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Hellenistic Literature

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Source: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 17 (1963), pp. 21-35

Published by: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University

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# HELLENISTIC LITERATURE

MOSES HADAS

THE history of literature is a continent, not an archipelago; to insulate segments is convenient, but can also be misleading. It is by political events that literary epochs are usually delimited; but a proper respect for its seminal powers might suggest that literature prepares the way for political change and that its conserving force continues effective despite political change.

Hellenistic literature, which is my present subject, is of course a useful designation and evokes particular characteristics, which attained their fullest expression in the third century B.C., but these had been adumbrated long before and survived long after. At either end it is only by political events that the period can be defined. There are reasonable grounds for fixing the later limit at the fall of Corinth in 146 or of Egypt in 30 B.C., but also for fixing it at the reign of Justinian or indeed at the fall of Constantinople. The career of Alexander the Great, which usually fixes the earlier limit, only hastened a process long in progress. A good modern history of Greece, like that of H. Bengtson in the Iwan Müller series, starts the Hellenistic age with 360 B.C.; it is at least as logical to start it with the fourth century.

There are of course meaningful shifts of emphasis which the Hellenistic age favored: from heroic to bourgeois premises and aspirations, from a puritanic concern for edification to pure belles lettres, from grandeur in scope and style to the highly-wrought miniature and the humble, from preoccupation with the speculative and ideal to concern for the practical and individual, and at the same time from parochial to ecumenical horizons, from literature as a commodity to something approaching the object of a cult. These new tendencies the Hellenistic age bequeathed to its successors, but it bequeathed too a persistent tendency in the opposite direction based upon reverence for the traditional classics. These acquired something like canonical authority, and none of the deviations I have listed can be appreciated apart from the paradigms out of which they arose. What I propose to present here is not a systematic characterization of Hellenistic literature as a whole but rather a congeries of disjointed remarks on aspects of it which may be useful for the appreciation of the later types of Greek writing with which Professor Jenkins will deal. I shall glance first at the poets, who are the best gauges of literary theory, and then more fully at prose, which is a more explicit vehicle for political and philosophical outlooks, and finally at the educational ideals and practices, which conserved and perpetuated ideals and outlooks. I shall find it legitimate as well as convenient to touch upon centuries from the fourth B.C. to the fifth A.D.

The genre which seems to characterize the new age most fully and which was most prolific in the fourth and third centuries is New Comedy, but it must be noted that New Comedy was formally a continuation of Old, and that the essential innovations of New Comedy are present in Euripides, who was himself a continuator of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Euripides has complicated

intrigue, frequently derived from folk-motifs, dramatic recognitions with proper care for verisimilitude, a strong erotic interest, the happy ending, and, most important, *dramatis personae* who, though they masquerade under heroic names, are essentially contemporary bourgeois types, with the premises, problems, and aspirations of ordinary humanity. Euripides' language and style are notoriously near the vernacular. New Comedy's most striking innovation is its free invention of names and therefore plots, and here, of course, it continued the practice of Old Comedy. In a sense Euripides can also be regarded as the ancestor of the Greek romances: a careful study has shown that the various motifs of the prose romances are to be found in Euripides' *Helen*; if chronology did not prove otherwise we might suppose that Euripides had learned from them.

The Hellenistic genre which is commonly regarded as a revolutionary innovation is the pastoral idyll as practiced by Theocritus and his imitators. Elevating rustic types (who are, however, and more frequently than we suspect, gentlemen in disguise) to the dignity of hexameter is indeed an innovation, and so, to some degree, is the amoebaeian form, though the tradition of the Sicilian mime goes back at least to Sophron, and such pieces as the Pharmaceutria and the Adoniazusae are clearly mimes. But in the case of the pastoral, tradition may be at work in a less obvious way. In the traditional corpus of classical poetry what looks most like pastoral are the so-called Homeric Hymns, in particular those to Demeter and to Aphrodite. Either of these might pass for a pastoral masque, with rustic scenes and rustic names, with masquerade and unmasking. For us who are bred to habits of historical perspective it is easy to sense that these poems are deeply religious and must have served as something like a scripture for a cult. It is probable, on the analogy of similar phenomena in other genres, that the religious burden faded, in the course of time, but that the poems continued to be admired for their aesthetic value. It may be that it was simply for their high value as poems that the Alexandrians, who were not bred to a sense of historical perspective, valued the hymns; Callimachus, to whom the ancient myths had no more than literary value, emulated the hymns in their formal aspect, and Theocritus may have emulated them in their pastoral aspects. He is eager to reach out for new realms in poetry and scorns those for whom "Homer is enough"; but he was still rooted in tradition and might have regarded himself a deviationist though not a revolutionary.

