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DIONYSIUS AND LONGINUS ON THE SUBLIME: RHETORIC AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

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Abstract. Longinus' *On the Sublime* (date unknown) presents itself as a response to the work of the Augustan critic Caecilius of Caleacte. Recent attempts to reconstruct Longinus' intellectual context have largely ignored the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Caecilius' contemporary colleague (active in Rome between 30 and 8 B.C.E.). This article investigates the concept of *hupsos* ("the sublime") and its religious aspects in Longinus and Dionysius, and reveals a remarkable continuity between the discourse of both authors. Dionysius' works inform us about an Augustan debate on Plato and the sublime, and thereby provide us with an important context for Longinus' treatise.

> ταύτῃ καὶ ὁ τῶν Ἰουδαίων θεσμοθέτης, οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνήρ, ἐπειδὴ τὴν τοῦ θείου δύναμιν κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἐχώρησε κἀξέφηνεν, εὐθὺς ἐν τῇ εἰσβολῇ γράψας τῶν νόμων 'εἶπεν ὁ Θεός', φησί,—τί; '"γενέσθω φῶς", καὶ ἐγένετο. "γενέσθω γῆ", καὶ ἐγένετο.' (Longinus 9.9)
>
> A similar effect was achieved by the lawgiver of the Jews—no mean genius, for he both understood and gave expression to the power of divinity as it deserved—when he wrote at the beginning of his laws—I quote his words—"God said"—what?—"Let there be light." And there was. "Let there be earth." and there was.[1]

[1]Following conventional practice, I will refer to the author of *On the Sublime* as Longinus. Translations of passages from Longinus and Dionysius are taken (and in some cases adapted) from Fyfe and Russell 1995 and Usher 1974, 1985. For this first passage (Longinus 9.9), however, I have borrowed the illuminating translation from Russell's commentary (1964, 93). The syntax is notoriously difficult. Following Russell, I suppose (1) that ταύτῃ καί must be combined with a main verb that is not expressed, (2) that the clause starting with ἐπειδή depends on οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνήρ, and (3) that τί; "what?" gives emphasis to God's words γενέσθω φῶς and γενέσθω γῆ. There is one point that I would add to Russell's explanations, i.e., that φησί (parenthetical) draws attention to the sublime words of Moses (not God): Longinus emphasizes the sublimity of the author by underlining his utterance. For other ways of understanding the syntax of this passage, see Russell 1964, 92–93, and Mazzucchi 1992, 172–74.

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1. INTRODUCTION

THE PARAPHRASE OF GENESIS 1.3–9 in Longinus' *On the Sublime* (9.9) has intrigued readers for many centuries. Perhaps the earliest biblical quotation in a pagan writer, it has reinforced the enigmatic status of the rhetorical treatise *Peri hupsous*. Modern readers have paid due attention to questions concerning the authenticity and possible source of Longinus' allusion to Genesis. In the early twentieth century, the passage was the object of a heated debate between scholars like Ziegler and Mutschmann: the former regarded the passage as an interpolation, whereas the latter argued for its authenticity.[2] Norden wrote a complete monograph about the problem, in which he included a discussion of the cultural exchange between Jewish and Greek or Roman intellectuals in Rome and Alexandria, thereby demonstrating that a pagan writer of the first century C.E. may well have known the passage from Genesis.[3]

The literature on the origin and authenticity of this passage is overwhelming, but relatively few scholars have explored the connection between the Genesis example and its context in Longinus' treatise. Important exceptions include West and Usher, who convincingly demonstrate that the Genesis paraphrase is closely related to the Homeric examples in the context of Longinus' chapter 9. In that chapter, which opens the discussion of "great thoughts" (the first source of the sublime), Longinus cites several literary representations of the divine, such as Homer's descriptions of Eris, Poseidon, and other gods.[4] West argues that both the Genesis passage and the examples from the *Iliad* in chapter 9 find their origin in Near-Eastern poetry, from which he adduces a number of useful parallels (although the common background of these passages cannot prove the authenticity of the Genesis passage). Usher, on the other hand, shows that there are strong thematic and idiomatic connections between the Genesis paraphrase and the examples from Homer directly preceding and following it in Longinus' chapter 9.

Now that most scholars seem to accept the authenticity of the Genesis paraphrase, new perspectives are opened up for our understanding of Longinus and his treatise, *On the Sublime*. His example of God creating light and earth not only fits the direct context of Longinus' chapter 9, but it also underlines the importance of the divine to his concept of the

[2] Ziegler 1915 and Mutschmann 1917.

[3] Norden 1954. Norden discusses interesting parallels between Longinus and Philo of Alexandria, who also uses the term *hupsos* in connection with Moses' divine inspiration.

[4] West 1995 and Usher 2007.

sublime. Throughout his work, Longinus presents sublimity as something superhuman, which he frequently characterizes by means of religious vocabulary. This discourse of the divine and the supernatural is one of the clues that may help us to narrow down Longinus' sublime to a specific context: it is the framing of sublimity in religious terms that especially seems to connect Longinus with his Augustan colleagues. An exploration of the religious language of the sublime will lead us from Longinus first to the Augustan critic Caecilius of Caleacte, Longinus' principal opponent in *On the Sublime*, and then to Caecilius' contemporary colleague Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who worked in Rome in the period of Augustus. An examination of Dionysius' ideas on *hupsos* will make it possible to reconstruct the contours of an Augustan debate on sublimity. A next step would be to explore the wider issue of religion in the Augustan era and its relevance to the sublime in Dionysius and Longinus, but this article will concentrate on the religious language that both authors use when presenting their ideas. I will argue that Longinus' famous treatise as well as his concept of *hupsos* should primarily be understood as reacting and building on this Augustan debate.

Although the date of Longinus does not affect the argument of the current article, it will turn out that a comparison of Longinus and his Augustan colleagues provides strong arguments for a relatively early date (end of the first century B.C.E. or first century C.E.). Heath's attempt to revive the attribution of the treatise to the third-century philosopher Cassius Longinus, though not in fact incompatible with my emphasis on the Augustan background of Longinus' ideas, will appear less convincing in the light of the argument here presented.[5]

[5] On date and authorship of *On the Sublime*, see esp. Russell 1964, xxii–xxx; Crossett and Arieti 1975; Russell 1995, 145–48; Heath 1999. Manuscript P (Parisinus 2036) has in the title "Dionysius Longinus," and in the table of contents, "Dionysius or Longinus." This looks like a guess by a Byzantine scholar, who thought that either Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century B.C.E.) or Cassius Longinus (third century C.E.) wrote the treatise. However, both options seem implausible. The style and the contents make it clear that Dionysius of Halicarnassus cannot be the author. On the other hand, Cassius Longinus and the author of *On the Sublime* differ as well, both in their way of writing and in their aesthetic views (esp. on Plato). Although Heath 1999 reexamines all the arguments in a careful way, I do not follow his attribution of the treatise to Cassius Longinus. One of the most important arguments against the authorship of Cassius Longinus is the final chapter of *Peri hupsous*: the discussion of the decline of rhetoric fits the first rather than the third century C.E., and the reference to "the world's peace" (ἡ τῆς οἰκουμένης εἰρήνη, 44.6) suits the Augustan period rather than the third century C.E. (cf. Köhnken 2002, 211, n. 1). The current article in fact aims to show that *On the Sublime* is closely connected to the critical discourse of the Augustan period: although this view does of course not exclude the possibility that

2. LONGINUS: TRADITION AND ORIGINALITY

For a long time, *On the Sublime* used to be regarded as an isolated and unique piece of ancient criticism. The traditional view of Longinus was perhaps most eloquently expressed by Alexander Pope, who wrote about Longinus that he "is himself the great Sublime he draws."[6] *Peri hupsous* is certainly a very special treatise, as we realize when reading Longinus' striking observations on Homer, Sappho, or Demosthenes. However, Russell has rightly argued that Longinus is less mysterious and enigmatic than the exaggerations of many modern readers suggest. The topic of Longinus' treatise and his eloquent style make him different from other rhetoricians. But, as Russell points out, Longinus in fact "represents a tradition."[7] Following this suggestion, various scholars have tried to connect the doctrine of *On the Sublime* with the views of earlier and contemporary thinkers, in order to show how exactly Longinus fits into the tradition of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, rhetoric, and criticism. The works of Philo, Manilius, and Pliny turned out to be especially rewarding for this approach.[8]

In the twenty-first century, we have seen a number of inspiring publications on the sublime. In particular, scholars have demonstrated how the category of the sublime reveals itself outside the domain of rhetorical theory. Two scholars in particular have contributed to this debate. First, Conte includes a fascinating discussion of sublimity in his recent study of Vergil, *The Poetry of Pathos* (2007). He points out that Longinus' interest in composition (*sunthesis*) as an important source of the sublime is

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Longinus wrote (somewhat) later, it certainly makes a date in the first century C.E. (or perhaps even at the end of the first century B.C.E.) a more plausible option than a date in the third century C.E.

[6] Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711).

