IMITATION AND EVOLUTION: THE DISCUSSION OF RHETOR-
ICAL IMITATION IN CICERO *DE ORATORE* 2. 87–97 AND
SOME RELATED PROBLEMS OF CICERONIAN THEORY

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NEARLY forty years ago, Richard McKeon, in a brilliant paper, "Liter-
ary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity,"[1] gave
English-speaking critics the definitive basis for discussion of the dif-
ferent senses of *mimesis/imitatio* in Greek and Roman usage; thus most
recently George Kennedy[2] introduces his account of Dionysius of Halicar-
nassus' fragmentary *Peri mimeseos* with a description of the two predomi-
nant usages of *mimesis* based on McKeon's distinctions.

The first sense, denoting the relationship between literary representation
and "reality," belongs to the criticism of creative literature, not rhetoric. But
the second sense, that of "imitation of artists," is central to rhetorical prac-
tice, which advocated direct imitation of the teacher or his models by the
pupil in training. Theory, slowly following practice, developed an interest
in the working of imitation at two levels: (1) the imitation of teacher by
pupil, just mentioned; and (2) the more diffused imitation of finished works
of art or established artists, by the adult artists of a new generation.[3]

This paper is concerned with Cicero's attitude toward rhetorical imitation
and takes its point of departure from his first discussion of imitation in a
theoretical work—the passage *De oratore* 2. 87–97. The precepts, terminol-
ogy, and imagery of Cicero's opening comments all throw light on his con-
ception of the practice of imitation. The historical account of Greek oratory
which follows in 2. 93–95 serves to illustrate the long-term effect of imitation
on the history of the art. But understanding of this passage requires some
preliminary comment on Cicero's position in the history of rhetorical theory,
and on the special function of these chapters within the dramatic world of
Cicero's dialogue.

Cicero inherited a double tradition in the teaching of rhetorical theory, no
less double because the later, Latin, tradition itself derived from Greek
theory. On imitation at least, his approach was to undergo a change between
the composition of *De oratore* and his later works, *Brutus* and *Orator*, because
of changes in the critical world around him.

Where Greek pupils of rhetoricians had the choice between modeling
themselves on a contemporary tradition or an earlier, classical one, Roman
students originally learned rhetoric in Greek from Greeks, and trained by

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1. In *Modern Philology* 34 (1936–37): 1–35; reprinted in *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane
(Chicago, 1952), pp. 117–45. I cite the article with Crane's pagination.
2. G. A. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, 1972), p. 347 and n. 69.
3. The locus classicus on ancient rhetorical imitation is still W. Kroll, s.v. "Rhetorik (35)," *RE*,
suppl. 7. (1940): 1113–15. See also Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (Stutt-
gart, 1924), pp. 146 f.

imitating the masterpieces of an alien language.[4] This is the training which
Crassus described in *De oratore* and which Cicero himself experienced.[5]

But Crassus and his generation grew up to be teachers (in the informal
Roman sense) and models[6] of oratory for Cicero's youth: for Cicero there
were now two competing forms of imitation. He might advocate imitation
of the Athenian orators. This was the ideal of the classicizing Dionysius of
Halicarnassus, who urged his Greek readers to imitate classical speakers and
writers separated from them by some three centuries. It was also the prin-
ciple of Cicero's younger contemporaries, the Roman Atticists, who advo-
cated that young Roman orators should imitate the *Atticum genus;*[7] and
Cicero in his later rhetorical works, *Brutus* and *Orator*, accepted and argued
from their premises. In *De oratore*, however, he assumed that the Roman
pupils would imitate their teachers, or other senior contemporaries—Latin,
not Greek, models.

Cicero's purpose in *De oratore* 2. 87–97 is complex. Through Antonius
he is trying to cover more than the immediate problem of fostering the
growth of an orator; he is also arguing from a highly sophisticated assump-
tion about the importance of imitation on the larger scale, in the growth of
oratory as an art from generation to generation.[8] This larger significance of
imitation in rhetorical technique is raised at 2. 92, where Cicero asks: "quid
enim causae censetis esse, cur aetates extulerint singulae singula prope genera
dicendi?" He sees imitation as a prime cause of the evolution of oratory and
as the determinant of each generation's characteristic idiom or *genus dicendi*.
The history of Athenian oratory which he recapitulates in 2. 93–95 is offered,
not in order to advocate imitation of these *Attici* themselves, but to illustrate
the evolution of the art through imitation to its acme. As Greek oratory
grew in artistic merit because of imitation, so Romans will develop their
native oratory by imitation of their Roman predecessors.

These two aspects of the argument in *De oratore*—the belief in a common

4. On Cicero's knowledge of the Greek orators, see A. E. Douglas, "The Intellectual Background
of Cicero's Rhetorica," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini, vol. 1.3
(Berlin, 1973), pp. 102–6. (This discussion will be cited as Douglas, "Intellectual Background.") On
imitation of the Greek orators in Cicero's speeches, see A. Weische, *Cicero's Nachahmung der attischen
Redner* (Heidelberg, 1972). A. Reiff's dissertation, *Interpretatio, Imitatio, Aemulatio* (Bonn, 1961),
disclaims any concern with rhetorical imitation but offers a careful analysis of Cicero's use of the
three terms to denote various degrees of independence in the literary adaptation of Greek models by
Roman writers.

5. Cf. *De or.* 1. 155: "ut summorum Graecorum orationes explicarem quibus lectis hoc adsequebar
ut cum ea quae legeram Graece Latine redderem . . . etiam exprimerem quaedam verba *imitando*
. . ." *Brut.* 310–11 attests Cicero's own experience of working in Greek.

6. Crassus seems to have studied Ennius and Gracchus but found imitation of them through para-
phrase an unsatisfactory exercise (*De or.* 1. 154). Cicero in *Brut.* 164 reports his own private imita-
tion of Crassus' *oratio pro lege Servilia*, probably not with a teacher; it was the speech, "mihi a puero
quasi magistra," which taught him. We may compare his comment on Cotta and Hortensius in
Brut. 317: "duo . . . oratores qui me imitandi cupiditate incitarent."

7. For the *Atticum genus dicendi* cf. *Brut.* 68 and 285. The issue of imitating the classical Athenian
orators is discussed in order to show that Cicero can answer his young critics on their own terms,
but his reply reduces their criteria to a degree of generality in *Brut.* 291 which would hardly have
satisfied Calvus. On Cicero and the Atticists there is too much literature to cite here, but see Douglas,
Cicero's "Brutus" (Oxford, 1967), pp. xii–xvii; idem, "Intellectual Background," pp. 119–30.

