Tradition and Innovation in Ancient Greek Oratory of the Roman Empire: History of the Problem

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Abstract

This article presents a review of research literature on the so-called Second Sophistic (late first–early third centuries CE), that marked the flowering of ancient Greek oratory and had a powerful influence on the beginning of the Christian eloquence. The scholars' interest in this topic increased in the second half of the 19th century due to insufficient study of the material against the background of the well-researched classical literature of Ancient Greece (fifth to fourth centuries BCE). A comparative study of the two periods in the history of the development of ancient Greek eloquence led researchers to disappointing conclusions. The sophists' increased attention to the form to the detriment of content, addiction to stylistic delights, imitation of the language and style of classical orators and the monotonous themes of speeches gave many researchers a reason to characterize this literature as secondary and unoriginal, devoid of strength and depth of thought. However, in recent decades, a different point of view has prevailed in science, according to which the literature of the Second Sophistic is fundamentally not reducible to the sum of clichéd speeches with a standard set of rhetorical techniques, as it might seem. A detailed analysis of the works of Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides from whom voluminous corpora have been preserved showed that the sophists generally enjoyed fairly unconstrained creative freedom despite the rigid stylistic and linguistic framework. This freedom concerns content of speeches, choice and arrangement of material, overcoming genre boundaries, varying language,
and combining rhetorical techniques. All these factors allow us to conclude that a certain innovation coexisted with classical tradition in sophists’ texts. Furthermore, the abundant literature of the sophists influenced the development of both the rhetorical theory and the oratory of Late Antiquity. The outstanding Christian writers such as Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom studied eloquence from the famous teachers of their time – Himerius and Libanius, who followed the traditions of the oratory of the Second Sophistic.

Keywords


Ancient Greek literature of the Roman Empire comprises texts of very different genres among which the rhetorical texts occupy an important place. It is determined by the prominent role of oratory in the ancient world. This concerns the literature of the so-called “the Second Sophistic” which might be considered in a broad sense a literary movement of first three centuries CE based on the principles of Atticism. Atticism emerged as a trend of Greek oratory in the Hellenistic time in response to the increasing influence of the Asian style in Greek literature. The main disagreements between Atticism and Asianism as well as the heated controversy between representatives of the two styles are well-known enough from ancient sources. For the first time, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1st century BCE) studied these contrarieties from a theoretical point of view and concluded that Atticism had been invoked to save all Greek culture from decline and destruction (Dionys. Halic. De orat. vet., 1).

It was E. Rohde⁴ who took a close look at this issue in Modern times. He believed that one reason behind strengthening Atticism in ancient literature was the intention of Greeks who were under Roman rule to revive their great culture and past glory. Generally, Rohde underestimated the oratory of the Second Sophistic because he saw signs of literary decline in archaizing tendencies of its development. Rohde’s research was followed by the work of W. Schmid⁵ in which the language and style of the most prominent Greek atticists of the Roman Empire, such as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, Lucian, Philostratus, and others were examined in detail. Like Rohde, Schmid assumed that the main task of Atticism was strengthening the Greek cultural traditions against the oriental influence of Asianism. However, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff in his work⁶ concluded that, unlike Atticism, Asianism was not an original literature style, and a good deal of atticists sometimes used rhetorical devices of the Asian style.⁷ That is why Edward Norden⁸ characterized the style of some orations of Aelius Aristides as Asian. The same may be regarded in the language of the sophists who also used some koine-words along with Attic words and phrases.⁹

The second point characterizing the Second Sophistic is its relation to the previous Greek literature which, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, was in need of revival by such a mean. The name of “the Second Sophistic” emerged thanks to the Greek writer and sophist Flavius Philostratus (3rd century CE) who arguably attempts to prove a continuity between classic Greek literature and the literature of his time. In his opus named “Lives of the sophists”¹⁰ Philostratus

