

ON THE SUBLIME

Translation by W. H. Fyfe. Revised by Donald Russell.

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1. You know, my dear Postumius Terentianus, that when we were studying together Caecilius'^a little treatise on the Sublime it appeared to us to fall below the level of the subject and to fail to address the main points, or render its readers very much of that assistance which should be an authors chief aim, seeing that there are two requisites in every systematic treatise: the author must first define his subject, and secondly, though this is really more important, he must show us how and by what means we may reach the goal ourselves. Caecilius, however, endeavouring by a thousand instances to demonstrate the nature of the sublime, as though we know nothing about it, apparently thought it unnecessary to deal with the means by which we may be enabled to develop our natures to some degree of grandeur. Still, we ought perhaps rather to praise our author for the mere conception of such a treatise and the trouble spent upon it than to blame him for his omissions. But since you have now asked me in my turn to prepare some notes on the sublime for your own sake, let us then see whether my

a. Caecilius of Caleacte in Sicily was a noted rhetorician and historian, contemporary with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and said to have been a Jew. See E. Ofenloch, *Caecilii Fragmenta* (1907) for a full (but uncritical) collection of material.

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observations have any value for public speakers; and you yourself, my friend, will, I am sure, do what duty and your heart alike dictate and give me the benefit of your unbiased judgement in detail. For he spoke well who, in answer to the question, "What have we in common with the gods?" said "Beneficence and Truth."^a Further, writing for a man of such education as yourself, dear friend, I almost feel freed from the need of a lengthy preface showing how the Sublime consists in a consummate excellence and distinction of language, and that this alone gave to the greatest poets and prose writers their preeminence and clothed them with immortal fame. For the effect of genius is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder, with its power of amazing us, always prevails over what is merely convincing and pleasing. For our persuasions are usually under our own control, while these things exercise an irresistible power and mastery, and get the better of every listener.^b Again, experience in invention and the due disposal and marshalling of facts do not show themselves in one or two touches but emerge gradually from the whole tissue of the composition, while, on the other hand, a well-timed flash of sublimity shatters everything like a bolt of lightning and reveals the full

a. This saying is attributed to Pythagoras (Aelian, *VH* 12.59) but also to Aristotle and Demosthenes and others (see *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, p. 25 Stembach).

b. A listener is also a reader; ancient literary criticism often favours the vocabulary of listening and speaking over that of reading and writing, because the literature was thought of as primarily oral, and the sense of speeches and poems as auditory experiences was never lost.

power of the speaker at a single stroke. But, as I say, my dear Terentianus, these and other such hints you with your experience could supply yourself.

2. We must begin now by raising the question whether there is an art of sublimity or emotion,^a for some think those are wholly at fault who try to bring such matters under systematic rules. Genius, it is said, is born and does not come of teaching, and the only art for producing it is nature. Works of natural genius, so people think, are spoiled and utterly demeaned by being reduced to the dry bones of rule and precept. For my part I hold that the opposite may be proved, if we consider that while in matters of elevation and emotion Nature for the most part knows no law, yet it is not the way of Nature to work at random and wholly without system. In all production Nature is the first and primary element; but all matters of degree, of the happy moment in each case, and again of the safest rules of practice and use, are adequately provided and contributed by system. We must remember also that mere grandeur runs the greatest risk if left to itself without the stay and ballast of scientific method and abandoned to the impetus of uninstructed temerity. For genius needs the curb as often as the spur. Speaking of the common life of men Demosthenes^b declares that the greatest of all blessings is good fortune, and that next

a. This translates the emendation *pathous* for the manuscript reading *bathous*, which has been interpreted as “profundity” or “bathos.”

b. *Oration* 23.113.

comes good judgement, which is indeed quite as important, since the lack of it often completely cancels the advantage of the former. We may apply this to literature and say that Nature fills the place of good fortune. Art that of good judgement. And above all we must remember this: the very fact that in literature some effects come of natural genius alone can only be learned from art. If then, as I said, those who censure students of this subject would lay these considerations to heart, they would not, I fancy, be any longer inclined to consider the investigation of our present topic superfluous and useless.

[Two pages of the manuscript are missing here.]

3. ... and they check the chimneys towering blaze.

For if I see one hearthholder alone.
I'll weave one torrent coronal of flame
And fire his homestead to a heap of ash.
But not yet have I blown the noble strain.^a

All this has lost the tone of tragedy: it is pseudo-tragic— the “coronals” and “spewing to heaven” and making Boreas a piper and all the rest of it. The phrasing is turbid, while the images make for confusion rather than forcefulness. Examine each in the light of day and it gradually sinks from the terrible to the ridiculous. Now seeing that in tragedy, which is essentially a majestic matter and admits of bombast, misplaced tumidity is none the less unpardonable, it is even less likely to suit real

a. Probably from Aeschylus' *Orithyia* (fr. 281 Radt). The speaker is Boreas.

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speeches. Thus it is that people laugh at Gorgias of Leontini for calling Xerxes "the Persian Zeus," and vultures "living sepulchres";^a also at certain phrases of Callisthenes^b which are not sublime but high falutin, and still more at some of Clitarchus's^c efforts, an affected creature, blowing, as Sophocles says, "on scannel pipes, yet wasting all his wind."^d You find the same sort of thing in Amphicrates too, and in Hegesias and Matris.^e For often when they think themselves inspired, their supposed ecstasy is merely childish folly. Speaking generally, tumidity seems one of the hardest faults to guard against. For all who aim at grandeur, in trying to avoid the charge of being feeble and arid, fall somehow into this fault, pinning their faith to the maxim that "to miss a high aim is to fail without shame." Tumours are bad things whether in books or bodies, those empty inflations, void of sincerity, as likely as not producing the opposite to the effect intended. For, as they say, "there's naught so dry as dropsy."

But, while tumidity seeks to outdo the sublime, puerility is the exact opposite of grandeur; utterly abject, mean spirited, and in fact the most ignoble of faults. What then is puerility? Is it not obviously an idea born in the classroom, whose overelaboration ends in frigid failure? Writ-

a. Gorgias fr. B 5a Diels-Franz (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*) b. Nephew of Aristotle and historian of Alexander. c. Historian of Alexander, writing in the reign of Ptolemy II (285 – 246 B.C.) d. Cicero (*Ad Atticum* 2.16.2) quotes a different version of this passage (= fr. 768 Radt), and Longinus perhaps adapts it to his own purpose. e. These Hellenistic writers were all despised by classicizing critics of the Augustan and later periods. Amphicrates fled from Athens to Seleucia in 86 B.C. Hegesias of Magnesia dates from the third century B.C. Matris of Thebes wrote hymns and encomia. For Hegesias' style, see E. Norden, *Antike Kunstprosa* 134ff.

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ers fall into this fault through trying to be uncommon and exquisite, and above all to please, and founder instead upon the rock of cheap affectation. Closely allied to this is a third kind of fault peculiar to emotional passages, what Theodoras^a used to call the pseudo-bacchanalian. This is emotion misplaced and pointless where none is needed, or unrestrained where restraint is required. For writers often behave as if they were drunk and give way to outbursts of emotion which the subject no longer warrants, but which are private to themselves and consequently tedious, so that to an audience which feels none of it their behaviour looks unseemly. And naturally so, for while they are in ecstasy, the audience is not. However we have reserved another place in which to treat of emotional subjects.^b

4. The second fault of which we spoke above is Frigidity, of which there are many examples in Timaeus, in other respects a capable writer and sometimes not at all badly endowed for greatness of style, learned, and full of ideas. Yet while keenly critical of others' faults, he is blind and deaf to his own, and his insatiable passion for starting strange conceits often lands him in the most puerile effects. I will quote only one or two examples from Timaeus,^c as Caecilius has forestalled me with most of them. In his eulogy of Alexander the Great he speaks

a. Probably a rhetorician from Gadara, one of whose pupils was the emperor Tiberius, and who taught that, so long as the argumentation of a case was sound, the orator need not religiously to the traditional arrangement of

prooemium, narrative, argument, counterargument, and peroration. b. If this refers to the present treatise, and not to a separate work (see *Introd.*), it must be to a passage now lost. c. A Sicilian historian (from Tauromenium), who died c. 260 B.C.; he is adversely criticized by Polybius for inaccuracy and bad taste.

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of “one who subdued the whole of Asia in fewer years than Isocrates took to write his *Panegyric* urging war on Persia.”^a Surely this is an odd comparison of the Macedonian to the sophist, for it is obvious, friend Timaeus, that on this showing Isocrates was a far better man than the Spartans, since they spent thirty years in subduing Messene,^b while he composed his *Panegyric* in no more than ten! Again, take his final comment on the Athenian prisoners in Sicily: “Having committed sacrilege against Hermes and mutilated his statues they were therefore punished, mainly owing to the action of a single man, who was kin on his father’s side to the injured deity, Hermocrates the son of Hermon.”^c This makes me wonder, my dear Terentianus, why he does not write of the tyrant Dionysius that “Having shown impiety towards Zeus and Heracles, he was therefore deprived of his tyranny by Dion and Heracleides.”^d But why speak of Timaeus when those very demi-gods, Xenophon and Plato, for all their training in the school of Socrates, yet sometimes forgot themselves in their fondness for such cheap effects? In his *Constitution of Sparta* Xenophon says, “Certainly you would hear as little speech from these

a. Isocrates is said to have spent the decade c. 390-380 B.C. working over this famous speech. b. The Spartan war of conquest in the eighth century B.C. is usually said to have taken 20 years, but there were later conflicts also. It is unsafe to emend Longinus’ figure. c. See Plutarch, *Nicias* 1. d. The conceit depends on the fact that the oblique cases of *Zeus* are *Dia*, *Dios*, *Dii*, so that a pun similar to that on Hermes/Hermocrates is produced.

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Spartans as from marble statues, and could as easily catch the eye of a bronze figure; indeed you might well think them as modest as the maidens in their eyes.”^a It would have better suited Amphicrates than Xenophon to speak of the pupils in our eyes as modest maidens. And fancy believing that every single man of them had modest pupils, when they say that people show their immodesty in nothing so much as their eyes! Why, a violent man is called “Heavy with wine, with the eyes of a dog.”^b However, Timaeus, laying hands as it were on stolen goods, could not leave even this frigid conceit to Xenophon. For example, speaking of Agathocles when he carried off his cousin from the unveiling ceremony^c although she had been given in marriage to another, he says, “Who could have done such a thing, had he not harlots instead of maidens in his eyes?” And what of the otherwise divine Plato? “They will inscribe and store in the temples,” he says, “cypress memorials,” meaning wooden tablets: and again, “As for walls, Megillus, I would consent with Sparta to let the walls lie slumbering on the ground and never rise again.”^d Herodotus’ phrase for fair women

a. The manuscript tradition of Xenophon, *Resp. Lac.* 3.5 has “maidens in their chambers” (. . .), but Stobaeus (*Flor.* CXLIV.2.23 Hense) has the same reading as Longinus, which involves a pun on the two meanings of [. . .], “girl,” and “pupil of the eye” (*pupula*)—a sense presumably derived from the fact that, if you look into someone’s pupil closely, you see a doll-like image of yourself. b. Achilles to Agamemnon, *Iliad* 1.225. c. I.e. on the third day after the marriage, when the bride first appeared unveiled. Agathocles ruled Syracuse, 317-287 B.C.; this story is not mentioned elsewhere. d. *Laws* 5.741C, 6.778D, freely quoted.

is not much better: “torments for eyes” he calls them.^a Yet he has some excuse, for in Herodotus this is said by the barbarians, who are, moreover, in their cups. Yet even in the mouths of such characters as these it is not right to display the triviality of one’s mind before an audience of all the ages.

