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# CICERO'S *ORATOR* AND HORACE'S *ARS POETICA*

This paper seeks to answer two questions and, in the course of the argument, these questions will be seen to be connected. My purpose in asking them is to throw some fresh light on two great works of Roman literature. First I ask in what sense, if any, not only Cicero's *Orator* but also Horace's *Ars Poetica* should be said to offer what they often are said to offer — r h e t o r i c a l ideas, principles, and theories. On the basis of an answer to that question, I, secondly, reformulate an old problem — the problem of the sources of the two works.

On the first topic I would say by way of introduction that the word ' rhetorical ' in modern parlance has a variety of meanings. One of them is that used by modern writers, literary critics and scholars alike, when they describe ancient literary criticism as rhetorical. By that word I take them to mean that, unlike themselves, the ancient rhetoricians considered diction as something superadded to a predetermined subject, and that Aristotle, in both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, perpetuated this distinction between content and verbal form which they regard as unreal, especially in connexion with poetry.

As for the second topic some scholars believe that the two works under consideration are so similar in so many ways that it would be reasonable to infer that Horace in writing the *Ars Poetica* relied for its plan and its basic concepts on the *Orator*. To make this statement amounts also to saying something about the kinds of work the *Orator* and the *Ars* are, as well as adopting a definite kind of ' source criticism '. Moreover, since the material used by both Cicero and Horace is avowedly Greek, the more closely you tie the *Ars* to the *Orator*, the more you detach Horace from *exemplaria Graeca*.

An American scholar, G.C. Fiske, acquired some merit when, in a small book, *Cicero's De Oratore and Horace's Ars Poetica*, he argued that the *De Oratore* contains a number of ideas that are basic to that work and

are paralleled in Horaces' *Ars* (Fiske's book appeared posthumously in the *University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature* of 1929; it was prepared for publication by a junior colleague of his, Mary A. Grant, who in fact had brought together most of the evidence).

Fiske and Grant called these ideas 'rhetorical' — with what justification we shall see later. Foremost among them, they thought, was Cicero's and Horace's contention that 'philosophy' (according to Cicero) and *Socraticae chartae* (according to Horace) should be regarded as a foundation for rhetoric and poetry respectively. Next in generality came *decorum*, τὸ πρέπον or 'appropriateness', which has some importance in the *De Oratore* and great importance in the *Ars*. Yet, as far as Cicero's dialogue is concerned, it is not deeply affected in character or layout by these notions. For the *De Oratore* is laid out entirely in accordance with the five technical 'parts of rhetoric', Book II dealing largely with *inuentio*, subject-matter, though *dispositio* and *memoria* get their mention, and Book III largely with *elocutio*, and *actio* attached.

Book I lays the Roman basis in the life of Crassus' and Antonius' period, of which Cicero knew enough at second rather than first hand to get the cultural colours right. Greek rhetoric has to be established as an intellectual force in the leading Roman circles. The reference to Platonic *mimesis* in a famous letter to Atticus (4, 16, 3) is not unjust. The same letter says that the next two books contain 'technical rhetoric', τεχνολογίαν *habent*.

Some ten years later, in 46, Cicero produced the *Orator*, which stands beside his earlier work as Plato's *Politicus* beside the *Republic*, or, to talk in later terminology, as the *artifex* beside the *ars*. The procedure is very much adapted to the historical occasion. No longer is it the author's concern to naturalize Greek rhetorical theory in Rome. Political contingencies had severely curtailed the public scope of oratory. To that curtailment the *Orator*, unlike the roughly contemporary *Brutus*, pays no attention. Cicero talks as though oratory was still what it had been. Atticism had become a fashion. The *Orator* had the avowed purpose to persuade Brutus, and the young generation that felt like Brutus, not only that Atticist attacks on Cicero himself could be warded off, but that modern Atticizing dangerously narrowed the scope of the art. It is a fascinating historical question to ask who was right, but not my question now. To make his point Cicero had to show that oratory consisted of more styles than the one, Attic, style. Rather than comment on the variety of styles fit for different purposes, he adopted the idea, which perhaps had been applied before him to Demosthenes and which he now applies also to himself (*Or.* 102-11) —

the idea of putting different weapons in one hand, the hand of the perfect *artifex: in summo oratore fingendo* (*Or.* 7), *talem informabo qualis fortasse nemo fuit* (*ibid.*).

