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Canon as Pharmakón

Inside and Outside Discursive Sanity in Imperial Greek Literature

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Canon is a phenomenon belonging to the culture of memory. To establish canons means to endeavour to make achievements of the past pedagogically useful and valuable for the present,[1] or, to put it with Jan Assmann, to define what has to be regarded as authoritatively beautiful, great, important and meaningful.[2] For this purpose a decision is needed about exactly what of things past should be regarded as deserving conservation and use. Each society has, or at least (changing) elite parts of a society have,[3] to agree on this, and the more a society is complex and extensive, the more it will incline to leave such decisions to individual specialists or specialized institutions who – as specialists use to do – will quarrel about details.[4] Canons therefore normally dispose of a kind of universally agreed kernel, but also of a periphery the contents of which are object of discussion.[5]

In my paper I would like to deal with one segment of such omnipresent phenomenons of canonization, viz. with the special use made of canons by literary and rhetorical mimesis in imperial Greek literature.[6] I will concentrate on the following questions:

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1 For the reasons of establishing canons and their connection with cultures dominated by written texts see generally G.W. Most, *Canon Fathers. Literacy, Mortality, Power*, in: Arion N.S. 3/1 (1990), 35–60. Even if I agree with most of his arguments, it has to be stated that he treats the epochs following the hellenistic time too univocally. In any case, canon differs clearly from mere adhering to an authoritative past and tradition by establishing selections as well as exact and therefore disputable (and disputed) hierarchies and valorizations of texts; for a terminological differentiation of canon, tradition and classic see J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München ²1997, 120f.

2 See Assmann, 1997, 119.

3 See Most, 1990, 37.

4 See M. Asper, *Kanon*, in: Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik 4 (1998), 869–882 (870).

5 This is certainly true for esthetic canons, while religious canons tend to be far more restricted and unchangeable; see Asper, 1998, 870.

6 Most, 1990 is certainly right in assuming that canons, by shaping the past, help to maintain or to gain political power, and we should remember that in imperial times Greek education, παιδεία, is, as is commonly agreed, a main factor of power management between the different levels of political administration.

1. Who are the authors belonging to the kernel of the canon, and who are the authors discussed as belonging or not belonging to the periphery of the canon?[7]
2. How are these authors able to assume canonical authority?
3. How are these authors used for the sake of achieving paideia, education, and what is the right way to deal with texts of canonical authors?
4. Finally I would like to focus on a multifaceted metaphor being elaborated first of all in the oeuvre of Lucian of Samosata, where imitation of the canon is visualized as στερρὰ τροφή which is to be understood as a kind of diet for athletes. Which are the implications of this metaphor with regard to implementing a lecture of canon in general education? And how might lecture of canon, then, even be used in order to correct a wrong or mistaken education?

I start by asking for the identity of the canonical authors. It is widely known that the Greek literary and rhetorical production in the imperial period was closely bound to a corpus of authors belonging to the 5th and 4th century b. C. which was regarded as classical by everybody.[8] These authors had already been established as classics by the time of the hellenistic philologues, and the original contribution of the imperial time consisted not so much in ascribing canonicity to them as in strictly fixing them as an universal standard and point of orientation. Former scholars often thought that this postulate proved imperial writers to be in fact mere epigones or, at least, to have regarded themselves as epigones to the great classical past. To be sure this doesn't meet with the way the great imperial sophists used to stylize and present themselves, famous men who certainly didn't suffer from feeble self-confidence; just think of personalities as Aelius Aristides, Polemon of Laodikeia or Favorinus of Arelate. On the contrary, canon was regarded as presupposition to become elegant and, in the end, unique oneself.

Starting point of canonical lecture was the reading of Homer, as it was taught already in the class of the γραμματικός. Homer who was regarded to be everybody's teacher, even of the other canonical authors, seems to have been thought of as having himself no model, as being a kind of absolute beginning. Therefore Ps.-Longin does not refrain of comparing him to the Sun and to the Okeanos (*De sublimitate* 9.13). Next to him are, as we are told in

7 Today, we might prefer not to speak of canonical authors but of canonical texts. But this wouldn't be likely to be a distinction adequate to deal with ancient opinions. Ancient critics nearly always speak of authors when thinking about canons, traditions and models of imitation; see also Asper, 1998, 873. Texts are – and this might be an enduring relic of the first, oral epochs of Greek literature – seen primarily as utterances of (dead) poets.