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⁴ Edward Rohde, Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer, Leipzig, 1914, S. 310.
⁵ Wilhelm Schmid, Der Atticismus in seinen Hauptvertretern von Dionysios von Halicarnass bis auf den zweiten Philostratus, Bd. 2, Stuttgart, 1889.
⁷ Often it is difficult to distinguish the Attic features from the Asian ones in different genre of orations. See also: Wilhelm Schmid, Der Atticismus in seinen Hauptvertretern von Dionysios von Halicarnass bis auf den zweiten Philostratus, S. 244–246; André Boulanger, Aelius Aristide et la sophistique dans la province d’Asie au IIe siècle de notre ère, Paris, 1923, p. 328; Graham Anderson, The Second Sophistic. A cultural phenomenon in the Roman Empire, p. 36.
⁸ Edward Norden, Die antike Kunstprosa: vom VI Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance. Bd. 1, Leipzig, 1898, S. 421.
⁹ See the examples: Graham Anderson, The Second Sophistic. A cultural phenomenon in the Roman Empire, p. 89.
related the beginning of the oratory of his time to the activity of the first-century Greek sophist Nicetas of Smyrna and further to the Athenian orator Aeschines who had founded a rhetorical school on Rhodes that later became very popular. Besides this, the name of “the Second Sophistic” reminds of the fifth- and fourth-century BCE sophists, such as Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos, Kritias, and others who developed the basics of rhetorical techniques.

However, if the “first” sophistic was characterized by a great interest in philosophy, the Second Sophistic was a purely literary phenomenon.\(^\text{11}\) It was based on the principles of imitation (mimesis) of literary models.\(^\text{12}\) The models for imitation were the works of the fifth- and fourth-century BCE Greek writers – Plato, Xenophon, Thucydides, Lysias, Demosthenes, Isocrates, etc. who were the school authors as well.\(^\text{13}\) Schmid’s work mentioned above clearly displays the great influence of the language and style of these writers on the ones of the Greek orators of the Roman Empire. Rhetorical treatises of the latest time involved a number of rules and prescriptions for writing speeches of various oratory genres such as surviving treatise “On invention” of Pseudo-Dionysius (perhaps 1st century BCE), “On political oration” and “On simple oration” of the unknown second-century author,\(^\text{14}\) several treatises of Hermogenes of Tarsus,\(^\text{15}\) the treatise “On epideictic speeches” of Menander of Laodicea (3rd century CE), etc. For example, the author of the treatise “On political oration”, as well as Hermogenes of Tarsus regarded Demosthenes’ style to be the model for orators, whereas the author of “On simple oration” gave preference to that of Xenophon. These works look, in fact, like a catalog of rhetorical techniques illustrated with many examples from both authors.\(^\text{16}\) Among the rhe-

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\(^{11}\) Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, p. 4.


\(^{14}\) In antiquity, they were mistakenly attributed to Aelius Aristides.

\(^{15}\) In the Corpus of Hermogenes there are five survived treatises: “On ideas”, “Elementary exercises”, “On argumentative stances”, “On invention” and “On the technique of power”.

\(^{16}\) See Ian Rutherford, *Canons of style in the Antonine Age. Idea-theory in its literary context.*
torical treatises in the era of the Second Sophistic, there were plenty of lexica and compendia that included the lists of Attic words and phrases to be used in a wide variety of cases (cf. “Onomasticon” of Pollux, “On Attic words” and “Sophistic preparations” of Phrynichus, etc.). All of this vast amount of rhetorical literature was intended to have made a young orator a success.

The sophists of the Roman Empire not only imitated the language and style but often wrote orations on the same topics as classical Greek orators. The genre of rhetorical declamation (“μελέτη”) was very popular with the sophists. At first “μελέτη” was a mere rhetorical exercise in which a speech of some historical or fictitious person in certain circumstances was imitated. But at the era of the Second Sophistic or a little earlier, “μελέτη” became a special genre of oratory that can be regarded as a significant innovation. Flavius Philostratus tells us in detail about the declamations of some prominent sophists of the Roman Empire (Philos. VS 542–543; 569; 575; 593; 598; 619–620; 625, etc.). Besides them, a few declamations survived that were written by Aelius Aristides, Lesbonax of Mytilene, and Adrianus of Tyre. Some works of Lucian can be referred to this group, e.g. “Phalaris” and “Judgment of the vowels”. Speeches of the real historical figures known from the works


18 The earliest data about the genre of μελέτη in the Greek literature are related to the 2nd–3rd CE (Pseudo-Dionysius, Hermogenes of Tarsus, Sopatros).