[7] Russell 1995, 152–54, points out that there is affinity between Longinus' concept of *hupsos* and certain rhetorical ideas that we find in the works of other critics, in particular Dionysius of Halicarnassus' so-called "additional virtues of style" (*epithetoi aretai*), and Hermogenes' *ideai* ("forms or tones of speech"). Longinus' *hupsos*, Dionysius' *epithetoi aretai*, and Hermogenes *ideai* all reflect an interest in a special quality or tone of writing that evades or exceeds the formal and traditional system of the three styles. Instead of classifying texts as either elevated or simple or intermediate, these rhetoricians look for a special literary effect—something that adds a certain solemn or grand tone to a specific line, phrase, or passage.

[8] Longinus and Philo: Russell 1964, xl–xli; Longinus and Manilius: Goold 1961, 169–72. Longinus and Pliny: Russell 1964, xli–xlii, and Armisen-Marchetti 1990; see also Dugan 2005, 251–332, and Porter 2001a on Longinus and Cicero.

thoroughly reflected in Vergil's poetry. Conte argues that Vergil himself makes use of a "sublime style," the secret of which has to be sought in the surprising and powerful *combination* of words rather than in the vocabulary itself.[9] Conte's reading of Vergil from Longinus' perspective stimulates us to think further about the relationship between Roman Augustan poetry and Greek literary criticism.[10] The second scholar who should be mentioned is Porter. In the past few years, Porter has published an impressive series of articles in which he shows how the category of the sublime is relevant to the works of a number of Greek and Roman authors. Thus, he has published on the sublime in Cicero, Philodemus, Pausanias, Lucretius, and even the Presocratic philosophers.[11]

The current article will be in line with the tendency to consider the intellectual context of *Peri hupsous* rather than its allegedly unique and mysterious place in the history of literature. I agree with the scholars just mentioned (Porter and Conte in particular) that the ancient sublime is not confined to the treatise of Longinus, and that it is important to recognize the connections between his work and other literary, philosophical, and critical texts. Apart from Longinus, there is one other extant critic in whose works the concept of sublimity plays a considerable role, namely, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who was active in Rome between 30 and 8 B.C.E. It is remarkable that many scholars who attempt to connect Longinus with earlier and contemporary authors either ignore Dionysius' views on *hupsos* or believe that he uses that term exclusively to characterize the formal aspects of the elevated style (as opposed to the simple or the intermediate styles). An important exception is Porter, who has rightly suggested that the work of Dionysius is relevant to the history of

[9] Conte 2007, 63–71.

[10] See also Görler 1979 and section 6 of this article.

[11] Pausanias: Porter 2001b. Lucretius: Porter 2007. The Presocratics: Porter 2008. Cicero and the *kritikoi* in Philodemus: Porter 2001a. The current interest in Philodemus' works on rhetoric and poetic criticism has increased our understanding of more canonical works of criticism: the influence of the *kritikoi* can be detected not only in Longinus and Cicero but also in Dionysius: see Porter 2001a and de Jonge 2008. It should be noted that in the fragments of Philodemus, the words ὕψος and ὑψηλός are not used in contexts of style or literary criticism. Philodemus does use ὑψηλός for persons, in a theological context: see *On Piety* 1288 fr. 45 Obbink. As far as I know, the terminology of the "sublime" does not occur in the extant fragments of his *On Rhetoric* and *On Poems*. It is possible, however, that the idea of "elevation" is expressed in Philodemus, *On Poems* 1 fr. 84 Janko: here, Janko reads the word μεταιω[ρεῖσθαι] ("to be elevated"), which is further only found in Sch. Arist. *Av.* 433. Janko 2000, 281, n. 6, supposes that it refers to "the sublime pleasure produced by good sound."

the sublime.[12] Starting from his observations, I will argue that there is a clear continuity between the concept of *hupsos* in Longinus on the one hand, and Dionysius' observations on *hupsos* on the other: this continuity becomes especially apparent from the religious parameters of the concept of the sublime in both writers. Dionysius and his colleague Caecilius were the main representatives of Greek classicism in the Augustan Period. By drawing attention to the debate on *hupsos* that was going on in the circle of critics during the Augustan period, this article aims to reconstruct part of the intellectual context to which Longinus' *On the Sublime* belongs.

3. RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF LONGINUS' CONCEPT OF *HUPSOS*

The primary meaning of ὕψος is of course "height." A citation from Pausanias demonstrates the basic meaning of ὑψηλός as "high," while at the same time showing the connotation of impressiveness that may be attached to the word (1.33.6):

> ὁ δὲ Ἄτλας ὄρος ὑψηλὸν μέν ἐστιν οὕτως ὥστε καὶ λέγεται ταῖς κορυφαῖς ψαύειν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.
>
> Mount Atlas is so high that it is said to touch heaven with its peaks.

Porter has shown that Pausanias and Longinus have a lot in common, including an obvious interest in the overwhelming works of nature.[13] We naturally admire the craters of Etna and the fires of Heaven, as Longinus tells us in one of the most eloquent passages of his work (35.4). But apart from these impressive phenomena of nature, words or phrases themselves can also be "high" or "elevated," so that they lift both author and audience above their accustomed level. Longinus frequently uses words that refer to vertical movement, such as αἴρειν ("to lift"), ἐπαίρειν ("to elevate"), πίπτειν ("to fall"), and ἀποδιδράσκειν ("to descend").[14]

[12] Porter 2001a examines the connections among Cicero, the Hellenistic critics, Dionysius, and Longinus. Parallels between Dionysius and Longinus are found in their views on euphony and composition (Porter 2001a, 332–34). For a more general discussion of the sublime in Dionysius' works, see now also Porter (forthcoming).

[13] Porter 2001b. For Longinus' interest in rivers, the sea, and the volcano Etna, see esp. 9.13, 12.3, 13.1, 13.3, and 35.4. Innes 1995a shows that the use of these images from nature contributes to the unity of *Peri hupsous*.

[14] See, e.g., 7.2 (the truly sublime naturally elevates us), 7.3 (a sublime passage sinks into the bathetic), 15.4 (the writer's soul runs beside the heavenly bodies), 29.1 (use of

Since that which is "high" or "elevated" supersedes the normal and usual, *hupsos* is frequently described as something "superhuman." Both writer and reader are frequently described in religious language, the former as "inspired," the latter as being in a state of *ekstasis*. A central passage is *On the Sublime* 36.1, where Longinus points out that writers of genius "are above all mortal range" (παντός εἰσιν ἐπάνω τοῦ θνητοῦ). And he adds the following famous words (36.1):

> καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα τοὺς χρωμένους ἀνθρώπους ἐλέγχει, τὸ δ' ὕψος ἐγγὺς αἴρει μεγαλοφροσύνης θεοῦ.
>
> Other qualities prove their possessors men, sublimity lifts them near the mighty mind of God.

Here, it is the status of certain authors (models of sublime writing) that is described as divine. Apart from the writer of a sublime passage, both his audience and his subject matter can be caught in religious terms.[15] I will briefly discuss these three religious aspects of Longinus' treatise: divine thoughts (or themes), the inspired author, and the ecstatic audience.

1. Divine Thoughts (or Themes). First of all, gods and their actions are the ideal subject matter for sublime writing.[16] In his discussion of greatness of thought (*to megalophues*), the first and most powerful source of the sublime, Longinus initially cites a number of descriptions of impressive divinities, culminating in the passage from Genesis on God's creation of light and earth. The Genesis paraphrase is preceded by four Homeric passages and followed by two more (*On the Sublime* 9.4–11, representations of the divine):

9.4. Eris fills the whole distance between earth and heaven (*Il.* 4.442)

9.5. The "high-neighing horses of heaven" leap as far as a man can see (*Il.* 5.770–72)

9.6. The battle of the gods (*Il.* 21.338 and 20.61–65)

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periphrasis makes a passage fall flat), 33.2 (mediocre natures never aim at the heights), 33.5 (Pindar and Sophocles fall miserably flat), 36.1 (the sublime lifts us near the mighty mind of god), 43.3 (Theopompus descends from the sublime to the trivial, where he needs rather a crescendo), 43.5 (one ought not to descend to what is sordid and contemptible in elevated passages).

[15] Some of these ideas are already discussed in Segal 1959, who focuses on the final chapter of the treatise.

[16] See Innes 1979.

9.8. Poseidon shakes the woods and drives his chariot over the parting sea (*Il.* 13.18, 20.60, 13.19, 13.27–29)

9.9. God creates light and earth (Genesis 1.3–9)

9.10. Ajax prays to Zeus for light (*Il.* 17.645–47)

9.11. Homer himself "stormily raves" just like the war-god Ares (*Il.* 15.605)

Eris is portrayed as filling the whole distance between earth and heaven, thus showing the greatness not only of herself but also of Homer. The stride of the gods' high-neighing horses (θεῶν ὑψηχέες ἵπποι) is measured with a cosmic interval, "as far as a man can see." The battle of the gods (*theomachia*) makes such terrible noise that Hades fears that Poseidon will break open the earth. The same Poseidon shakes the hills and woods and drives his chariot over the parting sea. Usher has pointed out that there is a strong idiomatic and thematic unity that connects the Homeric examples with the Genesis passage.[17] Most striking is his observation that, in the Homeric passage that immediately precedes the Genesis paraphrase, the sea is said "to part" (θάλασσα διΐστατο) for Poseidon, which might remind us of Moses' parting of the Red Sea in *Exodus*: in other words, one might believe that the Homeric lines on Poseidon have actually triggered the paraphrase from Genesis in Longinus' treatment of divine themes.