8 The term 'classicus' is first used in the sense of 'classic' by Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 19.8,15. The hellenistic lists of classic authors are lucidly presented by U. Dubielzig, *Kanon*, in: ²Kleines Lexikon des Hellenismus (1993), 323–327 (325–327). Imperial times seem to have discussed the question of the kernel(s) of these lists – see the following – and to have added another canonical list of ten attic orators; for this see I. Rutherford, *Inverting the Canon. Hermogenes on Literature*, HSCP 94, Harvard 1992, 355–378 (357).

Lucian's dialogue *Lexiphanes* (22), the ἄριστοι ποιηταί, to whom belong, as Ps.-Longin lists them, authors as Hesiodus, Sappho, Pindarus, Stesichorus and Archilochus, whereas Dion of Prusa, in his oration on rhetorical training (D.Chr., or. 18.8), speaks generally of lyrical texts as part of the canon, but doesn't name any single authors in addition to the four great lyrical genres (μέλη δὲ καὶ ἐλεγεῖα καὶ ἴαμβοι καὶ διθύραμβοι)[9]; and to read them is not even regarded as inevitably necessary, even if we have to take into account that Dion doesn't aim at producing a generally educated man but a well educated politician. According to *Lexiphanes* 22, in the series of good and canonical reading follow the great orators, first of all Demosthenes who throughout antiquity was favored as occupying the rhetorical centre of the canon. If we take one step beyond into rhetorical periphery, we at once find first differences: While Lykinos in Lucian's *Lexiphanes* insists on reading Isokrates after Demosthenes, Dion doesn't even mention him and instead names Lysias, Hypereides, Aischines and Lycurgus.

Following the advice given in the *Lexiphanes* (22), after the orators one should read ἡ καλὴ κωμῳδία καὶ ἡ σεμνὴ τραγῳδία[10], which means, as Dion tells us, particularly Menander and Euripides; Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes may also be read and are of course not to be underrated, but we shouldn't – a metaphor which I will return to later – prefer precious to salubrious food: οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ ἰατροὶ τὰς πολυτελεστάτας τροφὰς συντάττουσι τοῖς θεραπείας δεομένοις, ἀλλὰ τὰς ὠφελίμους (D.Chr., or. 18.7)[11]. Finally, the highest and most difficult degree of mimesis is, as we are told in the *Lexiphanes*, the reading of Thucydides and Plato. The former is also named by Dion, while in his opinion all the other historians are, in the end, of second rank: Herodotus might be read by those who are looking for pleasing moments, Ephoros is bad in point of view of grammar, Theopompus may be seen to be quite near to Thucydides, but is stylistically negligent. Plato is subsumed by Dion under the Socratics who, all together, will teach us to be graceful, to display χάρις (D.Chr., or. 18.12); and their most important representative is, as he thinks, without any doubt Xenophon, to whom he dedicates four whole paragraphs (D.Chr., or. 18.14–17), but who is not mentioned explicitely by Lucian (while being implicitely present as the author of a Symposion, the genre the Lucianic protagonist Lexiphanes tries to excel in); Ps.-Longinus cites him six times, but as an example as well to be followed as to be avoided.[12]

9 "Lyrics and elegiac poetry too, and iambics and dithyrambs". Translations of Dio are by J.W. Cohoon (ed.), *Dio Chrysostom*, Cambridge 1939; of Lucian by A.M. Harmon (ed.), *Lucian. Works. with an English Translation*, Cambridge 1936, of Ps.-Longinus by W. Rhys Roberts (ed.), *Longinus on the Sublime*, Cambridge ²1907.

10 "Attractive comedy and sober tragedy".

11 "For physicians do not prescribe the most costly diet for their patients, but that which is salutary".

12 Ps.-Longin., *De sublimitate* 19.1; 4.4; 28.3; 25; 32.5; 43.5. Xenophon is therefore apparently an author of the canonical periphery, or, perhaps better: an author slowly advancing into