20 There are so named the “Leuctran Orations” (Or. XI–XV): Aelii Aristidis quae supersunt omnia, hrsg. B. Keil, Bd. 2, Berlin, 1898.

21 Lesbonactis sophistae quae supersunt, ed. F. Kiehr, Leipzig, 1907; Bryan P. Reardon, Courants littéraires grecs des IIe et IIIe siècles après J.-C., p. 106.

22 Polemonisae declamationes quae extant duae, ed. H. Hinck, Leipzig, 1873.

of classical Greek writers, e.g., Thucydides “the History of the Peloponnesian War” served as models for the sophists’ declamations. Furthermore, names of many declamations based on the events of the Greek-Persian Wars or of the time of Alexander the Great are known.24

So, according to G. Anderson, one of the major researchers of the Second Sophistic, the orientation of the sophists towards their past was not only caused by language purism (i.e. Atticism). The oratory of the sophists was based on the school rhetorical exercises and its classical models which provided orators with ready-made material.25 Consequently, the literature of the Second Sophistic had a strong tendency to archaization. It is one explanation for why nineteen-century scholars considered the literature of the Second Sophistic to be “secondary” and unoriginal.26 On the other hand, the negative assessment of the Second Sophistic in Modern times was based, in fact, on the negative attitude of the ancient writers to the sophists since the time of Plato.27 The virtuoso use of the techniques of evidence and refutation, as well as striving for visible plausibility to the detriment of truth, brought the sophists into disrepute in ancient society, in particular, among philosophers (cf. Xen. Cyn. 13, 6; Aristoph. Nub. 100–115; 358–361; 439–460; 950 sq; Plat. Gorg. 519b, etc.). The term “sophist” itself acquired a negative connotation.28 In the deliberative oratory of the classical era the word “sophist” was often used when an orator wanted to accuse one of his opponents of insincerity (cf. Demosth. XLI 48; XVIII 276; XIX 246, 250, etc.). The contrarieties between philosophy and rhetoric were continuing over the following centuries.29

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However, as the modern researcher T. Whitmarsh\(^{30}\) rightly said, the negative assessment of the Second Sophistic in Modern times was very subjective and reflected tastes and preferences of the scholars themselves in the field of art, literature, politics, and religion. Nowadays the literature of the Second Sophistic is no longer viewed as an “embarrassing epilogue” of Greek culture: “the Romantic obsession with “originality” and “inspiration” has been challenged by newer emphases on “creative imitation”, and indeed the reception, replication, and intertextual refashioning of earlier literary works”.\(^{31}\) The modern researchers who know well the methods of structuralism and postmodernism see signs of “intertextuality, allusiveness, and literary self-consciousness” in the Greek oratory of the Roman Empire.\(^{32}\) This turning point in science occurred in the second half of the 20th century when the rich epigraphical heritage of the Roman Empire was investigated. As G. Bowersock\(^{33}\) showed the Second Sophistic was a significant social and cultural phenomenon in the history of the Late Antiquity. Greek sophists were the intellectual elite in ancient society and served as the cultural intermediaries between the Roman authorities and the rest of the inhabitants of the Empire, especially the eastern provinces.