8. On Cicero's evolutionary approach to the art of rhetoric and its application to the plastic arts
in imitation of Greek theory, see the important paper of E. H. Gombrich, "The Debate on Primi-
tivism in Ancient Rhetoric," *JWI* 29 (1966): 24–38; Douglas, *Cicero's "Brutus,"* pp. xxxix–xli.

idiom for any given age group based on imitation, and the illustrative account of Greek rhetorical history—require the reader to compare two other passages of Ciceronian theory. The first of these is the discussion of personal *genera dicendi* in *De oratore* 3. 26–37, which is designed to explain the stylistic individuality of orators who could be contemporaries and even pupils of the same teacher. Whereas 2. 87–97 seeks out the *genus* of an age, 3. 26–37 has the conflicting goal of distinguishing what we would call the species, the stylistic identity of the individual. The second passage is the summary of Greek oratorical history offered in the *Brutus*, again evolutionary in interpretation, but this time treating Greek eloquence as a pattern and precedent for the main subject of the book, the evolution of eloquence at Rome. In discussing the historical account which begins at *De oratore* 2. 93, I will first set out in tabular form the *aetates* of the several Greek orators as implied in *De oratore* and the chronology of the fuller version given in *Brutus* 27–37, and then consider the modifications caused by Cicero's change of emphasis and increased historical knowledge. Some of the latent ambiguities in Cicero's presentation of the relationship between pupil and teacher will lead us to a closer examination of the Isocratean approach to training through imitation, and we will find evidence in *De oratore* 3. 34–36 for a more flexible attitude in both Isocrates and Cicero.

Finally I will take the evolutionary argument a stage beyond Cicero's portrait of Roman oratory at its acme. As growth in organisms leads to decay, so oratory after its acme will begin to decline; and the critic who both advocates imitation and recognizes this decline will be forced to acknowledge either a failure to imitate or a failure in imitation. So the basically evolutionist accounts of Velleius Paterculus and Messala in Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus* will serve as an epilogue, illustrating some of the adjustments in the evolutionary theory entailed by the recognition of decline.

When Antonius begins his discussion of *imitatio* in *De oratore*, the dialogue has reached a point where he can assume a pupil of natural aptitude, good character, and broad general education (2. 85). Speaking as a teacher, he claims that his role is to transmit what he has learned from experience; he should be a guide (*dux*) toward the stage of success which he himself has reached in performance, "since we cannot teach anything more advanced" (87). The technique of imitation is introduced and presented in three ways: most clearly in the *exemplum* of Sulpicius,[9] a participant in the dialogue who is used at the beginning and end of this section as an illustration of well-directed imitation; more briefly in the counter-example of Fufius, who chose the wrong model, and imitated the worst feature of it; and at the most generalized level in the brief history of Greek oratory.

To begin with Sulpicius, Antonius' former pupil: we are told that he had every physical gift of voice, bearing, and gesture; he had the other natural talents required; but his temperament led to rapid, overexcited speech, and

9. On Sulpicius' position in the society of *De oratore* and his role in the show-trial of Norbanus, see *De or.* 1. 25; 2. 89, 107, 109, 124, 183, and 197–204. For his career after the dramatic date of *De oratore*, see *De or.* 3. 11; and E. Badian, "Caepio and Norbanus," in *Studies in Greek and Roman History* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 50 f.

his youth showed itself in a flood of superfluous language.[10] In a metaphor and variation on it, Antonius describes him as a young plant, a vine in need of pruning for controlled growth (88), or a grain field in need of early cropping (96–97). The remedy Antonius proposed was a change of teacher, and he recommended Crassus because he saw that "Sulpicius' natural gifts were leading him toward the imposing and splendid style of Crassus, but could not succeed unless he directed himself to it by application and imitation, and habituated himself to speaking with his attention and aim focused entirely on Crassus" (89). This sentence is all that Cicero offers here to describe a proper method of imitation.[11] The reason for choosing Crassus as a model is the affinity between Sulpicius' temperament and Crassus' developed style.

In Book 3 Cicero throws further light on the relationship between natural talent and choice of model, with the much-quoted story of Isocrates' two pupils, Ephorus and Theopompus.[12] As told in 3. 36 it illustrates the need to accommodate the direction of training to the character of different pupils. Isocrates used the spurs to urge on Ephorus, because of his hesitation and modesty, but the bridle to hold back Theopompus' verbal exuberance: "neque eos similis effecit inter se, sed tantum alteri adfinxit, de altero limavit,[13] ut id confirmaret in utroque, quod utriusque natura pateretur." The metaphors from sculptural modeling represent the pupil's nature as the medium (the particular variety of stone or clay) predisposed to a certain type of form. A good teacher works both *with* the medium, in choosing the form (*genus dicendi*) to be aimed at, and *against* it, in the sense that he eliminates the excesses that disfigure it, modifying it toward the best version of the form. But, whereas in 3. 36 Isocrates is seen as able to foster a variety of styles, in 2. 89–90 the teacher is presented, not as versatile, but as the model in himself of a single form, so that the choice of form follows from the choice of teacher. Sulpicius became more successful because he chose to imitate the right man—one whose idiom was suited to his own nature.

10. His oratory is described and analyzed at *De or.* 3. 31 and *Brut.* 203; in the latter passage, the concluding words ("nec ea redundans tamen nec circumfluens oratio. Crassum hic volebat imitari, Cotta malebat Antonium, sed ab hoc vis aberat Antoni, Crassi ab illo lepos") confirm the report in *De oratore.* Apparently Sulpicius' imitation of Crassus cured the fault of redundancy mentioned in *De or.* 2. 88, but did not enable him to acquire Crassus' own special merit of charm in diction.

11. Cicero nowhere gives explicit instructions on methods of imitation. Dionysius may have given detailed practical advice in Book 3 of the *Peri mimeseos*, but we have only his statement in the letter to Pompeius Geminus of its contents as περὶ τοῦ πῶς δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι. It is only in Quintilian *Inst.* 10. 2 that we have a systematic account of techniques; and D. L. Clark's helpful article, "Imitation: Theory and Practice in Roman Rhetoric," *QJS* 37 (1951): 10–22, is based almost entirely on Quintilian. (I reserve comment on his theory and precepts for the sequel to this article, "Imitation and Decline," in which Quintilian is central. It will appear in the April number of *CP* 73 [1978].)

12. Significantly, the anecdote is told in a direct comparison of Sulpicius and Cotta with Theopompus and Ephorus at *Brut.* 203–4. It is also found at *Att.* 6. 1. 2; Quint. 2. 8. 11, and (allusively) 10. 1. 74 ("Ephorus, ut Isocrati visum, calcaribus eget").

13. *Limare* probably belongs to the language of bronze-casting and represents the final filing away of irregularities. Cicero's Atticist opponents seem to have used *limatus* as a commendatory word. Cicero himself diverts it in *Brut.* 35 to his own ideal Demosthenes. He uses the verb as a rhetorical term at *De or.* 1. 115, *De opt. gen.* 9 (of Lysias' plain style for minor cases), *Brut.* 236, and—with similar associations in a dialectical context—*Off.* 2. 35 ("illa, cum veritas ipsa *limatur* in disputatione, *subtilitas*"). *Adfingere*, probably formed to translate Greek προσπλάττειν or προσμάττειν, occurs of shaping rough buildings by adding clay at Varro *RR* 3. 9. 7. It would seem to be the proper word for adding bulk to figurines of clay; hence Cicero applies it to the shaping of human bodies by nature at *Nat.D.* 1. 92 and *De or.* 3. 179. In contrast, *De or.* 2. 325 criticizes an introduction poorly attached to the speech as *adfictum*, "patched onto its main body."