Even if we compare only these two texts – Lucian's *Lexiphanes* and Dio's Περὶ λόγου ἀσκήσεως – the principles of canonical kernel and canonical periphery become clearly visible. There are two other aspects to be added. First, it seems apt to observe a certain succession when reading those texts with regard to the respective degrees of difficulty; in addition, not all authors, as I already said, will be needed by everybody.[13] Second, contemporary texts apparently don't belong a priori into a canon. While Dion just names his choice of canonical authors without bringing them into a hierarchical succession – so Homer is called (D.Chr., or. 18.8) πρῶτος καὶ μέσος καὶ ὕστατος[14], but is only mentioned after comedy and tragedy –, Thucydides and Plato are, in *Lexiphanes* 22, put in the fourth and last place, and there is an explication added that they should be read ἐν καιρῷ[15], which must certainly mean that they are to be read when it is their turn, apparently being regarded as difficult models of imitation. Into this fits well the claim that the first step of literary education, the reading of the best poets, the ἄριστοι ποιηταί,[16] should be done under the guidance of a teacher (ὑπὸ διδασκάλων ἀναγιγνώσκειν: *Lexiphanes* 22).[17] This is to say that one advances from the more simple texts to the more difficult ones and is therefore able to develop a growing capacity of judgement which will help to climb the next steps which are even steeper. We learn by a teacher how to deal mimetically with canonical authors, how to extract their specific quality and beauty out of the texts read, and, having learnt all that, we can then turn to other authors much more difficult to analyze; and finally the canon can be enlarged by contemporary texts. Theoreticians of canon don't refuse completely to integrate the reading of authors whose lifetime was just some generations ago, but only show some kind of reluctance which is due to the fact that these authors have not yet stood the

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the inner circle of canon (see K. Münscher, *Xenophon in der griechisch-römischen Literatur*, Ph.S 13/2, Leipzig 1920, 181), even if Hermogenes ranks him with the three best prose writers (Hermog., Id. 2.12).

13 Cicero, for example, claimed that he would not read Greek lyrical texts even if he was given one more life: *Negat Cicero, si duplicetur sibi aetas, habiturum se tempus, quo legat lyricos* (Sen., Ep. 5.49,5).

14 „Homer comes first and in the middle and last".

15 „In due time".

16 It should be pointed out that – strange enough from our point of view – reading the poets was, after reading Homer, the first step of mimetic learning for the most, if not all theoreticians. In ancient thought, prose generally developped from poetry (for sources see Rutherford, 1992, 369, footnote 55), but even this argument could be inverted, as is shown by Aelius Aristides, *Eis Sarapin* 4–8.

17 Whether Lucian means that teachers are acquired for every step of education in mimesis is not clear. In this passage he links the frequentation of teachers undoubtedly only to the first step which in my opinion takes into account both the well known (e. g. semantic and dialectal) difficulties of Greek lyrics and the fact that reading them is at the same time the first step in the process of learning how to imitate. Quint., Inst. 10.1,15 seems to think that a great part of the educational task has to be done by oneself (*sine demonstrante et sequi iam suis viribus*). For the first step, a teacher is undoubtedly needed.

test, have not been object to trials which might have reduced their number sufficiently.[18] The larger the number of potential objects of imitation is, the more everybody practicing the art of mimesis has to trial it critically, and the more he has to dispose of critical capacities, of measures of selection, and those are only to be gained by reading the valuable texts of the old canon. Therefore Lycinus, Lexiphanes' Socratic antagonist in Lucian's dialogue, is inclined even to accept imitating later authors (*Lexiphanes* 23), as long as one avoids the worst, τὰ φαυλότατα, and doesn't think – as is added by Lucian in his Rhetorum praeceptor 17 – that it might be apt to replace the old authors by the newer ones. Dion, at last, even recommends to stick to more recent authors (τῶν νεωτέρων καὶ ὀλίγον πρὸ ἡμῶν: D.Chr., or. 18.12)[19] – when listing the canonical orators he names people as Antipatros, Theodoros, Plution and Konon[20] – and reasons that, if we emulate them, we can at least hope to reach them or even to outdo them, while the authors of the old canon are simply unreachable, what means that to imitate them is stigmatized by the fear of failure.[21] The old canon therefore cannot be ruled out in what concerns the development of critical measures, and only those authors enable us to confidently imitate contemporary or nearly contemporary authors. At the same time it becomes evident that our relationship to the old writers is not simply one of a degenerate, but nevertheless admiring epigone, but that for anybody who wants to

18 Above all the most important canonical selection of the Hellenistic philologues is missing (see Most, 1990, 54) which was due not so much to classicistic endeavours as to linguistic purism and prescriptive normativeness (see Asper,1998, 873). Furthermore, it seems that for ancient thought authors had to be dead before being canonized: "The notion seems to be, naively enough, that it is not difficult for an author to secure a hearing among his contemporaries, but that it is only when he himself has passed away, and with him all personal connections that might have encouraged flattery or envy, that the value of the work itself will become visible" (Most, 1990, 50). Nevertheless tradition shows clearly enough that the main focus in the transmission of texts as in teaching texts in school was laid on canonical authors.

19 "Those who lived a little before our time".

