

ENTRETIENS  
SUR L'ANTIQUITÉ  
CLASSIQUE  
LXVII



# ÉCRIRE L'HISTOIRE DE SON TEMPS, DE THUCYDIDE À AMMIEN MARCELLIN

Neuf exposés suivis de discussions

*Entretiens préparés par Valérie Fromentin  
et présidés par Pierre Ducrey*

*Volume édité par Valérie Fromentin  
en collaboration avec Pascale Derron*

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POUR L'ÉTUDE DE L'ANTIQUITÉ CLASSIQUE

ENTRETIENS

TOME LXVII

ÉCRIRE L'HISTOIRE DE  
SON TEMPS, DE THUCYDIDE  
À AMMIEN MARCELLIN

ENTRETIENS SUR L'ANTIQUITÉ CLASSIQUE

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TOME LXVII

WRITING CONTEMPORARY  
HISTORY, FROM THUCYDIDES  
TO AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

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NINE PAPERS FOLLOWED BY A DISCUSSION  
by

G. Schepens, R. Nicolai, J. Marincola,  
V. Fromentin, N. Luraghi, E.-M. Becker,  
A.M. Kemezis, B. Bleckmann, H. Inglebert

Entretiens prepared by Valérie Fromentin  
and presided over by Pierre Ducrey  
23-27 August 2021

Volume edited by Valérie Fromentin  
with the collaboration of Pascale Derron

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FONDATION HARDT  
POUR L'ÉTUDE DE L'ANTIQUITÉ CLASSIQUE  
VANDŒUVRES  
2022

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VANDŒUVRES

2022

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## PRÉFACE

Depuis 1952, la Fondation Hardt organise des *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique*. La série a été créée par le baron Kurd von Hardt lui-même, qui souhaitait que les meilleurs connaisseurs d'une discipline se réunissent chaque année pour étudier ensemble une problématique définie. Le terme *Entretiens* exprime le souhait du baron qu'après une conférence d'une heure, une seconde période soit consacrée à des discussions informelles. Celles-ci ont pu être fort longues, avant d'être formalisées. Une anecdote célèbre rapporte que la discussion se poursuivant, le baron avertit les participants : "Ne parlez pas trop longtemps, car nous avons à déjeuner un soufflé au fromage. Et le soufflé n'attend pas !" Sans se troubler, les savants poursuivent leurs échanges. Le baron, très agité, part en cuisine. Au bout d'une minute, il revient : "Messieurs (il n'y avait à l'époque que des messieurs), vous pouvez continuer, il n'y a plus de soufflé."

Au début, les discussions qui suivaient les *Entretiens* étaient enregistrées. Par la suite, ce procédé lourd a été abandonné. Depuis plusieurs années, les intervenants sont invités à rédiger leurs remarques et commentaires. On trouvera donc à la suite des communications le texte des "discussions", qui résument ce que les participants ont dit, ou plus exactement ce qu'ils auraient souhaité dire. En effet, les interventions sont le fruit d'une mise au point rédactionnelle, réalisée par les intervenants eux-mêmes en collaboration avec les auteurs des communications.

La publication du volume au plus tard moins d'un an après la fin des *Entretiens* répond à une règle que s'est fixée la Fondation depuis quelques décennies. La mise au point des textes dans ce délai requiert de la part des auteurs une certaine discipline. La remise des communications et des discussions est suivie d'un double travail de mise aux normes et d'édition, qui est assuré

depuis 2010 par Pascale Derron. Cette dernière se charge aussi de l'élaboration des index et de la bibliographie. La qualité de l'impression et de la reliure correspond aux ambitions du baron dès l'origine. Le seul changement important est l'apparition d'une jaquette illustrée et le plus souvent d'un cahier d'illustrations, réalisés depuis 2014 par Alexandre Pointet, Shaolin-Design à Lausanne. Rappelons que les volumes des *Entretiens* peuvent tous être consultés en ligne, avec une échelle mobile de trois ans.

Les 67<sup>e</sup> *Entretiens* auraient dû avoir lieu en 2020. Pour la première fois en quelque 70 années, la Fondation a dû reporter cette série d'une année, en raison de la pandémie de Covid-19, qui sévissait particulièrement depuis le début de 2020. Les 67<sup>e</sup> *Entretiens* ont donc eu lieu comme de coutume durant la dernière semaine complète du mois d'août, du 23 au 27 août, mais en 2021 seulement. La situation sanitaire s'était détendue et un seul participant a dû renoncer à être présent, John Marincola. Ce dernier a accepté une solution courageuse, suivre les *Entretiens* en visioconférence, un acte presque héroïque, eu égard au décalage horaire de six heures entre son lieu de résidence, la Floride, et Vandœuvre. En dépit de cette contrainte, John Marincola s'est montré d'une assiduité, d'une constance et d'une précision remarquables. Depuis 2009, les conférences sont données dans l'orangerie de la Fondation et les repas ont lieu sur la terrasse du bâtiment principal, les conditions météorologiques ayant toujours été favorables à la fin du mois d'août au cours des dernières années.