What is it that makes these passages from Homer sublime? Central ideas in these texts are of course immensity, great distances, and unexpectedness: there is sublimity in the immeasurable gap between heaven and earth (9.4), the cosmic interval that the gods' horses bridge (9.5), the intensity of the battle of the gods (9.6), the gap caused by the parting sea (9.8), and the sudden creation of light (9.9). However, there is an obvious connection between these sublime effects and the divinities that are portrayed in these lines. At the beginning of this series of citations, Longinus asks, "how Homer magnifies the powers of heaven" (πῶς μεγεθύνει τὰ δαιμόνια, 9.5). The agents in these narratives are gods (and in one case, their horses), who are able to bridge immense distances, to inspire intense fear, and to create light and earth by speaking a few simple words. It is the enormous power of gods that is responsible for the sublime as it appears in these examples. In other words, although the sublime can of course occur in narrative passages without gods, Longinus does suggest that there is (at the very least for Homer) a special relationship between divinity and sublimity.

[17] Usher 2007, 298–300.

Having cited the Genesis passage in which God creates light, Longinus adds another Iliadic passage, in which Ajax asks Zeus to brighten the heaven so that he may die in light rather than in darkness (*Il.* 17.645–47). Again, we see a thematic connection between the two examples that are juxtaposed.[18] Here it is of course Ajax' bravery that is sublime. But gods are never far away: Longinus points out that Homer is so successful in portraying Ajax' prayer for light, that the poet himself can be compared with the divine Ares. Homer "stormily raves (*mainetai*), as the spear-wielding War-god, or Fire, the destroyer, stormily raves on the hills" etc.[19]

2. The Inspired Author. The latter observation, which identifies Homer with one of the gods in his own narrative, brings us to the second point: religious discourse also informs Longinus' views on the author. We have already seen that the sublime "lifts" the author near god's *megalophrosunē*. Successful authors are frequently presented as divine natures. Thus, when pointing to a rare stylistic fault in a passage from the *Laws*, Longinus remarks that Plato is otherwise "divine" (*theios*).[20] "Divine Plato" is in itself a common formulation that we also find in Cicero and elsewhere, but Longinus makes more abundant use of this kind of vocabulary than any author: thus, Xenophon and Plato are called *hērōes* ("heroes"), and sublime writers are *isotheoi* ("demigods").[21]

As we have seen, the lawgiver of the Jews (in 9.9) is introduced as οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνήρ, "no ordinary man," "not just any man." These words can be interpreted as referring to the superhuman status of Moses, who is said "to have formed a worthy conception of divine power." The idea of possession also plays a role in Longinus' portrayal of the sublime author, who sometimes reminds us of the inspired poet of Plato's *Ion*.[22] In his discussion of Demosthenes' Marathon oath (*On the Crown* 208), for example, Longinus tells us that when the orator applies his sublime

[18] On the theme of light and darkness in Longinus, see Innes 1995a and Köhnken 2002.

[19] Longinus 9.11 adapts Homer, *Il.* 15.605–7.

[20] Longinus 4.6: ὁ τἆλλα θεῖος Πλάτων, "the otherwise divine Plato."

[21] Cicero calls Plato *divinus auctor* in *De optimo genere oratorum* 17; *deus ille noster Plato* in *Ep. ad Atticum* 4.16.3. For similar expressions concerning Plato in Cicero and elsewhere, see Russell 1964, 80, and Fornaro 1997, 156. For "heroes" and "demigods," see Longinus 4.4 and 35.2. Segal 1959, 123–24, connects the discourse of "divine" authors with the eternal aspects of the sublime (cf. 36.2).

[22] In 13.2, Longinus adapts and reworks Plato's metaphor of the magnetic chain (*Ion* 533d: Homer, rhapsode, audience), introducing a chain between the author imitated, the author who imitates and his audience.

figure of speech, he is "like a man suddenly inspired by a god and, as it were, Phoebus-seized" (*phoibolēptos*).[23]

3. The Ecstatic Audience. Having observed the religious aspects of Longinus' treatment of both divine subject matter and inspired authors, we may now turn to his views on the impact of the sublime: when listening to a sublime passage, the audience is overpowered, overwhelmed, and carried away. It is like a religious experience: in Longinus' words, the sublime "produces ecstasy (*ekstasis*) rather than persuasion" (1.4).[24] The term *ekstasis* refers to the condition of someone who "abandons himself," that is, he is so astonished or amazed that he seems to be "transported," leaving his normal state.[25]

Too has pointed out that the notion of "dislocation" or "transposition" is an essential aspect of *hupsos* on various levels.[26] The sublime seems to dislocate the audience, but a writer can achieve this ecstatic effect by means of another type of dislocation, namely, the transposition of the elements of language: the sounds, words, and rhythms in the text. Accordingly, both stylistic figures and "composition" (*sunthesis*) play an important role in the treatise *Peri hupsous*, as two out of five sources of the sublime. It is also significant that Longinus claims to have written two separate books on composition: this makes him a *collega proximus* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[27] Sublime composition makes good use

[23] Longinus 16.2: ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ καθάπερ ἐμπνευσθεὶς ἐξαίφνης ὑπὸ θεοῦ καὶ οἱονεὶ φοιβόληπτος γενόμενος τὸν <κατὰ> τῶν ἀριστέων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὅρκον ἐξεφώνησεν, "But when, like a man suddenly inspired by god and, as it were, god-possessed, he utters this great oath by the champions of Greece." The term *phoibolēptos* takes up the oracular imagery from an earlier passage (13.2), where Longinus compares the inspiration of the Pythian priestess in Delphi (who becomes impregnated with divine power) with the imitation of classical writers by their admirers. Just as Apollo takes possession of the Pythia, great writers from the past inspire their successors, and use their voice to express sublime thoughts. "Inspired by this, even those who are not easily moved to prophecy (οἱ μὴ λίαν φοιβαστικοί) share the enthusiasm (συνενθουσιῶσι) of their predecessors' grandeur."

[24] Longinus 1.4: οὐ γὰρ εἰς πειθὼ τοὺς ἀκροωμένους ἀλλ' εἰς ἔκστασιν ἄγει τὰ ὑπερφῦα· πάντη δέ γε σὺν ἐκπλήξει τοῦ πιθανοῦ καὶ τοῦ πρὸς χάριν ἀεὶ κρατεῖ τὸ θαυμάσιον, εἴγε τὸ μὲν πιθανὸν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ταῦτα δὲ δυναστείαν καὶ βίαν ἄμαχον προσφέροντα παντὸς ἐπάνω τοῦ ἀκροωμένου καθίσταται, "For the effect of genius is not to persuade the audience, but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder, with its power of amazing us, always prevails over what is merely convincing and pleasing. For our persuasions are usually under our own control, while these things exercise an irresistible power and mastery, and get the better of every listener."

[25] On *ekstasis*, see Pfister 1939. According to Dodds 1951, 77, *ekstasis* can mean "anything from 'taking you out of yourself' to a profound alteration of personality."

[26] Too 1998, 194–202.

[27] Longinus 39.1.

of rhythm and melody, and often departs from the usual word order, by means of hyperbaton or enallage. According to Longinus (39), word arrangement is one of the most powerful means to achieve a sublime effect, because, just like music, it can cast a spell on the listeners, so that they are enchanted and carried away: in other words, the displacement in language has a dislocating effect on the audience.

In some cases, the dislocation of the audience takes a special form, when the listener (or reader) starts to identify himself with the author of the sublime passage: the listener leaves his normal state (*ekstasis*) and is proud, as if he himself has produced the phrase that he just heard (Longinus 7.2).[28] Furthermore, the sublime not only connects the inspired author with his audience, but also with his characters. We have already encountered an example of this phenomenon in Longinus 9, where Homer is so successful in portraying the gods that the poet himself raves *just like Ares*.[29] Thus, the religious language of inspiration and ecstasy presents the effect of sublimity as a unifying experience, which brings together all the parties involved in sublime writing, namely, the author, the characters in his narrative, and the reader or listener.

In summarizing some aspects of Longinus' concept of the sublime, I have tried to highlight those elements that in my view largely determine the idea of *hupsos* not only in Longinus, but also before him. Keeping in mind Longinus' treatment of divine themes, inspired authors, and ecstatic audience, we will now investigate the concept of *hupsos* in earlier rhetoric.

4. *HUPSOS* BEFORE LONGINUS: CAECILIUS OF CALEACTE AND DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS

As far as we know, *hupsos* became a technical rhetorical term in the second half of the first century B.C.E.[30] In the Augustan period, the Greek rhetorician Caecilius of Caleacte wrote a treatise *On the Sublime* (*Peri hupsous*), to which Longinus' work with the same title is a polemical

[28] Too 1998, 191, calls this phenomenon the "intersubjectivity of the sublime."

[29] See also Longinus 15.4: when Euripides describes how Helios offers his son Phaethon the reins, it is as if the poet's soul ascends the car and "takes wing to share the horses' peril."