20 All of them were orators still active in the first half of the first century A.D. and therefore nearly contemporaries of Dio who lived about 40–110 A.D. or later. His contemporary Quintilian reports (Quint., Inst. 10.1,54) that *Aristarchus atque Aristophanes, poetarum iudices, neminem sui temporis in numerum redegerunt.* He himself doesn't include contemporary Greek authors, but stops at the Hellenistic authors Callimachus and Philetas (Dionysios of Halicarnassos [second half of the first century B.C.]) doesn't even proceed so far and stops in the fifth century B.C. with Pindaros, *De imitatione* B.6.2,5–8 Us.), while – on the Roman side of *auctores legendi* – he even mentions his nearly exact contemporaries Lucanus, who nevertheless was already dead for about 30 years, and Valerius Flaccus, who was dead only for some years, when Quintilian, at the end of the first century A.D., wrote his *Institutio oratoria.* Hermogenes (Hermog., Id. 2.12) ranked with the three best writers of prose not only the Socratic Aischines and Xenophon, but, in addition to the contemporaneously performing Aelius Aristides, also his contemporary Titus Aurelianus Nicostratus – a list so idiosyncratic that this latter author is known to us only by his name and some work-titles; see Rutherford, 1992, 375–378.

21 A concept which has been taken up and developed further by H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford 1973.

openly show off his education, to learn from the old writers bears a moment of agonality in itself.

If we think this concept of imitation through, we will, in the end, perhaps never be able to definitely come to terms with canonical reading, but we will, with every reading, be more able to be creative and original ourselves. For it must not be overseen that a writer or an orator who confines himself and his literary output to the canon will not be able to produce the excellent, outstanding and singular performance the imperial sophists are so much interested in. Adherence to canon is just a necessary step to the literary championship everyone is keen on: None of the famous Sophists, not even Lucian who wholeheartedly declines all aspiration for glory, would have been content with being praised only for his well done imitation of canon. The peak of canonical education consists in finding one's own style, in being able to connect it with canonical qualities, or, to put it in another way, to join what can be imitated with what is idiosyncratic. It may be considered as the paradoxon of imitating the canon, that all this working on one's own education aimes, in the end, at becoming canonical oneself.[22]

To say this is to give a first answer to my second question: What is it that gives authority to canonical authors and their texts? First, it is the very fact that, while being very old, they have always been and are still read, because this shows their quality which helped them to remain undamaged by all these processes of selection which have already taken place at different epochs, so that by now they can claim to be valid over all times. A second answer is naive only at first glance. It is again to be found in Dion who tells us that the eldest writers obtained their talent from the gods themselves (D.Chr., or. 18.3: καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ἀρχαιότατοι καὶ παρὰ θεῶν τὴν ποίησιν λαβόντες)[23]. For even the remark of Ps.-Longin, which might seem to us much more plausible, that also among the old poets themselves there existed relationships of imitation – so, for example, Herodotus and Plato imitated Homer and tried to outdo him[24] – brings us back to the already mentioned fact that at the beginning of all literature there was Homer and that never in ancient thought anyone had the idea of claiming also for him canonical examples he could have imitated. Following this ancient line of

22 This, of course, was not something to be attributed to a writer or sophist still living. But everybody strove for this, as is well shown by a very telling anecdote transmitted by Philostratos in his chapter on Herodes Atticus, perhaps the most famous orator of the second century A.D.: βοώσης δὲ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ καλούσης αὐτὸν ἕνα τῶν δέκα οὐχ ἡττήθη τοῦ ἐπαίνου μεγάλου δοκοῦντος, ἀλλ᾽ ἀστειότατα πρὸς τοὺς ἐπαινέσαντας "Ἀνδοκίδου μέν", ἔφη, "βελτίων εἰμί." (*And when all Greece was loud in applause of Herodes and called him one of the Ten* [scil. orators, see footnote 8], *he was not abashed by such a compliment, though it seems magnificent enough, but replied to his admirers with great urbanity: 'Well at any rate I am better than Andocides.'*: Philostr. VS 564); Andocides was regarded to be the least and last in this imperial canon of ten attic orators.

23 "The poets of the earliest times, who received their gift of poetry from the gods".

24 Ps.-Longinus, *De sublimitate* 13.2f.

thought we will, at least for θεῖος Ὅμηρος, have to assume godly inspiration, and at the end of the chain of reception even we will, when imitating the old writers, participate in it. It is for this reason that Ps.-Longinus (*De sublimitate* 13.2) compares the genius of the old poets, whose results we are meant to imitate, with the inspirational damps by which Pythia used to entrance herself, and he asserts that reading those inspired texts can, for us, who are not so deeply and wildly loved by the Muses, even replace godly inspiration:

> Οὕτως ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀρχαίων μεγαλοφυίας εἰς τὰς τῶν ὑψηλούντων ἐκείνους ψυχὰς ὡς ἀπὸ ἱερῶν στομίων ἀπόρροιαί τινες φέρονται, ὑφ' ὧν ἐπιπνεόμενοι καὶ οἱ μὴ λίαν φοιβαστικοὶ τῷ ἑτέρων ἐνθουσιῶσι μεγέθει[25].

