GREEK RHETORIC AND THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE.
THE BUBBLE OF THE 'THIRD SOPHISTIC'*

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Rhétorique grecque et Empire romain tardif.
Le mirage de la "Troisième Sophistique"

Longtemps négligée, la rhétorique tardo-antique fait maintenant l'objet d'un nombre croissant d'études. Pour mieux marquer cette revalorisation, on a introduit la dénomination de "Troisième Sophistique". Le présent article entend démontrer que ce syntagme reste problématique : faute de s'accorder sur son signifié précis, les caractéristiques qui lui sont attribuées font l'objet d'une discussion constante. En particulier, le rapport entre la "Troisième Sophistique" et son prédécesseur, la Seconde Sophistique, manque de clarté. Un obstacle majeur qui a empêché de définir ce rapport est la différence d'approche que l'on constate entre les spécialistes de la littérature du Bas Empire et ceux de la littérature du Haut Empire : si la Seconde Sophistique a été longtemps interprétée – comme l'est encore trop souvent la littérature tardo-antique – comme une expression culturelle en déclin ou, du moins, privée de vitalité, les nouvelles approches méthodologiques développées au cours des deux dernières décennies en ont au contraire démontré le dynamisme et l'incidence sociale. Plutôt que de repartir du syntagme "Seconde Sophistique", on propose une autre vision des choses : appliquées à l'Antiquité tardive, ces mêmes approches méthodologiques nous montrent pour cette époque des sophistes qui, loin d'avoir perdu leur prestige social au profit des professeurs de droit, des sténographes, ou des évêques, continuaient à jouer un rôle important dans la vie politique. Il en résulte, premièrement, une réévaluation des auteurs tardo-antiques, de leur position et de leur influence sociales ; en second lieu le remplacement du paradigme "rupture et déclin" par le paradigme "transformation et adaptation", selon un changement de perspective déjà opéré dans d'autres domaines de la recherche sur l'Antiquité tardive ; et finalement, grâce à une comparaison plus serrée des littératures du Bas et du Haut Empire, la mise en évidence d'importants éléments de continuité dans l'histoire de la rhétorique antique, sans pour autant oublier les éléments de discontinuité. [Auteur]

1. Introduction

Greek rhetoric in late Antiquity is unusually well documented[1]. As such, it has got everything it takes to attract the attention of scholars: both late Antiquity and Greek rhetoric are flourishing fields of study. Nevertheless, late ancient Greek rhetorical texts, especially classicizing ones, have often not received the penetrating analysis and dynamic

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* **Abbreviations**: **Brown**, *Power and Persuasion* = P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity. Towards a Christian Empire*, Madison, 1992. — **Cameron, *Education and literary culture*** = Av. Cameron, *Education and Literary Culture*, in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 13, 1998. — **Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*** = P.-L. Malosse – B. Schouler, *Qu'est-ce que la troisième sophistique ?*, in *Lalies*, 29, 2009, pp. 161-224. — **Puech**, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs* = B. Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs dans les inscriptions d'époque impériale*, Paris, 2002.

— **Swain, *Hellenism and empire*** = S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, A.D. 50-250*, Oxford, 1996. — **Whitmarsh, *Second sophistic*** = T. Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Greece & Rome. New Surveys in the Classics, 35), Oxford, 2005.

1. Cf. G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 58; Cameron, *Education and Literary Culture*, pp. 665-707, esp. p. 696; M. Heath, *Menander. A Rhetor in Context*, Oxford, 2004, esp. pp. 52-89.

approach that characterizes research in both these fields. Research on late Antiquity has often focused on Christian rather than on classicizing texts, and nowadays increasingly turns to study later periods and more 'peripheral' areas[2]. Scholars studying Greek rhetoric have had a marked preference for classical Athens and the early empire[3]. If most studies of Greek rhetoric under the Roman empire stop in the early third century, this is not so much because Philostratus' survey of the 'Second Sophistic' ends around that time – the 'Second Sophistic' having long been turned into something else than was originally intended by Philostratus, as we shall see – but because Greek rhetoric is often deemed, first, to have almost disappeared during the 'crisis' of the third century, and then, when it did resurface from the fourth century onwards, to have lost the performative vitality and social importance perceived as defining traits of earlier rhetoric[4].

Recently, a number of scholars have challenged this image of late ancient Greek rhetoric[5]. Focusing on grassroot rhetoric and technical treatises, Malcolm Heath (2004) has unravelled the technical innovations in later Greek rhetoric and demonstrated the importance and vitality of judicial and deliberative rhetoric in late Antiquity[6]. Similarly, the essays edited by Whitby and Hägg & Rousseau have greatly improved our understanding of a number of important late antique panegyrical texts[7]. My concern here, however, is with a group of predominantly continental scholars who, in an attempt to promote late antique rhetoric, have started to use the term 'Third Sophistic'. Whilst these scholars often have great merit in putting late antique rhetoric on the map again, their new categorization is problematic: the various scholars to have used the term have divergent,

and sometimes radically opposed, ideas on what literature it should cover; whilst adopting its fashionable name, they have largely failed to bring to bear the methodologies that have produced such stimulating readings of the Second Sophistic; and as a result of this, they have confirmed the image of classicizing Greek literature in late Antiquity as static, moribund, and no longer engaged or influential in society. Whilst trying to capitalize on the popularity of the Second Sophistic, the 'Third Sophistic' has thus ended up suggesting discontinuity rather than continuity with the early empire. As historians of late Antiquity have long moved beyond such a paradigm of decline and closure towards one of transformation and dynamic change[8], it should not cause surprise that sophists such as Libanius, Himerius, or Choricius figure but dimly in studies on late Antiquity[9]: if – to put it bluntly – classicizing Greek rhetoric was a set of fossilized *topoi* handed down in schools by teachers who used it as a refuge against contemporary religious, political, and socio-cultural evolutions, surely it is not only *quantité* but also *qualité négligeable*.

Abandoning the term 'Third Sophistic', this article pleads for reading late ancient Greek rhetoric through the lens of the Second Sophistic in order to place these texts back where they belong, at the heart of late ancient society. Indeed, applying the methodologies developed for the study of earlier Greek rhetoric allows a fair evaluation of both continuity and change: similar to second-century texts in being a prominent and powerful locus of social debate, late ancient texts, through their dynamic exploration of the key issues that mattered then and there, also offer detailed insight in conservative as well as progressive forces at work in late antique society. In order to demonstrate this, Section I sets out the problems involved in, and caused by, the term 'Third Sophistic'. After this, Section II sketches the general characteristics of the literature of the Second Sophistic, as well as the methodologies that have recently been applied to it. Section III refutes some persistent misunderstandings that continue to separate, in the eyes of many scholars, later Greek literature from its early imperial predecessors. Instead, it sets out important elements of continuity that justify the application of methodologies developed for the Second Sophistic to later Greek rhetoric. Section IV, finally, opens up new avenues of research by exploring how late antique sophists dynamically engaged in, and sought to influence, the political, cultural, and religious debates of their times. This fresh approach to late antique rhetoric will first and foremost deepen our understanding of literature as a social

2. The shift in chronological and geographic emphasis is illustrated in the selection of essays and topics in G. W. Bowersock –P. Brown – O. Grabar (edd.), *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Post-classical World*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1999, p. x, as pointed out by Mathisen, Review of the book in *BMCR*, 2000, http://bmcr. brynmawr.edu/2000/2000-03-14.html.

3. Cf. S. Goldhill, *Review of Gleason (Making man*, see *infra*, n. 28*)*, in *BMCR*, 1995, http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/1995/95.06.19. html).

4. For references, see below, n. 16.

5. Other studies of late antique Greek rhetoric include G. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, Princeton, 1983, Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, and J. Stenger, *Hellenische Iden-tität in der Spätantike. Griechische Autoren und ihr unbehagen an der eigenen Zeit* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 97), Berlin, 2009.

6. Another recent study offering in-depth discussion of many late antique rhetorical treatises is R. Webb, *Ecphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Farnham, Burlington, 2009.

7. M. Heath, *Menander*, *cit.* (n. 1); L. M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power*, Leiden, 1998 ; T. Hägg – Ph. Rousseau (ed.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage Series, 31), Berkeley –Los Angeles –London, 2002.

8. E.g. J.H.D. Scourfield (ed.), *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity. Inheritance, Authority, and Change*, Swansea, 2007, p. 4. Cf. also Cameron, *Education and Literary Culture*, p. 705, Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 167-168.

9. Av. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire*, London, 1993, pp. 131-132, for example, deals with classicizing literature very briefly. Cf. also Mathisen, *Review*, *cit*. (n. 2), 2000.

phenomenon in late Antiquity, but will also modify our understanding of late antique society in general, as well as of the history of ancient rhetoric.

2. THE BUBBLE OF THE 'THIRD SOPHISTIC'[10]

In 2006, a *Festschrift* appeared under the title *Approches à la Troisième Sophistique*. In his review of this collection of papers, Antony Hostein wrote that 'le livre possède avant tout un grand mérite: celui de consacrer l'usage de l'expression "Troisième Sophistique". Car parler de Troisième Sophistique pour évoquer *les orateurs païens et chrétiens de la fin de l'Antiquité* constitue, au fond, un *renversement de perspective majeur*. Employer cette notion revient à accorder aux études sur la rhétorique tardoantique une *autonomie*, un caractère propre et irréductible, ouvrant par ce biais un nouvel espace de recherche. Cette culture littéraire et rhétorique de la fin de l'Antiquité, tout en tenant une place de choix dans la continuité des époques classiques et impériales, bénéficie en retour d'une *réhabilitation* définitive, elle qui fut longtemps dénigrée et considérée comme un âge de décadence' [my italics, LVH][11]. Hostein's verdict provides a good summary of the first book to have carried the 'Third Sophistic' in its title. Yet three issues, which I therefore italicized, merit further investigation.