[30] Russell 1964, xxxi–xxxii, and Innes 2002, 273–74. *Hupsos* is not common as a literary or stylistic term before the first century B.C.E. When it occurs in earlier writers, it is mainly related to the "high (moral) character" of a speaker (which is of course also relevant in Longinus). In the *Odyssey* (1.385, 2.85, 2.303, 17.406), Antinous frequently describes Telemachus as ὑψαγόρης, which refers to his boasting and proud tone, not to elevated style or sublime impact. See also Plato, *Republic* 8.545d.

reaction.[31] Longinus criticizes his predecessor not only because he gave numerous examples without instructing his readers how to achieve sublime writing, but also because he omitted some of the sources of the sublime, including emotion (*pathos*).[32]

Unfortunately, we do not possess Caecilius' treatise *On the Sublime*.[33] One source that could tell us something about Caecilius' ideas is usually ignored or disregarded as irrelevant (although not by all scholars: see below), namely, the rhetorical works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Dionysius and Caecilius were both representatives of Greek classicism in the Augustan period, and in one of his letters Dionysius refers to his colleague as a "dear friend."[34] Unlike Caecilius and Longinus, Dionysius did not write a separate treatise on sublimity, but in his rhetorical works (*On the Ancient Orators, On Composition*, and his literary letters) he makes use of the substantive ὕψος and the adjective ὑψηλός when evaluating the writings of classical orators and historians. In emphasizing Longinus' uniqueness, modern scholars frequently point to differences between the use of *hupsos* in Longinus on the one hand and Dionysius on the other. The traditional view is that Dionysius uses *hupsos* as a purely formal category: it would refer to the grand or elevated style, as distinguished from the plain or simple style and the middle or mixed style: Kallendorf and Donadi are among those scholars who believe that in the period before Longinus, *hupsos* is identical with the *genus grande*.[35] Porter, on the other hand, has rightly pointed out that there is continuity between Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Longinus, despite certain differences in

[31] Longinus 1.1: the author and his addressee Postumius Terentianus were disappointed when they studied Caecilius' "little treatise" (συγγραμμάτιον).

[32] Longinus 8.1–2.

[33] Ofenloch 1907 has collected the fragments of Caecilius of Caleacte. For a comparison between the views of Caecilius and Longinus on the sublime, see Innes 2002.

[34] Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 3.240.14 (Us.-Rad.): τῷ φιλτάτῳ Καικιλίῳ. On the significance of this expression, see Tolkiehn (1908).

[35] Kallendorf 1994, 1357–58: "In der Tradition, die den größten Einfluß ausübte, wird das E[rhabene] mit der höchsten der drei Stilebenen, mit dem *genus grande*, assoziiert. . . . Dionysios von Halikarnassos bezeichnet den erhabenen Stil ebenfalls als ὕψος." Donadi 2001, 514: "Der Begriff *hypsos* findet sich auch bei Dionysios von Halikarnassos; dieser benennt die drei *charaktēres tēs lexeôs / genera dicendi* (*grave, medium, tenue*; Dion. Hal. de Demosthene 35) zu 'Harmonien' um: den ersten zur 'erhabenen' (*hypsēlē*), den zweiten zur 'schlichten' (*ischnē*), den dritten zur 'mittleren' (*mesē*). . . . Ps.-L. dagegen wischt die traditionelle Einteilung in drei Stilarten—die er jedoch voraussetzt—beiseite: der einzige Stil, der eine monographische Behandlung verdient, ist derjenige, der von einem erhabenen Geist inspiriert ist." The latter analysis is not only inadequate for Dionysius (see below), but also for Longinus: the sublime is not a style but a "special effect" (Russell 1964, xxxvii), which can occur in passages written in various styles.

their attitudes.[36] In order to cast more light on the precise connection between these two authors, I will examine some of the passages in which Dionysius speaks about sublimity. We will see that it is especially in the discourse of the supernatural that continuity between Dionysius and Longinus can be observed. Although it is true that Dionysius employs the concept of *hupsos* mainly in the context of style, his use of the term in many respects foreshadows Longinus' ideas on the inspiration of the "divine" author, the portrayal of divine themes, and the ecstatic experience of the audience.

Before we consider Dionysius' use of *hupsos*, it is worthwhile to ask a fundamental question: is it conceivable that Longinus and Dionysius employ the term in completely different ways? There is at least one consideration that makes it implausible that they did. As we have seen, Longinus' *Peri hupsous* reacts to Caecilius' work with the same title. Longinus criticizes his predecessor for omitting emotion as a source of the sublime (8.1–2), and he disagrees with him on specific matters of evaluation.[37] But these criticisms seem to imply that, in general, Caecilius used the same concept of *hupsos*. Innes has made this same point: Longinus and Caecilius "cannot have completely differing concepts."[38] Starting from this observation, I will now focus on Dionysius, Caecilius' contemporary colleague, in order to determine how we should interpret his use of ὕψος and ὑψηλός.

5. DIONYSIUS ON THE SUBLIME

The terminology of the sublime appears in Dionysius' discussions of rhythm, vocabulary, and composition.[39] The general style (*lexis*) of a certain passage can also be characterized as sublime, and here we see that *hupsēlos*

[36] See Porter 2001a, especially on euphony and composition, and, more generally, Porter (forthcoming).

[37] Innes 2002 discusses various cases of polemic between Longinus and Caecilius: Longinus disagrees with Caecilius' omission of emotion (8.1–2), his comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero (12.4), his views on the use of metaphors (32.1), and his preference for Lysias over Plato (32.8 and 35.1). Note that Caecilius discussed Lysias' superiority over Plato in his *On Lysias*, not, as far as we know, in his *On the Sublime*.

[38] Innes 2002, 276: "He [Longinus] and Caecilius cannot have completely differing concepts, and the opening chapter in particular should support his claim that we all know what the sublime is."

[39] The austere composition type uses rhythms that are "elevated, virile and impressive" (ὑψηλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἀνδρώδεις καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς, *Dem.* 39.212.5–6 Us.-Rad.); Demosthenes achieves clarity by using ordinary words in passages that also contain "sublime and exotic

is sometimes used as the opposite of *ischnos*, the former indicating the grand (or elevated) style, the latter the plain.[40] This particular usage of *hupsos* to describe the general style of a longer passage is clearly different from Longinus' notion of the sublime as a "special effect" (Russell 1964, xxxvii) that may occur in just one word or in a single phrase. But apart from the "sublime style," Dionysius also knows something similar to the sublime effect that is Longinus' concern: *hupsos* ("high tone") is also listed as one of Dionysius' so-called "qualities of style" (*aretai lexeōs*), which add a certain character to an author's discourse.[41] Besides, *hupsos* plays a role in Dionysius' theory of composition (*sunthesis*), which is one of Longinus' sources of the sublime.[42] More generally, Dionysius' remarks on the impact of sublime writing make it clear that *hupsos* is more than just a formal category. In one of his earliest works, he gives an analysis of Lysias' style, which he contrasts with the characteristics of the sublime (Dion. Hal. *Lys.* 13.23.5–13 Us.-Rad.; trans. adapted from Usher):[43]

> ὑψηλὴ δὲ καὶ μεγαλοπρεπὴς οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ Λυσίου λέξις οὐδὲ καταπληκτικὴ μὰ Δία καὶ θαυμαστὴ οὐδὲ τὸ πικρὸν ἢ τὸ δεινὸν ἢ τὸ φοβερὸν ἐπιφαίνουσα οὐδὲ ἁφὰς ἔχει καὶ τόνους ἰσχυροὺς οὐδὲ θυμοῦ καὶ πνεύματός ἐστι μεστὴ οὐδ', ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσίν ἐστι πιθανή, οὕτως ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν ἰσχυρὰ οὐδ' ὡς ἡδῦναι καὶ πεῖσαι καὶ χαριεντίσασθαι δύναται, οὕτω βιάσασθαί τε καὶ προσαναγκάσαι. ἀσφαλής τε μᾶλλόν ἐστιν ἢ παρακεκινδυνευμένη.
>
> Lysias' style is not sublime or grand, and it is not striking or marvelous, nor does it portray pungency or the powerful or the awe-inspiring; nor again

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wording" (ὑψηλῆς καὶ ξενοπρεποῦς ὀνομασίας, *Dem.* 34.204.11–12 Us.-Rad.; cf. *Dem.* 34.204.6–7 Us.-Rad.). Russell 1964, xxxi, rightly observes that Dionysius uses ὑψηλός often in combination with another adjective (like μεγαλοπρεπής), possibly in order to help the reader to understand its meaning. This might point to the relative novelty of the terminology of the sublime in the Augustan period, although we must add that Dionysius generally likes pleonasms of paired adjectives. See also Innes 2002, 274.

[40] The grand or elevated style is called ὁ χαρακτὴρ ὑψηλός (*Dem.* 33.203.10 Us.-Rad.).

[41] The "ancillary virtues" of style (ἐπίθετοι ἀρεταί) include ὕψος, "sublimity," καλλιρημοσύνη, "elegance of language," σεμνολογία, "impressiveness," and μεγαλοπρεπεία, "grandeur" (*Thuc.* 23.360.5–9 Us.-Rad.). Cf. Russell 1995, 153–54. On the virtues of style, see Innes 1985, 255–63. On Dionysius' essential and additional virtues of style (*Thuc.* 22.358.19–23, *Thuc.* 23.360.2–9, and *Pomp.* 3.239.5–40.22 Us.-Rad.), see esp. Bonner 1939, 16–19.

