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Omnis est: Middles of Sentences in Cicero

Ita, si numerus orationis quaeritur qui sit, omnis est, sed alius alio melior atque aptior; si locus, in omni parte verborum; si unde ortus sit, ex aurium voluptate; si componendorum ratio, dicetur alio loco, quia pertinet ad usum...; si ad quam rem adhibeatur, ad delectationem; si quando, semper; si quo loco, in tota continuatione verborum; si quae res efficiat voluptatem, eadem quae in versibus, quorum modum notat ars, sed aures ipsae tacito cum sensu[m] sine arte definiunt. (*Or.* 203)

This paper will focus attention on one important part of Cicero's theory of rhythm in oratorical sentences: how their middles sound. My contribution is to bring out the structural importance of some elements often treated as ancillary or trivial, by placing them in their context as builders of the soundscape of the middle of the Ciceronian sentence. I argue that relative weight or lightness of words and clauses, assonance, alliteration, end-rhyme, euphonic consonants and vowels (esp. with reference to *De Oratore* 3.171-2), and consciously applied elision are more essential components of rhythmic prose than the flashier but easier to achieve metrical sentence endings (*clausulae*) upon which so much scholarly attention has focused. I demonstrate the importance of internal soundscape elements for defining genre and emotional content by analyzing, then interpreting orally, passages from Cicero's speeches against Verres and for P. Sulla. I end by applying these ideas to the problem of relative linguistic aesthetic systems.

Periods (defined in *Or.* 204), as has often been pointed out, are not natural rhythmic phenomena (Cicero says this in essence as well: *Orator* 216, *Part. Or.* 21, *De Oratore* 3.191). Cicero found them rousing and very important for gaining crowd reactions (*Or.* 210-213): and yet they are a dead-end when one wants to hear the sound patterns within a Ciceronian sentence, because they are the culmination of that rhythm, not its source. The irhythmî of a sentence, Cicero's *numerus orationis*, lies in the orator's artful arrangement of *membra (cola)* and the sounds and colors within them. That Cicero's practice confirms this principle has been established by many scholars (e.g. Laurand 1907; De Groot 1926). *Cola* as constructive elements of Latin prosody have long been understood (progressively better, e.g. Zielinski 1904; Fraenkel 1921, 1932 etc.; Habinek 1985 [reviewing previous literature]), but not often applied on a practical plane: where did an orator pause in mid-sentence, and for how long? if consonant-clusters for instance were thought to slow down, and vowels to speed up, delivery, what speed patterns are displayed in Ciceronian sentences? did one attempt to vary the speed of similar-weight clauses within a sentence, or was it more effective to emphasize their similarities by performing them at the same speed? how did elision or hiatus affect speed patterns? how frequent are short *cola* with end-rhyme, and in what meaning contexts? what emotional overtones did speed, slowness, assonance, pitch, rhyme have?

I conclude by pointing out that *cola*-aesthetics as well as *clausulae* rely, for Cicero and consequently for his readers, on training the ear to hear the inaturalî rhythms of a language (*Or.* 203; *De Oratore* 3.191; Quintilian 9.4.33-36). This means the building up

of a store of unnatural sounds within one's ear while learning Latin or Greek: these sounds will not be the same across languages. To illustrate, I end by examining one significant aesthetic difference between Greek and Latin sentence middles: their treatment of elision and hiatus (*Or.* 77; 150-152; *De Or.* 3.190).