The epoch-making book of Bowersock was followed by a good number of other works which contributed to a clearer definition of the Second Sophistic and careful examination of this cultural phenomenon.\(^{34}\) The orientation of the sophists towards history, culture, and literature of their past was regarded by some scholars as a response of Greeks to the political dependence on Rome, as well as a way to express their own identity.\(^{35}\) The great attention was given to one more important issue – the relationship between the oratory of the


Second Sophistic and the late Greek literature of the Roman Empire, especially the Christian literature and culture.\(^{36}\) For the first time the problem of the relationship between literary norm and creative freedom, the typical and the individual, tradition and innovation in the sophistical texts was raised.\(^{37}\) Thanks to Schmid’s work (see above) it has been previously known that, despite purism, the sophists often used the language of koiné, dialect words, poetic vocabulary, etc. when they wanted to make their orations more convincing and expressive. Depending on the genre and style of their speeches the orators were quite free to choose various language techniques (for example, in διά λεξεις, i.e., in the speeches on free topics, or in μελέται). Therefore, they did not always follow the strong rules of Atticism.\(^{38}\) Even in such a conservative rhetoric genre as a declamation among traditional historical topics, there were often themes borrowed from actual forensic speeches or related to recent historical events.\(^{39}\) Finally, the genre of rhetorical declamation reached its heyday in the era of the Second Sophistic.\(^{40}\)

Adherence to tradition, as well as observance of rhetorical rules, was the most important part of ancient education.\(^{41}\) The surviving rhetorical treatises indicate that the rhetoric of the Roman Empire was very conservative and left little room for any kind of innovation. However, it cannot be asserted that the issues of innovation were not paid attention to altogether. Thus, Hermogenes in his treatise “On invention” says that “in suitable cases, novelty (καινότης) is permissible” (Hermog. De invent. 3.16). In the treatise by Pseudo-Aristides, innovation is associated mainly with a simple style (ἀ φέλεια), rarely used in orations of the epideictic kind (Pseudo-Aristid. Ars rhet. 1.9.1.2, 1.13.1.7, 1.13.2.1, 2.2.1.17, 2.13.1.24, etc.). The author of an anonymous work, which has come

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\(^{38}\) Anderson, The Second Sophistic. A cultural phenomenon in the Roman Empire, p. 89.

\(^{39}\) Russell, Greek declamation, p. 106.

\(^{40}\) Russell, Greek declamation, pp. 74–76.

down to us in the corpora of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but belongs to a later time (probably the 2nd century CE), discusses whether novelty is permissible in the deliberative kind of eloquence. In the end, he concludes that dialect words, as well as ones taken from poetry (tragedy or drama), can be used only in a suitable case (καιρός): "ἔστιν δὲ ὁ μὲν καιρός ἐκεῖνος, ὅταν ἐναργέστερόν τι ὄνομα ἢ ἀπὸ ποιήσεως ἢ διαλεκτικῆς ἢ ἱστορικῆς, χρῆσθαι, ὡς ὁ ρήτωρ, πρὸς τὴν ἐνέργειαν. ἡ δὲ διοίκησις ἐκείνη, τὸ προεξηγήσασθαι καὶ τοῖς προταχθεῖσιν οὖσι γνωρίσαι τὴν καινότητα τοῦ ὄνομας καὶ ὁμολογίᾳ χρῆσθαι τοῦ τὸ ρῆμα ἐξ ἄλλης ἱδέας λόγων εἶναι· ἵκανη γὰρ <ἡ> ὁμολογία καὶ παραμυθία τῆς καινότητος"\(^{42}\) (Pseudo-Dionys. Ars rhet. 10.10). The main requirement for oratory of the Second Sophistic was still the requirement for clarity known since Aristoteles’ time, which regulated the issue of innovation in rhetoric. The true skill of an orator, therefore, consisted not only in knowing the rules but in understanding how, when, and why to apply them.\(^{43}\)