Thus Antonius in 2. 90 infers from Sulpicius' experience the general precept: we must imitate the right model for us and, he adds, imitate only its best features. The trainee who has chosen his model represents or portrays (Cicero's words are *exprimere, effingere*)[14] the model by practice, *exercitatio*. He must, however, avoid imitating external features and mannerisms. What is conspicuous (*insignia*) is considered almost as a fault (*paene vitiosa*). There is the implication, borne out by the comments of other critics, that what is distinctive in an expert may, by the exaggeration of the amateur, be distorted to a fault. Poor Fufius in 2. 91 violated the general rule in two ways: his lack of natural energy prevented him from successful imitation of Fimbria's vigor (*nervi*); and he wrongly chose to copy Fimbria's ugly pronunciation, succeeding where he would have been well advised to fail.

Cicero moves from practical precepts to the highest level of literary theory in 2. 91, without formal transition. The abrupt rhetorical question, "What [else but imitation] has determined the special styles of oratory which characterize each successive generation?" marks the beginning of the historical summary, after which Cicero will return in 2. 96 to the pupils of the present day.

The question presupposes that in a society each generation has a common style, a nucleus of characteristics shared by all the orators of that day. These characteristics are distinct from those of the previous generation, yet, we are simultaneously told, causally related to them through imitation. Cicero explains that he is arguing from Greek rhetoric, because the orators have left written work as documentary evidence of the "dicendi ratio voluntasque cuiusque aetatis": these five words define the *genera* as a combination of method and choice; the latter, *voluntas*[15] (Greek *prohairesis*),[16] represents the style aimed at, and imitation is the means to that end.

14. *Effingere*, Greek ἐκπλάττειν, is the classic word for representation, originally by hand-molding in clay or wax. Cicero uses it for the orator's portrayal of his client's character in *De or.* 2. 184, but it is more common in relating the imitation, or imitating artist, to the model. With *effingat* in *De or.* 2. 90, cf. Quint. 10. 1. 108 ("nam mihi videtur M. Tullius cum se totum ad imitationem Graecorum contulisset, effinxisse vim Demosthenis"), 10. 1. 127 ("ad ea se quisque dirigebat effingenda quae poterat"), 10. 2. 15. See also 5. 12. 21, *effingere* of the molding of the pupil by the teacher. In Pliny *Ep.* 7. 9, a letter on imitation, the whole metaphor of wax, and its molding (*effingere*), is revived in a little epigram on artistic creation.

Exprimere, here a mere synonym of *effingere*, is rather shaping by means of a mold, stamp, or die, equivalent of ἐκτυποῦν (ἐκμάττειν); see n. 34. For its use in this context, cf. *Orat.* 19 ("quem si imitari atque exprimere non possumus"); Quint. 2. 7. 3 ("formam orationis . . . expriment"), 10. 2. 18, 10. 2. 26 ("totum exprimere quem elegeris"); Tac. *Dial.* 23. 1.

15. For *voluntas*, cf. *Brut.* 83, where *variae voluntates* describes the stylistic ideals adopted; *Brut.* 285 ("natura quaedam aut voluntas ita dicendi fuit"), *Orat.* 52 ("et naturae variae et voluntates multum inter se distantia effecerunt genera dicendi" [a significant analysis]); and Quint. 10. 1. 89 ("admirabilem . . . nacti generis voluntatem"). The verb *velle* is used repeatedly in this section of *De oratore* (cf. 89, "magistrum quem vellet eligeret"; 91, "imitari etiam vitia voluit"; 94, "partim in acie inlustres esse voluerunt"; 95, "sic semper fuisse aliquem cuius se similis esse vellent"; 98, "qui imitatione adsequi volet"; 98, "suapte natura quod velint sine cuiusquam similitudine consequantur") and in the discussion of Atticist imitation at *Brut.* 285 f. (*similis esse velle* denotes *imitari* in 286, "Charisi vult Hegesias esse similis," and 287, "Atticorum similes esse volumus"). The phrase is in fact the main element in the definition of imitation as given by *Rhet. Her.* 1. 3: "qua impellimur cum diligenti ratione *ut aliquorum similes in dicendo velimus esse.*" More generally, *velle* covers stylistic intent in Quint. 10. 1. 119, "quam velle optima crederes," and in the famous verdict on Seneca, 10. 1. 131, "digna natura quae meliora vellet, quod voluit, effecit." The recurring antithesis of *natura* and *voluntas* treats them as complementary ingredients in each man's idiom.

16. For *prohairesis* of stylistic aims, compare Dionysius *Peri mimeseos* 6. 31 Usener–Radermacher,

In 2. 93–95 Cicero traces the sequence of Athenian orators from Pericles to Demetrius of Phaleron, linked wherever possible by relationships of pupilhood and imitation. I present in table 1 the generations of this account in parallel with the fuller account given in *Brutus* 27–37. The passages have been compared before by a great historian,[17] and most recently by A. E. Douglas, from the point of view of rhetorical history,[18] but both scholars have been primarily concerned with the *Brutus*. Our investigation will focus on *De oratore*, using *Brutus* as a control. The question is: how far is Cicero straining the known facts of chronology and relations between successive orators to reinforce his theory of evolution through imitation?

In the historical sequence of *De oratore*, Pericles (b. 495?), Alcibiades (b. 455?), and Thucydides (b. 460?) are seen as contemporaries, the earliest generation (*antiquissimi*) whose writings are recorded as evidence. The characterization appropriate to Thucydides is applied to them all, and Cicero argues a priori that their common *genus* presupposes imitation of a common model. There are obvious objections to treating these men as belonging to one generation and to the assumptions about their style(s), which in Pericles'

TABLE 1

CICERO'S CHRONOLOGY BY GENERATION OF THE ATHENIAN ORATORS

De oratore 2. 93–95		*Brutus* 27–37
Pericles, Alcibiades, Thucydides		Pericles with Thucydides, with Cleon
Critias, Theramenes, Lysias		Alcibiades, Critias, Theramenes (*huic aetati suppares*, a half-generation)
		(Sophists)
Isocrates		Isocrates
ORATORS	HISTORIANS	Lysias
Demosthenes, Hyperides, Lycurgus, Aeschines, Dinarchus	Ephorus, Theopompus, Philistus	Demosthenes, Hyperides, Aeschines, Lycurgus, Dinarchus, Demades
Demochares (nephew of Demosthenes)		
Demetrius of Phaleron		Demetrius of Phaleron

where *dunamis* and *prohairesis* are opposed. The orator's *dunamis* is described as limited by his nature, but he has control over his *prohairesis:* style is seen as choice or will.

17. F. Münzer, "Atticus als Geschichtsschreiber," *Hermes* 11 (1905): 50–100, discusses and analyzes this section of *Brutus* on pp. 78–80. Cicero's chronological modifications are largely to be explained in terms of increased historical knowledge. *Brutus* was written under the stimulus of Atticus' *Liber annalis* and repeatedly acknowledges Cicero's debt. Thus 28 should certainly read *ex Attici monumentis* ("from Atticus' records"), with Malcovati and all modern scholars, against Wilkins' OCT *Atticis*.