Les 67<sup>e</sup> *Entretiens* ont été "préparés", pour reprendre la terminologie propre à la Fondation depuis l'origine, par Valérie Fromentin, professeure à l'Université de Bordeaux. C'est cette dernière qui est à l'origine de la thématique choisie et qui a assumé la direction et la responsabilité scientifique de cette série d'*Entretiens*. La mise au point du thème et des sujets abordés a fait l'objet de nombreux échanges entre Valérie Fromentin et la Commission scientifique, présidée par feu Jean-Louis Ferrary, disparu des suites d'une longue maladie en août 2020. Le choix

des participants propose toujours un défi aux responsables d'une série d'*Entretiens* : l'ambition est de réunir les meilleurs connaisseurs d'un thème donné, en assurant une bonne répartition entre âges, langues et pays d'origine, sans oublier la parité des genres. Le financement des *Entretiens* a bénéficié d'un soutien du Fonds national suisse de la recherche scientifique, sur une requête présentée par Paolo Crivelli, professeur à l'Université de Genève.

Depuis une quinzaine d'années, les *Entretiens* se sont orientés vers des thèmes et des problématiques renouvelés, dérogeant à l'approche largement philologique des premières décennies. Avec des sujets comme *Le jardin dans l'Antiquité* (2013, parution 2014), *Cosmologies et cosmogonies dans la littérature antique* (2014, parution 2015), ou encore *La nuit : imaginaire et réalités nocturnes dans le monde gréco-romain* (2017, parution 2018), la Fondation avait innové en sortant de la voie "classique" adoptée par le passé. Le thème retenu pour les 67<sup>e</sup> *Entretiens* revient à une forme plus traditionnelle, tout en comblant un manque. En effet, l'historiographie antique a été peu représentée jusqu'ici. La première série à s'être penchée sur ce thème remonte à 1956 (*Histoire et historiens dans l'Antiquité* (1956, parution 1958)). La proposition de Valérie Fromentin a donc reçu un accueil très favorable au sein de la Commission scientifique.

Le sujet proprement dit, *Écrire l'histoire de son temps, de Thucydide à Ammien Marcellin*, est de nature à susciter les curiosités. Valérie Fromentin résume ainsi les questions abordées : "Comment l'historien ancien regarde-t-il l'histoire de son temps ? Quelle différence y a-t-il entre écrire l'histoire de son temps et écrire l'histoire du passé ?" À ces questions, les participants ont répondu de manières diverses, en recourant à autant de sources que possible : les textes des historiens antiques, naturellement, mais aussi ceux des poètes, y compris Homère ("l'*Iliade* vue comme l'archétype de la monographie de guerre"), les Évangiles, les textes épigraphiques, dont des décrets, qui contiennent parfois, dans leurs attendus, des développements historiques. Sont posées aussi des questions relevant de la méthode de l'historien,

notamment celles des conventions propres à l'écriture de l'histoire contemporaine, mais aussi de la politique : quelles sont les vraies raisons, au-delà des principes affichés, qui incitent les historiens d'époque impériale à écrire sur leur propre temps, ou les en dissuadent, les risques étant jugés trop élevés ?

Durant la semaine des *Entretiens*, les participants ont pu visiter la Fondation Bodmer avec pour guide son directeur, le professeur Jacques Berchtold. D'autre part, ils ont découvert le Musée Patek Philippe, ouvert en 2001 à Genève. Les organisateurs ont pensé en effet que, comme la matière première des 67<sup>e</sup> *Entretiens* était l'histoire, donc le temps, une réflexion sur les montres, ces "garde-temps", paraissait appropriée.

Les *Entretiens* ont été suivis par un certain nombre d'auditeurs, notamment Alexander Meeus (Université de Mannheim), Damien Nelis et Jocelyne Nelis-Clément (Université de Genève et CNRS), Thomas Kerboul (Université de Genève), Simon Mimouni (École pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), Stéphanie Pierron (Université d'Aix-Marseille), Elvira Ramini et Elisabeth Renaud.

L'organisation proprement dite doit beaucoup à Sabrina Ciardo, administratrice et bibliothécaire de la Fondation, à Patricia Burdet, secrétaire administrative, à Heidi dal Lago, gouvernante et cuisinière, assistée de Amadou Lamine Diene et de Bruno Savoy, enfin à Fernando Manuel Mendes, jardinier-concierge.

À toutes et à tous, la Fondation exprime sa vive gratitude.

Pierre DUCREY,  
directeur de la Fondation Hardt

## INTRODUCTION

Ces *Entretiens* consacrés à l'historiographie antique, et en particulier aux auteurs qui ont fait le choix d'écrire "l'histoire de leur temps", visent à combler un manque dans la série des volumes publiés par la Fondation Hardt. Depuis 1952, en effet, trois *Entretiens* ont eu pour objet l'histoire et les historiens, dont deux portaient sur un auteur uniquement (*Hérodote et les peuples non grecs*, 1988 ; *Pausanias historien*, 1994), et un seul s'inscrivait dans une perspective diachronique et synthétique (*Histoire et historiens dans l'Antiquité*, 1956). Cette absence est d'autant plus étonnante que les recherches sur l'historiographie grecque et romaine représentent un courant de nos études particulièrement dynamique, comme l'attestent le grand nombre et la qualité des publications, individuelles ou collectives, parues depuis une trentaine d'années (éditions critiques et commentées, *corpora* publiés en ligne, monographies, *Companions*).