In explaining the canonical authority of an author aspects of concrete and provable quality meet with the aspect of what is, in the end, to be called the godly origin of great literature; but we have to admit that we are not quite well informed about criterial details of canonization.[26] Canonical and contemporaneous literature are, to sum this up, held together by a kind of magnetic chain as the one Plato speaks of in his dialogue *Ion* when trying to metaphorize the phenomenon of enthusiasm, transmitted from the Muses via the poet and the rhapsode to the audience.[27]

Using canon as tool of orientation in education is a very complexe endeavour where to be mistaken is easy. Certainly one will be able to learn a correct use of Greek semantic and syntax by diligently reading the classics; also one will be able to learn to distinguish different levels of style and, by this, to improve contextual adequacy of one's own speaking. But above this quite elementary levels improving by imitation of canon is clearly bound to literary talent, to natural endowment. Only a naturally gifted writer or orator will, when imitating the classics, be able to separate oneself from the surface of mere single words, expressions and sentences and will be able not simply to write what has been written by the great model, but to write in the same way as it was done by him. To achieve this means to accomplish a process of abstraction. The imitator must, first of all, understand why exactly the model just functions so well, or, to put it in other words: He must recognize, analyze and finally adopt not only the effects of textually immanent modes of esthetics as rhythm, sound, harmony, proportion

25 "Similarly from the great natures of the men of old there are borne in upon the souls of those who emulate them (as from sacred caves) what we may describe as effluences, so that even those who seem little likely to be possessed are thereby inspired and succumb to the spell of the others' greatness".

26 See T. Hägg, *Canon Formation in Greek Literary Culture*, in: E. Thomassen (ed.), *Canon and Canonicity. The Formation and Use of Scripture*, Copenhagen 2010, 109–128.

27 See Pl., Ion 533d1–536d3.

(see Lucian, Dom. 5)[28], but also other qualities as sagacity, argumentative intelligence, methodical proceeding, clear display of aims etc. To be sure, all this must always serve the purpose of one's own production: mimesis is not an end in itself, but is needed to ameliorate and to sharpen the way we deal with our own subjects and put them into words.[29] Even if Dio (D.Chr., or. 18.19) gives the advice to learn by heart the best and most perfect passages of our model texts, he nevertheless doesn't want us just to reproduce what we have read and learnt, but to enable us to deal continually with what is perfect without being dependent on its written form; and in order to become acquainted with qualities as rhythm and sound learning texts by heart will beyond any doubt be indispensable. Just to be content with taking over single words and citations when imitating the classics is most bitterly scourged by Lucian, because this for him is a sign either of mental indolence and a lack of readiness to exercise oneself – which is nothing else than ethical deficiency – or of a lack of talent, which is, so to speak, the same as intellectual deficiency. Both defects are not to be cured, even by a good teacher who, on the contrary, is responsible for refraining such deficient learners from following this way of education furtheron.

Imitation of canonical authors will be successful when based on critically asking in which respect the model is in itself idiosyncratic and where there are even deficiencies to be criticised. The imitator has to avoid those idiosyncrasies and, of course, those mistakes.[30] The individual, the particular features responsible for the great authors finally being regarded as admired geniuses, have to remain their own. For, as Ps.-Longinus explains, we forgive our models the faults they make only because at the same time they achieve ingenious marvels and highlights in their writings (*De sublimitate* 33). Everybody who tries to cover his own insufficiencies and shortcomings by copying the peculiarities of a model – and, of course, these will be peculiarities at once to be recognized by every educated person – will expose himself to derision. On the contrary one has to approach the model by, as Dion puts it, rendering the model text with one's own words, reading it with the help of a teacher or fellow and discussing it in an educated manner (D.Chr., or. 18.19). Beyond this one should, as Ps.-Longin (*De sublimitate* 14.1f.) advises us, with regard to the subject chosen reflect upon how Homer, Plato or Demosthenes would have put

28 Τέχνη δὲ ἢ κάλλος ἢ τέρψις ἢ τὸ σύμμετρον ἢ τὸ εὔρυθμον. ("craftmanship or beauty or charm or symmetry or grace [scil. better: proportion]").