First, there is the question of the object covered by the term 'Third Sophistic', which is by no means undebated. Originally coined some twenty years ago to refer to a postmodern intellectual movement illustrated by, amongst others, Derrida, it has, since then, been transferred to Greek rhetoric of the first century A.D. as well as to the cultural revival under the Byzantine dynasty of the Comnenians (12th century)[12]. Over the last decade and a half, an increasing number of scholars have claimed the term for late Antiquity, yet even amongst them, there is disagreement as to its contours: does the 'Third Sophistic' start in the third or in the fourth century? Is it limited to rhetoric, or to prose, or does it also include poetry? Are Christian texts included as well as 'pagan' texts? Does it comprise all texts written in late Antiquity, or just the classicizing ones? Thus far, none of these questions has been thoroughly addressed[13]. As most authors using the term have *de facto* focused on Libanius and other fourth-century texts, it is on these that I too shall concentrate.

Even more disagreement — and less reflection – exists on the characteristics of this so-called 'Third Sophistic', and especially on its relationship with the Second Sophistic. Laurent Pernot, who first applied the term 'Third Sophistic' to late Antiquity, stresses continuity between the Second and Third Sophistic: in his most elaborate treatment of the topic, which has gone strangely unnoticed by other scholars discussing the Third Sophistic, he highlights a series of striking parallels between the 'Third Sophistic' and its predecessor[14]. Hostein, on the other hand, whilst paying lip-service to elements of continuity with earlier periods, speaks about the *autonomy* of late ancient rhetoric. The same is true of Pierre-Louis Malosse and Bernard Schouler, who explicitly mention continuity, but concentrate their efforts on demonstrating change[15]. We shall come back to this in Sections III and IV, but the main argument they adduce regards the social role of sophists: according to Malosse and Schouler, the sophists of late Antiquity lost the social prestige and influence which their predecessors possessed to religious leaders (esp. bishops) and educational competitors (esp. teachers of law and shorthand), and therefore withdrew

10. In 1994, Peter Brunt wrote an article under the title 'The Bubble of the Second Sophistic', arguing that '[we] should not [...] posit a revival of oratory as such: rather a kind of oratory called sophistic, which had long been practised, came to be regarded as the highest form of eloquence and gained the greatest renown' (p. 26). Whilst Brunt's thesis has since been refuted (Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 2-3; Schmitz, *Bildung und Macht. Zur sozialen und politischen Funktion der zweiten Sophistik in der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit* [Zetemata, 97], München, 1997, pp. 14-18), I adopt his title in order to emphasize that there is no breach between early and later imperial Greek rhetoric.

11. A. Hostein, *Review of E. Amato – A. Roduit – M. Steinrück (edd.), Approches de la Troisième Sophistique. Hommages à Jacques Schamp (Latomus, 24), Bruxelles, 2006*, in *AntTard*, 16, 2008, pp. 395-396, esp. 396.

12. First century: A. M. Milazzo, *Un dialogo difficile. La retorica in conflitto nei Discorsi Platonici di Elio* (Spudasmata, 87), Hildesheim, 2002; Comnenians: A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 40 and 225-316 ; postmodernism : V. Vitanza, *Some More Notes. Toward a Third Sophistic*, in *Argumentation*, 5, 1991, pp. 117-139.

13. An exception, albeit a brief one, is Quiroga's discussion of Pernot's limitation of the 'Third Sophistic' to pagan writers, especially sophists. Cf. A. Quiroga, *From Sophistopolis to Episcopolis. The Case for a Third Sophistic*, in *Journal in Late Antique Religion and Culture*, 1, 2007, pp. 31-42, esp. 40. As pointed out by Whitmarsh *Second Sophistic*, p. 5, the divergent implementation given by various scholars to the term 'Third Sophistic' does not need to be problematic in itself. What is important, however, is to be aware of those differences. The absence of theoretical reflection on the 'Third Sophistic' in the *Festschrift* for Jacques Schamp, *cit.* (n. 11) was highlighted in the review of the volume by L. Van Hoof in *Antiquité Classique*, 77, 2008, pp. 514-517.

14. L. Pernot, *Seconda Sofistica e Tarda Antichità*, in *Koinonia* 30-31 (2006-2007), pp. 7-18, not included in either Quiroga, *From Sophistopolis*, *cit.* (n. 13), for whom it may have appeared too late, or Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*. The term 'Third Sophistic' was first suggested by L. Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, Paris, 1993, p. 14, n. 9, and repeated in Idem, *La rhétorique dans l'Antiquité*, Paris, 2000, pp. 271-272.

15. After briefly stating (p. 163) that 'c'est la continuité qui prévaut', Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, spend sixty pages focusing on differences. Quiroga *From Sophistopolis*, *cit.* (n. 13), equally focuses on elements of discontinuity.

into the safe world of their schools, where they sought refuge in the past against those recent evolutions[16].

As such, the view on late ancient literature offered in contributions on the 'Third Sophistic' has replaced earlier, negative descriptions with neutral, and sometimes even positive, ones. Ultimately, however, these recent interpretations, far from constituting a 'renversement de perspective majeur' as suggested by Hostein, confirm the longstanding image of late antique rhetoric as a *laudatio temporis acti*[17]. What determines this image to a large extent, however, is not so much the intrinsic characteristics of late antique literature, as the lens through which scholars continue to look at it. Indeed, preoccupation with Atticism, for example, or preference for mythological declamations and historical references to classical Greece is recognisable in the literature of the early as well as of the later Roman Empire. In the latter case, this phenomenon tends to be dismissed as proof of the fossilized or arthritic nature of late antique rhetoric, or of a withdrawal into the past. For the Second Sophistic, on the other hand, scholars have long moved beyond such a paradigm: imitation of the past is now interpreted in all its complexities as a sign of sophistication and a way of acquiring authority. The result, unsurprisingly, is the impression of a strong opposition between the Second and the 'Third Sophistic', which has prevented the 'rhetorical turn' that has so radically changed prevailing images of the Second Sophistic[18], albeit advocated by several authoritative voices on late Antiquity, from being taken in the study of late antique Greek rhetoric[19]. In order

to break this self-reinforcing circle and bring about a real *rehabilitation* of late antique rhetoric, to take up Hostein's words once more, what is needed is not just more attention for these texts, which scholars such as Malosse, Pernot, and Schouler have great merit in having brought about, but also a fresh approach to them. I therefore plead for abandoning the term 'Third Sophistic'[20], and for looking at late antique literature through the lens of the Second Sophistic.

3. Return to the Second sophistic

The phrase 'Second Sophistic', as is well known, was coined by Philostratus: 'We must regard the ancient sophistic art as philosophic rhetoric. For it discusses the themes that philosophers treat [...] But the sophistic that followed it, which we must not call "new", for it is old, but rather "second", sketched the types of the poor man and the rich, of princes and tyrants, and handled arguments that are concerned with definitive and special themes for which history shows the way'[21]. For the author of the *Lives of the Sophists*, then, the Second Sophistic is not a chronologically defined era: whilst the vast majority of sophists he discusses performed in the second and third centuries A.D., the 'founder' of the Second Sophistic is said to be Aeschines (fourth century B.C.), and its next important representative is Nicetes of Smyrna (first century A.D.)[22]. Instead, Philostratus sees the Second Sophistic as a rhetorical current concerned primarily with declamations, speeches in which the orator assumes the voice of a historical, mythical, or literary figure. Whilst pleading mostly deliberative (*suasoriae*) or judicial (*controversiae*) cases in the guise of these well-known figures, sophists were first and foremost involved in epideictic oratory: declamations, especially if delivered *ex tempore*, allowed orators to show off their ready mastery of various

16. Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, esp. pp. 163-166, 169-170, 178-179, and 218-220.

17. E.g. R. Pack, *Two Sophists and Two Emperors*, in *CPh*, 42, 1947, pp. 17-20; P. Wolf, *Libanios. Autobiografische Schriften*, Zürich-Stuttgart, 1967, p. 12; L. Cracco Ruggini, *Sofisti greci nell'impero romano. A proposito di un libro recente*, in *Athenaeum*, 49, 1971, pp. 402-425, esp. 425; E.-M. Seiler, *Konstantios II. bei Libanios. Eine kritische untersuchung des überlieferten Herrscherbilde*s (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe III, 798), Frankfurt am Main – Berlin – Bern – New york – Paris – Vienne, 1998, p. 130, Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 162. Even Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 42, although vividly acknowledging the importance of rhetoric the lingua franca of the elites of late Antiquity, talks about its '"arthritic" quality'.

18. The split between continental and Anglo-Saxon scholarship is striking: whilst the term 'Third Sophistic' has been greeted most enthusiastically in Europe, much – though not all, witness Schmitz and others – of the exciting work on the Second Sophistic has appeared in the UK and the US. That there are no contributions by English scholars to *Approches à la Troisième Sophistique* may, therefore, not just be due to the fact that it is a *Festschrift*, but also lay bare the isolation in which continental and Anglo-Saxon scholarship all too often work. Nevertheless, the concept of 'Third Sophistic' was adopted as the title of a session at the 2009 meeting of the American Philological Association.