In the field of the language and content of speeches the sophists were limited by the framework of rhetorical theory, while in matters of choice and arrangement of subject matter they enjoyed certain freedom, which depended entirely on their talent and ingenuity. As G. Anderson justly remarked, “where there is a notion of a classical norm exists, there will be an urge to subvert it”.\(^{44}\) A good illustration of this is the case of Aelius Aristides, who gained fame as an outstanding panegyrist in antiquity. Thus, although in his “Regarding Rome” (Or. xxvi) the orator follows the traditional scheme of encomium, he avoids complete repetition of the usual motives and themes. Aristides perfects this old form so that a banal praise in his work turns into “a cosmological hymn” and “a hymn to the ideal state”.\(^{45}\) Aristides’ original interpretation of some topoi and themes in “The Panathenaic oration” (Or. 1) is evidenced by the comparison of this one with the classical texts which served for the orator as models. As James Oliver notes, the rhetorical canons left enough freedom for creativity, and although the reader did not expect originality from the themes themselves, he could expect some originality from the changes made to them.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{42}\) A good case (καιρός) is when a word taken from poetry, dialect, or history is used for clarity. You need to prepare for this and mask the novelty (καινότης) with the help of the nearest words, preceding or following so that a word belonging to other types of speech seems appropriate; the relevance is sufficient for this, and it weakens the novelty".

\(^{43}\) Whitmarsh, The Second Sophistic, p. 55.

\(^{44}\) Anderson, The Second Sophistic. A cultural phenomenon in the Roman Empire, p. 72.


Thus, the unusual arrangement of the material characterizes two “Smyrnaean orations” by Aristides. In them, the orator almost completely departs from the rhetorical canon of the welcoming speech (λόγος προσφωνητικός) and instead of the praise to the ruler and his deeds focuses on the encomium of Smyrna (Or. xvii). As a result, the central part of the “The Smyrnaean oration” is occupied by the ecphrasis of the city, reminiscent of a modern tourist guide.47 An example of a creative approach to the rhetorical material is also “The Euboean discourse” (Or. vii) by Dio Chrysostom. At first glance, it may seem that this speech is a traditional set of “loci communes” that was taught at school at the initial stage of the rhetorical training (προγυμνάσματα). There are the hunter’s story (διήγησις) about himself, a description (ἐκφράσις) of a village and a city, a comparison (σύγκρισις) of the life of the hunter and the townspeople, evidence and refutation (i.e., ἄνασκευη and κατασκευη) in the speeches of two men in the assembly, the hunter’s oration in his defense (ἀπολογία), a characterization (ἠθοποιΐα) of the hunter, etc. But the skill of a sophist was precisely to put together a beautiful new building of oration out of all these types of exercises, as if out of bricks. In the speech entitled “Discourse delivered in Celaenae in Phrygia” (Or. xxxv), Dion, on the other hand, breaks the usual scheme of encomium on the city: he mostly talks about himself and the sophists of his day whom he criticizes. Another deviation from the rhetorical canon of this genre is the introduction of an ecphrasis of India into the oration. The examples given show that, despite the traditional form, the speeches of the sophists could differ in the specific treatment and arrangement of the material.

Along with the transformation of old forms, the sophists mastered new ones. Thus, Aelius Aristides introduced into the wide use the prose hymn genre, which was an adaptation of one of the oldest genres of ancient Greek poetry to prose. He wrote about thirty poetic hymns and substantially changed the traditional structure of the genre.48 Then, in the era of the Second Sophistic, a dialogue often began to be used in orations, which is especially clearly seen in the works of Dio Chrysostom and Lucian, who broke up with sophistic and went over to the camp of philosophers. The emergence of a dialogue form can

be regarded as a major innovation in the field of the sophistic rhetoric.\(^{49}\) In addition, the genre originality of the texts of sophists was ensured by the so-called "genre hybrids" which combined the elements of various genres: panegyric, hymn, diatribe, philosophical dialogue, etc. Many orations of Aelius Aristides, Dio Chrysostom and Lucian can serve as examples of such hybrids.\(^{50}\)