29 A step between analyzing the canon and creative own writing was exercised with the help of the progymnasmata, the composition of small texts with increasing thematic and stylistic difficulties; see M. Kraus, *Progymnasmata, Gymnasmata*, in: Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik 7 (2005), 159–190 (159–164). Statius describes (Stat., Silv. 5.3,146–161) an apparently current mode of advanced, but still pretext-bound imitation, the prose paraphrasis of canonical authors which could already be read to a 'larger' public; see B. Gibson, *Statius, Silvae 5*, Oxford 2006, 328.

30 Rutherford, 1992, 362 affirms rightly that canonization in antiquity never means sacralization: Readers always have to use their *iudicium*.

it into words (πῶς ἂν εἰ τύχοι ταὐτὸ τοῦθ' Ὅμηρος εἶπεν, πῶς δ' ἂν Πλάτων ἢ Δημοσθένης ὕψωσαν ἢ ἐν ἱστορίᾳ Θουκυδίδης) or even to call, in thought, Homer or Demosthenes to judge our text. This of course implies readiness and capability for self-criticism; I will return to this point later. Doing this intensely and continually one will be able to put a stamp of quality onto one's own abilities of expression (ἀποτύπωσις: Ps.-Longinus, *De sublimitate* 13.4), and it is exactly this stamp, this ἀποτύπωσις, reading and imitating canonical texts aims at: Only who finally reaches perfect mimetical assurance in matters of style and expression may be allowed to indulge in idiosyncrasies himself, which is to write down things not to be imitated by others. And only then he will nearly have accomplished his wish to become canonical himself – of course only for later generations. For in the literary agon the winner will be the writer who is most difficult to imitate. To arrive at this highest point of literary and rhetorical education, one has first to toil up the long, stony and steep path of imitation. Therefore, a teacher who – as does for example the teacher of rhetoric in Lucian's *Rhetorum praeceptor* – promises short-cuts and claims himself to be able to reduce imitation to some tricks of mere copying, just is a liar who only wants to increase the number of his pupils.

Paideia is more and aims at more than at only producing clever rhetoricians. Paideia rather desires to achieve intellectually and ethically mature personalities. Maturity manifests itself on a level of corporeal fitness as well as on the level of ethical good conduct and intellectual achievement; the two qualities last mentioned are not least to be seen in the ways this person makes use of language. Imitating the classics, as it should be clear by this, aims at more than at merely mastering the classical attic language.[31] The language of the masters of classical literature is – as shows the old maxim *qualis vita talis oratio*[32] – thought to reflect the best of classical values and attitudes which the most perfect user of the classical way of speaking will therefore himself be able to display of. Of course this is not gained automatically by just reading the classics, but by critically scrutinizing – as it is parodically done e. g. in Aristophanes' *Frogs* and very seriously requested by Quintilian (Quint., Inst. 10.1,16–26) – and carefully imitating them. Clearly, then, not everything is to be learnt from every model. The imitator will have to analyze each model and will then have to combine different values and attitudes. His task therefore will not least consist in thinking about and experimenting on possibilities of mimetical combination.[33]

So, as Dion puts it, we can learn from reading Euripides plausible thinking and adequately and elegantly formulating one's thoughts; from reading

31 See Most, 1990, 50f.

32 See M. Möller, *Talis oratio – qualis vita. Zu Theorie und Praxis mimetischer Verfahren in der griechisch-römischen Literaturkritik*, Heidelberg 2004.

33 Therefore if Lucian affirms to be proud of his mimetical invention – the hybrid of comedy and dialogue –, what was new in it was not the fact of combining genres but the at first sight huge distance between them and the resulting difficulties in merging them.

Lycurgus simple and at the same time noble views and sentiments; from reading Xenophon, Dion's favourite writer, how to deal with people of most different character, how to tell somebody the truth without offending him, not to trust anybody too easily, and lots of other things, all of which clearly belong to the realm of ethic education.[34] The 'stamping' (ἀποτύπωσις) Ps.-Longinus speaks of, is, then, to be regarded as a far-reaching process concerning the whole personality. Someone who is, from a linguistic and literary point of view, uneducated, runs the danger of being considered a bad character, and, *vice versa*, someone showing off a deficient character can be judged as not having been touched by an efficient mimetic stamping and not possessing intellectual and rhetorical qualities. Supposing that this view of things is right, Lucian for example thinks himself to be in his right when he not only ridicules someone as the uneducated lover of books for committing most stupid faults when speaking of books, but also mocks – apparently without changing his subject – his pretentious manners and his sexual deviances (*Adversus indoctum*). Of course, the unity of thinking, acting and speaking as Lucians imagines it here and in other texts, doesn't describe completely and faithfully the contemporaneous reality, but praises nevertheless an ideal of education which contains not only rhetorical, but also, by including ethics, philosophical aspects.

