The origins of the famous canon of ten Attic orators have long been the subject of controversy. This has of late subsided into a general recognition that no final decision is possible between the three chief claimants — the scholars of 3rd century Alexandria, those of 2nd century Pergamum, and Caecilius of Cale Acte. But, although there is no doubt that Alexandrian critics drew up some lists of approved writers, and it is possible that as Brzoska thought 1), the Pergamenes did the same, the first two suggestions are, as regards the canon of orators, in fact impossible 2). This view needs to be restated, and can be reinforced. Again, although there is attributed to Caecilius in Suidas a work entitled περὶ τῶν χαρακτήρων, none the less, the third view, while the most plausible of current opinions 3), is not free from difficulties, to which very little attention has hitherto been paid. Apart from the statement in Suidas, and a familiar observation of Quintilian (Inst. Orat. x. 1.76) reproduced and discussed below, there is no positive evidence for the canon before the 2nd century A.D. 4). In my view, there was no canon, in any real sense, before that date. The evidence of Cicero is decisive against the existence of any canon in his time. The silence of Dionysius of Halicarnassus

1) De canone decem oratorum Atticorum quaestiones (Breslau, 1883) summarised in Cousin, Etudes sur Quintilien (Paris, 1936) I, 565 ss.
2) Cf. P. Hartmann, De canone decem oratorum (Göttingen 1891), W. Heydenreich, De Quint. Inst. Or. lib. x . . . etc. (Erlangen, 1900), R. Weise, Quaestiones Caecilianae (Berlin, 1888). All agree that the canon is unknown to Cicero, but their views have not met with the acceptance they merit, while Brzoska’s thesis has enjoyed an extraordinary vogue, nor do they adduce the strong evidence from Cicero’s Brutus which I cite below.
3) Accepted in Christ-Schmidt, Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur II, 28 n. 4, 29 n. 1.
4) See the full evidence in M. H. E. Meier, Comm. Andoc IV, an early (1838) but still valuable study of the subject.
and the total evidence of Quintilian almost suffices to carry us forward to the end of the first century A.D. Since, as we shall see, Quintilian must have been interested in any canon of Caecilius, and yet ignores it at the point where it would be most relevant to his purpose, we may be forced to suspect the evidence of Suidas.

First, we should be clear as to the use of the term "canon". It has no value, and indeed is positively misleading, unless the list so designated had both authority and permanence 1). A list which fluctuates as to number and composition through the ages is not a "canon" — indeed it is not even a list, but a series of lists. This may seem obvious, but it has been ignored by Radermacher 2), Stuart Jones 3), and others. Neither library-catalogues (the πίνακες of Callimachus, the "indices" of Cic. Hort. fr. 13 and Quint. Inst. Orat. x. 1. 57), nor reading-lists are in themselves evidence for "canons". We mean by "canons", if we mean anything at all, that when someone referred e.g. to the Ten Orators, all educated people knew who were meant, and that they were the best, or the only, surviving examples of that particular genre.

We turn now to the evidence, with particular reference to two much-cited passages:

(i) Cic. Brut. 36: Huic (sc. Demostheni) Hyperides proximus et Aeschines fuit et Lycurgus et is, cuius nulla exstant scripta, Demades aliique plures. Haec enim aetas effudit hanc copiam, et ut opinio mea fert, sucus ille et sanguis incorruptus usque ad hanc aetatem oratorum fuit, in qua naturalis inesset, non fucatus, nitor.

(37) Phalereus enim successit . . .

(ii) Quint. Inst Orat. x. 1.76: sequitur ingens oratorum manus, ut cum decem simul Athenis aetas una tulerit. quorum Demo-

(i) The first of these is in fact a straightforward statement that up to to the period of Demosthenes and his contemporaries, a

1) Weise, op. cit., 29: "... siquidem vox canonis ita est intellegenda ut normam atque regulam quandam significet, regula autem certos et numero terminatos fines desideret".

2) Rh. Mus. 57 (1902), 141, where he appears to argue for an Alexandrian canon which any scholar could adjust at will.

3) As I interpret his remarks in Ancient Writers on Greek Sculpture (London, 1895), XX.