19. A number of prominent scholars have indeed pleaded for a literary-critical approach to late ancient texts. Cf. Cameron, *Education and Literary Culture*, p. 707; P. Heather – D. Moncur,

Politics, Philosophy and Empire in the Fourth Century. Select Orations of Themistius (Translated Texts for Historians), Liverpool, 2001, p. xv; J. A. McGuckin, *Gregory. The Rhetorician as Poet*, in J. Børtnes, T. Hägg (edd.), *Gregory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections*, Copenhagen, 2002, pp. 193-212, esp. 194; Quiroga, *From Sophistopolis*, *cit.* (n. 13), pp. 31-32; I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity. Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 56; Scourfield (ed.), *Texts and Culture*, *cit.* (n. 8), p. vii; Stenger, *Hellenische Identität*, *cit.* (n. 5), p. 14.

20. A nuanced evaluation, ultimately arguing against the term 'Third Sophistic', can be found in D. Westberg, *Celebrating with Words. Studies in the Rhetorical Works of the Gaza School*, Diss. Uppsala, 2010, pp. 18-20.

21. *Lives of the Sophists* 480-481, transl. W. C. Wright, *Philostratus. Lives of the Sophists, Eunapius. Lives of Philosophers* (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge (Mass.) – London, 1921, pp. 5-7.

22. For the importance Philostratus attached to rooting the Second Sophistic in classical Athens, cf. Whitmarsh, *Second Sophistic*, p. 5.

classical Greek dialects (especially, though not exclusively, Attic)[23], their knowledge of history and culture, and their inventivity. As Philostratus' account of the lives of various deuterosophists shows, this often led to spectacular performances, with which sophists attracted important audiences in the cities they visited.

For a long time, the Second Sophistic was not a popular object of study. The first scholars to study it, in late nineteenth-century Germany, focused on the deuterosophists' revival of the classical Greek language: although better than what they saw as the frigidity and effeminacy of the Asianist rhetoric, the Second Sophistic's Atticism was, ultimately, in the eyes of scholars such as Rohde and Schmid, as a liveless, slavish imitation of the classics[24]. The same escapist attitude was thought to underly the Second Sophistic's preference for declamations, which were read outside of the historical context within which they were performed. The Second Sophistic thus came to be seen as the last attempt, ultimately doomed to fail, to assert Hellenism against the new forces of the day: a 'museum of fossils' that 'diverted the attention from reality and enclosed a spiritual vacuum within the four walls of a classroom'[25]. The parallels with some people's evaluations of late antique literature as evoked above are striking.

As is the case with recent studies on the 'Third Sophistic', scholars working on the Second Sophistic have moved away from such negative evaluations. In two important ways, however, they have taken one more step. First, historians, classicists, and art-historians have explored the socio-historical context of the Second Sophistic: what was the deuterosophists' public role and influence, especially in the face of Roman power? According to Glen Bowersock, followed by Paul Zanker, Thomas Schmitz, and Bernadette Puech, Greek rhetoric could lead to Roman power[26]. Ewen Bowie, on the other hand, followed by Simon Swain and R.R.R. Smith, see the Greek obsession with the linguistic, literary, and historical past as a means of escaping from, or

opposing to, Roman power[27]. More important than these differences in opinion, however, is the point they all agree on, and are right in stressing: that Greek literature under the Roman Empire was an extremely powerful locus for taking a stance on contemporary issues, allowing people both to construct their own – mostly Greek, male, elite – identity, and to negotiate (with those in) power. Far from being confined to the classroom, Greek rhetoric has thus been shown to have occupied a central place in public life under the early Empire. A second important step forward was taken in the last two decades or so, with scholars such as Gleason, Connolly, and Whitmarsh drawing attention to what could be called the theatrical aspect of the Second Sophistic[28]. Examining the deuterosophists' performances, these scholars have highlighted the centrality of agonistic ostentation, literary sophistication, and public self-fashioning in the Second Sophistic: if sophists vividly disputed each other's Atticism, if they imitated the classical models of rhetoric, this was not so much a flight into the past as a way of distinguishing themselves in their own world.

The characteristics that have thus been highlighted in recent scholarship on the Second Sophistic can be found not only in the orators whose lives were described by Philostratus, but in a much wider range of Greek texts written under the Roman empire. As a result, the term 'Second Sophistic' is nowadays mostly used not so much to refer to a current of declamatory oratory, as intended by Philostratus, but rather in the sense of a cultural fashion, or even an epoch, of Greek literature between roughly 50 and 230 A.D. After this period, which spans the lives of the bulk of deuterosophists discussed by Philostratus, Greek literature is thought to be fundamentally different from the Second Sophistic: scholars tend to point to the 'crisis' of the third century, and to suggest that oratory, when it resurfaces in the fourth century, has lost its social relevance[29]. It is these assumptions which the next Section sets out to question.

4. IMPERIAL GREEK LITERATURE: ELEMENTS OF CONTINUITY

As far as Philostratus' definition of the Second Sophistic is concerned, later Greek literature presents no breach: declamatory oratory flourished in late Antiquity. Indeed, most of the Greek declamations that we have from antiquity date

23. On the popularity of Atticism amongst the deuterosophists, cf. W. Schmid, *Der Atticismus in seinem Hauptvertretern von Dionysius von Halikarnass bis auf den zweiten Philostratus*, Stuttgart, 1987-1897; Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 43-64. For Arrian's imitation of Herodotus' Ionic dialect, cf. Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, p. 49.

24. E. Rohde, *Die asianische Rhetorik und die zweite Sophistik*, in *RhM*, 1, 1886, pp. 170-190; Schmid, Der Atticismus, cit. (n. 23).

25. B. A. van Groningen, *General Literary Tendencies in the Second Century*, pp. 41-56, esp. 52 and 50.

26. G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1969; P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates. The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford, 1995; Schmitz, *Bildung und Macht*, cit. (n. 10); Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*.

27. E. L. Bowie, *Greeks and their Past in the Second Sophistic*, in *Past & Present*, 46, 1970, pp. 3-41; Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*; R.R.R. Smith, Late *Antique Portraits in a Public Context. Honorific Statuary at Aphrodisias in Caria, A.D. 300-600*, in *JRS*, 89, 1999, pp. 155-189.

28. M. Gleason, Making Men. *Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*, Princeton, 1995; J. Connolly, *Reclaiming the Theatrical in the Second Sophistic*, in *Helios*, 28, 2001, pp. 75-96; T. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire. The Politics of Imitation*, Oxford, 2001.

29. E.g. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 3-6; Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*.

from the fourth century onwards[30], and whilst these pieces were long dismissed in favour of epideictic oratory, translations and studies of these speeches are now appearing at great pace[31]. Whilst it may have been caused to some extent by the hazards of transmission, this imbalance in representation not only establishes the popularity of declamations in late Antiquity, but also suggests that late antique declamations were highly valued by subsequent generations of scribes and scholars. This stands in strong contrast with the negative verdict of modern scholars. Himerius' declamations offer a good example: put at the head of his collected works and praised by Photius as true masterpieces[32], they were dismissed for most of the twentieth century as illustrations of the degeneration of the classical tradition[33]. Declamations in general were long conceived as being escapist, and have therefore not received the attention they deserve in view of the central place they held in Antiquity. The fact that declamations occupied such a prominent place in the Greek literary culture under the Roman empire long contributed to the scholarly neglect of the period. As we have seen, scholars of the Second Sophistic have recently rehabilitated declamations by reading them in their performative context in the Greek cities of the Roman empire: declamations not only provide a powerful means of distancing oneself from, or engaging with, Roman domination, but are also public loci for exploring issues of culture and identity. As Danielle Van Mal-Maeder has recently shown in a study of Latin declamations, moreover, the fictional genre of the declama-

tion could be used to voice concerns that would otherwise have been difficult to discuss within the given socio-political circumstances of the times[34]. The fresh examinations of late antique declamations along these lines that are now being published will therefore allow to examine debates regarding Greek identity in late Antiquity from multiple perspectives, as well as to make better sense of a genre that was immensely popular in late Antiquity but that has often been neglected in modern scholarship.

At the end of the fourth century, Eunapius of Sardis wrote his *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*. The work discusses the lives of a range of philosophers, sophists, and iatrosophists whose *floruit* fell between roughly 230 and 400. In his introduction, Eunapius says that the philosophers up until Plato have been dealt with adequately by Porphyry, whilst Sotion discussed those up until his own time (end of third century B.C.). After Sotion, there came a 'third crop'. The sophists who lived between Sotion and Porphyry were discussed by Philostratus. The lives of the philosophers of the same period have not received any treatment that Eunapius is aware of[35], but can be easily reconstructed on the basis of their own writings. Eunapius himself focuses on the lives of later philosophers and sophists, 'as the period was interrupted and broken because of the calamities of the state' (ἔσχε μὲν οὖν διακοπήν τινα καὶ ῥῆξιν ὁ χρόνος διὰ τὰς κοινὰς συμφοράς, 455). At first sight, this reference to a breach suggests a sharp divide between the worlds of Eunapius and Philostratus, thus warranting a strict division between the Second and the 'Third Sophistic'. Two elements plead against this, however. First, the divisions proposed by Eunapius and Philostratus do not coincide: Philostratus' Second Sophistic comprises sophists (and some philosopher-sophists) from various epochs who practised declamatory oratory, Eunapius' 'third crop' is a chronologically defined group of philosophers first and foremost, which he then divides in an earlier group and a later group. If Eunapius presents it as if Philostratus had covered the early sophists of his 'third crop', whilst he himself will cover the philosophers and sophists (as well as, in fact, iatrosophists) of the later period, this is a way of placing himself in line with, rather than distancing himself from, Philostratus. This brings me to my second point: if Eunapius mentions a 'breach', this

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30. Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 186 already stressed the continuity between the Second and the 'Third' Sophistic as far as declamations are concerned. They equally pointed out (p. 185) that late Antiquity is the first epoch from which preparatory rhetorical exercises (προγυμνάσματα) have been preserved.