18. Douglas, "Intellectual Background," pp. 102–6.

case may have been based on forged speeches.[19] By the time of the *Brutus* Cicero has modified his chronology: starting from Pericles and Thucydides (because of his writings, *Brut.* 27), he renounces a serious attempt to date the earlier statesmen before returning to Pericles, to whom he loosely opposes Cleon. He distinguishes from these two a half-generation, grouping Alcibiades with Critias and Theramenes (orators active from 420 to, at the latest, 403 B.C.); and he infers the general style of the *aetas* from the writings of Thucydides (*Brut.* 29). But in *De oratore* Critias and Theramenes are grouped with Lysias, so that the speeches of the *Corpus Lysiacum*, and what survived then of Critias, are used to infer qualities distinct from those of Pericles. These orators have "his vitality, but with a fuller texture" (93).

In setting down Lysias and Critias as coeval, Cicero suggests a historical scheme which he subsequently changes in the *Brutus;* the ambiguity of Lysias' historical position stems from his relatively late oratorical activity. His speeches belong to the period between the restored democracy after 403 and 380 or later, although he was born in 459/458, according to Dionysius *Isocrates* 1 and pseudo-Plutarch *Vita X Oratorum* 835C (repeated 836A).[20] Lysias' career, delayed by his political exclusion from Attica, began after the careers of Critias, Alcibiades, and Theramenes had been terminated; his activity would thus be nearly contemporary with Isocrates' first speeches. But neither a chronology based on birth nor one based on career would seem to justify Lysias' postponement to a position after Isocrates in the *Brutus* sequence. Rather the arrangement serves to bring Isocrates closer to Gor-

19. Douglas, "Intellectual Background," p. 104, suggests that in *Brut.* 27 ("Periclem cuius scripta quaedam feruntur"), *feruntur* could mean either "are in circulation" or "are attributed." The latter sense is favored by the similar language of *Brut.* 205, where Cicero mentions and rejects as spurious "Sulpici orationes quae feruntur." Quintilian, who quotes *Brut.* 27 in 3. 1. 12, belittles the attributed speeches and supports those who believe that Pericles left no written oratory. According to H. Ll. Hudson-Williams ("Political Speeches in Athens," *CQ*, n.s. 1 [1951]: 68–73), it was exceptional for Athenian politicians of the fifth century to prepare speeches, which were expected to be impromptu and accordingly unlikely to be written up for publication. Cicero's assumption that Thucydides' style was typical of his age has the support of J. H. Finley ("The Origin of Thucydides' Style," *HSCP* 50 [1939]: 35–84; reprinted in *Three Essays on Thucydides* [Cambridge, Mass., 1967], pp. 55–117). Finley sees Thucydides' antitheses, abstractions, and grammatical variation as characteristic of Greek prose writing ca. 440–425 B.C.

20. F. Blass, *Die attische Beredsamkeit²*, 1:345, argues for a later date of birth: Lysias' visit to Thurii at age fifteen, he says, need not have been at the time of its foundation; and the fact that Lysias' career began in 403 suggests a later birthdate; so also K. J. Dover, *Lysias and the "Corpus Lysiacum"* (Berkeley, 1970), pp. 42–45. On the other hand, the political crises of the period, beginning with Athens' attack on his native Syracuse in 415, amply explain Lysias' absence from politics; and many scholars still accept the higher dating. Münzer, "Atticus als Geschichtsschreiber," p. 80, argues that Lysias owes his position in *Brutus* "weniger der Berücksichtigung seiner Zeit, als der seiner Bedeutung . . . wobei natürlich für Cicero die Rücksicht auf den Attizisten Brutus, den Verehrer des Lysias, massgebend ist." I would suggest that Cicero is not concerned to please Brutus by his treatment of Lysias (he makes no bones of attacking Lysias in *Brut.* 63–69): rather he reduces Lysias' importance, by postponing him to follow the full appraisal of Isocrates and by making his comment brief. Thus he enhances the prominence of Isocrates, whose characterization balances that of Demosthenes. Douglas, "Intellectual Background," p. 105, interprets the postponement of Lysias in slightly different terms: "He is firmly grouped with the great extant orators of the very late fifth and early fourth centuries." The difficulty is caused by Cicero's switch in *Brut.* 35 from chronological connection to connection by degrees of artistic development. Since Cicero later (*Brut.* 68 f., 293) matches Lysias with Cato as a kind of inspired forerunner of classicism, consistency requires him to keep Lysias distinct from Demosthenes and the group associated with Demosthenes in 36; this Cicero does implicitly through the contrast of *prope perfectus* and *plane perfectus*—as in his contrast between Myron and Polyclitus, the latter called *plane perfectus* in *Brut.* 70.

gias, his teacher, and the other Sophists, while reserving Lysias, as the *prope perfectus* of the immediately preclassical generation, to play foil to Demosthenes, the "plane perfectus . . . quoi nihil admodum desit" (*Brut.* 35).

In *De oratore* 2. 94 Isocrates is introduced as a comet newly arisen ("ecce tibi est exortus Isocrates"), and the exclamatory technique and vivid metaphor break the connection of succession and influence from the previous group. In *Brutus* also, Cicero suggests a break, inserting the rival traditions of Sophistic eloquence, headed by Gorgias, and Socratic dialectic, before he marks a return from the digression to the orators proper with the phrase, "exstitit iam senibus illis quos paulo ante diximus Isocrates" (*Brut.* 32). In fact, in both *De oratore* and *Brutus* Isocrates is recognized as an artist from outside the political tradition. Cicero cannot honestly proclaim him as a pupil or imitator of anyone except Gorgias.[21] But Isocrates was himself the strongest argument for the importance of evolution through imitation, because of his many and famous pupils[22] and because of his professed method of teaching by imitation.[23] It is in his treatment of Isocrates that Cicero sets out his most explicit statement that *imitatio* is the prime cause of stylistic growth (*De or.* 2. 94–95).

> Isocrates . . . cuius e ludo tamquam ex equo Troiano meri principes exierunt; sed eorum partim in pompa, partim in acie inlustres esse voluerunt. Atque et illi, Theopompi, Ephori, Philisti, Naucratae, multique alii naturis differunt, voluntate autem similes sunt et inter sese et magistri; et hi, qui se ad causas contulerunt, *ut* Demosthenes, Hyperides, Lycurgus, Aeschines, Dinarchus aliique complures, etsi inter se pares non fuerunt, tamen sunt omnes in eodem veritatis imitandae genere versati, quorum quam diu mansit imitatio, tam diu genus illud dicendi studiumque vixit; postea quam exstinctis eis omnis eorum memoria sensim obscurata est et evanuit, alia quaedam dicendi molliora ac remissiora genera viguerunt.

The pupils of Isocrates are divided into what we might call academics and statesmen. The former include the historians Theopompus, Ephorus,

21. Cicero is aware by the time of *Orator* (176) that Isocrates studied with Gorgias in Thessaly, but he may have learned this, along with his corrected attribution of rhythmical periods (*Orat.* 175), from recent reading. (J. E. Sandys' edition of *Orator* [Cambridge, 1885], ad loc., suggests Theophrastus' *Peri lexeos* as the source.) Since Gorgias himself was not in the political tradition of orator-statesmen, we cannot infer from Cicero's omission of the relationship at *De or.* 2. 93 that he did not know of Isocrates' association with Gorgias when he wrote *De oratore*.