Most striking of all, in this connection, is the case of Herondas. The discovery of his mimes, at the turn of the century, created a sensation not merely because a new author had been restored to light but because the new literature seemed so anticlassical. Herondas' first English translator entitled his book "A Realist of the Aegean." I have seen Herondas described as the first author who wrote for people who move their lips when they read. But though his persons might be ordinary urban types (as the pattern set by Sophron required) and their actions vulgar, Herondas is far from being a vulgar poet. For his meter, the limping skazon, Herondas skips back to Hipponax, who was a realist of the

Aegean centuries before, and he uses obscure and long-disused words of whose meaning he is himself uncertain. There can be no doubt of the force of tradition when a poet like Herondas is so concerned to accommodate himself to its forms.

Bookishness, with its concomitant display of erudition and preciosity, is in fact the keynote of Alexandrian poetry. What is usually said (but the matter is not so simple) is that Apollonius of Rhodes and the others set themselves to do, with conscious sophistication and recondite materials, what Homer had done naively and with obvious materials. According to this view, poetry for the Alexandrians was essentially a playful by-product of serious scholarship, which the scholar-poet addressed to an exclusive audience of his fellow scholar-poets. Here were men deeply concerned to revivify the long intermitted practice of poesy, and because Greek literature was always formal and stylized, never casual or naturalistic, they prepared for their high calling by diligent study.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship was not the end, in other words, but the means. Their first objective was *imitatio*, and they never wished to go beyond *aemulatio*.

The Alexandrian poet κατ' ἐξοχήν is Callimachus, and a glance at two of his best known pieces will illustrate the places of originality and tradition in the Hellenistic age. The first of his Hymns, To Zeus, follows the traditional form of the hymn quite closely, but, aside from metrical refinements, is far from being mere imitation. The poem starts with a question: Who rather than Zeus should be sung at libations? What is envisaged, then, is not a cult celebration but a symposium at which the poet addresses a small circle capable of appreciating his subtle refinements. Then follow the accounts of the descent and the virtue of the god, as the form demanded, with criticism of the Arcadian and Cretan traditions (Κρηῆτες ἀεὶ ψεύσονται). The criticism is not that of an enlightened thinker or a theologian, but purely that of a poet who takes delight in mythological stories for their own sake. The story of the nurture of the divine infant has something of the domestic or suburban about it, like Athena and Hera's visit to Aphrodite in Apollonius' third book. The choice of matter is capricious: one thinks of Apollonius' avowed refusal to include the familiar. Homer's account of the great deities casting lots for their respective realms is dismissed as absurd: Who would cast lots for Olympus and Hades? And finally there is a polite bow to Ptolemy Philadelphus: it is Zeus who appoints kings, and our own has outstripped all others. If the doctrinal content of this poem is less than negligible, it is nevertheless a serious and mature work of art. The classical authors would not have understood, or if they had would have rejected, the notion of *ars artis gratia*. For Callimachus the doctrine is proved valid.

His own poetic program Callimachus sets forth in the opening poem of his *Aetia*, recovered from an Oxyrhynchus papyrus. The poem is entitled Against the Telchines, a name he gives to his critics. "I (say) this to the Telchines," he declares, "... begone, you baneful race of Jealousy! hereafter judge poetry by (the canons) of art, and not by the Persian chain, nor look to me for a song

<sup>1</sup> For a suggestive discussion of this theme, see Rudolph Pfeiffer, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 75 (1955), 69-75.

loudly resounding. It is not mine to thunder; that belongs to Zeus.' For when I first placed a tablet on my knees, Lycian Apollo said to me: '... poet, feed the victim to be as fat as possible but, my friend, keep the Muse slender. This too I bid you: tread a path which carriages do not trample; do not drive your chariot upon the common track of others, nor along a wide road, but on unworn paths, though your course be more narrow. For we sing among those who love the shrill voice of the cicada, and not the noise of the ... asses.' Let others bray just like the long-eared brute, but let me be the dainty, the winged one."<sup>2</sup>