31. E. g. Choricius: R. Webb, *Rhetorical and Theatrical Fictions in Choricius of Gaza*, in S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity. Dynamism, Didactism, Classicism*, Aldershot, 2006, pp. 107-124; R. J. Penella (ed.), *Rhetorical Exercises from Late Antiquity. A Translation of Choricius of Gaza's Preliminary Talks and Declamations*, Cambridge - New york, 2009; Himerius: R. J. Penella, *Man and the Word. The Orations of Himerius* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 43), Berkeley, 2007; Libanius: D. A. Russell, *Libanius. Imaginary Speeches*, London, 1996; D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds. A Sourcebook*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 290-299; M. Johansson, *Libanius' Declamations 9 and 10* (Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia, 67), Göteborg, 2006.

32. *Cod.* 165, 107b: οὗτοι δὴ αὐτῷ οἱ λόγοι τήν τε ἐν λόγοις ἀρετὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν νοημάτων τὸ ἀνθηρὸν καὶ ἧκον εἰς δύναμιν μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων δεικνύειν πῶς ἐμελετηθῆσαν.

33. Negative verdict: G. Downey, *Education and Public Problems as Seen by Themistius*, in *TAPA*, 87, 1955, pp. 291-308, esp. 307. The positive evaluations of Himerius' declamations in antiquity are collected in Penella, *Man and the Word, cit.* (n. 31), pp. 156-157.

34. D. Van Mal-Maeder, *La Fiction des déclamations,* Leiden, 2007.

35. *Pace* R. J. Penella, *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century A.D. Studies in Eunapius of Sardis* (ARCA, 28), Leeds, 1990, pp. 36-37, if one takes into account the examples enumerated by Eunapius (Ammonius of Egypt, Plutarch, Euphrates of Egypt, Dio of Bithynia, Apollonius of Tyana, and the Cynics Carneades, Musonius, Demetrius, and Menippus), there is no contradiction between Eunapius' first (454) chronology of the third crop as coming 'between' (ἐν τῷ μέσῳ) Sotion and Porphyry, and his second (455) one as the philosophers from the reigns of Claudius and Nero onward. The philosophers of this period had, of course, been dealt with by Diogenes Laertius, yet Eunapius does not seem to know, or at least not to acknowledge, him.

serves above all to justify his starting point. Indeed, immediately after mentioning that the tradition of excellent philosophers lasted until the reign of Severus (193-211), Philostratus starts his survey with Plotinus, who was born precisely during that reign, and then moves on to his pupil Porphyry. As the ensuing series of philosophers are all linked to Plotinus and Porphyry through teacher-pupil relationships, there is definitely no 'breach' with the preceding period as far as philosophers are concerned. The first sophist to be discussed by Eunapius was, admittedly, born about half a century after Porphyry, yet the way in which Eunapius introduces him ('Julian of Cappadocia, the sophist, flourished in the time of Aedesius', 482), highlighting his connection with a philosopher who was part of the ongoing tradition evoked earlier in the work, again suggests continuity rather than rupture. In fact, as Malcolm Heath has recently shown, there is, between Philostratus and Eunapius, 'a continuing culture rather than a revival after cultural collapse. For the post-Philostratean blackout is not complete; it is just that the evidence is scattered, harder to collect, and less vivid. When our eyes adjust to the different lighting, enough can be discerned to put together an (inevitably incomplete) account of the flourishing state of rhetorical culture in the middle to late third century'[36]. At least in quantitative terms, then, the third century is not the desert it has sometimes been taken to be.

Hand in hand with Eunapius' reference to a quantitative rupture in the third century goes his suggestion of a qualitative decline: the best philosophers (τὸ τῶν ἀρίστων φιλοσόφων γένος, 455), he says, lasted until the reign of Severus, the implication being that the men which he himself discusses are of a lesser kind. As was the case with his suggestion of rupture, however, this evaluation conforms to the rhetorical topos of the *laudatio temporis acti* rather than being a description of reality. Indeed, as far as philosophy is concerned, few today would accept that Plutarch or Dio Chrysostom are better philosophers than Plotinus and Porphyry[37]. Likewise, scholars of late antique rhetoric no longer use the negative terms that characterized earlier scholarship on the period. In fact, as stated above, the very concept of the 'Third Sophistic' was invented partly in order to counter such negative images. Nevertheless, it is still often assumed that the framework within which later Greek sophists operated was fundamentally different from that of their predecessors: late antique sophists are thought to have lacked the socio-political prestige and influence of their predecessors[38]. One of the main arguments brought up

to support this idea is epigraphy[39]. Malosse and Schouler, for example, quote Bernadette Puech when saying that the world of epigraphy is the world of Philostratus rather than of Eunapius[40]. Quoted more fully, however, Puech's 2002 study of Greek orators and sophists in imperial inscriptions gives a more nuanced account: 'Dans le courant du Vᵉ siècle, [la documentation épigraphique] s'éteint peu à peu, *non qu'il y ait eu moins de sophistes mais parce que la fonction des inscriptions a changé: elles ne reflètent plus, désormais, la vie de la cité*. La dernière série de textes où les orateurs sont présents est celle de ces belles épigrammes en l'honneur de hauts personnages, composées au IVᵉ ou dans la première moitié du Vᵉ siècle. Mais le rôle qu'ils y tiennent n'est plus le même. A l'époque de la Troisième Sophistique, *l'orateur n'est plus la vedette qui fait la fierté de la cité, mais un professeur à qui l'on ne songe plus guère à élever une statue*; si son nom apparaît sur les monuments publics, c'est souvent qu'il est un intellectuel de cour, qui a pour mission de proclamer la gloire des puissants... *L'univers d'Eunape, celui de Libanios sont peu présents dans la documentation épigraphique; et lorsqu'on y retrouve un rhéteur ou un avocat de leur entourage, c'est bien souvent parce qu'il a fait une brillante carrière politique*, comme Flavius Eusèbios ou le préfet Majorinus. Le monde de la rhétorique, vu par les inscriptions, est en bonne partie celui de Philostrate. Néanmoins, jusqu'au bout, les orateurs continueront à proclamer, comme leurs prédécesseurs de l'époque antonine, une vérité qui est sans doute la raison d'être du mouvement sophistique: *l'équivalance - euphémisme courtois dans l'expression d'une conviction de supériorité - de la gloire littéraire et de la puissance politique, fût-elle la plus haute*'[41]. Far from saying that epigraphy suggests a decline of the sophistic movement – her book in fact contains epigraphical evidence for sophists not only of the first and second, but also of the

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36. Heath, *Menander*, *cit.* (n. 1), p. 53, with examples and further information on pp. 52-89. Cf. also Puech *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*, p. 7.

37. Note that Eunapius himself terms Porphyry a 'divine philosopher' (ὁ θεσπέσιος φιλόσοφος Πορφύριος, *Lives* 455).

38. E.g. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 3-6; S. Swain, *Biography and Biographic in the literarure of the Roman Empire*,

in M. J. Edwards –S. Swain (ed.), *Portraits: biographical representation in the Greek and Latin literarure of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 1-37, esp. 35 ; M. Hose, *Die Krise der Rhetoren. Über den Bedeutungsverlust der institutionellen Rhetorik im 4. Jahrhundert und die Reaktion ihrer Vertreter*, in C. Neumeister – W. Raeck (edd.), *Rede und Redner. Bewertung und Darstellung in den antiken Kulturen (Kolloquium Frankfurt a.M., 14.16. Oktober 1998*, Frankfurt, 2000, 289-299; Kaldellis, *Hellenism, in Byzantium, cit.* (n. 11), p. 40; Quiroga, *From Sophistopolis, cit.* (n. 12); Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, esp. pp.163-164.

39. E.g. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, p. 4 ; Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 163-164. Important collections of late antique epigraphic material include L. Robert, *Epigrammes du Bas-Empire*, in *Hellenica. Recueil d'épigraphie, de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques*, 4, 1948, pp. 35-114, and Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*. Further information on late antique epigraphy can be found in Roueché (1989), 68-70 and Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, pp. 35-36.

40. Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 219.

41. Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*, pp. 7-8, with my italics [LVH].

third to fifth centuries A.D. –, Puech suggests that changes in the late antique epigraphical record on sophists can be imputed to the changing roles of sophists on the one hand, and of epigraphy on the other. Both aspects merit further investigation.