[42] Composition (σύνθεσις) can make the ideas appear "sublime, rich and beautiful" (ὑψηλὰ καὶ πλούσια καὶ καλά, *Comp.* 4.20.8–10 Us.-Rad.): this passage foreshadows Longinus' treatment of word arrangement as a source of the sublime (39–42).

[43] References are to the chapter, page and line in the edition by Usener-Radermacher 1899/1904–29.

> does it have the power to grip the listener's attention and to keep it in rapt suspense; nor is it full of energy and inspiration, or able to match its moral persuasiveness with an equal power to portray emotion, and its capacity to entertain, persuade and charm with an ability to force and compel his audience. It is a safe style rather than an adventurous one.

In the first instance, one might think that Dionysius here merely classifies Lysias as a representative of the simple style. In fact, however, it seems that in this passage the term ὑψηλή triggers a number of categories that would easily fit into Longinus' picture of the sublime. First, Dionysius (indirectly) states that unlike Lysias' *lexis*, a sublime style would move the audience to wonder; θαυμαστός, the word that Dionysius uses, belongs (with other derivations of θαῦμα and θαυμάζω) to Longinus' favorite adjectives that describe the effects of sublime writing.[44] "The powerful" (τὸ δεινόν) and "the awe-inspiring" (τὸ φοβερόν) are similarly prominent in Longinus' description of the impact of *hupsos*.[45] Further, Dionysius tells us that a sublime passage would be full of inspiration (πνεῦμα): the latter word reminds us of Longinus' description of Demosthenes' inspiration (16.2). Finally, Dionysius' analysis implies that, unlike Lysias' style, which is safe rather than adventurous, the sublime would aim at a high level, thus risking failure. This idea is exactly what we find in Longinus: according to the author of *Peri hupsous*, mediocre writers are safe "because they never run any risks and never aim at the heights."[46] Here, Longinus uses precisely the same words as Dionysius does when evaluating Lysias' style: παρακινδυνεύειν ("to venture") as opposed to ἀσφαλής ("safe").

Longinus would certainly agree with Dionysius that Lysias' *lexis* is not sublime. This passage should also be a warning for those who think that Caecilius of Caleacte regarded Lysias as a model for the sublime.[47]

[44] Θαῦμα: 44.1; θαυμάζω: 4.3, 7.1, 9.2, 10.3, 35.4, 36.1, 36.3; θαυμάσιος: 1.4, 39.4; θαυμαστός: 4.2, 9.3, 17.1, 17.2, 30.1, 35.4, 39.1–2, 43.3.

[45] Δεινός: 9.5, 10.1, 10.4, 10.6 (τὸ δεινόν), 15.8, 22.3, 29.1, 34.4, 43.1. For δείνωσις, see 11.2, for δεινότης 12.4 (on Demosthenes) and 34.4. Φοβερός: 3.1, 9.7, 10.6; φόβος: 8.2, 22.2, 22.4.

[46] Longinus 33.2: μήποτε δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἀναγκαῖον ᾖ, τὸ τὰς μὲν ταπεινὰς καὶ μέσας φύσεις διὰ τὸ μηδαμῆ παρακινδυνεύειν μηδὲ ἐφίεσθαι τῶν ἄκρων ἀναμαρτήτους ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ καὶ ἀσφαλεστέρας διαμένειν, τὰ δὲ μεγάλα ἐπισφαλῆ δι' αὐτὸ γίνεσθαι τὸ μέγεθος, "Perhaps it is inevitable that humble, mediocre natures, because they never run any risks and never aim at the heights, should remain to a large extent safe from error, while in great natures their very greatness spells danger." Similar ideas can be found in Dionysius, *Pomp.* 2: Dionysius' correspondent Pompeius Geminus prefers authors who "aim high" and "run risks." Therefore, Richards 1938 and Goold 1961, 173–74, have argued that this Pompeius is in fact the author of the treatise *On the Sublime*. See below, section 7.

[47] See Innes 2002, 276.

Of course, we know that Caecilius admired Lysias for his plain style, and Longinus tells us that in his work *On Lysias* Caecilius presented the orator as superior to Plato. But from this information we cannot draw the conclusion that Lysias was his model of sublimity.[48] We know that Caecilius wrote many books on Demosthenes; hence this orator seems a more probable model of the sublime. Dionysius also wrote a separate work, *On Demosthenes*, in which he describes the overwhelming impact of the orator's speeches. Although he does not use the term *hupsos* in the following passage, his words certainly remind us of Longinus' views on the ecstatic experience that can be the result of sublime writing (Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 22.176.15–177.1 Us.-Rad.):

> ὅταν δὲ <τῶν> Δημοσθένους τινὰ λάβω λόγων, ἐνθουσιῶ τε καὶ δεῦρο κἀκεῖσε ἄγομαι, πάθος ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου μεταλαμβάνων, ἀπιστῶν, ἀγωνιῶν, δεδιώς, καταφρονῶν, μισῶν, ἐλεῶν, εὐνοῶν, ὀργιζόμενος, φθονῶν, ἅπαντα τὰ πάθη μεταλαμβάνων, ὅσα κρατεῖν πέφυκεν ἀνθρωπίνης γνώμης· διαφέρειν τε οὐδὲν ἐμαυτῷ δοκῶ τῶν τὰ μητρῷα καὶ τὰ κορυβαντικὰ καὶ ὅσα τούτοις παραπλήσιά ἐστι, τελουμένων, εἴτε ὀσμαῖς ἐκεῖνοί γε . . . εἴτε ἤχοις εἴτε τῶν δαιμόνων πνεύματι αὐτῶν κινούμενοι τὰς πολλὰς καὶ ποικίλας ἐκεῖνοι λαμβάνουσι φαντασίας.
>
> But when I pick up one of Demosthenes' speeches, I am transported: I am led hither and thither, feeling one emotion after another—disbelief, anguish, terror, contempt, hatred, pity, goodwill, anger, envy—every emotion in turn that can sway the human mind. I feel exactly the same as those who take part in the Corybantic dances and the rites of Cybele the Mother-Goddess, and other similar ceremonies, whether it is because these celebrants are moved by the inspiration of the scents . . . or sound or by the influence of the deities themselves, that they experience many and various sensations.

The emotional impact of Demosthenes' speeches is here caught in what we might call "Longinian" terminology. In *Peri hupsous*, ἐνθουσιᾶν ("to be inspired" or "possessed by a god") is one of the key terms to describe the effect of the sublime. Just like Longinus, Dionysius here also uses the word κρατεῖν ("to rule") to describe the overpowering effect of sublime literature.[49] The notion of displacement or dislocation, which we encountered in our treatment of *Peri hupsous*, can be recognized in the words δεῦρο κἀκεῖσε ἄγομαι, "I am led hither and thither." Further, his reference to religious rites is paralleled by a passage in which Longinus describes the

[48] Cf. Hidber 1996, 41, n. 184.

[49] Cf. Longinus 1.4. Porter 2001, 336, n. 80, notes that similar language is used by the *kritikoi* in Philodemus: P. Herc. 460 fr. 9, 15–18 (ἐπικρατῇ ἡμῶν).

magical impact of composition.[50] Finally, Dionysius' reference to inspiration (πνεῦμα) reminds us of Longinus' qualification of Demosthenes as ἐμπνευσθείς ("inspired," 16.2).

Thus, it appears that Demosthenes would certainly be a model of the sublime for Dionysius, as he probably was for Caecilius.[51] Another model to be imitated was Isocrates. In his treatise *On Isocrates*, Dionysius points out that "with regard to expression, Isocrates is more sublime (ὑψηλότερος), more impressive and more dignified than Lysias." Again, the terminology of the sublime is used in the context of stylistic analysis, and it is combined with other adjectives that express grandeur. But it is interesting to see how Dionysius proceeds to comment on "the sublimity of Isocrates' artistry" (τὸ τῆς Ἰσοκράτους κατασκευῆς ὕψος, Dion. Hal. *Isoc.* 3.59.15–60.7 Us.-Rad.; trans. adapted from Usher):

> ὑψηλότερός ἐστιν ἐκείνου κατὰ τὴν ἑρμηνείαν καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστερος μακρῷ καὶ ἀξιωματικώτερος. θαυμαστὸν γὰρ δὴ καὶ μέγα τὸ τῆς Ἰσοκράτους κατασκευῆς ὕψος, ἡρωϊκῆς μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως οἰκεῖον. δοκεῖ δή μοι μὴ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ τις ἂν εἰκάσαι τὴν μὲν Ἰσοκράτους ῥητορικὴν τῇ Πολυκλείτου τε καὶ Φειδίου τέχνῃ κατὰ τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ μεγαλότεχνον καὶ ἀξιωματικόν, τὴν δὲ Λυσίου τῇ Καλάμιδος καὶ Καλλιμάχου τῆς λεπτότητος ἕνεκα καὶ τῆς χάριτος. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐκείνων οἳ μὲν ἐν τοῖς ἐλάττοσι καὶ ἀνθρωπικοῖς ἔργοις εἰσὶν ἐπιτυχέστεροι τῶν ἑτέρων, οἳ δ' ἐν τοῖς μείζοσι καὶ θειοτέροις δεξιώτεροι, οὕτως καὶ τῶν ῥητόρων ὃ μὲν ἐν τοῖς μικροῖς ἐστι σοφώτερος, ὃ δ' ἐν τοῖς μεγάλοις περιττότερος, τάχα μὲν γὰρ καὶ τῇ φύσει μεγαλόφρων τις ὤν, εἰ δὲ μή, τῇ γε προαιρέσει πάντως τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ θαυμαστὸν διώκων.
>
> Isocrates is more sublime than Lysias is with regard to expression, and he is much more impressive and more dignified. Indeed, this sublimity of Isocrates' artistry is a great and wonderful thing, and has a character more suited to demigods than to men. I think one would not be wide of the mark in comparing the oratory of Isocrates, in respect of its grandeur, its virtuosity and its dignity, with the art of Polyclitus and Phidias, and the style of Lysias, for its lightness and charm, with that of Calamis and Callimachus; for just as the latter two sculptors are more successful than their rivals in portraying lesser human subjects, where the former two are cleverer at treating grander and superhuman subjects, so with the two orators: Lysias has the