I must pass over such characteristically Alexandrian productions as the long didactic poem, which becomes as technical as Nicander's *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*, and the amatory epigrams, which continued to be written at least to the close of the Palatine Anthology. But I should like to mention two phenomena at the end of the tradition which illustrate the peculiar dignity which poetry enjoyed. Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* starts, like any romance, with boy and girl meeting and falling in love at a festival, and then separating. But unlike the romances, here we have tragic death, and here we have heroic verse. The two go together; the love story is now sufficiently important to merit the tragic approach and hexameter verse. I cannot believe that an earlier love story would have been so dignified. Tristan or Lancelot are not in the same world with Achilles; they are only one jump away from Leander. The other phenomenon is a calculated blindness to Christianity on the part of poets we know to have been Christian when they wrote on pagan or secular themes. From Nonnus' forty-eight-book *Dionysiaca* (fifth century) we would never suspect that he was a Christian, and yet Nonnus wrote a Paraphrase of St. John's Gospel. So in the West Ausonius and Claudian never reveal their Christianity in their secular writings, even where they might well do so (as in Claudian's Epithalamium for the Christian marriage of Honorius to Stilicho's daughter Maria). The first welding of pagan form and imagery with Christian piety is in the hymns of Synesius of Cyrene—who could speak with pride of his Heraclid ancestry.

The scholarship upon which the literature of power rested produced its own literature of knowledge. Of the massive critical and encyclopedic work of the Alexandrians it is unnecessary to speak. Our own information concerning ancient literature rests upon this work, not only in its precipitate in scholia but in imitations and collections. The indispensable if tasteless Diogenes Laertius is a good example. Most of what the Romans knew of the eastern peripheries of the Greek world derives from the summaries and excerpts of Alexander Polyhistor, who lived in the time of Sulla. Two developments out of pedestrian bookishness are worth noticing: collections deliberately intended as raw material for poets, and encyclopedic works which themselves pretend to belles lettres. We know that Aratus used the sound astronomical work of Eudoxus and that works like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Vergil's *Georgics* rested on Alexandrian collections. But in Parthenius (first century B.C.) we have a large sheaf of out-

<sup>2</sup> Callimachus: *Aetia, Iambi, Hecale, etc.*, trans. C. A. Trypanis (Loeb Classical Library, 1958), 5f.

lines of love stories in bald prose specifically intended, as the proem tells us, for expansion by Roman poets. Encyclopedic collections resting, as such works must, on antecedent collections, continued to be made, as the Elder Pliny shows; but the encyclopedic taste comes to find expression in works intended to entertain as well as to inform—Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, for example, or Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*, or indeed, to a degree, Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*. If we transpose ourselves to another consciously humanistic age, we may think of Erasmus' *Adagia* and the better use made of the *Adagia* in Montaigne's *Essays* or in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

We move from scholarship to the more substantive kinds of prose, which is far more voluminous than poetry in the Hellenistic age, and the principal vehicle for significant and abiding outlooks. It was Isocrates' demonstration that artistic prose is the appropriate medium for communicating significant doctrine that virtually silenced poetry in the fourth century, and it was his precept and example that gave Hellenistic prose its general character. What is significant for us may be extrapolated largely from the *Panegyricus* (380 B.C.) and listed under the following rubrics: the ideal of *paideia* and its propagation, the ecumenical view, the conception of history as a national charter, historiography made dramatic and propagandistic, and a larger concern with individual personages.

*Paideia* signified initiation into the cultural traditions of Greece. Where Plato says (in the Seventh Epistle) that his doctrine is not to be gotten from books but only by long personal association with the master, Isocrates' education rested on a library of classics accessible to everyone. The touchstone of humanity is *logos*, which means word or discourse or reason. As man's superiority over animals rests on his possession of *logos*, the Hellene's superiority over barbarians rests on his possession of many and special *logoi*. The importance of *paideia* persists through all subsequent Greek literatures. If, like any classicizing movement, it is sometimes constricting, as in the so-called Second Sophistic, it yet provides a balance wheel of cultural continuity and sanity. In the second century A.D., for example, which was pullulating with religious and philosophical enthusiasts and extremists, it is their foundation in *paideia* which gives sobriety and abiding usefulness to such authors as Plutarch or Lucian or Clement.

If what makes a man a Hellene is his *paideia* there is no reason why men of non-Greek blood may not be assimilated to the Hellenic ideal. A memorable passage at *Panegyricus* 50 says that "the name of Hellas is distinctive no longer of race but of intellect and the title of Hellene is a badge of education rather than of race." "I am a Syrian from the Euphrates," says the Atticizing Lucian (*Fisher* 19), "but what of that? Some of these philosophers are equally barbarian by race; but character and culture (*paideia*) are not affected whether a man comes from Soli or Cyprus, Babylon or Stagira." And if the Greek way is accessible to all men, then all men are of interest to Greeks. Hence the enormous expansion of horizons and the approach to an ecumenical ideal which becomes a major factor in Hellenistic outlooks.