When I say weapons I mean the three celebrated Peripatetic (some think Theophrastean) styles, high, plain, and middle; and the criterion for how to wield them is provided by our old Peripatetic friend, τὸ πρέπον. It will be seen therefore that the same American scholars, Fiske and Grant, were on a better wicket when, in an earlier book (*Cicero's Orator and Horace's Ars Poetica*, «Harvard Studies» 35, 1924), they tried to prove the presence, both in Cicero's rhetorical theory and in Horace's poetic theory, of certain general Greek ideas. For, to take only the one example to which I have already alluded, the *Orator*, unlike its predecessor, the *De Oratore*, does make effective use of *decorum*, ' propriety'. This use affects the course and structure of his argument, because it is by their appropriateness to specific occasions, law-suits, and audiences, that the styles are distinguished and applied (*Or.* 76-101, applied to kinds of forensic or deliberative oratory 102-12). While it remains true that the *Orator* offers a more specialized argument than the *De Oratore*, and while the same remains true as regards the boundary lines drawn between oratorical style on the one hand, and philosophical, sophistic, historical, poetic on the other, all these disquisitions are firmly slotted into the traditional 5-part scheme of the rhetoricians. For the area in which the perfect speaker finds himself placed in the *Orator* is the practical oratory of public life; not even the epideictic genus qualifies for inclusion (*Or.* 37-42). And this area has the five traditional aspects already noted in the *De Oratore: inuentio, collocatio, actio, elocutio* and *memoria* (*Or.* 43, 54), although what Cicero here professes himself to be interested in, and what, he maintains, his addressee Brutus had requested, is a disquisition on *elocutio*, diction (50-3).

Precisely the same judgement must apply to the three functions of *docere, delectare,* and *flectere*, to inform, give pleasure, and sway. It is true that a glance at Horace's *aut prodesse uolunt aut delectare poetae/aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere uitae* (*A.P.* 333-4) shows that at any rate two of these *officia* had a wider implication. But Cicero's procedure puts beyond doubt that, when all allowance for his independence of mind has been made, the material on which he drew was adapted to oratory and he uses it for this purpose. In addition, *flectere*, to sway, could apply to any art but is in fact related to a practical purpose alone. Such a practical purpose has no place in the arts, nor, for that matter does *flectere* appear in the *Ars Poetica*. Hence the *Orator* relates the three *officia* to the three styles; there are as many *officia* as there are oratorical styles: *sed quot officia oratoris tot*

*sunt genera dicendi; subtile in probando* (the plain style), *modicum in delectando* (the middle style), *uehemens in flectendo* (the high style); *in quo uno uis omnis oratoris est* (*Or.* 69) — and that is *flectere* for a practical purpose.

Now the time has come to look at the reverse of the coin. Let us compare and contrast how the allegedly rhetorical criticism of Horace's *Ars Poetica* affects the structure, the overall thought, of that great work. Clearly Horace could have judged that the five traditional partitions of rhetorical teaching were no less germane to the criticism of poetry than Cicero did judge them to be germane for strictly rhetorical criticism. Had he judged so, he would have woven *inuentio dispositio elocutio actio memoria* as main strands into the fabric of the *A.P.*, or, at least, he would have found other ways of marking their importance. And so likewise with the three rhetorical styles — elevated, middle, and plain. So likewise with *decorum*, appropriateness, in its relation to the styles. And so, finally, with the laying of a philosophical base for poetry, as Cicero had laid it for oratory.

What in fact did Horace do? Obviously since his concern was not oratory, he could dispense which *actio* and *memoria*; they were of use only for the public speaker. However, the remaining triad of subject-matter, diction, and arrangement is not only used, but is used to shape a large part of the *Ars Poetica*. For after an initial run-up, which deals with art and unity, Horace (at line 40) promises success in diction and arrangement — *facundia* and *lucidus ordo* — to the poet who has chosen his subject (*materiam* 38, *res* 40) according to his ability. 'Arrangement', *lucidus ordo*, he deals with straightaway, but only in order to dismiss it, in a manner both masterly and curt (*A.P.* 42-4). This leaves two members of the quintet — *inuentio*, the finding of subject-matter, and *elocutio* or diction, in Cicero's terminology, *res* and *facundia* in Horace's.