22. From the third century when Hermippus of Smyrna, pupil of Callimachus and Peripatetic biographer, wrote his Περὶ τῶν τοῦ Ἰσοκράτους μαθητῶν (*FHG*, vol. 3, frags. 35–54), Isocrates' many pupils had been multiplied by critical tradition. Cicero elsewhere names Timotheus (*De or.* 3. 139, a passage introducing praise of Isocrates' other pupils), Ephorus and Theopompus (see n. 12), and Naucrates (*De or.* 3. 173; *Orat.* 172). [Plut.] *X orat.* 837C (vol. 10 of *Plutarch's "Moralia,"* trans. H. N. Fowler [Cambridge, Mass., 1960]) credits Isocrates with a hundred pupils, including Timotheus, Ephorus, Theopompus, and—"some say"—Hyperides and Isaeus; and he quotes a story that Isocrates rejected Demosthenes because he could not pay the full fee. In other lives [Plut.] also quotes Isocrates as teacher of Isaeus (839E has a lacuna, supplemented from 844B), Aeschines (840B, "as some say"), Lycurgus (841B), Demosthenes (844B, inconsistently with his own earlier version), and Hyperides (848E). Among the canonical ten orators only Dinarchus, notorious as an emulator of Demosthenes, escapes inclusion. According to Plut. *Demosth.* 5, Hermippus reported a story of Ctesibius that Demosthenes learned Isocrates' *techne* by borrowing notes from Isocrates' pupils. This kind of myth reflects the eagerness of later generations to exalt Isocrates' teaching.

23. *Against the Sophists* 18 and *Antidosis* 205–6, quoted on p. 12. See also Douglas, "Intellectual Background," p. 106, for Cicero's concern with Isocrates as a teacher in both *De oratore* and *Brutus*.

and Philistus of Syracuse (at *De or.* 2. 57 cited as an imitator of Thucydides), and the literary theorist Naucrates (known chiefly from *De or.* 3. 173, which reports him as crediting Isocrates with the invention of prose rhythm): these were men who had chosen epideictic writing, removed from the battlefield.[24] Set against them are the orators. The linking *ut* of line 4 mitigates the inclusion with Isocrates' pupils, Hyperides and Lycurgus, of others who had no direct relationship with him: Demosthenes, Aeschines, and the last in the canon of Attic orators, Dinarchus, whose first known speech occurred two years after Isocrates' death. For both groups Cicero emphasizes the differing natural aptitudes of the individual, modified by their shared artistic intentions. The epideictic writers, despite different temperaments, became similar to their teacher, and so incidentally to each other, because of their choice of model. The orators, although not all equally gifted, all practiced the same style of representing real life.

Cicero's argument has become less exact and more generalized: just as the concept of pupil has been extended to cover the whole range of orators from the next generation, so perhaps awareness of the radical differences between Demosthenes and Aeschines, or between each of them and Isocrates,[25] has led to the vaguer formulation, "in eodem veritatis imitandae genere versati" (line 6). Here the specification *in eodem genere* would seem to be parallel to *voluntate autem similes,* and to indicate their choice of the one Isocratic *genus* for their depiction of real life; while *veritatis imitandae,* rightly interpreted by the commentaries of Piderit–Harnecker and Wilkins as "representation of real life,"[26] is contrasted not with fiction, but with the remote but factual world of epideictic.[27] The orator deals with actuality,

24. The image of the public world of law and politics as a battlefield lends itself to contrast with the lesser worlds of epideictic, on the one hand, and the training school, on the other. Thus *pompa* denotes the display or parade of epideictic oratory, in which the orator's equipment is shown, not used. Compare *De or.* 1. 157, where the boy is to be brought "in agmen, in pulverem, in clamorem, in castra atque in aciem forensem . . . illa commentatio in veritatis lucem proferenda est"; or *Brut.* 37, describing the philsopher Demetrius of Phaleron as "non tam armis institutus quam palaestra." In *Orator* Isocratean epideictic is deprecated at 42: "verum haec ludorum atque pompae; nos autem in aciem dimicationemque veniamus." Quintilian uses the same distinction to contrast oratory and poetry in 10. 1. 29 ("nos vero armatos stare in acie") and to distinguish oratory from history in 10. 1. 31 ("totumque opus non ad actum rei pugnamque praesentem, sed ad memoriam posteritatis et ingenii famam componitur").

25. Cicero affirms these differences in *De or.* 3. 28 f. and *Brut.* 289: "nam quid est tam dissimile quam Demosthenes et Lysias? quam idem et Hyperides, quam horum omnium Aeschines?" The inconsistency between *De or.* 2. 94 and 3. 28 is more apparent than real. See p. 14.

26. W. Piderit–O. Harnecker (eds.), *Cicero: "De Oratore"*[6], vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1889; repr. Amsterdam, 1965), ad loc.: "in ihrer Darstellung des wirklichen Leben, wie es ist . . . im Gegensatz zu den Prunkrednern des genos epideiktikon und deren rhetorischer Ausschmuckung." A. S. Wilkins (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis "De oratore" libri tres* (Oxford, 1892; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), ad loc.: "style of representation of real life."

27. There are problems in interpreting both elements of this phrase. *Genus* could distinguish the genre(s) of public oratory from the genre(s) of epideictic writing along the lines of Cicero's *tria genera causarum* (*De or.* 1. 141; cf. 2. 43 f.). But this would be merely to declare that all the men named were orators. Rather we need emphasis on their common idiom, *genus dicendi.* The attachment of the explanatory gerundive is awkward, but it is paralleled by *Brut.* 146, "orator in hoc interpretandi explanandi edisserendi genere mirabilis" (identified by Douglas as the expository style, *Cicero's "Brutus,"* p. xxxiv). The difficulty in *veritatem imitari* arises from the ambiguity of *veritas.* Two other passages in *De oratore* (2. 34 and 3. 214) describe orators as maintaining or enacting reality (*veritatem suscipere, actor veritatis*) and contrast them with theatrical players who merely imitate it. This contrast of factual with fictional material has no relevance in discriminating between oratory and his-

with immediate, current events; and *veritas* here merely resumes the distinction of the previous sentence between the *acies* of public life and the *pompa* of the academic world: the pattern is the same as in *De oratore* 1. 157 (quoted n. 24). The orator-pupils of Isocrates employed the same method of representing reality because they copied the same model. The phrase confuses because Cicero has introduced something like the Aristotelian *mimesis* into a context concerned with the rhetorical type of imitation. But he surely has a motive: to affirm the validity and fidelity of imitation from artist to artist by describing the relationship between speech and life in the same terms. Imitation is reproduction, not pretense. As the sentence continues, Cicero returns to rhetorical *imitatio* and asserts its power to shape styles (*genera dicendi*). But he has moved on a generation, and Isocrates' pupils have become models; the objective genitive *eorum memoria* following (line 8) shows that *quorum imitatio* (line 7) is also objective: "as long as imitation of these speakers persisted, that style of oratory flourished; only with their death and the fading and blurring of their memory did slacker and more indulgent styles come into fashion." *Imitatio* depends on direct experience, or memory; when memory is damaged, *imitatio* becomes impossible and continuity ceases.