Politically, Isocrates' objective was a union of all Hellenes for promoting a crusade against the East, but to us at least the notion of union is more important than the end it was designed to compass. Politically the city-states of Greece were as distinct as are the nations of Europe; what Isocrates sought (and what eventually was at least approximated) was a sense of European rather than of parochial identity. Patriotism is based, in Isocrates, on a new idealization of the Greek past. Ancient texts had always been used, of course, but mainly for decoration or edification; in Isocrates we approach the Hebrew or Roman conception that history itself constitutes a kind of national charter, which confers special privileges upon those loyal to it, but imposes special responsibilities also. It was this sense of pride and responsibility which helped the Greeks retain their identity in the Eastern countries in which they settled and later under Roman or other masters.

The various strands of Isocratean doctrine are evident in the new historiography. History is no longer a science, as in Thucydides, but a species of oratory (and therefore democratic) which must possess ψυχαγωγία and ὠφέλεια. As Cícero puts it, the functions of oratory are *docere, delectare, flectere*. The first requirement was met by making history sensational (ἐκπληξίς) and dramatic. There is less analysis of political or military principles and more description of suffering and of psychological reactions. Events that do not lend themselves to dramatic heightening, no matter how important, may be hurried over, and others of less historical significance may be made central. Attention tends to center upon a single personage, who may not in fact be important in the historical view, and to neglect others less suitable to serve as dramatic heroes. And finally, under the heading of *opheleia*, if attention is artfully focussed upon an individual protagonist, this serves not only to enhance his status but to promote the ideals or aspirations attributed to him. The manipulation of historical fact is a move in the direction of historical fiction, and the partisanship for particular attitudes or convictions is a move in the direction of propaganda.

It is important to realize that the latitudinarianism of later antiquity in distinguishing between history and fiction was based on well-defined principles. Moderns recognize the shortcomings of Livy (who exhibits all the characteristics of Hellenistic historiography and is doubtless the best specimen of the genre) or of First and Second Maccabees, which, though one was written in a Semitic language and the other is an abridgement, also exhibit the same characteristics, but would consider these works as history, if perhaps poor history. But what of a work like Xenophon's *Cyropaideia*, of which the aims are also clearly *psychagogia* and *opheleia*? We today might accept such work as fiction, but not as history; how would later antiquity have accepted it?

For all forms of prose narrative (διήγησις) the schools recognized three categories of truth: ἀληθὴς ἱστορία, ψευδὴς ἱστορία, and πλάσματα, which we might render true history, imaginary history, and imaginative history. True history is something like unadorned chronicle, to be accepted literally. False history is fantasy which makes no pretense to truth; our best example is Lucian's *True History*, which states, near its opening, that there is no truth in

it. In *plasmata* the central story must be essentially true, but it may be filled out with accessory details provided they have verisimilitude, which is to say that they are ὡς γεγόμενα, like things which actually happened. As Aristotle puts it, τοιαῦτα οἷα ἂν εἰκός γενέσθαι. The whole must possess *opheleia*, or as we might put it, be edifying. If we assume the historicity of heroic myth, as the classical Greeks apparently did, then good tragedies are proper *plasmata*. In the Hellenistic age, certain works on the periphery of Scripture which have been suspected as mere romance—I think of Aristeas or III and IV Maccabees—can be seen to possess essential truth if we allow for the rules which governed their composition. I suspect that many dubious works of later centuries might be similarly vindicated.

The *Cyropaideia* advertises an idealized mode of behavior as embodied in a historical personage. Later romances retain the form of historical narrative and sometimes provide historical background, but their leading personages become wholly imaginary, like those of New Comedy. One interest in this apparently frivolous form of popular literature is its ultimately edifying objective, if only by demonstration that virtue is in the end rewarded. Another, more germane to our present theme, is its strict adherence to a highly stylized form. What the humanists (Sir Philip Sidney in his *Arcadia*, for example) learned from the Greek romance and bequeathed to the modern novel was not so much plot and incident but the art of making an organic unity, with beginning, middle, and end, out of a complex series of events. We can see how the novelty fascinated readers who had known only Amadis of Gaul and the other romances which Don Quixote's housekeeper and curate threw on the bonfire.