5. However, all these lapses from dignity in literature spring from the same cause, namely that passion for novelty of thought which is the particular craze of the present day. For our virtues and vices spring from much the same sources. And so while beauty of style, sublimity, yes, and charm too, all contribute to successful composition, yet these same things are the source and groundwork no less of failure than of success. And we must say the same, I suppose, about variety of construction, hyperbole, and the use of plurals for singulars. We will show later^b the danger which they seem to us to involve. We are thus bound at this stage to raise and propose the answer to the question how we can avoid the faults that go so closely with the elevated style.

6. And this, my friend, is the way: first of all to obtain a clear knowledge and appreciation of what is really sublime. But this is not an easy thing to grasp: judgement in literature is the ultimate fruit of ripe experience. However, if I must speak of precept, it is perhaps not impossible that a true discernment in such matters may be derived from some such considerations as the following.

a. Herodotus 5.18, in an amusing account of the way the Macedonians entertained the Persian invaders of Greece.
b. In chapters 23 and 38.

7. We must realize, dear friend, that as in our everyday life nothing is really great which it is a mark of greatness to despise, I mean, for instance, wealth, position, reputation, sovereignty, and all the other things which possess a very grand exterior, nor would a wise man think things supremely good, contempt for which is itself eminently good—certainly men feel less admiration for those who have these things than for those who could have them but are big enough to slight them—well, so it is with the lofty style in poetry and prose. We must consider whether some of these passages have merely some such outward show of grandeur with a rich layer of casual accretions, and whether, if all this is peeled off, they may not turn out to be empty bombast which it is more noble to despise than to admire. For the true sublime naturally elevates us: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, we are filled [with] joy and pride, as if we had ourselves produced the very thing we heard. If, then, a man of sense, well-versed in literature, after hearing a passage several times finds that it does not affect him with a sense of sublimity, and does not leave behind in his mind more food for thought than the words at first suggest, but rather that on consideration it sinks into the bathetic, then it cannot really be the true sublime, if its effect does not outlast the moment of utterance. For what is truly great bears repeated consideration; it is difficult, nay, impossible, to resist its effect; and the memory of it is stubborn and

indelible. To speak generally, you should consider that to be beautifully and truly sublime which pleases all people at all times. For when men who differ in their pursuits, their lives, their tastes, their ages, their languages,^a all agree together in holding one and the same view about the same writings, then the unanimous verdict, as it were, of such discordant judges makes our faith in the admired passage strong and indisputable.

8. There are, one may say, some five most productive sources of the sublime in literature, the common groundwork, as it were, of all five being competence in speaking, without which nothing can be done. The first and most powerful is the power of grand conceptions—I have defined this in my book on Xenophon^b—and the second is the inspiration of vehement emotion. These two constituents of the sublime are for the most part congenital. But the other three come partly from art, namely the proper construction of figures—these being of course of two kinds, figures of thought and figures of speech—and, over and above these, nobility of language, which again may be resolved into choice of words and the use of metaphor and elaborated diction. The fifth cause of grandeur, which gives form to all those already mentioned, is dignified and elevated word-arrangement. Let us then consider all that is involved under each of these heads, merely prefacing this, that Caecilius has omitted

a. Text unsure: the suggested emendations mean “dates” or “manners.” b. This book is lost.

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some of these five classes, one obvious omission being that of emotion. Now if he thought that sublimity and emotion were the same thing, and that one always essentially involved the other, he is wrong. For one can find emotions that are mean and devoid of sublimity, for instance feelings of pity, grief, and fear. On the other hand, many sublime passages are quite without emotion. Examples are countless: take for instance the poet’s daring lies about the Aloadae:^a

Ossa then up on Olympus they strove to set, then
upon Ossa
Pelion, ashiver with leaves, to build them a ladder
to Heaven;

and the still greater exaggeration that follows,

And they would have done it as well.

Then again in the orators their eulogies and ceremonial speeches and show pieces always include touches of dignity and sublimity, yet are usually void of emotion. The result is that emotional orators excel least in eulogy, while panegyrists equally lack emotional power. If, on the other hand, it never entered Caecilius’ head that emotion sometimes contributes towards sublimity, and he therefore omitted it as undeserving of mention, then great indeed is his mistake. I would confidently lay it down that nothing makes so much for grandeur as genuine emotion in the right place. It inspires the words as it were with a fine frenzy and fills them with divine spirit.

9. Now, since the first, I mean natural, greatness plays

a. *Odyssey* 11.315.

a greater part than all the others, here too, even if it is rather a gift than an acquired quality, we should still do our utmost to train our minds into sympathy with what is noble and, as it were, impregnate them again and again with lofty thoughts. “How?” you will ask. Well, elsewhere I have written something like this, “Sublimity is the echo of a noble mind.” And so even without being spoken the bare idea often of itself wins admiration for its inherent grandeur. How grand, for instance, is the silence of Ajax in the Summoning of the Ghosts,^a more sublime than any speech! In the first place, then, it is absolutely necessary to state whence greatness comes, and to show that the thought of the genuine orator must be neither small nor ignoble. For it is impossible that those whose thoughts and habits all their lives long are petty and servile should produce anything wonderful, worthy of immortal life. No, a grand style is the natural product of those whose ideas are weighty. This is why splendid remarks come particularly to men of high spirit. Alexander’s answer to Parmenio when he said “For my part I had been content. . .”^b

[Six pages are lost here.]

... the distance between earth and heaven. One might say too that this measured the stature not of Strife

a. Odyssey 11.543-67. Ajax, summoned from Hades, refuses to speak to Odysseus, because he is still angry at the award of Achilles’ armour to Odysseus rather than to himself. b. The story (told in most of the historians of Alexander: see e.g. Plutarch, *Alexander* 29), and perhaps derived from Callisthenes, is that Darius offered Alexander territory and one of his daughters in marriage; Parmenio said “If I were Alexander, I should have accepted,” and Alexander replied “If I were Parmenio, so should I.”

so much as of Homer.^a Quite unlike this is Hesiod’s description of Gloom, if indeed we are right in adding the *Shield* to the list of Hesiod’s works:^b

Mucus from her nostrils was running.

He has made the image not terrible, but repulsive. But see how Homer magnifies the powers of heaven:

Far as a man can see with his eyes in the shadowy
distance,
Keeping his watch on a hilltop, agaze o’er the wine-
dark ocean,
So far leap at a bound the high-neighing horses of
heaven.^c

He uses a cosmic interval to measure their stride. So supreme is the grandeur of this, one might well say that if the horses of heaven take two consecutive strides there will then be no place

found for them in the world. Marvellous too is the imaginative picture of his Battle of the Gods:

Blared round about like a trumpet the firmament
vast and Olympus;
Shuddering down in the depths, the king of the
dead, Aïdoneus,

a. Evidently *Iliad* 4.442:

Small is the crest that she wears at the first, but behold her
thereafter
Planting her head in the skies, whilw she treads with her
Feet on the earth.

b. *Shield of Heracles* 267. Aristophanes of Byzantium was among the ancient scholars who regarded the *Shield* as perhaps not Hesiod's, but Apollonius and others took it to be genuine. c. *Iliad* 5.770-2.

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Sprang from his throne with a shuddering cry, for
fear the earthshaker, Poseidon,
Might soon splinter asunder the earth, and his
mansions lie open,
Clear to the eyes of immortals and mortals alike all
uncovered.
Grim and dreary and dank, which the very gods see
with abhorrence.^a

You see, friend, how the earth is split to its foundations, hell itself laid bare, the whole universe sundered and turned upside down; and meanwhile everything, heaven and hell, mortal and immortal alike, shares in the conflict and danger of that battle. Terrible as these passages are, they are utterly irreligious and breach the canons of propriety unless one takes them allegorically. I feel indeed that in recording as he does the wounding of the gods, their quarrels, vengeance, tears, imprisonment, and all their manifold passions Homer has done his best to make the men in the *Iliad* gods and the gods men. Yet, if we mortals are unhappy, death is the "harbour from our troubles,"^b whereas Homer has given the gods not only immortal natures but immortal sorrows. The Battle of the Gods, however, is far surpassed by those passages which represent the divine nature as truly uncontaminated, majestic, and pure. Take, for instance, the lines about Poseidon, though they have been treated fully enough by others before us:

Trembled the woods, and trembled the long-lying
ranges
Yes, and the peaks and the city of Troy and the
ships of Achaia

a. A conflation of *Iliad* 21.388 and 20.61-5. b. A proverbial image, cf. (e.g.) [Plutarch] *Consolation to Apollonius* 10, Epictetus 4.10.27, Seneca *Agamemnon* 592 (with R.J. Tarrant's note).

Under the feet immortal and the oncoming march
of Poseidon.
He set him to drive o'er the swell of the sea, and
the whales at his coming
Capering leapt from the deep and greeted the
voice of their master.
Then the sea parted her waves for joy, and they
flew on the journey.^a

Soo [sic?], too, the lawgiver of the Jews, no ordinary man, having formed a worthy conception of divine power and given expression to it, writes at the very beginning of his Laws: "God said"—what? 'let there be light,' and there was light, 'Let there be earth,' and there was earth."^b

Perhaps you will not think me boring, my friend, if I insert here another passage from the poet, one that treats of human affairs, to show you his habit of entering into the sublimity of his heroic theme. Darkness and helpless night suddenly descend upon his Greek army. At his wits' end Ajax cries:

Zeus Father, rescue from out of the mist the sons of
Achaia,
Brighten the heaven with sunshine, grant us the
sight of our eyes.
Just so it be in daylight, destroy us.^c

a. Another conflation: *Iliad* 13.18, 20.60, 13.19, 27-9. In view of Longinus' comment, the passage was perhaps put together by earlier critics, and is not simply a confused quotation from memory. b. This loose quotation of *Genesis* 1.3-9 has often been suspected of being an interpolation, and indeed the argument runs on without it perfectly well. But there is no reason why Longinus should not have known it; and the tradition that Caecilius may have been a Jew suggests a possible source. The syntax of the sentence is controversial; see now Mazzucchi, pp. 172-4. For the considerable influence of the passage in the eighteenth, see esp. Boileau, *Réflexions sur le Sublime* X, and Robert Louth's Oxford lectures *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753). c. *Iliad* 17.645-7.

These are the true feelings of an Ajax. He does not plead for his life: such a prayer would demean the hero: but since the disabling darkness robbed his courage of all noble use, therefore, distressed to be idle in battle, he prays for light on the instant, hoping thus at the worst to find a burial worthy of his courage, even though Zeus be ranged against him. Here indeed the battle is blown along by the force of Homer's writing, and he himself

Stormily raves, as the spear-wielding War-god, or
Fire, the destroyer,
Stormily raves on the hills in the deep-lying thick-
ets of woodland;
Fringed are his lips with the foam-froth.^a

Yet throughout the *Odyssey*, which for many reasons we must not exclude from our consideration, Homer shows that, as genius ebbs, it is the love of storytelling that characterizes old age. There are indeed many indications that he composed this tale after the *Iliad*; for example, throughout the *Odyssey* he introduces as episodes remnants of the adventures at Ilium; yes, and does he not in this poem render to his heroes their meed of lamentation as if it were something long known? In fact the *Odyssey* is simply an epilogue to the *Iliad*:

a. *Iliad* 15.605.

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There then Ajax lies, great warrior; there lies
Achilles;
There, too, Patroclus lies, the peer of the gods in
counsel;
There, too, my own dear son.^a

It was, I imagine, for the same reason that, writing the *Iliad* in the heyday of his genius he made the whole piece lively with dramatic action, whereas in the *Odyssey* narrative predominates, the characteristic of old age. So in the *Odyssey* one may liken Homer to the setting sun; the grandeur remains without the intensity. For no longer does he preserve the sustained energy of the great *Iliad* lays, the consistent sublimity which never sinks into flatness, the flood of moving incidents in quick succession, the versatile rapidity and actuality, dense with images drawn from real life. It is rather as though the Ocean had retreated into itself and lay quiet within its own confines. Henceforth we see the ebbing tide of Homer's greatness, as he wanders in the realm of the fabulous and incredible. In saying this I have not forgotten the storms in the *Odyssey* and such incidents as that of the Cyclops—I am describing old age, but the old age of a Homer—yet the

a. *Odyssey* 3.109-11. Both opinions about the order of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were held in antiquity: Seneca (*De brevitate vitae* 13) regards it as a typical example of the useless questions raised by literary scholars.