This sentence seems to set the break in continuity between Demosthenes and Dinarchus, on the one hand, and Demochares and Demetrius of Phaleron, regent of Athens from 317–307, on the other. These two are hardly more distant in time from Demosthenes than Dinarchus, but their success belongs to the era of Macedonian domination, so that politics reinforce the generation gap.[28] However there are signs of a petitio principii: the decline in quality is apparent to Cicero, so it is convenient to imply a break in the tradition. Cicero's interest in *imitatio* as a source of continuity and development centers on Isocrates; and the successive generations are more slackly connected, until he can stand on more familiar ground with the state of oratory in Antonius' heyday—the time of Cicero's youth—in which all Asia is bent on imitating Menecles and Hierocles of Alabanda.

In some ways this historical sequence is better handled in *Brutus*, where Lysias is postponed and set in direct comparison with Demosthenes. Indeed

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tory. The superior "reality" of oratory can only derive from its actuality or immediacy, as in Suet. *Rhet.* 1. 33: "veteres controversiae aut ex historiis trahebantur . . . aut ex veritate ac re, si qua forte recens accidisset."

Douglas ("Intellectual Background," p. 114) has suggested a transference of critical terminology from the visual arts, "in which the achievement of *veritatis imitatio* marks the high peak." It carries an implication of classical perfection to be contrasted with the *molliora ac remissiora genera* which followed the fifth-century acme. A translation along these lines might be "in the same style of perfect realism," but Douglas himself sees the difficulty when he comments, "True *veritas* (whatever that could conceivably be in oratory). . . ." The antithesis of idealism and realism is not transferable to different stylistic levels in a purely verbal art.

28. By the dating of *OCD²*, Aeschines (397–322?), Lycurgus (390?–325/4), Hyperides (389–322), and Demosthenes (384–322) represent one generation; Dinarchus (360?–290), Demochares (360–275), and Demetrius of Phaleron (350?, but began political life in 325/4) the generation of their sons. But Dinarchus made his first speech in 336 and actually accused Demosthenes in 324; whereas Demetrius' career depended on his elevation by Cassander in 317, and Demochares did not become powerful until he was over fifty, in 307. If Cicero is dating the orator-statesmen by their earliest known oratory, his chronology is consistent.

Cicero has made Demosthenes central, by describing his style fully before associating with him, not only Hyperides and the lesser contemporaries, but also the younger group represented by Dinarchus and the new figure of Demades (not in *De or.* 2. 95). The break in tradition and beginning of decay with Demetrius is extenuated by exaggerating the time interval ("successit his senibus adulescens," *Brut.* 37) and by emphasizing the impractical nature of his philosophical training ("non tam armis institutus quam palaestra . . . processerat . . . e Theophrasti doctissimi hominis umbraculis," ibid.). The further decline after Demetrius is conveniently postponed to the second version[29] of oratorical history, which emphasizes outside cultural influences and blames Asianism squarely on geographical and anthropological factors.

Cicero was less self-conscious about Asianism in 55 B.C., and he ends the account of *De oratore* without reservations about the merits of contemporary tradition, urging Sulpicius, or whoever wishes to achieve a resemblance to the traditional form, to seek it by intensive practice and above all by written composition. Although Antonius adds as a courtesy to his present company that some speakers, such as Caesar Strabo and Cotta, or the absent Curio, have succeeded in forming their chosen style without imitating any model ("suapte natura quod velint consequantur," 98), Cicero's verdicts on these orators in *Brutus*[30] show that he considers them only modified successes, falling short of the power and versatility of the *plane perfectus.* But in the earlier work, tradition, and consequently imitation, has met with no serious challenge: the modifications in *Brutus* bespeak Cicero's urgent reaction to the challenges that arose with Calvus and continued after his death.

We leave this discussion in *De oratore* 2 with the impression that, for Cicero, imitation succeeds in proportion to its closeness to the model. Is this what Cicero intends? Is this what we normally understand by imitation? If so, what will be the artistic consequences?

Dictionaries reflecting modern usage generally define the act of imitation in terms of the verb "imitate": to try to be the same as, to follow the example of, to reproduce (in form, color, etc.), to make a duplicate of, to copy.[31] These definitions imply the aim of being as like as possible to the original, so that any modification of the original, even if it is bigger or better, is a failure, qua imitation. With this connotation, imitation will only produce growth and evolution in a technique by accident, and successful imitation will obstruct development. Did the ancient rhetorical theory, then, understand something different by *mimesis/imitatio?*

We have seen that Isocrates was Cicero's paradigm for the value of *imitatio,* and he himself reports of *De oratore* that it combines all the rhetorical

29. *Brut.* 39–48 (or perhaps 51).

30. Caesar Strabo, see *Brut.* 177; Cotta, *Brut.* 200, especially the reservation, "etsi id melius est quod splendidius ac magnificentius tamen in bonis omnia quae summa sunt iure laudantur." The verdict on Curio (the consul of 76) is more extensive and severe in condemning his lack of technique: cf. 213, "neminem . . . cognovi . . . tam indoctum, tam rudem."

31. I quote from Webster's *Twentieth Century Dictionary*[2] (Cleveland, 1956), whose entry seems to be based on the three main headings of the *OED.*

teaching of both Aristotle and Isocrates.[32] How did Isocrates understand *mimesis* as an element in rhetorical training? Two passages can be used to throw light on his approach to *mimesis*. In the speech *Against the Sophists*, he argues that "the teacher should provide in himself so good a model that the pupils who take on his imprint and are able to imitate him[33] instantly show in their speaking more grace and charm than is found in the others." The key metaphor here, ἐκτυποῦν,[34] is properly used of reproduction of a die or seal in wax or some other mold—a medium in which a faithful likeness is to be expected and can be mass-produced. That this is no aberration is shown by his statement in *Antidosis* 205–6:

> We think those men the most skilled experts in all arts and crafts who produce pupils as like each other in workmanship as possible. It will be obvious that the same thing applies in the case of philosophy. Whoever enjoy a real guide[35] with good judgment will be found to have such similar oratorical talent that it would be apparent to everyone that they had enjoyed the same rhetorical training. Yet if they had not undergone the same conditioning, or been offered the same technical training, they could not have achieved this likeness.

Isocrates then attributes this close resemblance (which he presents as a desirable effect and proof of the teacher's success) to the pupils' practice in copying, just as his teacher Gorgias had trained his pupils by giving them model speeches to learn by heart.[36] In this tradition the teacher creating the new orator aims to reproduce his own excellences. But there is a difference between Isocrates and his predecessors, because he is stressing the responsibility of the teacher to offer the highest standards. (In much the same way the *Auctor ad Herennium* [4. 10] insists that the teacher should be able to compose all his own examples, or at least provide examples from a single model.) Although such an attitude may seem to resist development

32. *Fam.* 1. 9. 23: "abhorrent enim a communibus praeceptis, atque omnem antiquorum et Aristoteliam et Isocratiam rationem oratoriam complectuntur."