The sensational and propagandistic historiography is worth emphasizing because it is a new development in the Hellenistic age and because, largely through Livy, it has affected history to this day. But even in the Hellenistic age proper the stature of Thucydides as a classic was of course recognized, and in the devoutly classicizing period of the Second Sophistic he was the acknowledged giant (as Atticist, however, not as historian) used to reduce later pygmies to their proper insignificance. Our most explicit text on the subject is Lucian's *How to Write History*, which excoriates the fancy language, sensationalism, servile encomia, indifference to fact, and in general the striving to be agreeable, and states emphatically that the sole gauge and object of history is truth. Three centuries before Lucian, in the Hellenistic age proper, Polybius, whose favorite word for his own history is "pragmatic," shows similar impatience with sensational writers like Phylarchus or time-servers like Timaeus and stresses his own devotion to historical accuracy. He follows Thucydides in pointing to the utility of his work in providing instructive examples for statesmen and generals, but he heeds the Hellenistic requirement of τὸ χρήσιμον by teaching men generally the lessons of the mutability of fortune (τῆς τύχης μεταβολάς). Critics of the late Republic and early Empire ignored Polybius and returned to Thucydides as the Attic model. Dionysius, who may have favored Herodotus because he too was "of Halicarnassus," shows the measure of contemporary criticism in his chiding of Thucydides for choosing to write of a war

in which his own country was defeated, and for placing the plague, if included it must be, so early in the book. But after the extravagances of the Second Sophistic, possibly because his Greek was more nearly contemporary and more intelligible than Thucydides' and possibly because the Roman Empire of which he writes was a continuing and paramount entity, Polybius may have out-distanced Thucydides.

We return to the Hellenistic type of historiography to note two significant developments which grew out of it. In the first place, its concern with the large individual gave rise to biography, and eventually to hagiology. The classical period avoided individualized portraiture, whether in literature or plastic art; characters in drama and early portrait busts tend to be idealized types. Thucydides' thumbnail character sketches of Pausanias and Themistocles (at the end of his first book) are pioneers in their kind. Our first literary biography is Isocrates' *Evagoras*. The next is by Isocrates' fellow demesman and admirer Xenophon, whose *Agesilaos* is clearly influenced by the *Evagoras*. Both are highly laudatory; how persistent the model was can be seen from Tacitus' *Agricola*, which has manifest echoes of the *Agesilaos*. The study of characters, even of physiognomies, became professional in the Peripatetic school; Theophrastus' *Characters* are not merely playful skits but serious analyses. The concern for individual idiosyncrasies is evident in Hellenistic portraiture and in New Comedy and eventually in the literary biographies represented for us by Plutarch and Suetonius.

The species of biography which merits our special notice is the aretalogy, which tells the *praxeis* or acts of a supernaturally endowed teacher. The teachers may have been impostors, like the Peregrinus or Alexander of Lucian, and the lives of honest teachers may have been exploited by charlatans. But there were honestly conceived if exaggerated aretalogies promulgated by teachers genuinely concerned for the spiritual welfare of their fellow men. The model out of which the type developed may well be the image of Socrates as drawn by Plato. Plutarch's *Life of Cleomenes* is in effect an aretalogy; Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* is an aretalogy; the Book of Jonah in the Old Testament is an interesting example of the influence of the genre. Our fullest extant ancient example is Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, who lived and worked in the first century. There can be little question that Apollonius was a gifted man and a devoted teacher—nor can there be much question that the powers attributed to him by Philostratus are much exaggerated. What is of interest here is that Philostratus' work, which was not alone in its kind, was the pattern for Athanasius' *Life of Anthony*, which is in turn the point of departure for an abundant hagiological literature.

Philostratus wrote his book at the instance of the Empress Julia Domna, and in his prefatory remarks he tells us that among the materials put at his disposal was an account of Apollonius written by his disciple, the Babylonian Damis. Philostratus' object, then, was to make a crudely and, hence, presumably disregarded story respectable by putting it into a form acceptable to the educated. One thinks of the parallel in the opening verses of Luke. What this

suggests in turn is the enormous importance attached to proper literary form, by writers and audience alike, not only in merely belletristic display pieces, but in the most earnest uses to which language is put. It may well be that the extraordinary importance attached to literary form—and the kind of education which fostered it—is the most significant legacy bequeathed by the litterateurs of the Hellenistic age to their successors.

