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Jumping through *Hypsos*: Assessing Hypereides in Longinus' *On the Sublime*

This paper focuses on the reception of the orator Hypereides in Longinus' essay *On the Sublime*. In the digression on the merits of flawless mediocrity and flawed genius (ββ33-36), Longinus pairs representatives of mediocrity and genius, according to genre; as oratory's representatives he analyzes the style of Hypereides and Demosthenes. Taking this extended passage as a starting point, I examine two questions concerning Longinus' assessment of Hypereides. First, to what extent is Hypereides' oratory considered an example of sublimity, or *hypsos*? Second, how does Longinus' assessment compare with that of other ancient critics? The results of this investigation show that Longinus is largely in step with other Greek – though not Roman – critics of the imperial period. Moreover, a close reading of *On the Sublime* reveals that its author is just as interested in flaunting his own *hypsos* as in analyzing that of others.

Critics other than Longinus are divided concerning the sublimity of Hypereides' style. Among the Roman critics his style wins praise, as is illustrated by statements in Cicero (e.g. *de orat.* 1.58; *Brut.* 36, 67-8, 138), Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.77) and Tacitus (*Dial.* 16, 25). The Greek critics, with the exception of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, show less approbation. Whereas Dionysius admires Hypereides' elegance and organizational skills, later Greeks are highly disapproving. In fact, the Greek assessment, on the whole, claims that Hypereides was bombastic, extravagant and replete with idiosyncratic language, all qualities not conducive to *hypsos*.

Turning once more to the synkrisis (comparison) in Longinus, one would have expected Hypereides, because he is paired with the universally admired Demosthenes, to fall firmly into the category of mediocrity. The detailed treatment of these two orators, however, suggests something more complex. For example, Hypereides is described as clever, witty, and with a good sense of character; Demosthenes is said to be 'wholly apart' from these characteristics (β34.3). Such an assessment seems to favor Hypereides, and scholars have often taken Longinus at his word. I would argue, however, that if one takes into account statements made elsewhere in *On the Sublime* (e.g. β14.1), Demosthenes is clearly meant to emerge as the superior representative of *hypsos*.

While Hypereides' extant speeches do not seem to reveal egregious cases of bombast, they do offer many examples of unusual diction and metaphorical language. In the case of Hypereides, I suggest, Longinus constructs a description of the orator's style that is *prima facie* laudatory, but on deeper analysis, subtly critical. At the synkrisis of β33-4, the two great orators are juxtaposed not to emphasize the merits of each, but to highlight how much more worthy Longinus considers Demosthenes. In this way Longinus takes a stand out of step with the majority of Roman critics but not so distant from the general Greek consensus.