33. Isoc. 13. 18: τοὺς ἐκτυπωθέντας καὶ μιμήσασθαι δυναμένους.

34. On the *tupos* image in Platonic *mimesis*, see McKeon, "Concept of Imitation," pp. 124, 126–27. His examples show that ἐκτυποῦν is one of a group of words from the plastic arts used extensively by Plato, both for imitation and for memory. The use of ἀπομάττειν as a metaphor of copying by Aeschylus in Ar. *Frogs* 1040 shows that the image was already associated with literary representation before Plato, and should perhaps be credited to the Sophists. The soul of man is a matrix of clay or wax (ἐκμαγεῖον, *Tht.* 191C) receiving the impression of its experiences (cf. *Tht.* 194D–E, 195). Plato's imagery of memory survives in Dionysius, both in his formal definition (*Peri mimeseos* frag. 3. 28 U–R): μίμησίς ἐστιν ἐνέργεια διὰ τῶν θεωρημάτων ἐκματτομένη τὸ παράδειγμα) and in his metaphorical praises of the successful eclectic imitator whose achievement will be οὐκ ἐξίτηλον χρόνῳ γενησομένην εἰκόνα τυποῦν (frag. 6. 31. 417 fin. U–R). As for Cicero, he makes explicit the metaphor of wax for memory in *De or.* 2. 354, but the analogy there is between the artificial organization of memory landscapes and the wax tablets of formal notetaking. More significant is the link between memory and imitation made in our passage, *De or.* 2. 95, where the fading metaphors of *obscurare* and *evanescere* show that Cicero conceived imitation as a memory-based process in the same Platonic tradition. The metaphor of the wax imprint echoes literary theory and is applied, not only to imitation, but to style, the product of imitation, in *De or.* 3. 177; Quint. 10. 5. 7; and Pliny *Ep.* 7. 9. 11.

35. Isocrates' word is *hegemōn;* we may compare Antonius' claim in *De or.* 2. 87 to be a guide (*dux*) and his frequent use of imagery based on *vias* (*itinera, locos*) *monstrare* in the section 2. 152–74.

36. Arist. *Soph. El.* 34. 183b38–184a1: ὁμοῖά τις ἦν ἡ παίδευσις τῇ Γοργίου πραγματείᾳ—λόγους γὰρ οἱ μὲν ῥητορικοὺς οἱ δ' ἐρωτητικοὺς ἐδίδοσαν ἐκμανθάνειν, εἰς οὓς πλειστάκις ἐμπίπτειν ᾠήθησαν ἑκάτεροι τοὺς ἀλλήλων λόγους.

and assume that all deviations from the master's own style must be a falling away, we should recognize Isocrates' own liberalization in practice of the tradition he inherited. For he goes on to describe the teacher in *Antidosis* 208 as possessing both knowledge he has taken over and what he has independently discovered,[37] so improving, we may infer, on his own instructors; again he allows for variation in the teacher's handling of different pupils— so that we have both growth between generations, and controlled divergence within the generation. The famous anecdote contrasting Isocrates' methods of training Ephorus and Theopompus shows that he was not so rigid, and Cicero himself has deliberately presented this story as the climax of his account of individual styles in *De oratore* 3. It is time to analyze his argument in these chapters (3. 26–37).

He lets Crassus begin with the variety of sensations, of sounds, or of sights, equal in beauty but different (he might even have added incommensurate) in kind. The argument leads through diversity of sights to diversity in the visual arts (the personal idioms of painters and sculptors), then to diversity in voice and language, such that men of acknowledged excellence are praised for different styles: "in dispari tamen genere laudentur." Here *genus* marks not the literary genre nor the idiom of a generation, but personal style. It is repeatedly applied in this way, to the *dissimile scribendi genus* (27) of the three Greek tragedians and their Latin counterparts, then to the idiom (*suo genere*, 28) of the Roman orators of the past and of the rising orators, Cotta and Sulpicius ("quid tam inter se dissimile, quid tam suo in genere praestans," 31). The *genera dicendi* of Caesar Strabo (30), of Antonius (32 and 33), and by implication of Crassus himself, are described and distinguished, leading to the summation in 34: the difference of merit between one and another of those present is a matter of *facultas*, not *genus*, since everything is praiseworthy which is *in suo genere perfectum*.[38]

Concentrating on oratorical identities, Cicero here brings his argument to the extreme conclusion: there must be as many *genera dicendi* as there are speakers. Then he faces an objection: how can men of different personal idioms be the product of the same *praecepta* and training? This might be called a different approach to the problem of imitation and change, and his answer lies in the recognition and exploitation of a speaker's nature. The theme has already been prepared by Cicero's reference in 28 to *oratorum studia atque naturae*.[39] The two elements of personality (or personal talent) and stylistic choice combine to create the personal idiom, and the supreme teacher will direct the pupil where his natural bent leads him (35). We are

37. τὰ μὲν παρειληφότα τὰ δ' αὐτὸν εὑρηκότα. I have been convinced by Dr. Erika Rummel of this important difference between Isocrates' own practice and the traditional methods which he recalls to his readers. Dr. Rummel's work in progress on Isocrates' educational principles shows that, while it was in Isocrates' interest to appear conservative in method, his class techniques were both calculated and flexible.

38. The argument is that, since it is possible to be perfect of one's kind in any *genus*, any actual speaker who is less than perfect falls short of the potential of his own *genus*. A similar distinction is made less successfully in *De opt. gen.* 4 ("ut alius melius quam alius concedendum est; verum id fit non genere, sed gradu") and again in 6 ("appellabuntur omnes oratores, ut pictores appellantur etiam mali, nec generibus inter se, sed facultatibus different").

39. The equivalent of *natura* and *voluntas* in *Brut.* 285, *Orat.* 52, etc. See n. 15.

back to Isocrates, whose pupils can emerge from the school of the same artist and teacher, supreme in his own personal style, yet show themselves both different from each other and deserving of praise—like Ephorus and Theopompus. As the details of the anecdote show, Isocrates is not rigid: he acknowledges the existence of more than one "good" style and recognizes that a speaker's idiom is formed from the blending of his own nature and the training he has been given. Cicero's account of Sulpicius' change of teacher (2. 89) implies the same point. To realize the maximum potential of the young orator, a fusion of his natural tendencies (*natura, ingenium, indoles*) with the right kind of imitation is needed. Sulpicius' temperament suits him to the imitation of a particular *genus dicendi*, that of Crassus rather than of Antonius. By blending imitation of Crassus' *genus* with his own talents, Sulpicius produces a new compound, his mature *genus*.

Yet it should be noticed that this formulation has reconciled the ideal of imitation with the fact of change only at the risk of denying the *singula prope genera dicendi* of each *aetas*, an intrinsic part of Ciceronian theory. He has acknowledged a substantive difference between the *genera* of Antonius and Crassus, although they are men of the same generation and social group. This inconsistency can be solved by a refinement of terminology; and in 3. 34, faced with the reductio ad absurdum, "quot oratores totidem paene reperiantur genera dicendi," Cicero quickly presents the reformulation, "innumerabiles quasi formae figuraeque dicendi, specie dispares, genere laudabiles." By introducing *forma* to convey the individual χαρακτήρ, and the additional term *species*,[40] Cicero can avoid the potential contradiction, leaving himself the option of describing the difference between Antonius and Crassus as one of *species*. Yet he stops short of making this point explicit, and, as I will show, it was left to his successors in the tradition to present a satisfactory formulation of the relationship between individuals, generations, and their inheritors.