As far as the role of sophists is concerned, the passage quoted is ambiguous: on the one hand, Puech suggests that late antique sophists were teachers or court propagandists rather than public figures or politicians, on the other hand, she has to admit that some late antique sophists did have brilliant political careers[42] and that sophists themselves continued to emphasize the congruence between sophistic ability and socio-political standing. At first sight, the literary sources seem to confirm Puech's first point: a quick comparison of Philostratus and Eunapius suggests that there were fewer sophists in late Antiquity, that they increasingly concentrated on teaching, and that they did not enjoy the same prestige in society as their predecessors had done[43]. Yet whilst it cannot be denied that Herodes Atticus had infinitely more political clout than, say, Parnasius, Herodes is not the Philostratean average, nor is Parnasius Eunapius'[44]. In fact, as opposed to what is sometimes suggested[45], many of the sophists discussed by Philostratus were engaged in teaching no less than those discussed by Eunapius. Conversely, four out of the ten sophists discussed by Eunapius – all flourishing between roughly 345 and 395, as opposed to Philostratus' much larger

chronological scope – were explicitly acknowledged or admired by emperors[46]. In three cases, the emperor in question is Julian. Yet rather than conclude that Julian was the only emperor under whose reign sophists flourished, it would be interesting to see to what extent Eunapius' own agenda and well-known preference for Julian influenced his presentation of Julian's predecessor and successors, especially since Constans, as opposed to Julian's rival Constantius, is explicitly said to have honoured Prohaeresius (§492). This suggests that the traditional image of a decline between Philostratus and Eunapius may not stand up to such a closer, more contextualised reading of both authors. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the vast majority of sophists in late Antiquity, far beyond the top of the sophists discussed by Eunapius, no less than in the second century came from an elite background and are therefore likely to have taken part in at least local politics[47]. Conversely, the vast majority of late antique politicians and administrators had, at least at some point of their lives, studied with a sophist. This not only ensured that Greek rhetoric continued to be the *lingua franca* of the Eastern elites, as Peter Brown has demonstrated[48], but also gave sophists a powerful local, regional, and sometimes

42. Cf. also Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 164. In the remainder of their article, however, Malosse – Schouler neglect these political sophists in favour of sophists who withdraw into their schools. As a result, it is no surprise that they end up with an image of the social role of sophists being in decline.

43. The fact that Libanius' is one of the largest corpora of works conserved from late antiquity may have reinforced this image, especially the idea that sophists were teachers first and foremost. The fact that recent research on Libanius has often focused on this aspect of the author has confirmed this even more. E.g. R. Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch*, Princeton, 2007. Yet the point has been made regarding late-antique literature in general as well. E.g. Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 179.

44. Whilst Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 170-171 note that only a small minority of fourth-century sophists acquired enough fame and influence to enable them to influence politics, the same can be said about the second century: not only is Herodes not Philostratus' average sophist, but also Philostratus' sophists are not the average second-century sophists.

45. Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 164 and 178. If many of the second-century top sophists included in Philostratus were engaged as teachers (e.g. Nicetes, Scopelian, Lollianus, Polemo, Herodes, Theodotus, Philagrus, Hadrian the Phoenician, Philiscus, Aspasius), this must have been a fortiori the case of the less brilliant sophists not included in his account. Cf. Also Lucian's A Professor of Public Speaking. For third- and early fourth-century teaching sophists, cf. C.E. Nixon – B. Rogers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors. The Panegyrici Latini*, Berkeley, 1994, pp. 11 and 29.

46. Prohaeresius was first summoned to Gaul, then sent to Rome by Constans (§492), Himerius declaimed for Julian (§494), Libanius was associated with Julian (§495), and Nymphidianus was *ab epistulis graecis* under the same emperor (§497). The contention of Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 163 that emperors no longer made detours in order to hear sophists declaim, is in contradiction with Libanius' claim (*Oration* 1.118) that Julian's main aim is coming to Antioch in order to hear him. Whilst this may be boasting on Libanius' part, it is by no means sure that Dio's claims to have delivered the *Kingship Orations* for Trajan are any more truthful. Cf. Whitmarsh, *Second Sophistic*, pp. 325-327.

47. Cf. already Kennedy *Greek Rhetoric*, *cit*. (n. 5), p. 133: 'sophists like Libanius often acquired leadership roles in their communities and sometimes even political influence'. As Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*, pp. 2-3 warns, moreover, we should take into account that 'plus un personnage a de puissance, politique ou économique, dans sa cité, dans sa province ou dans l'empire, plus il y a de risques que son rôle culturel soit occulté dans les inscriptions par sa position sociale. Or les intellectuels étaient très souvent issues des familles les plus influentes. Il est donc fort probable que plusieurs notables bien connus par la documentation épigraphique aient, sinon enseigné, du moins pratiqué la rhétorique comme un art sans que nous n'en sachions rien'. I leave aside here the question of the origin of the sophists' social influence: rather than ascribing it to either their social background or their sophistic abilities, this should be seen as the result of both, very much like most people going to Eton both come from well-connected families and acquire an important network by going there – with a varying balance between both.

48. Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, pp. 3-34, demonstrating what is often neglected in recent studies on the 'Third Sophistic', viz. that this shared culture could be used to persuade those in power. Cf. also Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, *cit*. (n. 9), 131-2 and Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 170-171.

even empire-wide alumni-network. One only needs to look at Libanius' letters to see how late antique sophists made use of such networks in order to influence political leaders and their decisions[49]. Far from detracting from a sophist's political influence, teaching could thus add to it. The conclusion must be, then, that even if – and this, as we have just seen, is by no means sure – late antique sophists spent more time and effort teaching than their predecessors, this did not necessarily detract from their socio-political influence: there need not be, in other words, a gap between the sophists' cultural-didactical and political activities[50].

As far as the changing role of epigraphy is concerned, Puech maintains that late antique epigraphy, much less frequent than before, no longer reflects what is important in the city. However, as Barbara Borg and Christian Witschel have convincingly argued[51], the decrease in epigraphy and statuary may well have its explanation in a switch not so much from cities to imperial centre, as from monumental structures to performative representation. If it is therefore correct 'daß sich der Charakter der Selbstdarstellung tendenziell aus dem Bereich der monumentalen, auf dauerhafte Sichtbarkeit und Dokumentation gerichteten Formen in den Bereich performativer, temporärer Repräsentation verlagerte', then the decrease in epigraphic documentation may go hand in hand with an increase, rather than with a decrease, in sophistic activity and importance in late Antiquity. Indeed, we know of many occasions where sophists performed. Visits of governors, increasingly frequent due to the smaller-sized provinces, and of emperors, who, for a long time in late Antiquity as opposed to before and after, had no fixed capital, provided ever so many opportunities for rhetorical display[52]. If the speeches delivered on those occasions were overwhelmingly epideictic in outlook, this did not preclude them from advising the emperor or trying

to obtain his pardon[53]. Moreover, deliberative and judicial as well as epideictic rhetoric continued to be practised within local cities, which largely kept their civic institutions intact and continued to be the point of reference for the vast majority of people[54]. Local notables and dignitaries moreover appreciated, and arranged for, being praised by sophists and poets at the occasion of their weddings, new jobs, or departures on travel[55]. Sophists themselves also organized public declamations in order to show off to powerful people such as governors or emperors, confirm their status with their fellow citizens, and attract students[56]. In any such occasion, successful, and, if possible, spectacular, performance was key[57]. First of all, the sophist had to not just read but perform his text fluently[58], use the correct linguistic as well as paralinguistic forms[59], and, in case of a declamation, impersonate the historical or mythological character trustworthily[60]. Whilst the implications of atticism, physiognomics, and theatricality for the orator's success, gender, and social standing have been extensively examined for the authors of the second century, late antique literature is still waiting for its Maud Gleason, its Thomas Schmitz, or its

49. Cf. S. Bradbury, *Libanius' Letters as Evidence for Travel and Epistolary Networks among Greek Elites in the Fourth Century*, in L. Ellis – F. L. Kidner (edd.), *Travel, Communication and Geography in Late Antiquity*, Burlington, 2004, pp. 73-78, and Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 197 on orations and letters being 'les instruments spécifiques de l'action dans le monde'.

50. Cf. already Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*, pp. 23-24. The suggestion by Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 164 and 219 of a widening gap, in late Antiquity, between the sophists' cultural and political activities, should therefore be questioned.

51. B. Borg –Chr. Witschel, *Veränderungen im Repräsentationsverhalten der römischen Eliten während des 3. Jhs. n. Chr.*, in G. Alföldy – S. Panciera (ed.). *Inschriftliche Denkmäler als Medien der Selbstdarstellung in der römischen Welt* (Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien, 36), Stuttgart, 2001, pp. 47-120.

52. For the importance of rhetoric as a way for emperors, governors, and local elites to communicate with one another and thus to establish a consensus and, ultimately, hold the empire together, *cf.* Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, pp. 3-34, esp. 29-30.

53. Westberg, *Celebrating with Words*, *cit*. (n. 20), pp. 14-16. For the penetration of technical vocabulary from judicial rhetoric into panegyric, *cf.* Webb, *Praise and Persuasion: argumentation and audience response in epideictic oratory*, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, Aldershot, 2003, pp. 127-135, esp. 130-131.

54. Heath, *Menander*, *cit*. (n. 1), pp. 279 and 284-288, esp. 285, correcting Pernot's (*La Rhétorique de l'éloge*, *cit*. [n. 14], p. 55) triumph of panegyric. *Cf.* also Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 197.