[50] Longinus 39.2 compares the effects of word arrangement with the impact of flute music: αὐλὸς μὲν ἐντίθησίν τινα πάθη τοῖς ἀκροωμένοις καὶ οἷον ἔκφρονας καὶ κορυβαντιασμοῦ πλήρεις ἀποτελεῖ, "The flute induces certain emotions in those who hear it, and it seems to carry them away and fill them with divine frenzy." On the metaphor of rites and mysteries in ancient rhetoric, see Kirchner 2005.

[51] Cf. Innes 2002, 276–82.

> greater skill with small subjects, while Isocrates is the more impressive with grand subjects. This is perhaps because he is naturally of a noble cast of mind; or, if this is not the case, it is at least because his mind is wholly set upon grand and admirable designs.

Dionysius here presents Isocrates as a champion of the sublime. Although this passage is part of his analysis of Isocrates' style, the discussion of the orator's great and wonderful *hupsos* is clearly not restricted to stylistic matters: it concerns his ῥητορική in general. It is striking that Isocrates' sublimity is said to have a character that is more suited to heroic than to human nature (ἡρωϊκῆς μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως οἰκεῖον). Of course, this observation reminds us of the superhuman character of the sublime in Longinus, who as we have seen describes his favorite authors as ἥρωες.

Dionysius' comparison of oratory with sculpture is also fascinating. Lysias is compared to Calamis and Callimachus, two classical sculptors who are said to be successful in portraying lesser and "human subjects" (ἀνθρωπικοῖς ἔργοις). Vitruvius mentions Callimachus as the inventor of the Corinthian capital and praises him for the refinement and delicacy of his work.[52] Isocrates, on the other hand, is compared to the famous sculptors Polyclitus and Phidias, who excelled in treating grander and "more divine" (θειοτέροις) subjects. In other words, there is a connection between the sublime and presentations of the divine, a relationship that we have already encountered in our discussion of Longinus. The similarity (or should we say, continuity) between the discourse and ideas of Dionysius and Longinus becomes even more obvious when we observe Dionysius' explanation of Isocrates' success: the orator may be "naturally high-minded" (τῇ φύσει μεγαλόφρων τις ὤν). We have seen that μεγαλοφροσύνη is a central term in the treatise *On the Sublime*, where it points to the noble mind of the great author as the first and most important source of *hupsos*. We remember that, according to Longinus (36.1), "the sublime lifts the author near the noble mind of god" (τὸ δ' ὕψος ἐγγὺς αἴρει μεγαλοφροσύνης θεοῦ). Even more famous is Longinus' aphorism (9.2): "the sublime is the echo of a noble mind" (ὕψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα).

The discussion of Isocrates' sublimity demonstrates that, for Dionysius, *hupsos* is more than a purely formal category referring to the grand style. Just like Longinus, he describes the sublime in religious terms. Besides, far from treating this category as a technical matter of grand diction and figures, Dionysius relates *hupsos* directly to the mind and

[52] Vitruvius 4.10. Cf. Usher 1974, 113, n. 5. On the possible connection between Vitruvius and Augustan critics (Dionysius in particular), see de Jonge 2008, 33–34, and 191.

character of the author: in these respects, there is a remarkable continuity between Dionysius and Longinus. Of course, Isocrates is not one of Longinus' primary models: at one point, he remarks that "Isocrates fell into unaccountable puerility through his ambition to amplify everything."[53] In their evaluation of individual authors, Longinus and Dionysius disagree on various points. But the concept of the sublime in Dionysius in many respects seems to foreshadow Longinus' *Peri hupsous*.

6. CLASSICISM, CRITICISM, AND COMPOSITION THEORY IN THE AUGUSTAN PERIOD

Innes has pointed out that "the terminology of the sublime coincides with the rise of Atticism."[54] Indeed, it seems significant that the Greek word *hupsos* is not found in the works of Demetrius, Philodemus, or earlier rhetoricians.[55] As a technical rhetorical term, it first occurs in the works of Dionysius and Caecilius, who were both active in the Augustan period. These critics, who took the oratory of classical Athens as a model for new writing, while objecting to the bombastic style of certain Hellenistic writers, seem to have preferred the vocabulary of "height" (*hupsos*) to that of "the thick" and "the fat": the traditional term ἁδρός ("fat"), which refers to the grand style in Philodemus and other authors, is absent from Dionysius' rhetorical works.[56] He does use μεγαλοπρεπής ("grand," "magnificent"), frequently in combination with ὑψηλός, but in this respect Dionysius and Longinus are similar.

In Latin rhetorical and critical texts, the same development can be seen. Just like the Greek terminology of *hupsos*, the Latin vocabulary of "height" emerges in the second half of the first century B.C.E.: Cicero starts to use the adjectives *excelsus, altus*, and *elatus* only in his later works, especially *Brutus* and *Orator*, both written in 46 B.C.E.[57] In these works, Cicero defends himself against the Atticists, who objected to his copious

[53] Longinus 38.2, with a discussion of the opening of Isocrates' *Panegyricus*.

[54] Innes 2002, 274.

[55] In Demetrius 52 (on Homer's portrayal of the Cyclops) the adjective ὑψηλός qualifies a mountain; in Demetrius 53 (a citation from Antiphon) it describes an island. I agree with recent specialists that Demetrius' *On Style* belongs to a relatively early date, probably in the second or early first century B.C.E. See esp. Chiron 1993 and Innes 1995b.

[56] For the "grand style" (ἁδρὸν πλάσμα) in Philodemus, see *On Rhetoric* 4, i.165, 2–7, ed. Sudhaus. In Dionysius, *On Composition* 4.20.10 Us.-Rad., the words καὶ ἁδρά have rightly been deleted by Sadée and all recent editors.

[57] See Russell 1964, xxxi, and Innes 2002, 273–74.

style. An interesting passage is *Brutus* 276, where "a more elevated style" (*altior oratio*) and "a more vehement delivery" (*actio . . . ardentior*) are associated with "frenzy or delirium" (*furere atque bacchari*). This reminds us of Longinus' vocabulary of ἔκστασις and μαίνεσθαι (9.11 on Homer) and Dionysius' Corybantic dances (*Dem.* 22, cited above). When we turn to the Augustan period (and Dionysius' immediate cultural context), the ideas of Horace are of course relevant. In his summary of conventional literary views, he draws a contrast between the ancient tragedians, calling Pacuvius "learned" (*doctus*) and Accius "elevated" (*altus*).[58] The latter qualification may be compared with Dionysius' evaluation of Aeschylus as ὑψηλός (*Imit.* 206, 2–3). In the *Ars Poetica*, sublimity is especially associated with the mad poet: "with his head upraised" (*sublimis*), he splutters verses, and falls (*decidit*) into a well (*AP* 456–57)—this is the same theme of verticality that we have encountered in both Dionysius and Longinus. Horace shares their discourse to a large extent, although he seems more suspicious of both the high style and the flawed genius that he links with sublimity.

All these observations suggest that the emergence of the sublime is closely connected with the classicizing views of the Augustan critics.[59] So why is it that critics like Caecilius and Dionysius developed the terminology of height, and how does this concept of *hupsos* suit their rhetorical theory? These critics, who thought that Augustan Rome experienced the renaissance of classical Athens, seem to have looked for a style that avoided "fat" or bombastic vocabulary, but which nevertheless did not fail to have an overwhelming impact on the audience. The most fruitful approach to this stylistic ideal, which had to combine Attic clarity with powerful impressiveness, was apparently found in the art of composition (*sunthesis*). During the first centuries B.C.E., the attention of critics seems to have shifted from the selection of words (*eklogē*) to the combination of words. We can already observe this tendency in the fragments of poetic criticism that are preserved in Philodemus' work *On Poems*.[60] In rhetoric, it is especially Dionysius' work *On Composition* (Περὶ συνθέσεως ὀνομάτων) that glorifies the idea of a beautiful composition built from commonplace and ordinary words. Again and again, he tells us that the beauty of a text is not to be found in the words, but in their pleasing

[58] Horace, *Ep.* 2.1.56.

[59] On Augustan classicism, see Hidber 1996, 14–81, and de Jonge 2008, 9–20.