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fact is that in every one of these passages the mythical element predominates over the real.

I have been led into this digression to show you, as I said, that great genius with the decline of vigour often lapses very easily into nonsense—there is the story of the wineskin^a and the men whom Circe turned into swine^b—Zoilus called them “porkers in tears”—there is the nurturing of Zeus like a nestling by the doves,^c Odysseus' ten days without food on the wrecked ship,^d and the incredible story of the suitors' slaying.^e Can one call these things anything but veritable dreams of Zeus?^f

There is another justification for our considering the *Odyssey* as well as the *Iliad*. I wanted you to realize how, in great writers and poets, declining emotional power passes into character portrayals. For instance, his character sketches of the daily life in Odysseus' household constitute a sort of comedy of character.

10. Well, then, let us see whether we can find anything else that can make style sublime. Since with all things there are associated certain elements, inherent in their substance, it follows of necessity that we shall find

a. Aeolus imprisoned the winds in a wineskin: *Odyssey* 10.19-22. b. *Odyssey* 10.237. Zoilus of Amphipolis—nicknamed *Homeromastix*, Scourge of Homer—was a fourth-century sophist and moralist who criticized improbable and inappropriate features in the epic. c. Zeus supplied with ambrosia by doves: *Odyssey* 12.62. d. *Odyssey* 12.447. e. *Odyssey* 22. f. An obscure phrase, probably suggesting that, Homer being Zeus of poets (cf. Quintilian 10.1.46), he sometimes dozes and dreams (*bonus dormitat Homerus*, Horace, *Ars Poetica* 359).

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one factor of sublimity in a consistently happy choice of these constituent elements, and in the power of combining them together as it were into an organic whole. The first procedure attracts the reader by the selection of ideas, the second by the density of those selected. Sappho, for instance, never fails to take the emotions incident to the passion of love from its attendant symptoms and from real life. And wherein does she show her excellence? In the skill with which she selects and combines the most striking and intense of those symptoms.

I think him God's peer that sits near you face to
face, and listens to your sweet speech and
lovely laughter.
It's this that makes my heart flutter in my breast. If
I see you but for a little, my voice comes no
more and my tongue is broken.
At once a delicate flame runs through my limbs; I
see nothing with my eyes, and my ears thun-
der.
The sweat pours down: shivers grip me all over. I
am grown paler than grass, and seem to
myself to be very near to death.
But all must be endured, since ...

a Sappho fr. 31, in D. A. Campbell (ed.), *Greek Lyric I* (Loeb Classical Library).

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Is it not wonderful how she summons at the same time, soul, body, hearing, tongue, sight, skin, all as though they had wandered off apart from herself? She feels contradictory sensations, freezes, bums, raves, reasons, so that she displays not a single emotion, but a whole congeries of emotions. Lovers show all such symptoms, but what gives supreme merit to her art is, as I said, the skill with which she takes up the most striking and combines them into a single whole. It is, I fancy, much in the same way that the poet in describing storms picks out the most alarming circumstances. The author of the *Arimaspeia*,^a to be sure, thinks these lines awe-inspiring:

Here is another thing also that fills us with feelings

of wonder,
Men that dwell on the water, away from the earth,
on the ocean.
Sorrowful wretches they are, and theirs is a
grievous employment:
Fixing their eyes on the stars, their lives they
entrust to the waters.
Often, I think, to the gods they lift up their hands
and they pray;
Ever their innermost parts are terribly tossed to
and fro.

Anyone can see, I fancy, that this is more elegant than awe-inspiring. But how does Homer do it? Let us take

a. Aristeas of Proconnesus (see J. D. P. Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus*, Oxford 1962, 8-15) wrote an epic description of the peoples of the far North: Herodotus (4.27) interprets *Arimaspi* as derived from Scythian words meaning one-eyed. This passage is fr. 1 Kinkel, fr. 7 Bolton, fr. 11 Bernabé.

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one example of many:

He fell on the host as a wave of the sea on a hurry-
ing vessel,
Rising up under the clouds, a boisterous son of the
storm-wind.
The good ship is lost in the shroud of the foam, and
the breath of the tempest
Terribly roars in the sails; and in their heart trem-
ble the sailors,
By the breadth of a hand swept out from under the
jaws of destruction.^a

Aratus, too, tried to adapt this same idea:

Only the tiniest plank now bars them from bitter
destruction.^b

But he has demeaned the idea and made it pretty instead of awe-inspiring. Moreover, he dismisses the danger when he says, "The plank bars them from destruction." Why then, it keeps it off. Homer, on the other hand, instead of dismissing the danger once and for all, depicts the sailors as being all the time, again and again, with every wave on the very brink of death. Moreover, by forcing into an abnormal union prepositions not usually compounded^c he has tortured his language into conformity with the impending disaster, magnificently figured the disaster by the compression of his language, and

a. *Iliad* 15.624-8. b. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 299. c. I.e. [. . .] is a compound of [. . .] ['under'] and [. . .] ('from').

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almost stamped on the diction the precise form of the danger—"swept out from under the jaws of destruction." Comparable to this is the passage of Archilochus about the shipwreck^a and the description of the arrival of the news in Demosthenes. "Now it was evening," etc.^b What they have done is to clean up, as it were, the very best of the main points, and to fit them together, allowing nothing affected or undignified or pedantic to intervene. These things ruin the whole, by introducing, as it were, gaps and crevices into masses which are built together, walled in by their mutual relationships.

11. Closely allied to the merits set out above is what is called amplification. Whenever the subject matter and the issues admit of several fresh starts and halting-places from section to section, then one great phrase after another is wheeled into place with increasing force. This may be done either by the development of a commonplace, or by exaggeration, or by laying stress on facts or arguments, or by careful build-up of actions or feelings. There are indeed countless kinds of amplification. Still the speaker must recognize that none of these methods can achieve its goal on its own, without sublimity. One may indeed very well make an exception where the effect required is one of commiseration or depreciation, but in

a. Archilochus fr. 105-6 West. b. De corona 169: "Now it was evening, and there came one with a message for the *prytaneis*, that Elatea had fallen"; there follows a vivid description of the ensuing panic at Athens. Elatea fell to Philip late in 339.

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all other forms of amplification to remove the touch of sublimity is like taking soul from body. For their practical effect instantly loses its vigour and substance if it is not reinforced by the strength of the sublime. But what is the difference between this topic of advice and what we discussed just now, namely the delimitation and unifying arrangement of vital points? What in general is the distinction between instances of amplification and those of sublimity? I must define these matters briefly in order to make my position clear.

12. The definition given by writers on the art of rhetoric does not satisfy me. Amplification, they say, is language which invests the subject with grandeur.^a Now that definition could obviously serve just as well for the sublime, the emotional, and the metaphorical style, since these also invest the language with some quality of grandeur. But in my view they are each distinct. Sublimity lies in elevation, amplification rather in amount; and so you often find sublimity in a single idea, whereas amplification always goes with quantity and a certain degree of redundance. To give a rough definition, amplification consists in accumulating all the aspects and topics inherent in the subject and thus strengthening the argument by dwelling upon it. Therein it differs from proof, which demonstrates the required point...

[Two pages are lost here.]

a. Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.9.1368a27) makes the point that amplification is most appropriate to epideictic speeches, because the facts are already admitted, and what remains as the speaker's task is to add grandeur and beauty.

... very rich indeed: like a sea, often flooding a vast expanse of grandeur. I should say then that in point of style the orator, being more emotional, has abundant warmth and passionate glow, whereas Plato, steady in his majestic and stately dignity, is less intense, though of course by no means frigid. It is in the very same respect—so I feel, my dear Terentianus, if indeed we Greeks may be allowed an opinion—that Cicero differs from Demosthenes in his grand effects. Demosthenes’ strength is usually in rugged sublimity, Cicero’s in diffusion. Our countryman with his violence, yes, and his speed, his force, his terrific power of rhetoric, bums, as it were, and scatters everything before him, and may therefore be compared to a flash of lightning or a thunderbolt. Cicero seems to me like a widespread conflagration, rolling along and devouring all around it: his is a strong and steady fire, its flames duly distributed, now here, now there, and fed by fresh supplies of fuel. You Romans, of course, can form a better judgement on this question, but clearly the opportunity for Demosthenes’ sublimity and nervous force comes in his intensity and violent emotion, and in passages where it is necessary to amaze the audience; whereas diffuseness is in place when you need to overwhelm them with a flood of rhetoric. The latter then mostly suits the treatment of a commonplace, a peroration, a digression, and all descriptive and epideictic passages, as well as historical and scientific contexts, and many other types of writing.

13. However, to return to Plato, though the stream of

his words flows as noiselessly as oil,^a he none the less attains sublimity. You have read the *Republic* and you know the sort of thing. “Those who have then no experience,” he says, “of wisdom or of goodness, living always amid banquets and other such festivities, are seemingly borne downwards and there they wander all their lives. They have never yet raised their eyes to the truth, never been carried upwards, never tasted true, abiding pleasure. They are like so many cattle; stooping downwards, with their eyes always bent on the earth and on their dinner tables, they feed and fatten and breed, and so greedy are they for these enjoyments that they kick and butt with hooves and horns of iron and kill each other for insatiate desire.”^b

Here is an author who shows us, if we will condescend to see, that there is another road, besides those we have mentioned, which leads to sublimity. What and what manner of road is this? Zealous imitation of the great prose writers and poets of the past. That is the aim, dear friend; let us hold to it with all our might. For many are carried away by the inspiration of another, just as the story runs that the Pythian priestess on approaching the tripod where there is, they say, a rift in the earth, exhaling divine vapour,^c thereby becomes impregnated with the divine power and is at once inspired to utter oracles; so, too, from the natural genius of those old writers there

a. *Theaetetus* 144B. b. *Republic* 9.586A, with some changes and omissions. c. The theory that the prophetic power of Delphi was due to such an intoxicating vapour or pneuma was widely held in antiquity, but the geology of Delphi lends it no support and no “rift in the earth” has been identified.

flows into the hearts of their admirers as it were an emanation from those holy mouths. Inspired by this, even those who are not easily moved to prophecy share the enthusiasm of these others' grandeur. Was Herodotus alone Homeric in the highest degree? No, there was Stesichorus at a still earlier date and Archilochus too,^a and above all others Plato,^b who drew off for his own use ten thousand runnels from the great Homeric spring. We might need to give instances, had not people like Ammonius^c drawn up a collection. Such borrowing is no theft; it is rather like the reproduction of good character by sculptures or other works of art.^d So many of these qualities would never have flourished among Plato's philosophic tenets, nor would he have entered so often into the subjects and language of poetry, had he not striven, with heart and soul, to contest the prize with Homer, like a young antagonist with one who had already won his spurs, perhaps in too keen emulation, longing as it were to break a lance, and yet always to good purpose; for, as Hesiod says, "Good is this strife for mankind."^e Fair indeed is the crown, and the fight for fame well worth the winning, where even to be worsted by our forerunners is not without glory.

a. Stesichorus' lyrics were largely epic in theme and language, while Archilochus' vigorous iambs had been compared with Homer by earlier critics (Heraclides Ponticus wrote on "Homer and Archilochus," but the contents of the book are not known). b Ancient critics saw resemblances between Plato and Homer in grandeur, character-drawing, and psychological theory. It is curious that the third-century Longinus (F15 Prickard) actually says: "Plato is the first who best transferred Homeric grandeur (. . .) into prose." Cf. Introduction. c. A pupil of Aristarchus, who wrote on Plato's debt to Homer. d. Or (reading . . . for . . .): "an impression taken from good characters, sculptures, or other works of art." e. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 24.