Another form which Hellenistic historiography and its derivatives seem to have promoted is that of letters. The historians appear to have made a practice of including official documents, and in particular letters, to document and illustrate their accounts. I Maccabees is especially rich in such documents, most of which appear to be genuine. In Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander*, which is built upon letters, most are fictive though some must be genuine. When we move to outright fiction, letters, naturally wholly fictitious, continue to be used. Most often they serve the plot, but sometimes they provide historical or psychological background, somewhat like a tragic chorus, or, better, like an *ekphrasis* of a work of art, which the romances also use. Admirable examples of the organic use of *ekphrasis* in classical literature are the descriptions of the pictures at Delphi in the first stasimon of Euripides' *Ion* and of those on Dido's building in the fourth *Aeneid*.

Eventually the fictive letter becomes an independent literary form; those of Alciphron show the embryonic beginnings of the epistolary novel, like Richardson's. Ovid's *Heroides*, which are in verse and deal with mythological figures, show how frankly "literary" the form could be and also how well it lends itself to psychological narrative. From the studied form of the letters we should guess that they were cultivated as a literary genre, and the progymnasmata do in fact include sections on letter writing as they do on *ekphrasis*, *synkrisis*, and the like. Two treatises on letter writing, which include model specimens, are ascribed, probably wrongly, to Demetrius of Phalerum and to Libanius.<sup>3</sup> The former lists twenty-one types, the latter forty-one; the subtlety of distinctions shows how seriously the art of epistolary composition was taken. The first specimen in the shorter list is "the friendly letter," of which the author says, "The friendly letter is one which purports to be written by a friend to a friend; such are written by persons not really friends." The specimen starts, "Though I happen to be separated from you by a great space, it is only my body that is in this case." Others in Demetrius' collection are labelled Introducing a stranger; Gentle chiding; Reproach for behavior inconsistent with former benevolence; Condolence; Expressing surprise at derelictions; Admonition to right conduct or against wrong; Deterrent for wrong conduct, actual or in prospect; Chiding bad actions; Felicitation for right course; Counselling for or against a particular course; Petitioning to abate harshness; Asking whereabouts of third party; Responding to such an inquiry; Using allegory to be understood only by recipient; Excusing seeming dereliction; Reproach for speaking ill of the writer; Replying to above; Felicitation for some distinction; Ironic, when our words are contrary to fact and we call wicked persons gentlemen; Polite

<sup>3</sup> Edited together in a single Teubner volume by V. Weichert (1910).

claim for gratitude. Student compositions in this genre affected not only imaginative works and even history, but also the forms of actual letter-writing. A long step in the direction of the astonishing emptiness which Professor Jenkins will describe are the actual letters addressed by Fronto to Marcus Aurelius recovered from a palimpsest during the last century. It is hard to believe that a respected teacher addressing an intelligent emperor could have so little to say. It may be of interest to observe that Erasmus too learned from the collections; time and again phrases in his massive correspondence echo Libanius, whom Erasmus admired. The fact that the collection is today regarded as spurious is irrelevant.

The proliferation of distinctions, elaborations, rigidifications, noticed in the works on letter writing are characteristic of all the progymnasmata, and perhaps most of all in the copious Hermogenes, who appears to have been extremely influential among the Byzantines. His vogue is suggested by the incredible details in his biography: he wrote his works, which occupy a stout Teubner volume,<sup>4</sup> in his teens and counted the Emperor Marcus Aurelius among his auditors; he went mad at twenty-four and could no longer recognize his own works though he lived to be very old; on autopsy his heart was found to be covered with shaggy hair. The degree to which artifice takes precedence over intelligence in the teacher of "creative writing" is plain from the rather shocking proem to his *Peri ideon*:

If there is anything essential for the rhetor it is knowledge of the forms of discourse; their nature and their genesis. For one thing, without such knowledge capacity to judge other particulars, whether in ancient work or modern, in what respects they are good and correct and in what respects they are not, is impossible. For another, to a man who wishes himself to become a fashioner of discourse beautiful and noble and approximating that of the ancients, this knowledge is indispensable if he is not to diverge too far from correctness. Imitation alone and devotion to the ancients accompanied by bare empiricism and unsystematic application are not, in my judgment, capable of attaining correctness, even with good natural endowment. On the contrary, it may be that the pride of natural endowment leaping forward unsystematically without some technical craftsmanship will rather hinder the attainment of the object. But with technical knowledge of these matters a man who wishes to emulate the ancients would not miss his mark even if his natural endowment is modest. It is best, of course, if he possesses natural qualities in addition, for so he can do good work so much the better. But if he does not, still what can be taught and learned, which is not in the province of others, but in a man's own, he must endeavor to acquire. Men who do so will quite likely surpass those who are well endowed but inferior in training and in practicing the correct mode. Inasmuch, then, as the study of forms is important and necessary both for those who wish to accomplish and for those who wish to be competent in judging, it is not to be wondered at if we find that the study is not easy or one that requires mere busyness. If it is the way of nature that nothing that is good issues from idleness, I would be much surprised if anything more profitable than good and noble discourse and its forms could accrue to human beings, who are rational creatures.

