
A new Italian edition of Demetrius’ *On Style* is very welcome. The previous Italian translations of the text, that of Lombardo (1999)\(^1\) and my own (Ascani 2002),\(^2\) although recent, do in fact have different aims: the purpose of the first one is primarily to emphasise matters relating to aesthetic, establishing interesting parallelisms between modern and ancient aesthetics; the aim of the second one is to supply an efficient and agile manner in which to appreciate the work, offering all readers the translation as well as the necessary information to facilitate an approach to the text. An Italian edition of *On Style* complete with a systematic technical commentary was therefore lacking and Marini fully accomplishes the duty of providing it.

The edition consists of: a brief foreword (ix-x), in which the object and intentions of the book are presented; a lengthy introduction (1-43), where the *vexatae quaestiones* are dealt with (in particular the date and the authorship of *On Style* as well as the unusual theory of the four styles on which the work is centred), the Greek text (based essentially on Chiron’s text)\(^3\) and the translation (45-152); an extensive commentary of the individual passages (153-295); and lastly, a copious bibliography (297-320), followed by the *indices* (*locorum*, 323-6, and *verborum*, 331-53).

Despite the unquestionable value of this work, some of M.’s positions left me feeling rather perplexed. From the foreword on, she argues that in the last few years scholars have focused almost exclusively on the date of Demetrius’ text, failing to do justice to the work and its value within the history of rhetoric and ancient stylistics. In my view this may have been true in the 1980s, when Morpurgo Tagliabue, who is quoted on several occasions by M., rightly complained about this situation. Today I believe that the picture has changed considerably; not recognising this means ignoring the contributions of several scholars in this direction.

It is a little surprising therefore that, after such argumentative tones, the novelty of Marini’s thesis mainly concerns the chronological issue. The date of Demetrius’ *On Style* is a thorny subject that has been pondered on for decades.\(^4\) Eventually, in the last few years, a position shared by most had been reached. The thesis, according to which *at least* the contents (if not the author) of Demetrius’ text are

\(^{4}\) The range of hypotheses regarding the date spans from the beginning of the third century BC to the first/second century AD.
said to be attributable to the second century or the beginning of the first century BC, seemed to have found agreement among the majority of scholars, creating widespread consensus.

M. seems to ‘reshuffle the cards’ so to speak and, quite surprisingly, she ascribes Demetrius, his work and its contents to the Early Imperial Age (first/second century AD), therefore bringing the chronological issue back to the forefront. On the one hand she recuperates the early 20th-century position of Radermacher (1901) and Roberts (1902), both of them supporters of a later date (first/second century AD), while distancing herself from the more recent and more significant contributions by Chiron (1993), Innes (1995) and Schenkeveld (2000), all of whom are supporters of an intermediate date (second/first century BC). On the other hand, she follows Calcante’s new thesis (2000; 2004) regarding the four-style theory in Demetrius, which is said to be posterior, not previous, to the traditional tripartite stylistic system, well certified from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* onwards—a thesis which is certainly new but not as convincing.

Although we can certainly agree with M. that some of Roberts’ and Radermacher’s linguistic arguments still remain valid (even if we know so little about the Hellenistic Age), she doesn’t actually deal with the issue of the overall contents of the work: the nature of the subject-matter of *On Style*, the theoretical points of view and, above all, their exposure show evidence of belonging to an era previous to Cicero and Dionysius, a fact that M. seems to have evaded.

Without dwelling too much on this subject, I would like to just briefly consider the core of M.’s thesis and a few of the issues it touches on. M. moves the date of the work to the first/second century AD and in her book she proposes an overall assessment of Demetrius’ work, not only in the light of Aristotle and Theophrastus, but also recognising other influences from later authors, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch and Quintilian. Following Calcante’s theory, M. argues in particular that the influence of new communication techniques, associated with the *declamationes*, has led to the introduction of a new recitation style in the first century AD, the *deinos* style, in the traditional system of the three *genera dicendi*. The unusual theory of four styles is therefore said not to be previous to the traditional and well-attested theory of three styles but, rather, it is said to represent a posterior phase: the de-structuring of the traditional tripartite style system.

One of the argumentations presented by M. in support of this thesis is founded on the recurrence of the theory of figured speech in *On Style* (§§287-98) and it is articulated around three main points. Firstly, M. asserts that the use of the term

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6) I am referring to the recurrence of some Atticist forms in Demetrius’ language.