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14. We too, then, when we are working at some passage that demands sublimity of thought and expression, should do well to form in our hearts the question, "How might Homer have said this same thing, how would Plato or Demosthenes or (in history) Thucydides have made it sublime?" Emulation will bring those great characters before our eyes, and their shining presence will lead our thoughts to the ideal standards of perfection. Still more will this be so, if we also try to imagine to ourselves: "How would Homer or Demosthenes, had either been present, have listened to this passage of mine? How would that passage have affected them?" Great indeed is the ordeal, if we suppose such a jury and audience as this to listen to our own utterances and make believe that we are submitting our work to the scrutiny of such heroes as witnesses and judges. Even more stimulating would it be to add, "If I write this, how would all posterity receive it?" But if a man shrinks at the very thought of saying anything that is going to outlast his own life and time, then must all the conceptions of that man's mind be like some blind, half-formed embryo, all too abortive for the life of posthumous fame.

15. Weight, grandeur, and urgency in writing are very largely produced, dear young friend, by the use of "visualizations" (*phantasiai*). That at least is what I call them; others call them "image productions." For the term *phantasia* is applied in general to an idea which enters the mind from any source and engenders speech, but the word has now come to be used predominantly of

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passages where, inspired by strong emotion, you seem to see what you describe and bring it vividly before the eyes of your audience. That *phantasia* means one thing in oratory and

another in poetry you will yourself detect, and also that the object of the poetical form of it is to enthrall, and that of the prose form to present things vividly, though both indeed aim at the emotional and the excited.

Mother, I beg you, do not drive against me
These snake-like women with blood-reddened
eyes.
See there! See there! They leap upon me close.^a

And

Ah, she will slay me, whither shall I flee?^b

In these passages the poet himself saw Furies and compelled the audience almost to see what he had visualized. Now Euripides makes his greatest efforts in presenting these two emotions, madness and love, in tragic guise, and succeeds more brilliantly with these emotions than, I think, with any others; not that he lacks enterprise to attack other forms of visualization as well. While his natural genius is certainly not sublime, yet in many places he forces it into the tragic mould and invariably in his grand passages, as the poet says,

a. Euripides *Orestes* 255-7, from the classic scene in which Orestes has a madman's vision of Clytemnestra sending the Erinyes against him. b. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 291: a herdsman describes to Iphigenia the mad behaviour and words of the man he has seen on the beach, who turns out to be Orestes, who is experiencing the same delusion of attack by the Erinyes avenging his mother.

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His tail at his ribs and his flanks now lashes on this,
now on that side,
Ever he spurs himself on to share in the joys of the
Battle.^a

For instance, when Helios hands over the reins to Phaethon:^b

“And do not drive into the Libyan sky.
Its torrid air with no damp humour tempered
Will burn your wheel and melt it.”

And he goes on,

“But toward the seven Pleiads hold your course.”
This heard, young Phaethon caught up the reins,
Slashed at the flanks of his wing-wafted team,
And launched them flying to the cloudy vales.
Behind, his sire, astride the Dog-star's back,
Rode, schooling thus his son. “Now, drive on there,
Now this way wheel your car, this way.”

Would you not say that the writer's soul is aboard the car, and takes wing to share the horses' peril? Never could it have visualized such things, had it not run beside those heavenly bodies. You find the same sort of thing in his Cassandra's speech:

a *Iliad* 20.170, describing a wounded lion. b. The following passages are from Euripides' *Phaethon* (fr. 779 Nauck, see J. Diggle, *Euripides' Phaethon*, Cambridge 1970, lines 168-77). They come from a messenger's speech relating Phaethon's fatal ride in the Sun god's chariot.

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O you horse-loving Trojans^a

And whereas when Aeschylus ventures upon heroic imaginings, he is like his own "Seven against Thebes," where

Seven resistless captains o'er a shield
Black-bound with hide have slit a bullock's throat,
And dipped their fingers in the bullock's blood,
Swearing a mighty oath by War and Havoc
And Panic, bloodshed's lover—^b

and all pledge themselves to each other to die "apart from pity," and though he sometimes introduces unworked ideas, all woolly, as it were, and tangled, Euripides' competitiveness leads him also to embark on the same perilous path. Aeschylus uses a startling phrase of Lycurgus's palace, magically possessed at the appearance of Dionysus,

The palace is possessed, the roof turns bacchanal.^c

Euripides expressed the same idea differently, softening it down,

And all the mountain
Turned bacchanal with them.^d

a. Euripides fr. 935 Nauck. This may come from the *Alexandros*, and may have to do with Cassandra's warning against the Trojan Horse; if so, "horse-loving" is an apt taunt. Presumably Longinus means us to recall more of the speech than these opening words. b. *Seven against Thebes* 42-6: "apart from pity" comes from the same passage (51). c. Aeschylus fr. 58 Radt, from the *Lycurgeia*, the trilogy dealing with Lycurgus' resistance to the cult of Dionysus in Thrace, a parallel theme to that of Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Pentheus of Thebes vainly resists the god. d. Euripides, *Bacchae* 726.

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Sophocles too describes with superb visualization the dying Oedipus conducting his own burial amid strange portents in the sky;^a and Achilles at the departure of the Greeks, when he appears above his tomb to those embarking,^b a scene which nobody perhaps has depicted so vividly as Simonides.^c But to give all the instances would be endless. However, as I said, these examples from poetry show an exaggeration which belongs to fable and far exceeds the limits of

credibility, whereas the most perfect effect of visualization in oratory is always one of reality and truth. Transgressions of this rule have a strange, outlandish air, when the texture of the speech is poetical and fabulous and deviates into all sorts of impossibilities. For instance, our wonderful modern orators—god help us!—are like so many tragedians in seeing Furies, and the fine fellows cannot even understand that when Orestes says,

Let go! Of my own Furies, you are one
And grip my waist to cast me down to Hell,^d

he only imagines that, because he is mad.

What then is the use of visualization in oratory? It may be said generally to introduce a great deal of excitement and emotion into one's speeches, but when combined with factual arguments it not only convinces the audience, it positively masters them. Take Demosthenes: "And yet, suppose that at this very moment we were to hear an uproar in front of the law courts and someone

a. *Oedipus at Colonus* 1586 – 1666. b. In *Polyxena*, fr. 523 Radt. c. D. A. Campbell (ed.), *Greek Lyric III* (Loeb Classical Library) Simonides fr. 557 (= fr. 52 Page). d. Euyripides, *Orestes* 264-5.

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were to tell us, 'The prison has been broken open and the prisoners are escaping,' there is no man, old or young, so unheeding that he would not run to give all the assistance in his power. But suppose someone were to come and actually tell us that this was the man who set them free, he would be killed on the moment without a hearing."^a And then, to be sure, there is Hyperides on his trial, when he had moved the enfranchisement of the slaves after the Athenian reverse. "It was not the speaker that framed this measure, but the battle of Chaeronea."^b There, besides developing his factual argument the orator has visualized the event and consequently his conception far exceeds the limits of mere persuasion. In all such cases the stronger element seems naturally to catch our ears, so that our attention is drawn from the reasoning to the enthralling effect of the imagination, and the reality is concealed in a halo of brilliance. And this effect on us is natural enough; set two forces, side by side and the stronger always absorbs the virtues of the other.

This must suffice for our treatment of sublimity in ideas, as produced by nobility of mind or imitation or visualization.^c

16. The topic of figures comes next, for these too, if rightly handled, may be, as I said,^d an important element in the sublime. However, since it would be a long, and indeed an interminable task to treat them all in detail

a. Demosthenes, *Oration* 24.208. b. After Philip's victory at Chaeronea (338 B.C.), Hyperides proposed the enfranchisement of slaves, and defended this panic measure, it is said, in these terms: see Rutilius Lupus 1.19, [Plutarch] *Lives of the Ten Orators*, 849A. c. This summary is puzzling: it omits the contents of chap. 10. d. In chap. 8.

at this point, we will by way of confirmation of our thesis merely run through a few of those which make for grandeur. Demosthenes is producing an argument in defence of his political career. What was the natural way to treat it? “You were not wrong, you who undertook that struggle for the freedom of Greece, and you have proof of this at home, for neither were the men at Marathon misguided nor those at Salamis nor those at Plataea.”^a But when in a sudden moment of inspiration, as if possessed by the divine, he utters his great oath by the champions of Greece, “It cannot be that you were wrong; no, by those who risked their lives at Marathon,” then you feel that by employing the single figure of adjuration—which I here call apostrophe—he has deified the ancestors by suggesting that one should swear by men who met such a death, as if they were gods; he has filled his judges with the spirit of those who risked their lives there; he has transformed a demonstrative argument into a passage of transcendent sublimity and emotion, giving it the power of conviction that lies in so strange and startling an oath; and at the same time his words have administered to his hearers a healing medicine, with the result that, relieved by his eulogy, they come to feel as proud of the war with Philip as of their victories at Marathon and Salamis. In all this he is enabled to carry the audience away with him by the use of the figure. True, the germ of the oath is said to have been found in Eupolis:

a. *De corona* 208. The passage was much admired in antiquity (Quintil. 9.2.62; 12.10.24; Hermogenes, *De ideis* p. 267 Rabe), and Longinus’ discussion was highly praised by Dr. Johnson (*Life of Dryden* p. 299, World’s Classics edition).

No, by the fight I fought at Marathon,
No one of them shall vex me and go free.^a

But the mere swearing of an oath is not sublime: we must consider the place, the manner, the circumstances, the motive. In Eupolis there is nothing but an oath, and that addressed to Athens, when still in prosperity and needing no consolation. Moreover, the poet’s oath does not immortalize the men so as to beget in the audience a true opinion of their worth, but instead he wanders from those who risked their lives to an inanimate object, namely the fight. In Demosthenes the oath is carefully designed to suit the feelings of defeated men, so that the Athenians should no longer regard Chaeronea as a disaster; and it is, as I said, at the same time a proof that no mistake has been made, an example, a sworn confirmation, an encomium, and an exhortation. The orator was faced with the objection, “You are speaking of a reverse due to your policy and then you go swearing by victories,” and therefore in the sequel he measures his every word and keeps on the safe side, inculcating the lesson that “in the wildest rite” you must stay sober.^b “Those who risked their lives,” he says, “at Marathon and those who fought on shipboard at Salamis and Artemisium and those who stood in the line at Plataea”—never “those who won the victory.” Throughout he cunningly avoids naming the result, because it was a happy one, and the opposite of what happened at Chaeronea. So before his hearers can raise the objection he promptly adds, “To all of these the

a. From the *Demes* (fr. 106 Kassel-Austin). b. A reminiscence of Euripides, *Bacchae* 317.

country gave a public funeral, Aeschines, not only to those who were successful.”