For example, in the “Palinode for Smyrna” by Aristides (Or. xx), written to commemorate the restoration of the city after the earthquake of 178 C.E., along with the traditional topoi of a panegyric to the city, there is a philosophical discourse on the fate of the city, autobiographical data, a praise to the emperors, and the final prayer to the gods that was a common element of a prose hymn. In his hymn “Isthmian oration: Regarding Poseidon” (Or. XLVI), there are many appeals to the inhabitants of Corinth which is more typical of a political oration (λόγος πολιτικός). Likewise, in the “Panegyric in Cyzicus” praise for the temple and the emperor Hadrian is combined with the appeals to the citizens of the city. Of four Dio’s speeches “On Kingship”, the first and the third speeches (Or. I; III) are the philosophical discourses, while the second and the fourth ones (Or. III; IV) contain a dialogue between Alexander, Philip, and Diogenes. Many genre “hybrids” are found in Lucian. So, his “Charon, or The inspectors” resembles a rhetorical exercise (“εἰδωλοποιΐα”), which is combined with the elements of a diatribe. In the dialogue “The ship, or The wishes”, the diatribe is contaminated with topoi of praise and blasphemy, as well as with some elements of προγυμνάσματα (see above): there is the portrait (ἡθοποιΐα) of the captain, the description (ἐκφιράσις) of the storm and the ship, the mythological story (διήγησις). Thus, the playing with the traditional topoi by placing them in a new, unexpected context, as well as the widespread use of irony, paradox, allusions, reminiscences, and quotations from classical Greek writers show that the sophists were ready to experiment both within the framework of the traditional rhetorical theory and beyond.\(^{51}\)

The sophists’ approach to the problem of innovation was largely determined by the mood of the audience, who expected to hear not only familiar things but also something new. While the compilers of rhetorical manuals sought to regulate oratory, relying on generally accepted rules and tradition,
the truly talented “virtuosi” often broke these rules and easily trampled on the samples. According to T. Whitmarsh, “sophistic came alive in practice, not theory”. Orators not only willingly resorted to innovation where possible but often spoke directly about the novelty of their compositions. Thus, innovation itself becomes the subject of reflection in the texts of the Second Sophistic. For example, in the prologue to the “Zeuxis, or Antiochus” Lucian tells how the crowd praised him for his novelty (τὸν νεωτερισμὸν), shouting: “Ω τῆς καινότητος. Ηράκλεις, τῆς παραδοξολογίας, εἰμήχανος ἄνθρωπος. οὐδὲν ἂν τίς εἴποι τῆς ἐπινοίας νεαρώτερον” (Luc. Zeux. 1). And although the orator openly sneers at this excessive praise and the public’s craving for everything new (καινότης), this passage reflects, in fact, the general state of affairs. On the other hand, Aristides in the extensive proem of the oration “Regarding Serapis”, justifies his appeal to the genre of the prose hymn by the fact that orators can write hymns to the gods no worse than poets do (Or. xlv 1–13 K). Thus, the conservative tendencies of rhetorical manuals and treatises were opposed by an obvious need for some innovation and originality, emanating from both the orators themselves and their audience.

However, for a sophist, it was no less important to be able to maintain the necessary balance between loyalty to tradition and the desire for novelty. There is a well-known case of Philagrus of Cilicia who aroused the disapproval of the Athenians by inserting a lament for his deceased wife in the panegyric to the city (Philostr. VS 579). Aelius Aristides had to make a speech in response to criticism which was aroused by the autobiographical details he told during the recitation of the hymn “Athena” (Or. xxxvii, 2K). As usual in such cases, good taste and a sense of proportion came to the aid of the sophist who had been introduced to them at school through the reading and imitation of classical Greek authors. So, about Aspasius of Ravenna Philostratus says: “πολυμαθὴς δὲ ὁ Ἀσπάσιος καὶ πολυήκοος καὶ τὸ μὲν καινοπρεπὲς ἐπαινῶν, ἐς ἀπειροκαλίαν δὲ οὐδαμοῦ ἐκπίπτων υπὸ τοῦ ἐν καιρῷ χρῆ σθαι οἷς γιγνώσκει” (Philostr. VS 627.). It is no coincidence that in cases where the authors of rhetorical treatises talk about innovation (see above), their main requirement is to observe “appropriateness” and “moderation”.