[60] See Janko 2000, whose edition of Philodemus' *On Poems* Book 1 reveals a number of striking parallels between the ideas of the so-called Hellenistic *kritikoi* and Dionysius' theories on composition. See also de Jonge 2008, 37–39, etc.

combination.[61] Such a composition can indeed be sublime, as he points out: just as the goddess Athena makes Odysseus appear now in one form, now in another, "so composition, taking the same words, makes the ideas appear at one time unlovely, mean and beggarly, and at another time *sublime*, rich and beautiful."[62]

It is no coincidence that the Greek rhetorician Dionysius wrote his book *On Composition* in the same period in which the Roman poet Horace expressed a preference for *iunctura callida*, "skilful joining," in his *Ars Poetica*.[63] Nor is it a coincidence that—again in the same period—no other than M. Vipsanius Agrippa accused Vergil because he used a new kind of stylistic affectation (*cacozelia*), which actually consisted in the effective combination of ordinary words (*communibus verbis*).[64] As I have already mentioned, Conte explains Vergil's style as a sublime style, which makes use of artful syntax and the unexpected transposition of linguistic elements.[65] We have seen that transposition is a crucial concept in the description of the sublime in both Dionysius and Longinus.

Ancient treatments of σύνθεσις often compare the effects of composition to those of music: both Dionysius and Longinus refer to the magical power of artistic word arrangement.[66] The latter, who wrote two separate

[61] See, e.g., Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 3.9.6–9, 11.5–12.3, and 14.9–15.2 Us.-Rad. Having cited passages from Homer (*Od.* 16.1–16) and Herodotus (the story of Gyges and Candaules in 1.8–10), Dionysius remarks: "There are many passages like this in this author [Herodotus], as in Homer, from which one may conclude that the appealing quality of this style is derived, after all, not from the beauty of the words but from their combination."

[62] Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 4.20.8–10 Us.-Rad.: αὕτη τε τὰ αὐτὰ λαμβάνουσα ὀνόματα τοτὲ μὲν ἄμορφα καὶ ταπεινὰ καὶ πτωχὰ ποιεῖ φαίνεσθαι τὰ νοήματα, τοτὲ δ' ὑψηλὰ καὶ πλούσια καὶ καλά. My italics.

[63] Horace, *Ars Poetica* 46–48: *In verbis etiam tenuis cautusque serendis | dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum | reddiderit iunctura novum*, "Moreover, with a nice taste and care in weaving words together, you will express yourself most happily, if a skilful setting makes a familiar word new" (trans. Fairclough). Russell 1973, 117, observes: "Characteristically Augustan is the emphasis laid on ingenious word-combination (*iunctura*, σύνθεσις) as the road to distinction and novelty."

[64] See Donatus, *Life of Virgil* 44: Agrippa called Vergil the "inventor of a new kind of artificiality, neither extravagant nor affectedly simple, but based on common words and for that reason not at once perceived" (*novae cacozeliae repertorem, non tumidae nec exilis, sed ex communibus verbis, atque ideo latentis*, trans. Camps 1969, 115–20). Cf. Görler 1979, 179. Both Longinus (40.2–3 on Euripides) and Dionysius (*Comp.* 3 on Herodotus and Homer) praise the effective combination of ordinary words, which can have a sublime impact.

[65] Conte 2007, 67.

[66] Longinus 39 compares harmonious composition with music of the flute and the tones of the harp (φθόγγοι κιθάρας), which "often exercise a marvelous spell" (θαυμαστὸν ἐπάγουσι πολλάκις . . . θέλγητρον). According to Dionysius, "we are all enchanted" (κηλούμεθα)

books on σύνθεσις, points out that "composition casts a spell on us" (he uses the word κηλεῖν).[67] The magical power that both Dionysius and Longinus attribute to the art of composition seems closely related to the religious language that we have observed in their treatments of *hupsos*.

7. THE AUGUSTAN DEBATE ON PLATO AND SUBLIMITY

Still, Longinus is not Dionysius. Having argued that the treatise *On the Sublime* should be understood as building on the ideals of Augustan classicism, I will complete this article by drawing attention to one of Dionysius' lesser-known works, namely, his *Letter to Cn. Pompeius Geminus*.[68] This literary letter is important for our understanding of the history of the sublime in two ways. First, the text sheds light on the debate on sublimity that seems to have taken place in the Augustan Period. Second, it illustrates the obvious differences between the preferences of Dionysius and Longinus.

Pompeius Geminus is one of the many intellectuals in Rome who seem to have been in contact with Dionysius, forming what we might call an intellectual network.[69] Most scholars assume that he was a Greek rhetorician, but his name suggests that he may have been Roman.[70] According to one theory, Pompeius was a freed slave; perhaps he was somehow associated with the house of Pompeius Magnus, which would make him an interesting link between Greek criticism and the Roman elite.[71] Whoever he was, this Pompeius Geminus, having read Dionysius' work *On Demosthenes*, objected to the negative criticism of Plato that

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by good melody and rhythm (*Comp.* 11.39.17–19 Us.-Rad.), and "rhythm is the most potent device of all for bewitching (γοητεύειν) and beguiling (κηλεῖν) the ear" (*Dem.* 39.212.6–10 Us.-Rad.): on the magical power of poetic language according to Dionysius, see further de Jonge 2008, 332–40.

[67] Longinus 39.3. See de Jonge 2008, 337.

[68] Most recent edition with commentary by Fornaro 1997.

[69] Rhys Roberts 1900 already reconstructed a "literary circle" of Dionysius of Halicarnassus by examining his addressees. Goold 1961 further investigated this "professorial circle." Recent discussions can be found in Hidber 1996, 1–8, and de Jonge 2008, 25–34.

[70] Rhys Roberts 1900, 439–40, believes that Pompeius is a "Greek rhetorician." Richards 1938, 133–34, argues that Pompeius is Greek because "he writes in excellent Greek." Goold 1961, 173, thinks that Pompeius is "a Greek teacher of letters at Rome." Aujac 1975, xxii–xxiii, identifies Pompeius with the astronomer Geminus. Fornaro 1997, 4, n. 7, states that he is "probabilmente un greco." Hidber 1996, 7, n. 50, however observes that Pompeius' name is Roman, and he refers to a Roman senator with the name Pompeius Geminus.

[71] See Rhys Roberts 1900, 439, and Schultze 1986, 122.

he found in that treatise. His reaction forced Dionysius to illuminate his views on Plato in a separate letter.

For Longinus, Plato is one of the most prominent models of the sublime.[72] Dionysius, on the other hand, characterizes Plato's style as a mixture of the plain and the grand style. He approves of the passages that are written in the plain style, whereas he objects to those passages in which the philosopher attempts to employ a more impressive and poetic language.[73] In his work *On Demosthenes*, Dionysius analyzes a passage from the *Phaedrus* as an example of Plato's sublime style (ὑψηλὴ λέξις).[74] He strongly objects to the decorative language of Socrates' first speech in that dialogue (*Phaedrus* 237a). Of course, his criticism of this passage is in line with the views of Socrates himself, who rejects the overly poetic tone of his first speech.[75] Dionysius, however, expresses his contempt by addressing the author with the ironical vocative δαιμονιώτατε Πλάτων, "you most divine Plato," which obviously alludes to Socrates' sometimes annoying way of addressing his interlocutors in Plato's dialogues.[76]

Pompeius Geminus protested against this criticism: in his view, Plato deserved credit for attempting a hazardous style. In his *Letter to Pompeius*, Dionysius quotes the views of his opponent, who apparently argued that authors cannot achieve great success "without accepting risks of such a kind as must involve possible failure."[77] This view reminds us of Longinus' ideas on the risky nature of sublime writing. Dionysius replies that he in fact agrees with Pompeius concerning this point: his own conviction,

[72] See, e.g., 13.4 and 32.5–8. In 14.1, Longinus singles out Homer, Plato, Demosthenes, and Thucydides. On Plato as a sublime model, see Russell 1981 and Innes 2002, 261–69.

[73] See esp. Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 5.136.11–138.7 Us.-Rad. Cf. de Jonge 2008, 264–67. For ancient views on Plato's style, see Walsdorff 1927.

[74] Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 7.139–42 Us.-Rad.: a discussion of Socrates' first speech, in particular *Phaedrus* 237–38, and 246–47.

[75] Plato, *Phaedrus* 241e: Socrates remarks that he has started speaking in verses, not "dithyrambs" anymore. Dionysius (*Dem.* 7.140.11–13 Us.-Rad.) notes that "Socrates himself will shortly admit" (αὐτὸς ἐρεῖ) that his first speech consisted of ψόφοι ("bombast") and διθύραμβοι ("dithyrambs"). On the rhetorical use of the term "dithyramb," see de Jonge 2008, 354–55.

[76] Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 7.141.8 Us.-Rad.