17. While on this topic I must not omit to mention a view of my own, dear friend, which I will state, however, quite concisely. Figures seem to be natural allies of the sublime and to draw in turn marvellous reinforcement from the alliance. Where and how? I will tell you. There is an inevitable suspicion attaching to the sophisticated use of figures. It gives a suggestion of treachery, craft, fallacy, especially when your speech is addressed to a judge with absolute authority, or still more to a despot, a king, or a ruler in high place. He is promptly indignant that he is being treated like a silly child and outwitted by the figures of a skilled speaker. Construing the fallacy as a personal affront, he sometimes turns downright savage; and even if he controls his feelings, he becomes conditioned against being persuaded by the speech. So we find that a figure is always most effective when it conceals the very fact of its being a figure. Sublimity and emotional intensity are a wonderfully helpful antidote against the suspicion that accompanies the use of figures. The artfulness of the trick is no longer obvious in its brilliant setting of beauty and grandeur, and thus avoids all suspicion. A sufficient instance is that mentioned above, “By those at Marathon.” In that case how did the orator conceal the figure? By its very brilliance, of course. Much in the same way that dimmer lights vanish in the surrounding radiance of the sun, so an all-embracing atmosphere of grandeur obscures the rhetorical devices. We see some-

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thing of the same kind in painting. Though the highlights and shadows lie side by side in the same plane, yet the highlights spring to the eye and seem not only to stand out but to be actually much nearer. So it is in writing. What is sublime and moving lies nearer to our hearts, and thus, partly from a natural affinity, partly from brilliance of effect, it always strikes the eye long before the figures, thus throwing their art into the shade and keeping it hid as it were under a bushel.

18. Now what are we to say of our next subject, the figures of inquiry and interrogation? Is it not just the specific character of these figures which gives the language much greater realism, vigour and tension? “Tell me, my friend, do you all want to go round asking each other ‘Is there any news?’^a For what stranger news could there be than this of a Macedonian conquering Greece? Is Philip dead?’ ‘No, not dead but ill.’ What difference does it make to you? Whatever happens to him, you will soon manufacture another Philip for yourselves.” Or again: “Let us sail to Macedon. Someone asks me, ‘Where on earth shall we land?’ Why, the mere course of the war will find out the weak spots in Philip’s situation.” Here a bare statement would have been utterly inadequate. As it is, the inspiration and quick play of the question and answer, and his way of confronting his own words as if they were someone else’s, make the passage, through his use of the figure, not only loftier but also more convincing. For emotion is always more telling when it seems not to be

a. This and the following passage are loose quotations from the First *Philippic* (Demosthenes, *Oration* 4.10 and 44).

premeditated by the speaker but to be born of the moment; and this way of questioning and answering one's self counterfeits spontaneous emotion. People who are cross-questioned by others in the heat of the moment reply to the point forcibly and with utter candour; and in much the same way the figure of question and answer actually misleads the audience, by encouraging it to suppose that each carefully premeditated argument has been aroused in the mind and put into words on the spur of the moment. Moreover—for this passage of Herodotus has always been reckoned one of the most sublime—if in this way...^a

[Two pages are missing here.]

19.^b ... the phrases tumble out unconnected in a sort of spate, almost too quick for the speaker himself. “And locking their shields,” says Xenophon, “they pushed, fought, slew, fell.”^c And take the words of Eurylochus,

We came, as you told us to come, through the oak-
coppice, shining Odysseus.
Built in the glades we beheld habitations of won-
derful beauty.^d

The phrases being disconnected, and yet none the less rapid, give the idea of an agitation which both checks the utterance and at the same time drives it on. This is the

a. The passage of Herodotus cannot be identified, but may be 7.21, which has notable rhetorical questions. b. The subject is now asyndeton, i.e. the omission of conjunctions. c. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.3.19 (= *Agesilaus* 2.12). d. *Odyssey* 10.251-2.

effect the poet has achieved by his use of asyndeton.

20. The combination of several figures often has an exceptionally powerful effect, when two or three combined cooperate, as it were, to contribute force, conviction, beauty. Thus, for instance, in the speech against Midias the asyndeta are interwoven with the figures of repetition and vivid presentation.^a “For the aggressor may do many injuries, some of which the victim could not even describe to anyone else—by his manner, his look, his voice.” Then to prevent the speech coming to a halt by running over the same ground—for immobility expresses inertia, while emotion, being a violent movement of the soul, demands disorder—he leaps at once into further asyndeta and anaphoras. “By his manner, his looks, his voice, when he strikes with insult, when he strikes like an enemy, when he strikes with his knuckles, when he strikes you like a slave.” Here the orator does just the same as the aggressor, he belabours the minds of the jury with blow after blow. Then at this point he proceeds to make another onslaught, like a tornado. “When it's with his knuckles, when it's a slap on the face,” he says, “this rouses, this maddens a man who is not accustomed to insult. Nobody could convey the horror of it simply by reporting it.” Thus all the time he preserves the essence of his repetitions

and asyndeta through continual variation, so that his very order is disordered and equally his disorder involves a certain element of order.

a. Demosthenes, *Oration* 21.72 (with some variations from our text).

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21. Now insert the connecting particles, if you care to do so, in the style of Isocrates^a and his school. “And yet one must not overlook this too, that the aggressor may do much, first by his manner, then by his looks, and then again by his mere voice.” If you thus paraphrase it sentence by sentence you will see that if the rush and ruggedness of the emotion is levelled and smoothed out by the use of connecting particles,^b it loses its sting and its fire is quickly put out. For just as you deprive runners of their speed if you bind them up, emotion equally resents being hampered by connecting particles and other appendages. It loses its freedom of motion and the sense of being, as it were, catapulted out.

22. In the same category we must place hyperbaton. This figure consists in arranging words and thoughts out of the natural sequence, and is, as it were, the truest mark of vehement emotion. Just as people who are really angry or frightened or indignant, or are carried away by jealousy or some other feeling—there are countless emotions, no one can say how many—often put forward one point and then spring off to another with various illogical interpolations, and then wheel round again to their original position, while, under the stress of their excitement, like a ship before a veering wind, they lay their words and

a. Isocrates was the principal proponent and model of the periodic style which articulates every clause carefully and avoids hiatus. b. The word for “conjunction” or “connecting particle,” *sundesmos*, literally means “bond.”

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thoughts first on one tack then another, and keep altering the natural order of sequence into innumerable variations—so, too, in the best prose writers the use of hyperbata allows imitation to approach the effects of nature. For art is only perfect when it looks like nature and Nature succeeds only when she conceals latent art. Take the speech of Dionysius the Phocaeen, in Herodotus.^a “Our fortunes stand upon a razor’s edge, men of Ionia, whether we be free men or slaves, aye, and runaway slaves. Now, therefore if you are willing to endure hardship, at the moment there is toil for you, but you will be able to overcome your enemies.” Here the natural order was, “O men of Ionia, now is the time for you to endure toil, for our fortunes stand upon a razors edge.” He has transposed “men of Ionia” and started at once with his fears, as though the terror was so immediate that he could not even address the audience first. He has, moreover, inverted the order of ideas. Before saying that they must toil—for that is the point of his exhortation—he first gives the reason why they must toil, by saying, “Our fortunes stand upon a razors edge.” The result is that his words do not seem premeditated but rather wrung from him. Thucydides is even more a master in the use of hyperbata to separate ideas which are naturally one and indivisible. Demosthenes, though not indeed so wilful as Thucydides,

a. Herodotus 6.11.

is the most lavish of all in this kind of use and not only employs hyperbata to give a great effect of vehemence, and indeed of improvisation, but also drags his audience along with him to share the perils of these long hyperbata. For he often suspends the sense which he has begun to express, and in the interval manages to bring forward one extraneous idea after another in a strange and unlikely order, making the audience terrified of a total collapse of the sentence, and compelling them from sheer excitement to share the speaker's risk: then unexpectedly, after a great interval, the long-lost phrase turns up pat at the end, so that he astounds them all the more by the very recklessness and audacity of the transpositions. But there are so many examples that I must stay my hand.

23. Again, accumulation, variation, and climax, the so-called "polyptota," are, as you know, very powerful, and contribute to ornament and to sublimity and emotion of all kinds. And consider, too, what variety and liveliness is lent to the exposition by changes of case, tense, person, number, or gender. In the category of number, for example, not only are those uses ornamental where the singular in form is found on consideration to signify a plural—take the lines:

And straightway a numberless people
Scatter the length of the beaches and thunder, "the
Tunny, the Tunny!"^a

a. The source of this quotation is not known. If the text here printed is right, the reference is to tunny-fishing, when the approach of a shoal is watched for and eagerly announced to the fishermen.

—but it is still more worthy of notice that plurals sometimes make a grander impression, courting favour by the sense of multitude given by the grammatical number. This is the case with Sophocles' lines about Oedipus:

Curse on the marriages
That gave us birth and having given birth
Flung forth the selfsame seed again and showed
Fathers and sons and brothers all blood-kin,
And brides and wives and mothers, all the shame
Of all the foulest deeds that men have done.^a

These all mean one person, Oedipus, and on the other side Jocasta, but the expansion into the plural serves to make the misfortunes plural as well. There is the same sense of multiplication in "Forth came Hectors and Sarpedons too,"^b and in the passage of Plato about the Athenians, which we have also quoted elsewhere: "For no Pelopses nor Cadmuses nor Aegyptuses and Danauses nor any other hordes of born barbarians share our home, but we are pure Greeks here,

no semi-barbarians,”^c and so on. The facts naturally sound more imposing from the accumulation of names in groups. This device should not, however, be employed except where the subject invites

a. *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1403-8. b. Source unknown: see Kannicht-Snell, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* II (Adespota 1 fr. 289). c. Plato, Menexenus 245D. “Elsewhere” presumably refers to another book.

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amplification or redundance or exaggeration or emotion, either one or more of these. To have bells hung all over you is the mark of a sophist.

24. Yet again, the converse of this, the contraction of plurals to singulars, sometimes gives a great effect of sublimity. “Moreover, the whole Peloponnese was split,” says Demosthenes.^a Again, “when Phrynichus produced his *Capture of Miletus* the theatre burst into tears.”^b To compress the number of separate individuals into a unified whole gives more sense of solidity. The ornamental effect in both is due to the same cause. Where the words are singular, to make them unexpectedly plural suggests emotion: where they are plural and you combine a number of things into a well-sounding singular, then this opposite change of the facts gives an effect of surprise.

25. Again, if you introduce events in past time as happening at the present moment, the passage will be transformed from a narrative into a vivid actuality. “Someone has fallen,” says Xenophon, “under Cyrus’ horse and, as he is trodden under foot, is striking the horse’s belly with his dagger. The horse, rearing, throws Cyrus, and he falls.”^c Thucydides uses such effects very often.

26. Change of person gives an equally powerful effect, and often makes the audience feel themselves set in the thick of the danger.

a. *De corona* (Oration 18) 18. b. Herodotus 6.21. c. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.1.37.

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. . . You would say that unworn and
with temper undaunted.
Each met the other in war, so headlong the rush of
their battle.^a

And Aratus’ line:

In that month may you never be found where the
sea surges round you.^b

Herodotus does much the same: “You will sail up from the city of Elephantine and there come to a smooth plain. And when you have passed through that place you will board again another ship and sail two days and then you will come to a great city, the name of which is Meroe.”^c Do you see, friend, how he takes you along with him through the country and turns hearing into

sight? All such passages with a direct personal address put the hearer in the presence of the action itself. By appearing to address not the whole audience but a single individual—

Of Tydeus' son you could not have known with
which of the hosts he was fighting—^d

you will move him more and make him more attentive and full of active interest, because he is roused by the appeals to him in person.

27. Again sometimes a writer, while speaking about a person suddenly turns and changes into the person himself. A figure of this kind is a sort of outbreak of emotion:

a. *Iliad* 15.697 – 8. b. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 287. c. Herodotus 2.29. d. *Iliad* 5.85.