The interaction of the orator with the audience in the process of rhetorical performance had a powerful influence on all rhetorical output of the Second

52 Whitmarsh, The Second Sophistic, p. 56.
53 “How new (καινότης)! What paradoxes, to be sure! What invention the man has! His ideas are quite unequalled for originality (νεαρώτερον)!”
54 “Aspasius was an industrious student and was diligent in attending the rhetorical schools. He used to praise novelty (τὸ καινοπρεπὲς), but he never lapsed into bad taste, because what he invented he employed with a due sense of proportion (ἐν καιρῷ).”
Sophistic.\textsuperscript{55} As has been already mentioned, often the various innovations of the sophists were caused by the desire to win the approval of the audience.\textsuperscript{56} The audience appreciated not only the form and content of their orations but also the speaker's appearance, facial expressions, gestures, voice, etc. The ambitions of the sophists were fueled by the competitive nature of the performance itself (ἀγών) which was a suitable platform for the speaker's self-presentation.\textsuperscript{57} The orators addressed the listeners with various, often topical questions, expressed their views on any events or phenomena, defended themselves, scolded opponents, praised something, etc. There is a lot of autobiographical material in the orations of the sophists that noticeably distinguishes them from the works of orators of the previous era.\textsuperscript{58} This feature of the texts of the sophists not only testifies to a certain innovation in the oratory of Late Antiquity but also allows us to obtain some information about those authors whose biographies are not well known enough. So, about many of the circumstances of Dio Chrysostom's life is known only what he says in his writings (mainly in the so-called “Bithynian discourses”). Most often, orators used autobiographical material in their speeches as a means of a certain self-presentation and self-promotion. However, Dio positions himself not at all as a successful sophist but as a person far from vain aspirations and earthly blessings who has embarked on the path of philosophical knowledge and strives for truth. A humble tone and self-criticism, as well as opposing oneself to the sophists are frequent topoi in his orations of the “philosophical period”.\textsuperscript{59}


\textsuperscript{56} However, this was condemned by more conservative orators, such as Aelius Aristides and Dio Chrysostom (Aristid. XXXIV 18, 25–26, 43 K; XXXIII 13, 27–28 K; XXI 1 K, etc; Dio Chrysost. IV 38–39; VIII 9–10; XXXII 12; IV 35–36; 132; XXXIX 3, etc.).

\textsuperscript{57} Whitmarsh, \textit{The Second Sophistic}, p. 23.


anything that usually arouses the praise and admiration of those around him, the orator says that he also does not own anything that is required of brave warriors or good merchants (Ibid. 17–20). In the "Borysphenitic discourse", he modestly avoids comparing himself with Achilles as expressed by one of his listeners (Or. xxxvi, 28). Dio's self-presentation is sharply opposed to the self-presentation of such orators as Favorinus of Arelate or Aelius Aristides. The latter positions himself as an outstanding orator, connoisseur of classical Greek literature, and the successor of the illustrious ancient writers. Being a great admirer of Plato, he refuses to classify himself as a sophist and prefers to be called simply a "rhetorician" (Philost. vs 582–583). Often, like Dio and Lucian, he criticizes modern customs, claiming to be a mentor and educator of the Hellenes. Autoapology and self-praise are not uncommon in his writings. He talks a lot about himself in the writings, using every opportunity for self-presentation and self-promotion that is in full accordance with the nature of sophistic performance. For scholars such as Rode and Wilamowitz, this caused extreme irritation, and the orator was often reproached for excessive vanity.60