As for the immediate issue of differentiating Antonius' idiom from Crassus', Cicero might have explained their idioms in another way reconcilable with the practice of *imitatio*, if he had attributed the differences to imitation of rival models from the Roman forum of their youth. But he does not associate either Crassus or Antonius with any teacher or model.[41] He may have

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40. Cicero identifies *forma* with χαρακτήρ at *Orat.* 36 and 134. In *Orator*, *species* is a synonym of *forma*, but both concepts are more important to Cicero's argument, because he is viewing oratory statically in its present, evolved sophistication. Hence *species* in *Orator* is the full equivalent of the Greek εἶδος or ἰδέα, and the *perfectae eloquentiae species* of *Orat.* 9 (cf. 18) corresponds to the Platonic ideal or form. Cicero does not yet employ *species* as the technical equivalent of εἶδος in classification (this terminology is first adopted in *Top.* 30). The nontechnical nature of *species* is confirmed by three instances of classification in *De oratore* (1. 189–90, 2. 166–68, and 3. 111 f.), which analyze in terms of *genera* and *partes*. But 1. 189 ("genus autem id est quod sui similis communione quadam, specie autem differentis . . . complectitur partes") shows how *species* ("appearance" or "shape"), as the respect in which the *partes* were distinct, would come to be used in classification. In 3. 34 *species* is merely a synonym of *forma* or *nota*, as in 3. 115; it is adopted for the sake of variation.

41. In *Off.* 2. 47, speaking of Crassus' early debut as an orator, Cicero comments, "non aliunde mutuatus est, sed sibi ipse peperit maximam laudem"; this need not be a literary judgment, but in fact so precocious an orator cannot have undergone the usual extent of training by imitation in either political or rhetorical arts.

lacked historical evidence, or have thought the details irrelevant to the dialogue situation. More important is the fact that such an attribution would merely have transferred the problem of Sulpicius' *genus* to an earlier stage and would have weakened the emphasis he is seeking on the unified, single-stream progression of rhetorical Latin toward its full scope and versatility. There is still some inconsistency in Cicero's use of the term *genus dicendi*, which has varying degrees of generality even within the single section 2. 87–97 under discussion, but the value of the evolutionary sense, "idiom of a generation," to literary theory may be seen as a compensation for the difficulties of terminology which he leaves unresolved.

The most important element of this evolutionary theory, the assumption of a characteristic oratory for each generation, based largely on imitation of existing models, recurs in the literary chapters of Velleius Paterculus (1. 16–18), and in the arguments of Messalla, the representative of classicism in Tacitus' *Dialogus*.

Velleius is a particularly interesting case. Nothing is known of his actual teachers,[42] but his interpretation of rhetorical history is clearly in the tradition of *De oratore*. He opens his discussion with the proposition that the best talents (*ingenia*) of any art have coincided in time and in type: "in eandem formam et in idem artati temporis congruere spatium" (16. 2). He has added a new element to the Ciceronian theory: where Cicero assumes the art of oratory and is concerned only with those adhering to it, Velleius argues that men of talent have chosen their art form according to their circumstances and the condition of the genre. He limits excellence in Attic oratory to the age of Isocrates (16. 5): "quid ante Isocratem, quid post eius auditores eorumque discipulos clarum in oratoribus fuit?" Like Cicero (*De or.* 2. 94–5) he extends this acme to two generations, covering the pupils of Isocrates and those who learned from them. As in *De oratore*, but not *Brutus* or *Orator*, Isocrates is prominent, Demosthenes not yet the model and counterpart of Cicero. Velleius' account of Roman oratory limits its full achievement to the time of Cicero (17. 3) and explains this narrow period of success in terms of imitation. Talent is fed by competition, and, whether it be jealousy or admiration that fosters imitation, the desire of individuals to succeed raises the achievement of an art as far as its natural peak. Only then, since it is difficult to remain still at the level of perfection, what can no longer advance, naturally recedes (17. 6). The last sentence, predicating decay of the fully evolved organism, is a feature without precedent in Cicero's rhetorical writings, which could however have been inspired by his words of regret in *Tusculans* 2. 6: "atque oratorum quidem laus ita ducta ab humili venit ad summum,[43] ut iam quod natura fert in omnibus fere rebus, senescat,

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42. On Velleius' discussion, see Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World*, pp. 456–59. F. Della Corte, "I Giudizi Letterari di Velleio Paterculo," *RFIC* 15 (1937): 154–59, reports that scholars have seen a conflict between Velleius' approval of Isocrates and his Ciceronian content; but it is the choice of Isocrates, rather than Demosthenes, as the Greek ideal which brings Velleius closest to *De oratore*.

43. Cicero's language merely continues his expression of the concept of growth and acme as it is found at the focal point of *Brutus:* "ut dicendi latine prima maturitas in qua aetate exstitisset posset notari et intelligeretur iam ad summum paene esse perductam" (161).

brevique tempore ad nihilum ventura videatur." Decline is a first-century issue with implications that demand a separate study.[44] In other respects, however, Velleius can be said to conform to the pattern of *De oratore*.

But Velleius' theme does not call for an account of the relationship between contemporaries; such an account is provided by Messalla, in what may be the last version of the theory to be composed.[45] Messalla argues in terms of *aetates:* just as the height of Attic oratory was achieved by Demosthenes, and those who came closest to him were orators of his *aetas* (Aeschines, Hyperides, Lysias, whose seniority is here disregarded, and Lycurgus), so Cicero surpassed all his contemporaries, but they in turn were superior to all earlier or subsequent speakers. The contemporaries are extended from Caesar to Asinius Pollio, their radical differences identified and reconciled by the *species/genus* distinction:

> Nec refert quod inter se *specie* differunt, cum *genere* consentiant . . . omnes . . . eandem sanitatem eloquentiae ferunt, ut si omnium pariter libros in manum sumpseris scias, quamvis in *diversis ingeniis*, esse quandam *iudicii ac voluntatis similitudinem et cognationem*. [*Dial.* 25]

Their individual *species* can be attributed to their *diversa ingenia*; their common *genus* is seen as a product of choice. *Consentiant* anticipates the more specific words *iudicium* (taste) and *voluntas*, which we have seen are associated with the choice of model for imitation and the pursuit of a given style.[46] In these sentences Tacitus presents through Messalla a consistent account of the theory of evolution through imitation; it would be dangerous to assume that he was himself committed to this interpretation of rhetorical history, but it is noteworthy that the theory goes without contradiction in the ensuing chapters.

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44. A sequel to this article (cf. n. 11) will consider Quintilian's attitude to imitation, in the light of the apparent decline of eloquence in his day, and will relate his attitude to the comments of the elder and younger Seneca and the later generation of Pliny and Tacitus.

45. Tac. *Dial.* 25–26.

46. On this chapter of the *Dialogus*, see A. Michel, *Le "Dialogue des orateurs" de Tacite et la philosophie de Cicéron* (Paris, 1962), p. 104 and n. 5. Oddly Michel, p. 106, sees not chap. 25 but the arguments of Aper in chap. 18 as growing from the *genus/species* distinction of *De or.* 3. 34. The conflict arises because Aper has substituted a relativistic for an evolutionary approach, appraising oratory by its capacity to satisfy the tastes of its own generation.