I just said that from an imperial point of view perfect education might well include a beautiful body. A neglected outward appearance, overweight, bad poise etc. can be read, if they are due to an inadequate and unhealthy way of life, as external signs of a lack of self-control (ἐγκράτεια) and consequently of ethic stability. We might therefore say that the outward appearance is at least indirectly related with what I have just been saying about rhetorical and ethical stamping by mimesis. It is Lucian who, in this context, is particularly fond of using 'nourishment' as a far-reaching metaphor of his concept of mimesis. You will remember that already Dion, in the context of reading tragedy and comedy, differentiated consuming solid and healthy whole-food from nibbling expensive dainties. In just the same way Lucian makes a difference between the 'hard food' (στερρὰ τροφή) needed by athletes to maintain their physical fitness on the one hand and delicacies on the other hand (λιχνεία: *Lexiphanes* 23 / 25). Let's have a closer look at the end of Lucian's *Lexiphanes* already often cited by me in this paper. Lycinus' friend Lexiphanes ('the shower of words') just has declaimed a Symposion composed by him in a Platonicizing style, a text sparkled with most rare and far-fetched words which, at that, have often been used by Lexiphanes in the wrong way or in the wrong contexts. Lycinus decides that in this case

34 This ethical perspective of reading canonical authors coincides with one of the conceptual and terminological roots of 'canon', the meaning of perceptional truthfulness as the basis of correct and adequate behaviour; see Asper, 1998, 871f.

a drastic therapeutical operation is needed. First, he hires a friend of his, the doctor Sopolis, who makes Lexiphanes swallow down an emetic:

> Βοηθέα γοῦν τῷ ἀνδρὶ πάσῃ μηχανῇ καὶ – κατὰ θεὸν γὰρ τῶν χολωτῶν τινι φάρμακον τουτὶ κερασάμενος ἀπῄειν, ὡς πιὼν ἐμέσειε – φέρε πρῶτος αὐτὸς πῖθι, ὦ Λεξίφανες, ὡς ὑγιὴς ἡμῖν καὶ καθαρὸς γένοιο τῆς τοιαύτης τῶν λόγων ἀτοπίας κενωθείς. ἀλλὰ πείσθητί μοι καὶ πῖθι καὶ ῥᾴων ἔσῃ (*Lexiphanes* 20)[35].

This cathartic process finally ends up in an act of vomiting described in all detail:

> Πρῶτον τουτὶ τὸ μῶν, εἶτα μετ᾽ αὐτὸ ἐξελήλυθε τὸ κᾰ́τα, εἶτα ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς τὸ ἤ δ᾽ ὅς καὶ ἀμηγέπη καὶ λῷστε καὶ δήπουθεν καὶ συνεχὲς τὸ ἄττα. βίασαι δ᾽ ὅμως, κάθες εἰς τὴν φάρυγγα τοὺς δακτύλους. οὐδέπω τὸ ἱκταρ ἐμήμεκας οὐδὲ τὸ σκορδινᾶσθαι οὐδὲ τὸ τευτάζεσθαι οὐδὲ τὸ σκύλεσθαι. πολλὰ ἔτι ὑποδέδυκε καὶ μεστή σοι αὐτῶν ἡ γαστήρ. ἄμεινον δέ, εἰ κάτω διαχωρήσειεν ἂν ἔνια· ἡ γοῦν σιληπορδία μέγαν τὸν ψόφον ἐργάσεται συνεκπεσοῦσα μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος. ἀλλ᾽ ἤδη μὲν καθαρὸς οὑτοσὶ πλὴν εἴ τι μεμένηκεν ὑπόλοιπον ἐν τοῖς κάτω ἐντέροις. σὺ δὲ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο παραλαβὼν αὐτόν, ὦ Λυκῖνε, μεταπαίδευε καὶ δίδασκε ἃ χρὴ λέγειν (*Lexiphanes* 21)[36].