Of this pair Horace takes *facundia* first and, although he starts off in general terms, pronouncing on the use of words, immediately after (at. 73) he ties it so closely to poetic forms that it is no longer diction *per se* but the stylistic aspect of poems he puts before us. Different types of poetry are rehearsed according to their metre (epic, elegiac, iambic, drama comic or tragic, and lyric) and then he talks about the style and tone of poetic drama (up to 118). Then comes subject-matter, in drama and epic, with character-types attached, followed by various facets of the dramatic art (up to 294), about two thirds of the work). It seems undeniable in spite of similarities with the procedure in the *Orator*, especially in regard to appropriateness, *decorum*, and to the general theory about the use of words, that Horace is putting forward a theory of style and subject - matter which is wholly attached to poetry. It is impossible to squeeze it out of

the *Orator*. The reason for that impossibility is simple. Such theory of rhetoric as the *Orator* offers is developed in the service of public oratory (at a time, incidentally, when it had, to all intents and purposes, disappeared), and its five departments and its three styles. But such theory of poetry as the *Ars Poetica* offers is developed in the service of poetry and its genres. Each called for a different argument and, in spite of certain similarities (which will have to be accounted for), Horace's argument can be got out of Cicero's as little as Cicero's out of Horace's.

If this conclusion has rightly been shown to apply to the introductory portion of the *Ars Poetica* and to the portions on poetic style and content, it applies indubitably to its last part. For this addresses itself to the notion of the *poeta perfectus*: " what nourishes and forms the poet, what is or is not fit (for him), where does his right or wrong course lead ? " (307-8 *quid alat formetque poetam, | quid deceat quid non, quo uirtus quo ferat error*). Thus a part of Horace's work is concerned with the ideal poet, and differs in two respects from Cicero's *Orator*, since the *Orator* as a whole outlines such an ideal figure, and since that figure is *orator*, and not *poeta, perfectus*. Again it is true that there are similarities, which will have to be accounted for, such as Cicero's triad of teaching, entertaining, and swaying (tied at *Or.* 69 to the three styles) and Horace's pair of teaching and entertaining - although a pair is not a triad, and it is not tied to specific styles (*A.P.* 333-44).

Here then are two works by two great writers. Each has his own procedure which is in turn related to his subject, rhetoric or poetry. In spite of their very personal procedures, neither author can be taken to create *ex nihilo* the fields within which they write. They put an individual construction, and the preconceptions of their own periods, on existing and highly sophisticated traditions. One tradition is that of the theory of rhetoric, as it had been worked out by the rhetoricians and by the philosophers, especially Aristotele and his successors. The other is the theory of poetics as it had been laid down in Aristotle's *Poetics* and, subsequently, been worked over by the philosophers and literary critics of the Hellenistic age. Although the two traditions often seem to run parallel to each other, their applications to rhetoric and poetry are quite different, and had been for centuries before Cicero and Horace.

One feature in which the theories of rhetoric and poetry seem to resemble each other embodies the distinction between content and diction. When Horace makes that distinction, he makes it as attached to poetics not to rhetoric. There is no sign that it is he who is transforming Cicero's or indeed any rhetorical theory into a poetic one; comparison with the *Orator* highlights the difference between a ready-made poetic and a ready-

made rhetorical theory. The same applies to the curious way in which certain general problems of poetic criticism are discussed under the head of 'the poet'; again the *Orator* shows up the difference. That this was the case could have been inferred at any time from an attentive reading of the *Ars Poetica*. It was so inferred in 1905 in a famous article by Eduard Norden (*Die Composition und Litteraturgattung der Horazischen Epistula ad Pisones*, «Hermes» 40). What we have learned from our comparison with the *Orator* largely supports his view, notwithstanding a number of faults, which, as tends to be the case, attracted more attention than his true assertions. One of the minor mistakes was the undue stress that Norden placed on the pair *ars-artifex*. Even before C. Jensen, in the first two decades of this century, discovered the new evidence which revolutionized our knowledge of Hellenistic literary theory — and that includes Neoptolemus of Parium, Horace's reputed source —, it could have been seen that what lies behind Horace's structure (from verse 465 onward) is the triad *poema-poesis-poeta*, although not the technical terminology of *poema* and *poesis*. That fact does not strike me as surprising: Horace is not fond of technical language.