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Hector lifted his voice and cried afar to the Trojans
To rush back now to the galleys and leave the
blood-spattered booty.
Whomsoever I see of his own will afar from the
galleys,
Death for him there will I plan.^a

There the poet has assigned the narrative to himself as his proper share, and then suddenly without any warning attached the abrupt threat to the angry champion. To insert “Hector said so and so” would have been frigid. As it is, the change of construction has suddenly run ahead of the change of speaker. So this figure is useful, when a sudden crisis will not let the writer wait, and forces him to change at once from one character to another. There is an instance in Hecataeus: “Ceyx took this ill and immediately bade the descendants be gone. For I cannot help you. So to prevent perishing yourselves and hurting me, away with you to some other people.”^b By a somewhat different method Demosthenes in the *Aristogeiton* has used variety of person to suggest rapid shifts of emotion. “And will none of you,” he says, “be found to feel anger and indignation at the violence of this shameless rascal, who—oh you most accursed of villains, who are cut off from free speech not by gates and doors which one might very well open . . .”^c Leaving his sense incomplete he has

a. *Iliad* 15.346-9. b. Hecataeus fr. 30 (*FGrHist* 1). By descendants, Hecataeus means the descendants of Heracles, as the intrusive gloss indicates: Ceyx, king of Trachis, is unable to help them, and so sends them away. See Diodorus Siculus 4.57.2. c. [Demosthenes] *Or.* 25.27-8.

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made a sudden change and in his indignation almost split a single phrase between two persons—“who—oh you most accursed”—and thus, while swinging his speech round on to Aristogeiton and appearing to abandon the jury, he has yet by means of the emotion made his appeal to them much more intense. Penelope does the same:

Herald, oh why have they sent you hither, those

high-born suitors?
Is it to tell the hand-maidens that serve in the
house of Odysseus
Now to desist from their tasks and make ready a
feast for the suitors?
Would that they never had wooed me nor ever met
here in our halls.
Would they might make in my house their last and
latest of banquets,
You that meet often together and utterly ravage our
substance!
... Nor yet from your fathers
Heard you ever at home long ago in the days of
your childhood
What manner of man was Odysseus.^a

28. That periphrasis can contribute to the sublime, no one, I fancy, would question. Just as in music what we call accompaniment enhances the beauty of the melody, so periphrasis often chimes in with the literal expression and gives it a far richer note, especially if it is not bombastic or tasteless but agreeably blended. A sufficient proof of this

a. *Odyssey* 4.681-9.

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is the opening of Plato's Funeral Oration: "First then in deeds we have given them their due reward, and, this won, they travel now their destined journey, escorted all in common by their country and each man severally by his kinsmen."^a Here he calls death a destined journey and their enjoyment of due rites a sort of public escort by their country. Is it a trivial dignity that he thus gives to the thought, or has he rather taken the literal expression and made it musical, wrapping it, as it were, in the tuneful harmonies of his periphrasis? Again Xenophon says, "You hold that hard work is a guide to the pleasures of life and you have stored in your hearts the noblest and most warrior-like of all treasures. For nothing pleases you so much as praise."^b By saying "You make hard work a guide to living with pleasure" instead of "You are willing to work hard," and by similarly expanding the rest of his sentence, he has invested the eulogy with a further grand idea. Then there is that inimitable phrase in Herodotus: "Upon those Scythians that sacked her temple the goddess sent a female malady."^c

29. However it is a risky business, periphrasis, more so than any of the other figures, unless used with a due sense of proportion. For it soon falls flat, smacking of triviality and grossness. So that critics have even made fun of Plato—always so clever at a figure, sometimes

a. Plato, *Menexenus* 236D. b. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.5.12. c. Herodotus 1.105.4.

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unseasonably so—for saying in his *Laws* “that we should not let silver treasure nor golden settle and make a home in a city.”^a Had he been forbidding people to possess sheep, says the critic, he would clearly have said “ovine and bovine treasure.”

But, my dear Terentianus, this digression must suffice for our discussion of the use of figures as factors in the sublime. They all serve to lend emotion and excitement to the style. But emotion is as much an element of the sublime, as characterization is of charm.^b

30. Now, since thought and diction are generally closely involved with each other we must further consider whether there are any elements of diction still left untouched. It is probably superfluous to explain at length to someone who knows, how the choice of the right word and the fine word has a marvellously moving and seductive effect upon an audience and how all orators and prose writers make this their supreme object. For this of itself gives to the style at once grandeur, beauty, old-world charm, weight, force, strength, and a sort of lustre, like the bloom on the surface of the most beautiful bronzes, and endows the facts as it were with a living voice. Truly, beautiful words are the very light of thought. However, their majesty is not for common use, since to attach great and stately words to trivial things would be

a. Plato, *Laws* 7.801B b. Cf. the comparison between *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, above 9.11-15.

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like fastening a great tragic mask on a little child. However in poetry and history...

[Four pages are lost here.]

31. ... is most nourishing and productive; so, too, with Anacreon’s “No more care I for the Thracian filly.”^a In the same way the novel phrase used by Theopompus is commendable; it seems to me extremely expressive because of the analogy, though Caecilius for some reason finds fault with it. “Philip,” he says, “had a wonderful faculty of stomaching things.”^b Thus a common expression sometimes proves far more vivid than elegant language. Being taken from our common life it is immediately recognized, and what is familiar is thereby the more convincing. Applied to one whose greedy ambition makes him glad to endure with patience what is shameful and sordid, “stomaching things” forms a very vivid phrase. It is much the same with Herodotus’ phrases: “In his madness,” he says, “Cleomenes cut his own flesh into strips with a dagger, until he made mincemeat of himself and perished,” and “Pythes went on fighting in the ship until he was chopped to pieces.”^c These come perilously near to vulgarity, but are not vulgar because they are so expressive.

a. Anacreon, fr. eleg. 5 (D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric* II p. 148). b. Theopompus fr. 262 (*FGrHist* 115 F 262). c. Herodotus 6.75, 7.181.

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32. As to the proper number of metaphors, Caecilius seems on the side of those who rule that not more than two or at the most three may be used together. Demosthenes assuredly is the canon in these matters too. And the occasion for their use is when emotion sweeps on like a flood and carries the multitude of metaphors along as an inevitable consequence. “Men,” he says, “of evil life, flatterers, who have each foully mutilated their own country and toasted

away their liberty first to Philip and now to Alexander, men who measure happiness by their bellies and their basest appetites, and have overthrown that liberty and freedom from despotism which to Greeks of older days was the canon and standard of all that was good.”^a Here it is the orator’s indignation against the traitors which screens the multitude of metaphors. Accordingly, Aristotle and Theophrastus say that bold metaphors are softened by inserting “as if” or “as it were” or “if one may say so” or “if one may risk the expression.”^b The apology, they tell us, mitigates the audacity of the language. I accept this, but at the same time, as I said in speaking of figures, the proper antidote for a multitude of daring metaphors is strong and timely emotion and genuine sublimity. These by their nature sweep everything

a. *De corona* (= *Or.* 18) 296. b. See Aristotle fr. 131 Rose, with *Rhet.* 3.7.1408b2, Cicero, *De oratore* 3.165, Theophrastus fr. 690 Fortenbaugh.

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along in the forward surge of their current, or rather they positively demand bold imagery as essential to their effect, and do not give the hearer time to examine how many metaphors there are, because he shares the excitement of the speaker.

Moreover in the treatment of a commonplace and in descriptions there is nothing so expressive as a sustained series of metaphors. It is thus that in Xenophon^a the anatomy of the human tabernacle is magnificently depicted, and still more divinely in Plato.^b The head he calls the citadel of the body, the neck is an isthmus built between the head and chest, and the vertebrae, he says, are planted beneath like hinges; pleasure is evil’s bait for man, and the tongue is the touchstone of taste. The heart is a knot of veins and the source whence the blood runs vigorously round, and it has its station in the guardhouse of the body. The passageways of the body he calls alleys, and “for the leaping of the heart in the expectation of danger or the arising of wrath, since this was due to fire, the gods devised a support by implanting the lungs, making them a sort of buffer, soft and bloodless and full of pores inside, so that when anger boiled up in the heart it might throb against a yielding surface and suffer no damage.” The seat of the desires he compares to the women’s apartments and the seat of anger to the men’s. The spleen

a. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.4.5. b. Plato, *Timaeus* 65C-85E, quoted selectively and with considerable freedom; see Russell (1964) pp. 153-5.

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again is the towel for the entrails, “with whose offscourings it is filled and becomes swollen and fetid.” “After this,” he goes on, “they shrouded the whole in a covering of flesh, like felt, to shield it from the outer world.” Blood he calls the fodder of the flesh, and adds, “For purposes of nutriment they irrigated the body, cutting channels as one does in a garden, and thus, the body being a conduit full of passages, the streams in the veins were able to flow as it were from a running stream.” And when the end comes, the soul, he says, is loosed like a ship from its moorings and set free. These and thousands of similar metaphors occur throughout. Those we have pointed out suffice to show that figurative writing^a has a natural grandeur and that metaphors make for sublimity: also that emotional and descriptive passages are most glad of them. However, it is obvious without my stating it, that the use of metaphor, like all the other

beauties of style, always tempts writers to excess. Indeed it is for these passages in particular that critics pull Plato to pieces, on the ground that he is often carried away by a sort of Bacchic possession in his writing into harsh and intemperate metaphor and allegorical bombast. “It is by no means easy to see,” he says, “that a city needs mixing like a wine bowl, where the mad wine seethes as it is poured in, but is chastened by another and a sober god and finding good company makes an excellent and temperate drink.”^b

a. This translation understands [. . .] with [. . .]. b. Plato, *Laws* 6.773C.

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To call water “a sober god” and mixing “chastisement,” say the critics, is the language of a poet who is far from sober.

Caecilius too, in attacking like defects, has actually had the face to declare in his book on Lysias that Lysias is altogether superior to Plato. Here he has given way to two confused emotions: for though he loves Lysias even better than himself, yet his hatred for Plato altogether outweighs his love for Lysias. However he is moved by a spirit of contentiousness and even his premises are not agreed, as he supposed. For he prefers his orator on the ground that he is immaculate^a and never makes a mistake, whereas Plato is full of mistakes. But the truth, we find, is different, very different indeed.

33. Suppose we illustrate this by taking some altogether immaculate and unimpeachable writer, must we not in this very connection raise the general question: Which is the better in poetry, and in prose, grandeur flawed in some respects, or moderate achievement accompanied by perfect soundness and impeccability? And again: is the first place in literature rightly due to the largest number of excellences or to the excellences that are greatest in themselves? These inquiries are proper to a treatise on the sublime and on every ground demand decision. Now I am well aware that the greatest natures are least immaculate. Perfect precision runs the risk of triviality, whereas in great writing as in great wealth there

a. *Katharos*, i.e. “pure,” in language, possessing one of the basic stylistic virtues.

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must needs be something overlooked. Perhaps it is inevitable that humble, mediocre natures, because they never run any risks and never aid at the heights, should remain to a large extent safe from error, while in great natures their very greatness spells danger. Not indeed that I am ignorant of the second point, that whatever men do is always inevitably regarded from the worst side: faults make an ineradicable impression, but beauties soon slip from our memory. I have myself cited a good many faults in Homer^a and the other greatest authors, and though these slips certainly offend my taste, yet I prefer to call them not wilful mistakes but careless oversights, let in casually almost and at random by the heedlessness of genius. In spite, then, of these faults I still think that the greatest excellences, even if they are not sustained throughout at the same level, should always be voted the first place, if for nothing else, for the greatness of mind they reveal. Apollonius, for instance, is an impeccable poet in the *Argonautica*, and Theocritus—except in a few extraneous matters^b—is supremely successful in his pastorals. Yet would you not rather be Homer than Apollonius? And what of Eratosthenes in his *Erigone*?^c

Wholly blameless as the little poem is, do you therefore think him a greater poet than Archilochus with all his disorganized flood and those outbursts of divine inspiration, which are

a. Presumably in other works. b. This refers either to the parts of Theocritus which are not pastoral or (more probably) to slips of factual detail noted by grammarians. c. A learned elegiac poem by the astronomer-poet (third century B.C.), in which was related the Attic myth of the death of Icarus and the suicide by hanging of his daughter Erigone, the principal characters being all translated into stars. See J. U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* 64ff.