55. For the occasions at which orations were performed, cf. Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 198-199. That sophists competed with (wandering) poets to get the job of singing the praises of important people is clear from Libanius, *Oration* 40.17-28, translated in Malosse – Schouler *cit*., pp. 194-7. Himerius' orations, conversely, have been characterised by E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, Stuttgart, 1958, p. 429, as "Poesie in scheinbarer Prosa". Cf. also Cribiore *School of Libanius*, *cit*. (n. 43), pp. 54-58; Penella, *Man and the Word*, *cit*. *cit*. (n. 31), pp. 14-16.

56. For the public performance of declamations, cf. Russell, *Libanius*, *cit*. (n. 31), p. 7; Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 43 and Whitmarsh, Second Sophistic, p. 21.

57. For the performance culture of classical Greece and early Imperial Rome, see Whitmarsh, *Second Sophistic*, p. 23.

58. Libanius (*Oration* 1.71) recounts the case of an orator who was unable to perform, and who was therefore told to read his text.

59. Concern with Atticism: Julian, *Letter to Nilus Dionysius* 446A-B; attention for the orator's gestures: Libanius, *Oration* 1.76.

60. Choricius therefore likens the performance of a declamation to that of a mime. Cf. Westberg, *Celebrating with Words*, *cit*. (n. 20), pp. 133-135.

Tim Whitmarsh to carry out such an examination[61]. Second, sophists needed to play their public: their performances were to elicit reactions from the public. Libanius, for example, feels entitled to the respect of the man he had praised with an oration because this oration had elicited great applause from the public (*Oration* 40.22-3). In another oration, conversely, he reproaches his students for not having applauded him as they should have done (*Oration* 3.14). Themistius, on the other hand, in an attempt to distinguish himself, as a philosopher, from sophists, claims to find instructing his audience more important than eliciting applause from them. Ironically, however, his speech starts with an elaborate description of the generous and spontaneous applause he tends to get (*Oration* 23.282-3). Thus far, however, the interaction of public and orator has often been neglected. Given the attention for public reactions to sophistic performances in late antique texts, it would pay off to continue Korenjak's study on rhetorical audiences into late Antiquity, or at least to keep his findings in mind when interpreting late antique texts[62]. Last but not least, sophists, in their performances, needed to react flexibly to ever changing circumstances. No less than before, the topic for a declamation was sometimes decided on the spot: Prohaeresius, for example, was a master in improvisation[63]. Nor could orations always be entirely prepared on beforehand: a speech for, say, an emperor sometimes had to be adapted to the latest political developments[64]. Recent research on late antique acclamations, reading them as dynamic and improvised rather than as static and staged events, may have some pointers for the study of late antique rhetoric here[65]. Until such further studies are available, and in order to enable and stimulate them, suffice it to say that far from dying out or withdrawing into their schools, late antique sophists continued to take an active part in public

life, and that far from fossilizing[66], rhetoric remained a creative performance within late antique society.

5. GREEK LITERATURE AND THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

As creative performers in late antique society, sophists could not but engage in the social debates that were taking place at the time. For a long time, modern scholars have suggested that sophists found themselves at the wrong side of a series of important divides in late antique society - between Latin and Greek, Roman law and Greek rhetoric, Christianity and paganism, the requirements of Empire and devotion to the cities[67]. As a result, they argue, sophists lost their social standing and became obsessed with the past. The contrast with interpretations of the Second Sophistic is striking: if second-century authors discuss the oppositions of Greek and Latin, culture and power, rhetoric and philosophy, scholars highlight their active and dynamic influence on questions of cultural identity. Rather than assume that political, cultural-educational, and religious changes negatively affected late antique sophists, the following pages therefore bring together various strands of recent research to open up ways of examining how sophists presented, and sought to influence, these changes.

First, politics. According to Swain, '[t]he restored Roman empire of the Tetrarchs and Constantine was a far more monarchical, bureaucratic, centre-oriented affair than the High Empire… Men's minds were drawn upwards away from their homelands'[68]. Yet as Peter Brown has argued, 'it is frequently misleading to read the speeches of Libanius and the letters of Synesius of Cyrene as if governor and provincials invariably faced each other in "an endless war, with the provincials inevitably the losers"'[69]. Indeed, as opposed to what Swain and others have suggested, people did not always perceive a strong opposition between the imperial centre and their local communities, with the former to be preferred, if possible, over the latter. Libanius is a good case in point. Whilst the emperor Constantius II offered him a career in Constantinople, he preferred to return to his

61. Gleason, *Making Men*, *cit.* (n. 28); Schmitz *Bildung und Macht*, *cit.* (n. 10); T. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire. The Politics of Imitation*, Oxford, 2001.

62. M. Korenjak, *Publikum und Redner. Ihre Interaktion in der sophistischen Rhetorik der Kaiserzeit* (Zetemata, 104), München, 2000.

63. For the continuing popularity, in late Antiquity, of *ex tempore* rhetoric, cf. Themistius, *Oration* 25. See also R. J. Penella, *The Private Orations of Themistius*, Berkeley –Los Angeles – London, 2000, pp. 26-27.

64. A clear example is Libanius, *Oration* 15. Cf. L. Van Hoof, *Libanius and the EU Presidency. Career Moves in the Autobiography*, in P.-L. Malosse – O. Lagacherie (ed.), *Libanios. Le premier humaniste*, Grenoble (CARDO), forthcoming.

65. E.g. C. Roueché, *Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire. New Evidence from Aphrodisias*, in *JRS*, 74, 1984, pp. 181-199; J. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law. A Study of the Theodosian Code*, New Haven, 2000; C. Hugoniot, *Les acclamations dans la vie municipale tardive*, in H. Inglebert (ed.), *Idéologie et valeurs civiques*, Paris, 2002, pp. 179-188; H.-U. Wiemer, *Akklamationen im spätrömischen Reich. Zur Typologie und Funktion eines Kommunikationsritual*, in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 86, 2004, pp. 27-73.

66. Pace Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 42. See above, n. 17.

67. E.g. L. Cracco Ruggini, *Politici intellettuali di Roma fra il IV e il VI secolo. Connotazioni ideologiche della cultura greca in Occident*e, in F. Conca – I. Gualandri – G. Lozza (edd.), *Politica, cultura e religione nell'Impero romano (secoli IV-VI) tra Oriente e Occidente (Atti del Secondo Convegno dell'Associazione di Studi Tardoantichi)*, Napoli, 1993, pp. 41-58, esp. 57, B. Rochette, *Le latin dans le monde grec*, *cit.* (n. 67), pp. 140-141; S. Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, 284-641. The Transformation of the Ancient World*, Malden (MA) – Oxford, 2007, pp. 180-181.

68. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 4-5. Cf. also Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 163.

69. Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 20, quoting R. Pack, *Studies in Libanius and Antiochene Society under Theodosius*, Menasha, 1935, p. 30. Cf. also Brown, *ibid*, *passim*.

native Antioch. At first sight, this seems to confirm if not people's preference for the imperial centre, then at least a strong opposition between centre and periphery. Yet close reading of Libanius' rhetoric has recently developed a more nuanced picture. First, Libanius explicitly says that it depends on one's social position whether membership of the Constantinopolitan Senate is a good option: to the grandson of the famous philosopher Sopater, Libanius writes that membership of the Senate 'profits nonentities, but it could never increase the renown of people with an inheritance like yours'[70]. It cannot be said, therefore, that Constantinople, or an imperial career, was the ultimate dream of every elite man in the empire. Second, Libanius' statements about Constantinople are guided not so much by deeply-held, unshakeable beliefs about the preferability of one's own city over the imperial centre as by the rhetorical context within which he is writing: Constantinople is presented in positive terms in a series of recommendation letters to Araxius, the Proconsul of the city, in negative terms in the letters with which he hopes to obtain permission to stay in Antioch[71]; and within the *Autobiography*, his description of Constantinople turns sour only when things become difficult for him there[72]. And third, it has been demonstrated that 'Libanius's networks were designed precisely to overcome the tension between the centre of power surrounding the emperor and his highest officials, and the civic elites... It is not so much that he used his personal relationships to bridge some huge gap between civic elite and imperial centre. Rather, from the point of view of his personal relationships, such a gap was far less of a reality than we might expect'[73]. The changing political structure of the empire thus did not always have a defining impact on rhetoric. In fact, the opposite may be closer to the truth: the gap between centre and cities was, at least to some extent, a rhetorical construction. Rather than start from the assumption that the new capital eclipsed civic life in the East with its characteristic rhetorical competition[74],

it will thus pay off to examine how late antique sophists exploit the new political organisation of the empire and sometimes construct or emphasize, at other times neglect or downplay, oppositions between emperor and cities, capital and provinces.

When it comes to education, one often reads that elite men in late Antiquity preferred to study Latin and law rather than Greek rhetoric, as the former would have given privileged access to a career in imperial administration[75]. Yet whilst it is indeed possible to find this view expressed in especially a number of Libanian orations[76], the general situation was more complex. For a start, rhetorical schools continued to enjoy at least the same amount of official support in late Antiquity as they had received since the instauration of municipal and, later, imperial chairs: the Theodosian Code stipulates the wages to be paid to rhetors in the various cities across the empire, and the system remained unchanged at least until the reign of Justinian[77]. In addition, and notwithstanding what is often suggested, the only 'statistic' examination concerning the education of fourth-century officials, whatever its shortcomings, suggests that a clear majority of them (ca. 65%) had enjoyed a literary education, whilst only a much smaller group (ca. 15%) had also enjoyed legal training[78]. At least in the fourth century, then, Greek rhetoric offered better chances of an imperial career than Latin and

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70. *Letter* 34.