[77] Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 2.231.16–19 Us.-Rad., quoting Pompeius: ἓν δὲ τοῦτο διισχυρίζομαι, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι μεγάλως ἐπιτυχεῖν ἐν οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ μὴ τοιαῦτα τολμῶντα καὶ παραβαλλόμενον, ἐν οἷς καὶ σφάλλεσθαι ἐστὶν ἀναγκαῖον, "But this one point I strongly affirm, that it is not possible to achieve great success in any direction without facing and accepting risks of such a kind as must involve the possibility of failure." Fornaro 1997, 157–58, notes differences in vocabulary between Dionysius on the one hand and the citations from Pompeius on the other. Pompeius' terminology seems to have a Platonic flavor.

however, is that, in aiming to achieve a "sublime (ὑψηλῆς), impressive and daring (παρακεκινδυνευμένης) expression," Plato did not succeed in every instance: in his works it happens often that "sublimity of style lapses into emptiness and tedium" (Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 2.231.19–232.4 Us.-Rad.):

> οὐδὲν διαφερόμεθα πρὸς ἀλλήλους· σύ τε γὰρ ὁμολογεῖς ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τὸν ἐπιβαλλόμενον μεγάλοις καὶ σφάλλεσθαί ποτε, ἐγώ τέ φημι τῆς ὑψηλῆς καὶ μεγαλοπρεποῦς καὶ παρακεκινδυνευμένης φράσεως ἐφιέμενον Πλάτωνα μὴ περὶ πάντα τὰ μέρη κατορθοῦν, πολλοστὴν μέντοι μοῖραν ἔχειν τῶν κατορθουμένων τὰ διαμαρτανόμενα ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ. καὶ καθ᾽ ἓν τοῦτο Πλάτωνά φημι λείπεσθαι Δημοσθένους, ὅτι παρ᾽ ᾧ μὲν ἐκπίπτει ποτὲ τὸ ὕψος τῆς λέξεως [τῶν λόγων] εἰς τὸ κενὸν καὶ ἀηδές, παρ᾽ ᾧ δὲ οὐδέποτε ἢ σπανίως γε κομιδῇ. καὶ περὶ μὲν Πλάτωνος τοσαῦτα.
>
> There is no disagreement between us: for you admit that a man who aspires great things must sometimes fail, while I say that Plato, in aiming to achieve sublime, impressive and daring effects of expression did not succeed in every particular, but his failures were nevertheless only a very small fraction of his successes. And I say that it is in this one respect that Plato is inferior to Demosthenes, that with him the elevation of style sometimes lapses into emptiness and tedium; whereas with Demosthenes this is never, or only very rarely so. That is all I have to say about Plato.

The dispute between Dionysius and Pompeius is fascinating, because it informs us about the literary discussions that were going on during the Augustan period. In particular, the limited information that Dionysius gives us about his addressee seems to reveal that his views on sublime writing were strikingly consonant with the ideas that we find in Longinus. For this reason some scholars have suggested that Pompeius was in fact the author of *Peri hupsous*.[78] Most specialists reject this attribution because they think that the treatise belongs to a later period, but the possibility of an Augustan date cannot be excluded. However, the authorship of *Peri hupsous* remains a complex problem, which I cannot solve in this article. There is a more important conclusion for us to be drawn here. The correspondence between Dionysius and Pompeius confirms that the sublime was a hot topic in the Augustan age; we have seen that at least three critics, Caecilius of Caleacte, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Pompeius Geminus, participated in this discussion, and we have observed that they did so in similar terms as the author of *Peri hupsous*.

[78] Richards 1938 and Goold 1961. Rhys Roberts 1900, 440, already expressed the view that "if conjecture is to seek an author for that treatise [i.e., *On the Sublime*] in the age of Augustus, this Pompeius might be named with far more plausibility than Dionysius himself."

Within that debate, critics could of course express different views on particular writers, as the *Letter to Pompeius* makes clear.[79] But even if Dionysius' evaluation of Plato differs from the views of both Pompeius and Longinus, he clearly participates in what we might call the discourse of the sublime. Dionysius himself underlines this, when he attempts to mitigate his judgment on Plato (Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 2. 230.16–231.1 Us.-Rad.):

> ἐπιτιμῶ τε οὐχ ὡς τῶν τυχόντων τῳ ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἀνδρὶ μεγάλῳ καὶ ἐγγὺς τῆς θείας ἐληλυθότι φύσεως.
>
> And I criticize him [Plato] not as an ordinary man, but as a great one who has come near to the divine nature.

Dionysius admits that Plato is not one of τῶν τυχόντων. These words bring us right back to the beginning of my article: as we have seen above, Longinus similarly characterizes Moses as "not just any man," οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνήρ. In both cases, this formulation seems to point to the divine status of the author. Even if Dionysius, unlike Longinus, objects to Plato's poetic style, he seems to recognize that the philosopher is generally regarded as a divine model of sublime writing. It has been suggested that Dionysius is ironical when he calls Plato a man who has come only "near" (ἐγγύς) to having a divine nature, because the characterization of Plato as "divine" is well established in other ancient texts (Cicero, for example, refers to *divinus auctor Plato*).[80] But we may also compare Longinus' view that "sublimity lifts authors *near* the greatness of mind of god" (36.1: ἐγγὺς αἴρει μεγαλοφροσύνης θεοῦ). This parallel rather suggests that Dionysius, far from being ironical about Plato's allegedly divine nature, is making use of the discourse of those contemporaries who regarded the philosopher as an indisputable model of *hupsos*.

[79] Unlike Longinus, Dionysius shows himself a supporter of precision (*akribeia*) rather than an admirer of a hazardous style. This preference may be related to Dionysius' profession as a teacher, who wants his students to stay on safe ground, while avoiding the risks of Plato's adventurous style.

[80] Fornaro 1997, 156, thinks there is irony, and she compares Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 42.223.9 Us.-Rad.: Πλάτων ὁ θαυμάσιος, "the admirable Plato." But when we read Dionysius' remark about Plato being "near to divine nature" in its context, it seems more plausible that it is a sincere attempt to calm down Pompeius: Dionysius also emphasizes that he did not criticize Plato's subject matter. So with his allegedly "ironical" remark about Plato's divine nature, he seems to reassure Pompeius that his critical remarks on Plato's style are not detrimental to the philosopher's unique status. Of course, Dionysius' observations concerning Plato's figurative expressions should also be understood as the warnings of a teacher of rhetoric, who prefers his students to write in a clear and moderate style. For Cicero's reference to divine Plato, see n. 21.

8. CONCLUSION

The notion that Longinus builds on the works of his Augustan predecessors may seem an unsurprising conclusion to draw. However, scholars generally emphasize the differences between Dionysius and Longinus rather than their affinities. In agreement with Porter's discussion of the euphonistic tradition that connects Dionysius and Longinus, this article has argued that the connection between these two critics is in fact very strong. This especially appears from an examination of Dionysius' discourse of *hupsos*. The rhetorical terminology of the sublime appears to have emerged in the Augustan period among the representatives of Greek classicism. Their views could be summarized in a package of three interrelated ideas. First, the sublime is obviously considered something immeasurable, which overwhelms the audience because it somehow appears to escape human analysis; hence the religious language of *hupsos*, which we find in both Longinus and Dionysius, in discussions of the inspired state of the author, the ecstatic experience of the audience, and the suitability of divine and heroic themes. Second, effective composition is considered one of the most powerful sources of sublime writing. As we have seen, the classicizing rhetoric of the Augustan Period largely turned its attention away from *eklogē* towards *sunthesis*: by focusing on the art of word arrangement, euphony, and rhythm, rhetoricians as well as poets were able to combine the clarity of common words with the enchanting impressiveness of composition, thus avoiding the bombastic language of so-called Asianic rhetoric. Finally, Dionysius, Pompeius Geminus, and Longinus share the idea that there is always an element of *danger* in the sublime: authors who aim to achieve sublime effects run a serious risk of failure. This latter aspect of sublime writing, its risky nature, seems to have been a particularly prominent subject of discussion in the criticism of Plato; in this debate, Caecilius of Caleacte appears to have agreed with Dionysius, whereas Gnaeus Pompeius Geminus shared the views of the author of *Peri hupsous*.

The wider cultural background of the Augustan ideas on sublimity and its religious aspects remains to be explored further. At the beginning of this article I cited the well-known Genesis paraphrase from Longinus' *On the Sublime.* Some scholars have suggested that Longinus found this text in the work of Caecilius of Caleacte, who seems to have been a Hellenized Jew.[81] That may be right, and it is even possible that Longinus

[81] See Russell 1995, 190–91, n. b, and Innes 2002, 275.

himself was a Jew, who saw parallels between Greek and Jewish culture. The identity and cultural background of the author remain a riddle, but we can at least say more now about the connection between rhetoric and religion in the early history of the sublime. We have seen that the Genesis passage is indeed closely interwoven with the Homeric examples against which it is juxtaposed in Longinus' treatise: both the grandeur of the divine theme and the motif of light and darkness are obviously appropriate to Longinus' concept of *hupsos*. It thus seems that the Genesis passage suits Longinus just as well as it may have suited Caecilius. In fact, this biblical paraphrase turns out to be a perfect example of the continuity that exists between the Augustan taste and Longinus' preferences. Genesis 1 is not only a supposedly inspired passage that deals with a divine theme, but we may now also observe that its sublime power results from *sunthesis* rather than from *eklogē*: γενέσθω φῶς, καὶ ἐγένετο· γενέσθω γῆ, καὶ ἐγένετο: "'Let there be light.' And there was. 'Let there be earth.' And there was." There is no bombastic language here, but we are impressed by a simple repetition of ordinary words. It is in this passage and in similar texts that Longinus and his Augustan colleagues found sublimity.[82]

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