The reproach uttered here is beyond any doubt. By choosing the genre of *Symposion* Lexiphanes has dared to step onto a mimetic ground covered by famous masterpieces of the greatest writers of the old canon, Plato and Xenophon. But Lexiphanes has completely failed to grasp the special beauty of those model texts; instead, he has limited himself to the mere use of precious single words. He apparently hasn't got any idea of what might be the deeper sense and the true purpose of a *Symposion* and only uses this genre in order to be able to display of rare attic words not being adequate for such a text; there is no other aim than just this performance of mere words. To have chosen this genre therefore is nothing else than a pretentious act, that is: an ethically deficient act. Lucian, having a much-comprising view of paideia, enlarges this subject of false affinity to canon by composing the

35 "The man must be helped by all means. As good luck would have it, I came away with this medicine, made up for an insane person, so that by taking it he might throw off his bile. Come, you be the first to take it, Lexiphanes, that we may have you cured and cleansed, once you have rid yourself of such impossible language. Do obey me and take it, and you will feel better".

36 "First, this 'prithee,' then after it 'eftsoons' has come up; then on their heels his 'quoth he' and 'in some wise,' and 'fair sir,' and 'in sooth,' and his incessant 'sundry.' Make an effort, however; put your fingers down your throat. You have not yet given up 'instanter' or 'pandiculation' or 'divagation' or 'spoliation'. Many things still lurk in hiding and your inwards are full of them. It would be better if some should take the opposite course. Anyhow, 'vilipendency' will make a great racket when it comes tumbling out on the wings of the wind. Well, this man is now purged, unless something has remained behind in his lower intestines. It is for you next, Lycinus, to take him on, mending his education and teaching him what to say".

little scene I have just cited and, with this, connecting it with the metaphoric realm of the body, this is: He suggests that Lexiphanes suffers from a stomach ache caused by semantic gluttony. Canonical education – and this seems to me to be what is most interesting in this passage – has failed by now, but can be relaunched a second time, now as a kind of pedagogical therapy. For this to work two presuppositions must be met: first, Lexiphanes' readiness to learn anew (μεταμανθάνειν), which is shown here by his agreement to swallow the emetic, and second, Lexiphanes' readiness to entrust himself to a teacher (διδάσκειν). In doing this he, in some way, returns to the first level of education: Instead of producing texts himself he has to learn to know what quality of writing and composing really looks like. In order to achieve this he may not only read his beloved Plato, but, as nourishment has to be manifold and balanced, he must read different canonical authors and is to pick their most beautiful petals (τὰ κάλλιστα ἄνθη ἀπανθίζεσθαι: 22). Of course, 'picking petals' does not mean to do what Lexiphanes has done the whole time, that is to consider single words to be the greatest achievement of the model texts, but Lexiphanes must from now on try to understand what is the particular quality, the specific beauty of a model author, what he can learn from him for his own writing and declaiming and, finally, what can never be imitated. Not to be aware of these things is, in this text, considered to be an illness, so to speak even a kind of madness. To cure it, first a cathartic operation is needed, then a severe diet. Following this diet one is bound to stay away from what Lucian, in a strange expression, calls word-anemones, ἀνεμῶναι τῶν λόγων (*Lexiphanes* 23). Strange as this expression may be, it nevertheless fits well into what I have been speaking about. In antiquity, the anemone was considered to have been produced by Aphrodite's tears she wept on the death of Adonis;[37] in Greece, this plant generally was not cultivated but was growing wildly within cornfields. The metaphor of nourishment, then, is here enlarged and enriched with a visual element, viz. the motif of the sight of a cornfield sparkled with anemones. To behave like Lexiphanes is as stupid as reaping only the anemones but letting back the corn. If we think of anemones as being symbols of the transitoriness of love and fidelity – for Aphrodite's tears could easily be taken to represent something easily coming, easily going –, then the 'word-anemones' stand for those precious attic words to be found distributed among the corn, that is: the well balanced whole food, but which are not properly cultivated and whose value is transitory and inconstant. And this, finally, fits well into another connotation of the anemone, the wind (ἄνεμος), which in Lucian's œuvre is principally connected with transitoriness and exaggeration.

In this paper, I have delineated – in an admittedly tag-like manner – some modes of imperial canonizations as well as the reasons advanced by theoreticians on how canonical authority is to be gained, by whom, and why.

37 See J. Murr, *Die Pflanzenwelt in der griechischen Mythologie*, Groningen 1969, 265f.

A second part of my argument was devoted to the ethical implications of canonization, reading and mimetically approaching canonical authors playing an important role in the formation of sophistic παιδεία. At last I have tried to show how correctly or falsely dealing with a classical canon is even to be paralleled with good or bad nutrition. The imperial education, prolongating the old aristocratic ideal of being good and beautiful, καλὸς κἀγαθός, tends to merge inward and outward qualities in order to mould the paradigmatic or, to push the semantics of the term, the canonical man – as he was described and sculpted by the classical 'inventor of Κανών': Polycletus.