71. Letters asking for permission: 399, 434, 435, 438, 441; letters to Araxius: 482, 503.

72. Cf. L. Van Hoof, *Career Moves in the Autobiography*, cit. (n. 64).

73. I. Sandwell, *Libanius' Social Networks. understanding the Social Structure of the Later Roman Empire*, in I. Malkin – C. Constantakopoulou – K. Panagopoulou (edd.), *Greek and Roman Networks in the Mediterranean*, London-New York, 2008, pp. 129-143, esp. 131. Cf. also B. Cabouret, *Pouvoir municipal, pouvoir impérial à Antioche au IVᵉ siècle*, in Ead. – P.-L. Gatier – C. Saliou (edd.), *Antioche en Syrie. Histoire, images et traces de la ville antique* (Colloque tenu à Lyon, Maison de l'Orient méditerranéen, 4-6 octobre 2001), *Topoi*, 5, 2004, pp. 117-142, esp. 140-141.

74. Indeed, had they started from the premise that Roman dominion placed Greek sophists at a disadvantage, scholars of the Second Sophistic might not have been able to see how Greek sophists thrived in the earlier Roman empire by exploring and construct-

ing, for themselves and for others, Greek as well as Roman identities, which, depending on the rhetorical context, they sometimes presented as diametrically opposed, at other times as perfectly compatible and mutually reinforcing.

75. E.g. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch. City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 242-255; S. Bradbury, *Selected Letters of Libanius from the Age of Constantius and Julian* (Translated Texts for Historians, 41), Liverpool, 2004, p. 169. 109; Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, cit.* (n. 67), pp. 180-181; Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 169.

76. E.g., *Orations* 31.27-9, 43.3-5, and 62.21. Cf. Wolf, *Libanios, cit.* (n. 17), p. 14; Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, p. 20.

77. Continuing municipal and imperial chairs: Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric, cit.* (n. 5), pp. 133-135; R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language. The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley-London, 1988; A. Chastagnol, *Note sur le salaire des professeurs à Rome*, in M. Sot (ed.), *Haut Moyen-Âge. Culture, éducation et société. études offertes à Pierre Riché*, Paris, 1990, pp. 25-31; Cameron, *Education and Literary Culture*, p. 676; M. Joyal – I. McDougall – J. C. Yardley, *Greek and Roman Education. A Sourcebook* (Routledge Sourcebooks for the Ancient World), London-New york, 2009, p. 252; Westberg, *Celebrating with Words, cit.* (n. 20), pp. 10-11; extension of exemption from liturgies to all teachers under Constantine: E. J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria*, Berkeley-London, 2006, p. 69.

78. P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au ive siècle après J.-C.*, 368-9 calculated that of 103 officials before 365, 67 had enjoyed a literary education, 20 a technical education, and 16 a legal education.

law. Nevertheless, it is from this century that we have some striking complaints about the popularity of these new educational alternatives. Linguistically, an increasing number of men in the Greek East learned Latin, and – in a remarkable change of fortunes compared to the Second Sophistic – even chose that language to write in[79]. If Greek rhetoricians such as Libanius complain about this popularity of Latin, it would be wrong to read their complaints as nothing more than the agony of death of the last of the Mohicans. It should never be forgotten, in this respect, that it was Greek, and not Latin, that became the language of Byzantium[80]. Once we realize this, Libanius' statements about the status of Greek and Latin appear no longer as doomed, passive and negative reactions to a given situation; instead, the question that imposes itself is how Libanius tried to influence events so as to enhance the appeal of his own school of Greek rhetoric and safeguard his own position and influence in the face of Latin's popularity. A whole range of strategies can in fact be discerned. At the one extreme, Libanius tries to persuade Olympius to come and establish himself as a teacher of Latin in Antioch[81]. At the other, he stresses his own ignorance of the language. An interesting case in point is the letter he wrote in order to congratulate Themistius. Rather than an admission of weakness, Libanius' comment about his need of an interpreter in order to read the letter with which Constantius announced Themistius' adlection to the Senate (δι' ἑρμηνέως, *Letter* 434.2) serves to distance himself and his own career from Themistius[82]: following upon a letter with which Libanius renounced his earlier undertaking to make Themistius follow his own example and bring him from Constantinople

to Antioch[83], Libanius' emphasis on his own need for an interpreter may well serve to emphasize the differences between himself and Themistius and suggest that he himself has no interest in the kind of life Themistius is living – a kind of life that brought Themistius in close contact with court, where Latin held sway[84]. In the same way, it would be interesting to examine complaints about the popularity of law studies[85]. In *Oration* 40, for example, Libanius accuses Eumolpius and his brother of having promoted to the rank of assessor – often the first step in a career in imperial administration[86] – a man who had gone to Rome to study law but who was unable, upon his return, to speak actually in court. At first sight, this is yet another proof that Greek rhetoric was losing ground to other educational options, and that this led Libanius to praise the past at the expense of the present. If the rhetorical context of Libanius' statement is taken into account, however, a more nuanced image emerges. On the one hand, Libanius' complaint about the promotion of a law student constitutes only the *prokatastasis* of a speech which, as we have seen, is largely dedicated to Libanius' defiant claim that he alone should have been allowed to sing Eumolpius' brother's praises. Even people who were willing to hire law students as assessors, then, insisted on being publicly praised by sophists like Libanius. On the other hand, Libanius' accusation concerning the promotion of a law student gives him the opportunity to ridicule legal studies rather than to envy them. Indeed, as Libanius presents it in *Oration* 40, legal education alone is not enough: notwithstanding his education in Rome, the law student 'was as incapable of speaking as of paying attention to what was being said, and so little used to using his tongue that even gestures fatigued him'[87]. A much more positive image of legal studies is given, however, in the letters which Libanius wrote to the Berytus-based law teacher Domnio between 356 and 364[88]. This not only confirms that Libanius' presentation of legal studies is always influenced by the rhetorical context in which he is writing,[89] it also shows that many law

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79. Well-known Greeks writing in Latin include Ammianus Marcellinus, Claudian, and probably Macrobius. Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs*, Paris, 1955, pp. 368-369, moreover discusses the case of a certain Aristaenetus, an aristocrat from Byzantium discussed by Philostratus, who became orator maximus in both Latin and Greek.

80. For Latin in the Greek East, see Rochette, Rochette, *Le latin dans le monde grec*, cit. (n. 67), esp. pp. 116-147; Av. Cameron, *New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature. A Title Revisited*, in S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity. Dynamism, Didactism, Classicism*, Aldershot, 2006, pp. 11-28, esp. 18; *Hellenism in Byzantium*, cit. (n. 12), pp. 64-69. In addition, it should not be forgotten that Latin and Greek were not the only languages spoken or even written in late antiquity. For the increasing importance of other languages, cf. Cameron, *New Themes*, p. 14.

81. *Letters* 534, 539.

82. Libanius also admits his need of an interpreter for Latin letters in *Letters* 1004.4 and 1036.2 and 4. A rhetorical aim may also be discernable behind Libanius' proud statement that Phasganius' ignorance of Latin caused no problem: by emphasizing that Phasganius easily communicated with Roman officials through an interpreter, Libanius not only confirms his family's Hellenic credentials, but also suggests that the Antiochenes did not - and should not - feel obliged to learn Latin. *Cf.* Rochette, *Le latin dans le monde grec*, cit. (n. 67), pp. 131-133.

83. Cf. *Letter* 402.

84. Note that Themistius himself in *Oration* 6.71c complains that he did not actually know Latin. Cf. Wintjes (2005), 149.

85. Popularity of legal studies: F. Millar, *The Greek East and Roman Law. The Dossier of M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus*, in *JRS*, 89, 1999, pp. 90-108, esp. 105-106. Criticism: Themistius *Oration* 2.11, Ammianus 30.4.

86. Cf. A.H.M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 2, p. 501; Bradbury, *Selected Letters*, cit. (n. 75), p. 109.

87. Oration 40.6: οὔτε λέγων οὐδὲν οὔτε λέγοντι προσέχων, τοσοῦτον ἀπέχων <τοῦ χρήσασθαι τῷ στώματι, ὥστε καὶ τὸ νεῦσαι κάματον ἔχειν αὐτῷ>.
  Needless to say, of course, that this is Libanius' rhetorical presentation of legal education.

88. E.g. *Letters* 87, 117, 209, 533, 653, 1131, 1171.

89. Differences in Libanius' presentation of law studies across time and genre were already pointed out by Bradbury, *Selected Letters*, cit. (n. 75), p. 201, and Cribiore, *The School of Libanius*,

students also studied rhetoric[90]. Indeed, a recent study on late antique law in practice has demonstrated that rhetorical techniques were of key importance in exploiting laws to one's advantage[91]. Rather than a description of reality, then, the opposition between rhetoric and law is a rhetorical construction that served (and sometimes did not serve) rhetoricians to promote their own curriculum as opposed to new competitors in the educational field[92]. What is needed, therefore, is an examination of just how this rhetoric works in different circumstances – an examination for which studies of the competition between rhetoric and philosophy in the Second Sophistic offer good examples, highlighting how the various participants constructed, or minimized, this opposition in order to promote themselves and their teaching within imperial society[93].