Euphuism, in one form or another, has appeared in various literatures, but its effects are usually limited to a coterie. What is striking here is that Hermogenes,

<sup>4</sup> Ed. H. Rabe (1913).

who is negligible as a thinker and less than negligible as a guide to literary creativity, could have retained so dominating an influence and for so long, and, in effect, have imposed the preciousness of a coterie on a whole literature.

From the progymnasmata and the like, Hermogenes' and others, we know the kind of education the rhetor received, and from Philostratus' and Eunapius' accounts of them we know what enormous prestige the virtuoso rhetors enjoyed. What we must not forget is that the huge audiences which thronged to hear them must have been knowledgeable enough to appreciate the fine points in the game. Sound second-century authors like Dio Chrysostom or Plutarch or Lucian demonstrate, in what is probably their early work, how empty pure rhetoric could be—which only shows that it was considered a sufficient end in itself. But when these men turned serious—and apparently lost caste with their guild as renegades for so doing—they still show the old school tie of the progymnasmata. They seize every opportunity for an *ekphrasis* to describe a work of art, or for a *synkrisis*, to point a contrast, or they will deal with a proposition pro and con with equal cogency. Plutarch not only appends his weak *synkriseis* to his Lives, but when he comes to write on a subject like Superstition his form is a *synkrisis* between δεισιδαιμονία and ἀθεώτης. Even Livy inserts into his history what is manifestly an undergraduate *synkrisis* of Alexander the Great and Scipio (9. 17 ff.).

A word must be said on the uses of quotations, which are numerous in all the classicizing writers and were inserted according to prescribed techniques. Demetrius (*De Elocutione* 150) had said that χάρις is attained by quotation of another's words, and Hermogenes *Περὶ γλυκύτητος* prescribes περιπλοκὰς τῶν ποιημάτων ἐν λόγῳ as a source of γλυκύτης. Elsewhere (*Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος* 30, 436) he distinguishes two methods of introducing verse into prose, Κατὰ κόλλησιν and Κατὰ παρώδιαν. The former is when an entire verse is fused harmoniously into the prose context; the latter is when the verse is interrupted by the writer's own additions to produce a consistent and syntactically complete formulation. Lucian, who is a prodigious quoter, follows these rules very precisely, and incidentally supplies excellent evidence for the extent of literary education in his day. He acknowledges, in his defense against having traduced the philosophers (*Fisher* 6) that his main contribution was in presenting *their* words: "All these things I say come from you alone. I cull your flowers (ἀπανθίζομαι) like a bee and display them to mankind; and men praise me, recognizing whose the flowers are and my mode of gathering them. They felicitate me for my art in collecting and arranging and harmonizing colors, but the truth and the flowery meed is yours." The point is, Lucian is sure that the flowers *will* be recognized. Plutarch too is an inveterate quoter, but his works are intended for readers. Lucian's are apparently intended for oral presentation and to large companies, and he is not the sort of man to compose what his audience is incapable of receiving. It may be remarked incidentally that scriptural quotations in Christian writers follow the same techniques of Κόλλησις and παρώδια that Lucian does; this is particularly noticeable in St. Augustine. What gives point to the analogy is that the quotations in the secular writers

are all from the acknowledged, one is tempted to say canonical, classics of the fifth and fourth centuries, occasionally from Menander, very rarely from later writers.

How were the audiences prepared to appreciate highly conventionalized forms and, more especially, to recognize literary allusions? Lucian was a Syrian, and though he probably spoke idiomatic Greek in childhood (not Syrian, as most books say), the classical Greek he writes he could have learned only in school, as other non-Hellenes we know learned it. What kind of school? The first thing any handful of Greeks did upon settling in a "barbarian" country was to establish a gymnasium. There were good practical reasons for receiving a gymnasium education, for it was prerequisite to full participation in certain political privileges; οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γυμνασίου constitute a special class. But the principal motive must have been to retain and establish Greekhood in an alien environment. This involved games and social graces of course, but it also involved the traditional *logoi* of Hellas. What the reading list was we can only surmise, on the basis of fragmentary reading lists in books or statistics of literary papyri, but it was clearly the classics, not the contemporaries, that were taught—Homer, of course, and tragedy quite as surely. The large theatres scattered over the cultural empire of the Greeks show what the volume of this classical education must have been. Apparently the institution of gymnasia in the Greek diaspora affected education in the homeland—quite as if Oxford and Cambridge would adopt the organization and curricula of Harvard and Yale.