Thus, in the “Funeral address in honor of Alexander” who was a famous grammar teacher of Cotiaeus and the educator of the young Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Aristides departing from the rhetorical canon of the epitaph, introduces the elements of autobiography into the speech (Or. xxxii 2–3, 39–40 K). In the orations under the title “Against those who burlesque the mysteries (of oratory)” and “To those who criticize him because he does not declaim”, the orator condemns his listeners for being carried away with empty declamations of sophists and cites his own speeches as an example leading to good behavior and general benefit (Or. xxxiv 42–44; xxxiii 20 K). In addition, Aristides left us the only sample of religious autobiography that survived from pagan antiquity. In “The Sacred Tales” (Or. xlvi–lxi) he conveys the experience of his spiritual communication through the dreams with the god Asclepius in whose famous Epidaurus’ sanctuary he had spent several years as a patient.61 Lucian speaks of himself no less often and willingly, especially in the prologues to

60 See: Baumgart, Aelius Aristides, S. 39; Schmid, Der Atticismus, S. 2; Norden, Die antike Kunstprosa, S. 401–402; Boulanger, Aelius Aristide, p. 172.

his speeches (προλαλίαι) which the sophists usually used to establish closer contact with the audience. However, the basis for his self-presentation is sarcasm and self-irony achieved through such rhetoric devices as paradox, grotesque and satire (cf. “Zeuxis, or Antiochus”, “The ship, or The wishes”, “Essays in portraiture defended”, “Apology”, “The dead come to life, or The fisherman”, “A professor of public speaking”, etc.). The increased interest in personality, i.e., the “inner man”, and psychologism which were characteristic all of late ancient literature, testifies to the author’s self-reflection which intensified in the texts of the Second Sophistic. One can see this even in the literature genres for which there were hard and fast rules, consecrated by a centuries-old rhetorical tradition.

The Greek oratory of the Roman Empire, called the Second Sophistic, was a complex synthesis of traditional rhetoric and original creativity, whose proportions could differ for different authors. It depended on the level of their education, experience, talent, and abilities. The rhetorical manuals of this time known to us, as well as the testimonies of Philostratus in the “Lives of the sophists”, give numerous reasons to speak of the imitative nature of this literature. So, Scopelianus of Clazomenae imitated the most ancient Greek poets (Philostr. VS 518), Polemon of Laodicea urged to learn from the poets and writers of the past (Ibid. 518, 539), Lollianus of Ephesus (527), Heraclides (601) and Mark of Byzantium (528) wrote historical declamations similar to those of Demosthenes and Thucydides, and the Hippodromus of Larissa (620) imitated the style of Plato. Some sophists, like Lucian (Luc. Pisc. 1–5, 22, 26), imitated several classical authors at once, thus demonstrating their rhetorical skills. However, a careful study of the surviving works of the sophists indicates that the literature of the Second Sophistic is fundamentally not reducible to elementary school rhetoric or banal imitation of literary samples, despite the general archaizing tendencies of this trend. One should talk not so much about the simple imitation of classical models as about the “creative imitation” as a principle of the sophists’ literature. Free and easy handling of rhetoric material, an inclination to experiment with genres and styles, and the author’s heightened self-reflection in the texts testify to the desire of the sophists to innovate along with their adherence to the classical tradition. Furthermore, the abundant and varied sophists’ output influenced the rhetorical theory of Late Antiquity, especially the development of the classical doctrine about

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63 The famous orators like Herodes Atticus, Polemon of Laodicea, Favorinus of Arelate, and Scopelianus of Clazomenae had a lot of illustrious pupils (Philostr. VS 490; 521; 537–539; 564, etc.).
the qualities of style. Many authors of rhetorical manuals, like Menander of Laodicea, relied in their recommendations on the writings of the sophists of the Roman Empire. Finally, one cannot fail to mention the enormous influence that the oratory of the Second Sophistic had on the inception and development of Christian eloquence. The outstanding Christian writers like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom studied eloquence from the famous teachers of their time – Himerius and Libanius who followed the traditions of the oratory of the Second Sophistic. All of the above allows us to conclude that the Second Sophistic was, in the right expression of T. Whitmarsh, “at once radical, traditional and innovative, centripetal and centrifugal” which opened up “a new and exciting perspective on ancient literature”\textsuperscript{64}

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\textsuperscript{64} Whitmarsh, \textit{The Second Sophistic}, p. 3.