Finally, late antique sophists are often thought to have lost their social influence and prestige to bishops, against whose religious innovations they therefore vehemently fought[94]. First of all, however, it is by no means true that sophists were sidelined in late antique city life: as was demonstrated in the previous section, they were invited to speak at numerous communal occasions. In those cases where a bishop did take over the rhetorical floor, much depends on one's interpretation. They can be seen as a sign of the sophists' weakness, but they can equally well be read as proof of rhetoric's flourishing: the fact that bishops take to rhetoric is an implicit acknowledgement of the power and importance of rhetoric

and continues the practice of rhetorical performances[95]. In this respect, it should not be forgotten either that sophist and bishop cannot always be neatly distinguished: many bishops would have enjoyed a thorough rhetorical training in their youth, some of them were exceptionally good at public speaking – witness John Chrysostom's name –, and we know of several members of the Church hierarchy who were also teachers of rhetoric[96]. Rather than focus on the fact that these are Christians occupying posts that would have otherwise been in the hands of 'pagans', it would be interesting to examine to what extent these cases represent the efforts of certain rhetoricians to adapt to, and capitalize on, changing circumstances. The degree of these changes should, moreover, not be exaggerated. Indeed, recent scholarship has demonstrated that '[t]he eventual dominance of Christianity was by no means certain in the fourth century, however much fifth-century Christian writers may have tried to imply the opposite. [...] 'Christianization' proceeded as much by ambiguity and cultural appropriation as by direct confrontation.'[97]. These recent findings inspire caution in two respects. On the one hand, we should not assume, without

cit. (n. 43), p. 212. Yet time and genre are not the only factors determining Libanius' presentation: as far as Libanius' pupil Apringius is concerned, for example, there is an interesting contrast between Libanius' recommendation letter to the law teacher Domnio, and his letter to the rhetorically trained advocate Megethius 2, in which he is much more critical about legal education. More research into Libanius' rhetorical presentation would therefore pay off.

90. On the (basic) rhetorical training of most advocates, cf. Heath, *Menander*, *cit.* (n. 1), pp. 321-331, esp. 326-329. As in the case of Latin, Libanius therefore tried to get a law teacher to establish himself in Antioch. Cf. *Letters* 433 and 486 to Silanus, and Letter 209 to Domnio. Neither of the two was, however, persuasive.

91. C. Humfress, *Law in Practice*, in Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, Malden, 2009, pp. 377-391, esp. 382-383. See also Libanius' remarks on the lack of success of in *Oration* 40.6.

92. Stenger, *Hellenische Identität, cit.* (n. 5), p. 379, notes that Libanius himself uses legal language to defend 'paganism'.

93. *Pace* Kennedy *Greek Rhetoric*, *cit.* (n. 5), p. 133, and although it has not received the same amount of attention, the competition between rhetoric and philosophy continued in late Antiquity as well. Especially the so-called 'private' speeches of Themistius would be interesting to study under this heading.

94. E.g. A. López Eire, *Retórica frente a cristianismo en la Autobiografía de Libanio*, in *Fortunatae*, 3, 1992, p. 85-98, esp. 98; Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, pp. 163 and 169-170.

95. Cf. H. M. Hubbel, *Chrysostom and Rhetoric*, in *CPh*, 19, 1924, pp. 261-276, esp. 262-266. As has been demonstrated by B. Beaujard, *Cités, évêques et martyrs en Gaule à la fin de l'époque romaine*, in *Les fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (IIIᵉ-XIIIᵉ siècles). Actes du colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome avec le concours de l'université de Rome La Sapienza, Rome, 27-29 octobre 1988*) (CÉFR, 149), Rome, 1991, pp. 175-191, martyr homilies became an important element in the competition between cities in Southern Gaul in late Antiquity.

96. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, *cit.* (n. 77), p. 73, Malosse – Schouler, *Troisième sophistique*, p. 206. On Julian's school edict and various other voices on Christian engagement with pagan culture and teaching, see Kaster, *ibid.*, pp. 70-95 and, most recently, J.-M. Carrié, *Julien législateur : un mélange des genres ?*, in *AnTard*, 17, 2009, pp. 175-184 with bibliography. As H.-U. Wiemer, *Libanius und Julian. Studien zum Verhältnis von Rhetorik und Politik im 4. jahrhundert n. Chr.*, München, 1995, pp. 68 and 108-110, rightly highlights, Libanius explicitly did not praise Julian's edict.

97. Cameron, *Education and Literary Culture*, p. 667. On the rather slow progress of Christianization, cf. also I. R. Smith, *Julian's Gods. Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate*, London, p. 210; F. R. Trombley, C*hristian Demography in the territorium of Antioch (4th-5th c.). Observations on the Epigraphy*, in I. Sandwell – J. Huskinson (edd.), C*ulture and Society in Later Roman Antioch (Papers from a colloquium held in London, 15th December 2001)*, Oxford, 2004, pp. 59- 85; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium, cit.* (n. 12), pp. 143-145; compare Christopher Kelly's recent argument at the Oxford Mellon Sawyer seminar that the shift towards Christians as governors took place in the fifth rather than in the fourth century; on religious allegiances often being less clear-cut than we tend to think, cf. also Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, *cit.* (n. 1), p. 64; Av. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse*, Berkeley, 1991, p. 121; Ead., *Education and Literary Culture*, p. 705; N. McLynn, *Pagans*

further ado, that the ('pagans' amongst the) sophists found themselves on the losing side of a battle that was about to end once and for all: if sophists sometimes present the situation in such terms, it is worthwhile to examine such presentations as rhetorical constructions designed to have a certain effect on the sophist's audience. On the other hand, we should also beware of overemphasizing such confrontational presentations: the idea that the struggle for life and death between 'pagans' and Christians runs as a red thread through late antique literature and, indeed, society, may reveal more about the lens through which modern scholars have long tended to look at late Antiquity than about the concerns of ancient writers themselves[98]. Indeed, as the close readings of Jerome by Ann Mohr and of Libanius and John Chrysostom by Isabella Sandwell have demonstrated, authors sometimes create and emphasize, but equally often omit or minimize religious differences[99]. As such, then, sophists were not so much passive recorders of changes perceived to be totally beyond their control, as participants in society using the public voice they enjoyed in order to further the aims they were pursuing with each text. It will be worthwhile to develop and apply this approach to other 'pagan' and Christian authors, and examine how they present their religious and other allegiances in various circumstances, and in what ways they thereby seek to influence their audience's attitudes towards, and even behaviour in, society.

6. Conclusion

When, in 1971, Jones published the first volume of his famous *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, well over half of the entries about notables in the Greek East were based on, or referred to, Libanius' letters and orations. Greek rhetoric was, in other words, acknowledged to provide vital insight into the social history of the later Roman empire. Ever since, however, and notwithstanding the boom in studies on late Antiquity as well as on rhetoric, Libanius and his likes have been largely dismissed as a group of men soon bound to lose all their social influence due to a number of important political, religious, and cultural changes. As will be clear from the preceding pages, though, this impression is due not so much to any inherent characteristics of late anti-

que rhetorical texts as such, as to the lens through which they have been studied – an approach epitomized in the invention of the 'Third Sophistic'. Rather than a new name, then, late antique rhetoric is in need of a new approach. It has been argued here that recent studies of the Second Sophistic can offer inspiration for such a project, as they allow us to see rhetoricians performatively engaging in some of the most important social debates that were going on in their world: far from being static or moribund, Greek rhetoric, also in its classicizing form, belongs indeed, as Jones already saw, at the very heart of late antique society.

This new approach to late antique rhetoric will have three important consequences. First, it will lead to a thorough reassessment of some important late antique authors. Libanius, for example, will appear less as a man of the past who withdrew into his classroom as he no longer mattered in fourth-century Antioch, but rather as a man deeply engaged in society and trying, through rhetoric, to influence policy at the local, and, via his network and letters, regional and even empire-wide level. Second, by placing (a different image of) these authors back on the map, the new approach will modify the geography of late Antiquity: if Libanius and his likes can no longer be dismissed as living 'at the margins' of late antiquity, it may well be that 'dissenting' or 'conservative' voices were stronger, and could be heard for much longer, in late Antiquity, than has often been suggested. A revaluation of late antique rhetoric, especially in its classicizing form, will thus confirm recent findings in other fields, which replace the paradigm of rupture and change under Diocletian and Constantine with one of much more gradual transformation and adaptation. Finally, the new approach will have repercussions for the history of ancient rhetoric. If studies thus far have suggested that the Second Sophistic saw the last great flourishing of classical Greek rhetoric with the 'Third Sophistic' representing its death struggle, the approach proposed here will allow to fully assess elements of continuity as well as of discontinuity. Only if, as proposed here, the texts from these different epochs are read through a similar lens is it possible to come to a fair comparison between early and later imperial Greek literature, and thus write the history of Greek rhetoric and the Roman Empire.

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in a Christian Empire, in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity, cit*. (n. 91), pp. 572-587, esp. 573 and 585.

98. Note that Libanius, for example, counted both Christians and 'pagans' amongst his students. Cf. Cribiore, *The School of Libanius*, *cit*. (n. 43), pp. 5-110.

99. Cf. A. Mohr, *Jerome, Virgil, and the Captive Maiden. The Attitude of Jerome to Classical Literature*, in J.H.D. Scourfield, (ed.) *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity. Inheritance, Authority, and Change*, Swansea, 2007, pp. 299-322, and Sandwell, *Religious Identity*, *cit*. (n. 18). For the role of the category of the 'secular' in this respect, cf. R. Lim, *Christianization, Secularization, and the Transformation of Public Life*, in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, *cit*. (n. 91), pp. 497-511.