

Abstract

If awarded, the fellowship period would enable me to draw upon three decades of producing critically introduced and highly annotated translations of neglected Greek sophistic texts from Late Antiquity to lay the foundation for an innovative monograph: *The Eloquent on Eloquence: Issues and Motifs in Imperial Greek Sophistic*.

The Eloquent on Eloquence will be a series of explorations around the theme of what sophists (and philosophical rhetors such as Dio Chrysostom and Themistius, who also belong to rhetorical culture although not self-identifying as sophists) say in their orations when their own craft—*eloquence*—becomes the subject.

My goal during the fellowship period will be to:

1. read through, assess, and take notes on as many of the actual orations of imperial Greek orators as possible (mainly Dio Chrysostom, Maximus of Tyre, Aelius Aristides, Himerius, Libanius, Themistius, Synesius, Procopius of Gaza, Choricus), with some work on ancillary sophistic works as well as those of Apuleius and the *Panegyrici Latini*.
2. complete a first draft of sections regarding:
 - a. Aelius Aristides's defense of rhetoric against Plato's criticisms;
 - b. Himerius's and Themistius's responses to the Platonic critique;
 - c. and those recurring situations in which sophists refuse to, or refrain from, speaking and why.

The piece on Himerius's and Themistius's responses to Plato will see preliminary and separate publication in a volume on "Plato in the Third Sophistic," which is being planned and edited by Ryan Fowler and to which I have been invited to contribute.

Background

In 1979 I published the first thorough historical, philological, and, thematic study of Eunapius of Sardis's the *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists* (ca. 400 A.D.), an important text for the history of Greek sophists in the fourth century A.D. This study was propelled by two tendencies of the late 20th century: a new interest in the Second Sophistic (the sophistic culture of the first 2 ½ centuries A.D.) and a surge of interest in Late Antiquity (the period roughly from 250 to 650 A.D.). In the course of that work I became aware of how many important Greek sophistic texts of Late Antiquity had never been translated into English or, in some cases, into any language—and were therefore lying in neglect. These Greek texts are difficult; few cultural historians, let alone dedicated philologists, will read through them in the original for exploratory purposes.

For this reason I have dedicated most of my career to producing critically introduced and highly annotated translations of the private orations of the 4th century philosophical rhetor Themistius and the orations of the 4th century sophist Himerius. Most recently, as contributing editor and organizer of an international team, I have worked to produce the first translation of the *Preliminary Talks (Prolaliai)* and *Declamations* of the 6th century Gazan sophist Choricus. All these translations will provide access, stimulate interest, and serve as a vade mecum to the Greek texts of the various works.

It is from this foundation that I now want to turn from translation to crafting a new monograph that will offer insight into how these Greek sophists—professors of rhetoric and masters of eloquence—spoke regarding their own craft. This insight will contribute to the better understanding of a number of areas of ancient life, as the Greek

sophists were the most advanced teachers of the literary-rhetorical curriculum that prepared the eastern Roman elite to assume its roles in the cities, the imperial bureaucracy, courts, and other arenas of power and prestige. Outside the schools, they catered to educated adults' taste for rhetorical displays, served as public orators, ambassadors, and cultural arbiters; within the schools they presided over the infusion of Hellenism throughout the Roman Empire and its subsequent spread into the Byzantine period.

Contribution

The Eloquent on Eloquence will be of interest to students and scholars of ancient rhetoric, ancient higher education, and the cultural history of the Roman Empire. It will bring to greater prominence the sophistic texts from the 1st to the 6th centuries A.D. in which I have immersed myself, but which otherwise have been studied only in limited ways (and often merely narrowly exploited) because of Romantic biases about the classical canon that are just now being broken. I look forward to bringing to light in a monograph the insights I have gained from translating these texts for over a quarter-century, an intimacy that has enabled me to uncover recurring issues and motifs of which scholars are woefully unaware and therefore have yet to fully appreciate. Therefore, *The Eloquent on Eloquence* will examine and expose to the light of further scholarship the following themes (among others that will doubtless emerge):

➤ **The Sophist's Platonic Heritage:**

How do imperial sophists respond to Plato's classic critique of rhetoric—and to the

fact that he is, in his own way, simultaneously an accomplished rhetorician and stylistic model himself?

➤ Athens' Relation to Rhetoric:

The tradition that rhetoric originated at Athens; continued Athenian prominence in rhetorical education; challenges to that claimed privileged position.

➤ The Metaphors of Eloquence:

There is a whole series of recurring metaphors that imperial sophists use in reference to themselves and their craft (e.g., eloquence as human or animal song, as a drug or charm, as a feast of food served to the audience; the rhetor as competitive athlete, as a dancer, as a painter): how are these used, reused, and deployed over the centuries, and do they form a kind of "system"?

➤ The Divine Origin/Force of Rhetoric:

The divine origin of rhetoric; the charming power of rhetoric; the oration personified.

➤ The Patrons of Rhetoric:

Gods, heroes, historical figures of classical Greece who are continually invoked in imperial sophistic as patrons/models of eloquence.

➤ When Sophist's Declined to Speak:

Recurring situations in which sophists refuse to, or refrain from, speaking and why.

To conduct this examination, a massive body of primary texts must be read through: (1) the imperial Greek sophists' actual orations, scholastic and extra-scholastic, on real-life and imaginary themes, which are the primary focus of my project; (2) ancillary works (e.g., letters, memoirs) written by imperial Greek sophists that shed light

on their rhetorical culture; (3) works on rhetorical theory (from Aristotle through late antiquity); (4) the orators of classical Greece (5th and 4th centuries B.C.), to determine the extent to which the identified "issues and motifs" that occupy imperial Greek sophists already appear in the classical world; and (5) some collateral imperial sophistic texts in Latin, because, although my focus is on Greek sophistic, contemporary Latin materials will be a critical aid. Although I have the advantage of already being steeped in much of the bibliography, I shall have to supplement and keep updated my bibliographical knowledge, including significant reading in secondary scholarship, in order to prepare an adequate platform upon which to write my text.

Conclusion

I am seeking to bookend thirty years of active research and writing, which have been prolific in producing critically introduced and highly annotated translations of neglected Greek sophistic texts from Late Antiquity, with a new monograph as innovative in its insight and broad in impact as that which inaugurated this scholarly journey. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] I look forward to this opportunity, and the contribution that *The Eloquent on Eloquence* will make to our department here at Fordham, as well as scholarship throughout the academy on ancient rhetoric, ancient higher education, and the cultural history of the Roman Empire.