What proportion of the population enjoyed this education is impossible to determine. It was doubtless high, but more important, it did perpetuate a consistent standard of literary excellence. A high degree of stylization and of fidelity to established forms is characteristic of all ancient Greek literature. Consider how artificial and how binding the conventions of classical tragedy are. With revolutionary philosophical and social premises Euripides is still constrained to retain the forms and the *dramatis personae* of his predecessors. Two centuries later Herondas consciously emulated Hipponax. Three centuries later Lucian consciously emulated (though he chided those who merely imitated) the classic writers. Whenever there was a revival of literary activity, as in the third century B.C. or the second A.D., its basis was not casting off the old but attending to it more narrowly.

It is not too much to say that attention to the literary tradition assumed the character of a cult. It is almost so in the devout Plutarch, whose principal motivation, I think, was the survival of Hellenism, of which the vehicle is naturally literature. It is entirely so in the thoroughly secular-minded Lucian, in whom devotion to literature is the spiritual center of his life. Though he distrusts every form of other-worldliness he reports that Dame Paideia promised him, when she recruited him in a dream: "Even when you depart from life you shall never cease associating with those who possess *paideia* and conversing with the best" (*Dream* 6). Throughout the long period we have glanced at we may assume high respect for the lettered; in the centuries before and after the common era this respect verges on reverence. As Marrou, our best author-

ity on ancient education points out,<sup>5</sup> the formula *μουσικὸς ἀνὴρ* (which is something like B.Litt.) which appears on tomb inscriptions is in effect a claim for special consideration in the world to come; and descriptions of the pastimes in the Elysian fields, as in the Pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus*, which is dated to the first century B.C., include intellectual pursuits. It may not be too much to say, then, that conservatism in literary modes was protected by something like a religious motivation.

The trend towards religious reverence for classical patterns in literature is, after all, only another aspect of the acceptance of authority in all fields, and most strikingly in philosophy itself. The Law of Contradiction, which gives all classical philosophy its character, fell into abeyance. Not only in matters of religion was dogmatic assertion glorified as faith, but even philosophy becomes rather the exegesis of accepted texts than a search for truth. The process is admirably illustrated in the closing chapters of George Boas' new *Rationalism in Greek Philosophy*.<sup>6</sup> Most relevant to our present theme is a paragraph on the last page of Professor Boas' book:

When one reads such a work as the *De Mysteriis* of Iamblichus, a work which is written soberly and carefully, and realizes that it defends everything which modern man would call superstition, divination, sacrifices, revelations from supernatural powers of various degrees of sanctity, auguries from dreams, and so on—one can only wonder why it should have been preserved intact, if it is intact, and so many tough-minded scientific works should have been lost. I find it hard to believe that Cicero, Epictetus, and Seneca were as intelligent as Theophrastus, not to speak of his teacher, and yet they were preserved almost *in toto* and used by later Christians as authorities. But then Vergil was used as a prophet and Pliny and Aelian as zoologists.

We may share Mr. Boas' regrets if like him we are concerned with the rationalist impulse. But literature includes other values which, unlike the quest for rationalism, may vary from age to age. What keeps it from being sporadic is a continuing attention to traditional form, and form itself, in its turn, invites to a renewal of excellence. The tragedians, who are as profound in their way as the pre-Socratics in theirs, have fared better because they created works of art. There is no better illustration of the seminal influence of form alone than the rebirth of drama in the Renaissance. To what we admire as the profundity of Greek tragedy the Italian Humanists seem to have been quite blind, but they did learn that drama could be a high art, not merely entertainment for a carnival mob, worthy of the best efforts of true artists and an intelligent public. And presently the form gave rise to new profundity, as in the Latin plays of George Buchanan or the English plays of the Elizabethans.

A defense can be made even for Hermogenes. The world at large, following at however many removes the adverse judgment of Edward Gibbon, deploras the want of originality in later Greek literature. On the other hand, conservatism did preserve the treasures of the past which might otherwise have been dissipated, and by subjecting innovation to the control of traditional form it did insure the continuity of the texture of civilization.

<sup>5</sup> H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb (New York, 1956), 100ff.

<sup>6</sup> Baltimore, 1961.