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so troublesome to bring under any rule? In lyrics, again, would you choose to be Bacchylides rather than Pindar, or in tragedy Ion of Chios^a rather than Sophocles? In both pairs the first named is impeccable and a master of elegance in the smooth style, while Pindar and Sophocles sometimes seem to fire the whole landscape as they sweep across it, though often their fire is unaccountably quenched and they fall miserably flat. The truth is rather that no one in his senses would give the single tragedy of *Oedipus* for all the works of Ion together.

34. If achievements were to be judged by the number of excellences and not by their greatness, Hyperides would then be altogether superior to Demosthenes. He has greater variety of voice and his excellences are more numerous. He may almost be said to come a good second in every competition, like the winner of the Pentathlon.^b In each contest he loses to the professional champion, but comes first of the amateurs. Besides reproducing all the virtues of Demosthenes, except his skill in word arrangement, Hyperides has embraced all the excellences and graces of Lysias. He talks plainly, where necessary, does not speak always in the same tone, as Demosthenes is said to do, and has the power of characterization, seasoned moreover by simplicity and charm. Then he has an untold store of polished wit, urbane sarcasm, well-bred

a. Ion of Chios (mid-fifth century B.C.) was better known for his prose works ("Memoirs" and "Visits of Famous Men"), but a number of his tragedies were known in Hellenistic times (*TGF* i pp. 95ff; A. von Blumenthal, *Ion von Chios* (1939)). b. The best result in all five contests taken together—jumping, running, discus, javelin, wrestling—would doubtless be achieved by an athlete who was not an outstanding performer in any one.

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elegance, supple turns of irony, jests neither tasteless nor ill-bred, well-dressed with wit like the Attic masters, clever satire, plenty of pointed ridicule and well-directed fun, and in all this a quite indescribable charm. Nature endowed him fully with the power of evoking pity and also with a superb flexibility in narrating myths copiously, and pursuing a theme with fluency. His story of Leto,^a for instance, is in a more poetical vein, while his Funeral Oration^b is as good a piece of epideictic composition as anyone could produce. Demosthenes, on the other hand, has no gift of characterization or of fluency, is far from facile, and no epideictic orator. In fact he has no part in any one of the qualities we have just mentioned. When he is forced into attempting a jest or a witty passage, he rather raises the laugh against himself; and when he tries to approximate charm, he is farther from it than ever. If he had tried, to write the little speech on Phryne^c or Athenogenes,^d he would have been an even better advertisement for Hyperides. But nevertheless I feel that the beauties of Hyperides, many as they are, yet lack grandeur; "inert in the heart of a sober man,"^e they

a. Hyperides' lost *Deliacus* (fr. 67 – 75 Kenyon; the date is about 343 B.C.) upheld the Athenian claim to the presidency of the temple at Delos, where Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. b. The *Funeral Oration* (Oration 6) 322 B.C., on those who fell in the Lamian War, is extant on a papyrus first published in 1858. c. Hyperides' defence of the courtesan Phryne (fr. 171-80 Kenyon) is lost, but was famous for the peroration, in which Phryne's charms were displayed to the court (Athenaeus 13.590E). d. Against Athenogenes (Oration 3, a large part of which survives in a papyrus published in 1892) concerns a contract for the purchase of slaves; it is lively and full of character, but the case is a complicated one. e. Proverbial and perhaps a verse quotation.

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do not trouble the peace of the audience. No one feels frightened while reading Hyperides. But Demosthenes no sooner "takes up the tale"^a than he shows the merits of great genius in their most consummate form, sublime intensity, living emotion, redundance, readiness, speed—where speed is in season—and his own unapproachable vehemence and power: concentrating in himself all these heaven-sent gifts—it would be impious to call them human—he thus uses the beauties he possesses to win a victory over all others that even compensates for his weaknesses, and out-thunders, as it were, and outshines orators of every age. You could sooner open your eyes to the descent of a thunderbolt than face his repeated outbursts of emotion without blinking.

35. There is, as I said,^b a further point of difference as compared with Plato. Lysias is far inferior to him both in the greatness and number of his excellences; yet the abundance of his faults is still greater than his deficiency in excellences. What then was the vision of those demigods who aimed only at what is greatest in writing and scorned detailed accuracy? This above all: that Nature has judged man^c a creature of no mean or ignoble quality, but, as if she were inviting us to some great gathering, she has called us into life, into the whole universe, there to be spectators of her games and eager competi-

a. A Homeric phrase (*Odyssey* 8.500). b. In chap. 32. c. If this reading is right, Nature "admits" men as spectators and competitors in the games of life: but Seager's conjecture—"created"—may well be right.

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tors; and she therefore from the first breathed into our hearts an unconquerable passion for whatever is great and more divine than ourselves. Thus the whole universe is not enough to satisfy the speculative intelligence of human thought; our ideas often pass beyond the limits that confine us. Look at life from all sides and see how in all things the extraordinary, the great, the beautiful stand supreme, and you will soon realize what we were born for. So it is by some natural instinct that we admire, not the small streams, clear and useful as they are, but the Nile, the Danube, the Rhine, and above all the Ocean. The little fire we kindle for ourselves keeps clear and steady, yet we do not therefore regard it with more amazement than the fires of Heaven, which are often darkened, or think it more wonderful than the craters of Etna in eruption, hurling up rocks and whole hills from their depths and sometimes shooting forth rivers of that earthborn, spontaneous fire. But on all such matters I would only say this, that what is useful or necessary is easily obtained by man; it is always the unusual which wins our wonder.

36. In dealing, then, with writers of genius, whose grandeur is of a kind that comes within the limits of use and profit, we must at the outset observe that, while they are far from unerring, yet they are above all mortal range.

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Other qualities prove their possessors men, sublimity lifts them near the mighty mind of God. Correctness escapes censure: greatness earns admiration as well. We need hardly add that each of these great men again and again redeems all his mistakes by a single touch of sublimity and true excellence; and, what is finally decisive, if we were to pick out all the faults in Homer, Demosthenes, Plato, and all the other greatest authors and put them together, we should find them a tiny part, not the smallest fraction, of the true successes to be found everywhere in the work of these heroes. That is why the judgement of all ages, which no jealousy can convict of mental incompetence, has awarded them the crown of victory, guards it as their irremovable possession, and is likely to preserve it,

So long as the rivers run and the tall trees flourish
and grow.^a

As to the statement that the faulty Colossus^b is no better than the Doryphorus of Polyclitus,^c there are many obvious answers to that. For one thing, we admire accuracy in art, grandeur in nature; and it is Nature that has given man the power of using words. Also we expect a statue to resemble a man, but in literature, as I said before, we

a. Quoted in Plato (*Phaedrus* 264C) as part of an epitaph said to have been written for Midas. See *Anthologia Palatina* 7.153. b. Perhaps the Colossus of Rhodes, damaged in an earthquake when it had stood for sixty years; but more probably any colossal statue: cf. Strabo 1.1.23, who speaks of *kolossoi* in which the total effect is all-important, and the accuracy of the detail insignificant. c. The statue of the boy with a lance by Polyclitus of Argos was regarded as a model of beautiful proportions (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.55).

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look for something greater than human. However (this service reverts to something with which we began our treatise), since impeccable correctness is, generally speaking, due to art, and the height of excellence, even if erratic, to genius, it is proper that art should always assist literature. Their cooperation may well result in perfection. This much had to be said to decide the questions before [now(?)]. But everyone is welcome to his own taste.

37. Closely akin to metaphors (to return to them) are comparisons and similes. The only difference is . . .

[Two pages are lost here.]

38. ... Laughable^a also are such things as “If you do not carry your brains trodden down in your heels.”^b One must know, then, where to draw the line in each case. The hyperbole is sometimes ruined by overshooting the mark. Overdo the strain and the thing sags, and often produces the opposite effect to that intended. For instance, Isocrates fell into unaccountable puerility through his ambition to amplify everything. The theme of his *Panegyric* is that

Athens surpasses Sparta in her benefits to Greece. But at the very outset he puts this: “Moreover words have such power that they can make great things humble and endue small things with greatness, give a new guise to what is old, and describe recent

a. This assumes Reiske’s supplement. b. [Demosthenes] *Oration* 7.45.

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events in the style of long ago”^a—“Why, Isocrates,” one may say, “do you intend by this means to reverse the positions of the Spartans and the Athenians?” For his praise of the power of words has all but issued a prefatory warning to the audience that he himself is not to be believed. Perhaps then, as we said above of figure,^b the best hyperbole is the one which conceals the very fact of its being a hyperbole. And this happens when it is uttered under stress of emotion to suit the circumstances of a great crisis. This is what Thucydides does in speaking of those who were killed in Sicily. “For the Syracusans went down and began to slaughter chiefly those in the river. The water was immediately tainted but none the less they kept on drinking it, foul though it was with mud and gore, and most of them were still ready to fight for it.”^c That a drink of mud and gore should yet still be worth fighting for is made credible only by the height of the emotion which the circumstances arouse. It is the same with Herodotus’ description of those who fought at Thermopylae. “On this spot,” he says, “while they defended themselves with daggers, such as still had daggers left, and with hands and teeth, the barbarians buried them under a shower of missiles.”^d Here you may well ask what is meant by actually “fighting with teeth” against armed men or being “buried” with missiles; yet it carries credence in the same way, because Herodotus does not seem to have introduced the incident to justify the hyperbole, but the hyperbole for the sake of the incident. As I am never tired of saying, to atone for a daring phrase the universal

a Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 8. b. See chap. 17. c. Thucydides 7.84. d. Herodotus 7.225.

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specific is found in actions and feelings that almost make one beside oneself. Thus, too, comic expressions, even if they result in the incredible, yet sound convincing because they are laughable:

His field was shorter than a Spartan letter.^a

Laughter indeed is an emotion based on pleasure. Hyperbole may tend to belittle as well as to magnify: the common element in both is a strain on the facts. In a sense too vilification is an amplification of the low and trivial.

39. Of those factors of sublimity which we specified at the beginning^b the fifth one still remains, good friend—this was the arrangement of the words themselves in a certain order. On this question I have in two books given a sufficient account of such conclusions as I could reach, and for our present purpose I need only add this, that men find in melody not only a natural instrument of persuasion and pleasure, but also a marvellous instrument of grandeur and emotion. The flute, for instance, induces certain emotions in those who hear it. It seems to carry them away and fill them with divine frenzy. It sets a particular rhythmic movement and

forces them to move in rhythm. The hearer has to conform to the tune, though he may be utterly unmusical. Why, the very tones of the

- a. The brevity of Spartan messages was proverbial. The line is perhaps from comedy (cf. fr. adesp. 417-19 Kock).
- b. In chap. 8.

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harp, themselves meaningless, by the variety of their sounds and by their combination and harmonious blending often exercise, as you know, a marvellous spell. (Yet these are only a bastard counterfeit of persuasion, not, as I said above, a genuine activity of human nature.) Must we not think, then, that composition, which is a kind of melody in words—words which are part of man's nature and reach not his ears only but his very soul—stirring as it does myriad ideas of words, thoughts, things, beauty, musical charm, all of which are born and bred in us, and by the blending of its own manifold tones, bringing into the hearts of the bystanders the speaker's actual emotion so that all who hear him share in it, and by piling phrase on phrase builds up one majestic whole—must we not think, I say, that by these very means it casts a spell on us and always turns our thoughts towards what is majestic and dignified and sublime and all else that it embraces, winning a complete mastery over our minds? Now it may indeed seem lunacy to raise any question on matters of such agreement, since experience is a sufficient test, yet surely the idea which Demosthenes applies to his decree strikes one as sublime and truly marvellous: "This decree made the peril at that time encompassing the country pass away like as a cloud."^a But its effect is due no less to the harmony than to the thought. Its delivery rests wholly on the dactyls, which are the noblest of rhythms and

- a. *De corona* 188.