Having gone over this ground carefully, and I believe sceptically, in my *Prolegomena* to Horace, I do not see any need for repeating what I have there said (*Horace on Poetry*, vol. I, pt. II, ch. 1). All that needs to be remembered in order to appreciate the result of our comparison with the *Orator* is, 1) *poema* denotes any small-scale poem but also what is thought to make such a poem poetic, that is style, diction, metre; 2) *poesis* denotes any poem, especially of the large scale of epic or drama, but also what makes such a poem different from a *poema*, that is its subject and structure; and 3) *poeta*, the kind of person who can master the art described by *poema* and *poesis* but also what makes such a person, his talent, training and aims.

It would be unfair to Norden's important paper if it were unduly censured for the assertion that a binary division rather than a triad underlies the main portion of the *Ars Poetica* from the 40ies onwards. For the simpler division into *ars* and *artifex* seems ever more fundamental, is paralleled elsewhere, and could have been obtained by opposing *poema* and *poesis* together to *poeta*. Nevertheless this is not the case, although it is still often said to be so. As far as Horace is concerned, the triadic structure is obtained by a major break at line 119. There *famam* and *finge* mark the 'new subject' (of *poesis*), and cannot be accommodated otherwise. The break is mitigated, in the poet's well-known manner, by a 'gliding transition'; but so is the break at line 295, where *artifex* or *poeta* is introduced. At the later point *limae labor*, or *ars*, is used to effect the transition from Roman

poetry to 'the poet' who handles the art, and at the earlier point 'character' is deployed in the same way, first character as it affects style, and next as it affects *fama* and *fingere*. The reason why a triadic division is preferred to a binary one (if one wishes to speculate about reasons) may be surmised. Whoever designed the triad, which is first known from Neoptolemus of Parium, may have wished to place an Aristotelian emphasis on the large unities of epic and drama which is known from the *Poetics*; for such an emphasis accounts for splitting off *poesis* from the rest.

Everything we read in the *Ars Poetica* suggests that Horace himself sympathized with that emphasis, in spite of the fact that he was a poet of lyric and *satura*, not of epic or drama. On the other hand it would be hard to find this tendency anywhere in Cicero's rhetorical writings, not because Cicero disliked epic or drama (he cited either often enough with evident approval), but because his argument was of a different kind. This observation brings out that, in spite of some interesting similarities, Cicero's and Horace's basic theories differed in their nature and purpose.

If this is so, it may be easier now to determine where Fiske and Grant's researches have some virtue and where they go astray — *quo uirtus, quo ferat error*. The two scholars did not do themselves justice because they never clarified what they were trying to prove. The outcome was a fog which covered not only their *error* but also their *uirtus*. When Fiske analyzed the *Orator* in 1924 he spoke for both researchers in summing up his arguments in the following words (« Harvard Studies » 35, 73-4); " I have not thought to prove that the *Orator* is the exclusive source of the *Ars Poetica*, or to insist on any exact verbal influence binding Cicero's work to that of Horace. It has rather been my effort to show that the *Orator* is simply one of the cloud of rhetorical witnesses which encompasses the *Ars Poetica* and at the same time forms the environing field from which Horace's great imitative and creative work has sprung ". The writer seems to have failed to understand that his several contentions belonged to different orders of thought. 'Exclusive source' and 'source' are not the same thing, 'source' and 'exact verbal influence' may differ, and 'cloud of rhetorical witnesses', quite apart from prejudging the rhetorical character of Horace's theory, need not imply dependence. Miss Grant expressed herself in similar terms five years later (« Wisconsin Studies in Lang. and Lit. » 27, 134) No wonder that a certain lack of clarity ensued, which is stille noticeable even when scholars discuss this topic without reference to Fiske and Grant, as for example Professor Brooks Otis in his thoughtful review of my *Prolegomena* in « Gnomon » 36, 1964, 269. Now therefore an attempt should be

made to separate the wheat from the chaff in Fiske and Grant's argument. I have already indicated the lines on which I wish to proceed.