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make for grandeur—and that is why the most beautiful of all known metres, the heroic, is composed of dactyls. Change the position of the phrase^a to any place you like—[. . .]—or simply cut off a single syllable—[. . .]—and you will realize how truly the harmony chimes in with the sublimity. Indeed the actual phrase [. . .] rests on its long first rhythmical element, equivalent to four beats. Cut out the one syllable—[. . .]—and the curtailment at once mutilates the grandeur. So again if you lengthen it—[. . .]—the meaning is the same, but it does not strike the same upon the ear, because the sheer sublimity is broken up and loosened by the breaking up of the longs in the final syllables.^b

40. Nothing is of greater service in giving grandeur to what is said than the organization of the various members. It is the same with the human body. None of the members has any value by itself apart from the others, yet one with another they all constitute a perfect system. Similarly if these effects of grandeur are separated, the sublimity is scattered with them: but if they are united into a single whole and embraced by the bonds of rhythm, then they gain a living voice just by being merely rounded into a period. In a period, one might say, the grandeur

- a. I.e. the words [. . .]. b. I.e. both the proposed changes involve losing the effect of [. . .] as two longs.

comes from the multitude of contributors. We have indeed abundantly shown^a that many writers both in prose and poetry, who are not by nature sublime, perhaps even the very opposite, while using for the most part current vulgar words, which suggests nothing out of the common, yet by the mere arrangement and fitting together of these properly have achieved dignity and distinction and a reputation for grandeur; Philistus,^b for instance, among many others, Aristophanes occasionally, Euripides almost always. After the slaughter of his children Heracles says:

I am loaded with woes and have no room for more.^c

The phrase is exceedingly ordinary, yet becomes sublime by being apt to the situation. If you put the passage together in any other way, you will realize that Euripides is a poet of word arrangement more than of ideas. Speaking of Dirce being tom apart by the bull, he says,

And if perchance it happened
To twist itself around, it dragged them all,
Woman and rock and oak, and juggled with them.^d

The idea itself is a fine one, but it gains additional force from the fact that the rhythm is not hurried along or, as it

a. Presumably in the (lost) work in two books referred to at 39.1. b. Sicilian historian of the fourth century, imitator of Thucydides: *FGrHist* 556. c. Euripides, *Hercules Furens* 1245. d. From *Antiope* (fr. 221 Nauck): Amphion and Zethus, having discovered that Antiope was their mother, inflict on the cruel queen Dirce the punishment she had intended for Antiope.

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were, running on rollers, but the words prop one another up and are separated by intervals, so that they stand firm and give the impression of stable grandeur.^a

41. Nothing damages an elevated passage so much as effeminate and agitated rhythm, pyrrhics [. . .], for instance, and trochees [. . .], and dichorees [. . .], which fall into a regular dance rhythm. For all over-rhythmical passages at once become merely pretty and cheap, recurring monotonously without producing the slightest emotional effect. Moreover, the worst of it is that, just as songs divert the attention of the audience from the action and forcibly claim it for themselves, so, too, over-rhythmical prose gives the audience the effect not of the words but of the rhythm. Thus they sometimes foresee the due ending themselves and keep time with their feet, anticipating the speaker and setting the step as if it were a dance. Equally deficient in grandeur are those passages which are too close-packed and concise, broken up into tiny fragments and short syllables. They give the impression of being bolted together, as it were, at frequent intervals with rough and uneven joins.

42. Extreme conciseness of expression also tends to diminish sublimity. The grandeur is mutilated by being too closely compressed. You must understand here not proper compression, but sentences which are, in absolute terms, small and fragmented. For extreme conciseness cripples the sense: true brevity goes straight to the point.

a. The point is that combinations of consonants delay the smooth running of the words: note especially *perix helixas* and *petran drum* in the passage just quoted.

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It is plain that the opposite holds of fully extended expressions; what is relaxed by unseasonable length is dead.

43. The use of trivial words also has a terribly debasing effect on a grand passage. The storm in Herodotus, for instance, is, as far as the ideas go, wonderfully described, but it includes certain things which are beneath the dignity of the subject. One might instance perhaps “the sea seething”:^a the word seething is so cacophonous that it takes off a great deal of the sublimity. But he does worse. “The wind,” he says, “flagged,” and “For those who were clinging to the wreck there awaited an unpleasant end.”^b “Flagged” is too colloquial a word to be dignified, and “unpleasant” ill befits so terrible a disaster. Similarly Theopompus,^c after fitting out the Persian king’s descent into Egypt in the most marvellous manner, discredited the whole description by the use of some paltry words. “For what city or what people of those in Asia did not send envoys to the king? What was there of beauty or of value whether born of the earth or perfected by art that was not brought as an offering to him? Were there not many costly coverlets and cloaks, some purple, some embroidered, some white; many pavilions of gold furnished with all things needful, many robes of state and costly couches? Then, moreover, there was plate of beaten silver and wrought gold, cups, and

a. Herodotus 7.188. b. Herodotus 7.191, 8.13. c. Fr. 263a (*FGrHist*): the passage is quoted by Athenaeus (2.67F), but somewhat differently. It refers to the expedition of Artaxerxes Ochus against Egypt in the middle of the fourth century (of. Diod. Sic. 16.44ff).

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bowls, some of which you might have seen studded with jewels and others embellished by some other means both cunning and costly. Besides these there were countless myriads of weapons, some Greek, some barbarian; baggage animals beyond number, and victims fatted for slaughter; many bushels of spice, and many bags and sacks and pots of papyrus^a and of all other things needful; and such a store of salted meat of every kind that it lay in heaps so large that those who approached from a distance took them for mounds and hills confronting them.” He descends from the sublime to the trivial, where he needs rather a crescendo. As it is, by introducing bags and spices and sacks in the middle of his wonderful description of the whole equipage he has almost given the effect of a cook shop. Suppose that in all this show itself someone had brought bags and sacks and set them in the middle of the gold and jewelled bowls, the beaten silver, the pavilions of solid gold and the drinking cups—that would have presented an unseemly sight. In the same way the untimely introduction of such words as these disfigures the style, and puts a brand on it, as it were. He might have given a comprehensive description both of what he calls the heaped-up mounds and of the rest of the equipage by altering his description thus: “camels and a multitude of baggage animals laden with all that serves the luxury and pleasure of the table”; or he might

a. Or onions, if we accept Toups conjecture.

have called them “heaps of every kind of grain and of all known aids to cookery and good living”; or, if he must at all hazards be explicit, “all the dainties known to caterers and cooks.” One ought not in elevated passages to descend to what is sordid and contemptible, except under the severe pressure of necessity, but the proper course is to suit the words to the dignity of the subject and thus imitate Nature, the artist that created man. Nature did not place in full view our dishonourable parts nor the drains that purge our whole frame, but as far as possible concealed them and, as Xenophon says,^a thrust their channels into the furthest background, for fear of spoiling the beauty of the whole creature. There is, however, no immediate need for enumerating and classifying the factors of mean style in detail. As we have already laid down all the qualities that make our utterance noble and sublime, it obviously follows that the opposite of these will generally make it trivial and ungainly.

44. One problem now remains for solution, my dear Terentianus, and knowing your love of learning I will not hesitate to append it—a problem which a certain philosopher recently put to me. “It surprises me,” he said, “as it doubtless surprises many others too, how it is that in this age of ours we find natures that are supremely persuasive and suited for public life, shrewd and versatile and especially rich in literary charm, yet really sublime and tran-

a. *Memorabilia* 1.4.6.

scendent natures are no longer, or only very rarely, now produced. Such is the universal dearth of literature that besets our times. Are we really to believe the hackneyed view that democracy is the kindly nurse of genius and that—speaking generally—the great men of letters flourished only with democracy and perished with it? Freedom, they say, has the power to foster noble minds and to fill them with high hopes, and at the same time to rouse our spirit of mutual rivalry and eager competition for the foremost place. Moreover, thanks to the prizes which a republic offers, an orator's intellectual gifts are whetted by practice, burnished, so to speak, by friction, and share, as is only natural, the light of freedom which illuminates the state. But in these days we seem to be schooled from childhood in an equitable slavery, swaddled, I might say, from the tender infancy of our minds in the same servile ways and practices. We never drink from the fairest and most fertile source of eloquence, which is freedom, and therefore we turn out to be nothing but flatterers on a grand scale.” This is the reason, he alleged, that, while all other faculties are granted even to slaves, no slave ever becomes an orator. According to him, the inability to speak freely, and the sense of being as it were in prison, immediately assert themselves, the product of the repeated beating of habit. As Homer says: “Surely half of our manhood is robbed by the day of enslavement.”^a “And so,” he adds, “if what I hear is true that not only do the

a. *Odyssey* 17.322.

cages in which they keep the pygmies or dwarfs, as they are called, stunt the growth of their prisoners, but enfeeble them by the bonds applied to their bodies, on the same principle all slavery, however equitable, might well be described as a cage for the soul, a common prison.” However I took him up and said, “It is easy, my good friend, and it is characteristic of human nature always to find fault with things as they are at the moment. But consider. Perhaps it is not the worlds peace that corrupts great natures but much rather this endless warfare which besets our hearts, yes, and these passions that garrison our lives in present days and make utter havoc of them. It is the love of money, that insatiable sickness from which we all now suffer, and the love of pleasure, that enslave us, or rather one might say, sink our ship of life with all hands; for love of gold is a withering sickness, and love of pleasure utterly ignoble. Indeed, I cannot discover on consideration how, if we value boundless wealth, or to speak more truly, make a god of it, we can possibly keep our minds safe from the intrusion of the evils that accompany it. In close company with vast and unconscionable Wealth there follows, ‘step for step,’ as they say,^a Extravagance: and no sooner has the one opened the gates of cities or houses, than the other comes and makes a home there too. And when they have spent some time in our

a. Cf. Demosthenes, *Oration* 19.314.

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lives, philosophers tell us, they build a nest there^a and promptly set about begetting children; these are Swagger and Conceit and Luxury, no bastards but their trueborn issue. And if these offspring of wealth are allowed to grow to maturity, they soon breed in our hearts inexorable tyrants, Insolence and Disorder and Shamelessness. This must inevitably happen, and men no longer then look upwards nor take any further thought for future fame. Little by little the ruin of their lives is completed in the cycle of such vices, their greatness of soul wastes away and dies and is no longer something to strive for, since they value that part of them which is mortal and foolish, and neglect the development of their immortal part. A man who has been bribed for his verdict can no longer give an unbiased and sound judgement on what is just and fair (for the corrupt judge inevitably regards his own interest as fair and just). So, seeing that the whole life of each one of us is now governed-wholly by bribery and by hunting after other people’s deaths and laying traps for legacies, and we have sold our souls for profit at any price, slaves that we all are to our greed, can we then expect in such pestilential ruin of our lives that there is left a single free and unbribed judge of the things that are great and last to all eternity? Are we not all corrupted by our passion for gain? Nay, for such as we are perhaps it is better

a. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 9.573C.

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to have a master than to be free. Were it given complete liberty, like released prisoners, as it were, to prey on our neighbours, greed would swamp the world in a deluge of evils. In fact,” I said, “what wastes the talents of the present generation is the idleness in which all but a few of us pass our lives, only exerting ourselves or showing any enterprise for the sake of getting praise or pleasure out of it, never from the honourable and admirable motive of doing good to the world.” “It’s best to let this be”^a and pass on to the next question, which is that of the

Emotions, a topic on which I previously undertook to write a separate treatise, for they seem to me to form part of the general subject of literature and especially of sublimity . . .

[The rest is lost.]

a. Euripides, *Electra* 379.

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