In spite of statements which it is hard to agree with even in this area, Fiske and his collaborator seem to me to have proved that Cicero's and Horace's theories have several things in common. The most important of these is their common base in the treatment of diction and style. What they share here is best described as the Aristotelianism of the *Rhetoric*, or, more explicitly, as a base partly Aristotelian and partly Peripatetic. The status of the *Rhetoric* is seen most clearly when a whole context remains more or less unimpaired as in the 'appropriateness', τὸ πρέπον, as regards subject, character, and emotion, in Book 2, 7 of that work; the three principles are picked up in *Ars Poetica* 89-118, though tied to drama, and two of them, ἠθικόν and παθητικόν, in *Orator* 128-33, though tied to oratory. Other notions, like the division of word-usage into selection of single words and their combination, ἐκλογὴ and σύνθεσις ὀνομάτων, are only 'potentially present in Aristotle and become more fully operative with his successors'; I have talked about this particular case in my commentary on *Ars Poetica* 46-72. The doctrine of appropriateness, τὸ πρέπον, may well belong here, although later Stoic admixture can be observed certainly in Cicero. I only mention such other features as *probare* and *delectare*, or the 'philosophical foundation' of rhetoric and poetry respectively, because they require a longer argument than I can give here. But even the similarities that I have mentioned go a long way towards establishing Peripatetic features common to both authors.

Now for the contrast — and the chaff. Any of Fiske and Grant's suggestions that these similarities are more than parallel features on two sides of a divide (I mean the divide between rhetoric and poetics) have to be dismissed as unreal. Cicero was an orator, statesman, and thinker. As far as his rhetoric goes, he set down theory for the use of orators and statesmen in the Roman setting, 'philosophical rhetoric' especially of the Peripatetic kind (the category in which he places his relevant writings in the survey of his work, *De Diuinatione* 2, 4, cf. *De oratore* 1, 43), other Peripatetic departments such as the types of style, *genera dicendi*, adapted to actual forensic cases and political occasions, Theophrastus' virtues of style, *uirtutes dicendi*, but also Isocratean practicalities. Although there are indications that the styles of prose and verse together were systematized in the early Peripatetic school (I refer for brevity's sake to O. Regenbogen's useful survey of Theophrastus in *RE*, Supp. VII, col. 1522), there is comparatively little of that in Cicero, and still less of it concerns the layout of his literary theories.

Horace on the other hand was a poet-critic. What he attempted was a theory of poetics, again Peripatetic to a large degree, in which certain basic criteria were applied to poetry. It was a theory that did not prevalently juxtapose poetry with rhetoric as just another use of language directed to listeners, πρὸς τοὺς ἀκροατάς, as Theophrastus had done (thus Regenbogen cites from fragments 64 and 65, in the article I have mentioned). Horace regards rhetoric as a practical pursuit, one of the may arts in which mediocrity has its uses. This is not the case with a poem, *animis natum ... iuuandis* (*A.P.* 366-78). The aims of poetry and rhetoric differing as they did to Horace's mind, it would be surprising if he had turned to teaching that served the wrong ends. This is why he seems to have turned to teaching which, as I suggested earlier, had more than two centuries before adapted certain basic Peripatetic principles to poetry. This adaptation, which accounts for the theoretical framework of the *Ars Poetica*, occurs among the *praecepta* of Neoptolemus of Parium, which, we are told, Horace ' brought together ' in his poem. Cicero's rhetorical works, however attractive to him in other ways, would not provide that theoretical basis.

I end therefore with brief remarks on two topics, which have turned out to be connected as I said at the outset they would - a remark on exploring sources and a remark on the notion of rhetoric in the *Orator* and the *Ars Poetica*.

Discussion of the sources of the two works, in their relation to each other, have so far largely miscarried, because the differing aims of the two writers have not been taken into account. Source-criticism is insufficiently critical if it is handled mechanically. The difference between a rhetorical and a poetic theory is of decisive importance for an assessment of these sources, and more so, not less so, because they happen to have some similar affiliations, Peripatetic in this case.

Finally, rhetoric and rhetoric are not necessarily the same. If the distinction between a predetermined subject and rules for superadded wording is described as rhetorical (rightly I believe), then Ciceros' theory is rhetorical, because it is based on this dichotomy, quite apart from its main concern with the aims of practical oratory. It strikes me as true that the triad *poema-poesis-poeta*, which I think lies behind the *Ars Poetica*, embodies a similar distinction, but is does so to a smaller degree since it is already adapted to poetic genres, and not to types of public speaking or to the uses of language at large.

Moreover in deploying an articulate and sophisticated theory of appropriateness, even Cicero plays down this dichotomy; τὸ πρέπον straddles the unreal boundary line between *inuentio* and *elocutio*. In the *Ars Poetica*

the πρέπον principle is ubiquitous, as has often been noted, and makes against hard and fast distinctions of an abstract kind. Thus for example 'appropriateness to character' functions as a bridge between two major contexts of Horaces poem. In his use of these ordering principles Horace behaves not like a critic but, as one would expect, like a poet.