Cet essor est très largement tributaire des travaux de Felix Jacoby, dont la magistrale édition des *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* a non seulement ouvert un champ d'investigation immense, jusqu'alors à peine défriché, mais aussi, par ricochet, durablement influencé les études sur les historiens non-fragmentaires, de langue grecque d'abord mais aussi latine. Aujourd'hui, cependant, les spécialistes de l'historiographie, tout en reconnaissant leur dette envers le grand savant allemand, sont de plus en plus nombreux à remettre en question non pas son travail éditorial proprement dit mais sa conception du développement du "genre historique" et la définition des différents "sous-genres". Cette position critique, adoptée déjà par certains contemporains ou continuateurs de Jacoby, comme Guido Schepens, aboutit à déconstruire, au moins partiellement, un système de classement, et donc de pensée, dont on peut raisonnablement

se demander s'il facilite notre compréhension des anciens historiens ou au contraire y fait obstacle. Ces *Entretiens* s'inscrivent dans ce mouvement, puisque la *Zeitgeschichte* ("l'histoire du temps présent") fait justement partie des concepts et de la taxinomie utilisés par F. Jacoby dont plusieurs travaux récents, et en particulier ceux de John Marincola, invitent à interroger la pertinence.

La thèse de F. Jacoby sur l'écriture de l'histoire contemporaine (qui doit beaucoup, en fait, à E. Schwartz et à U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, comme le souligne Guido Schepens dans la communication inaugurale de ce volume) présente en effet deux faiblesses.

La première réside dans la plasticité et l'ambiguïté sémantiques du terme de *Zeitgeschichte* qui, initialement appliqué à l'œuvre de Thucydide, a été ensuite étendu à des productions historiographiques très différentes (histoires universelles, historiographie d'Alexandre et des souverains hellénistiques, historiographie romano-centrée, littérature autobiographique et hypomnématique, chroniques byzantines, etc.), mais dont les auteurs avaient en commun, selon F. Jacoby, "d'avoir raconté l'histoire générale [de la Grèce ou de l'*oikoumenê*] de leur époque, ou jusqu'à leur époque". Il paraît donc artificiel de voir dans ce conglomérat d'œuvres hétérogènes un authentique sous-genre historiographique.

Deuxième faiblesse : la supériorité supposée de l'option "thucydidéenne" de l'écriture de l'histoire, perçue comme "la véritable histoire", "pragmatique" et rationaliste, et sa non moins supposée centralité au sein de l'historiographie d'époque hellénistique et romaine. L'idée – défendue notamment par Arnaldo Momigliano – selon laquelle le modèle thucydidéen se serait majoritairement imposé aux auteurs postérieurs, grecs mais aussi latins, n'a plus cours aujourd'hui : la *Zeitgeschichte* thucydidéenne n'est pas le genre dominant à l'époque hellénistique, et il faut attendre Cicéron et Denys d'Halicarnasse pour voir Thucydide établi comme le "second père de l'histoire".

Qui plus est, à ce moment-là, l'historien a déjà été annexé par la rhétorique d'école et passé au crible de la critique grammaticale et littéraire : ce qu'on admire et imite désormais chez lui, à la fin de la République et sous l'Empire, ce sont surtout ses discours, son style et son "anthropologie", et si l'on continue de louer sa méthode (autopsie, recherche et critique des sources, exigence de vérité et d'impartialité), on ne la considère pas, ou plus, comme spécifique de l'histoire contemporaine. Aussi est-il possible, à l'époque de la Seconde sophistique, d'imiter Thucydide sans écrire l'histoire de son temps (Cassius Dion dans soixante-dix premiers livres de son *Histoire romaine*) et d'écrire l'histoire de son temps sans imiter Thucydide (Cassius Dion dans les dix derniers livres).

Cependant, si le concept de *Zeitgeschichte* doit être sinon évacué, au moins redéfini, l'écriture de l'histoire contemporaine, quant à elle, constitue bel et bien une réalité, attestée durant toute l'Antiquité par un nombre important d'œuvres grecques et latines, dont la plupart, malheureusement, sont entièrement perdues ou réduites à l'état de fragments. On peut déplorer cette disparition, ou bien se réjouir à l'inverse du fait que les rares historiens grecs profanes aujourd'hui conservés de façon complète ou semi-complète dans la tradition manuscrite directe (Hérodote, Thucydide, Xénophon, Polybe, Diodore de Sicile, Flavius Josèphe, Appien, Cassius Dion, Hérodien) relèvent tous de cette catégorie : ils ont tous écrit l'histoire de leur temps, soit sous la forme d'une "monographie" soit en l'intégrant à une "histoire globale". On n'en déduira pas que les Byzantins du IX<sup>e</sup> et du X<sup>e</sup> siècle qui ont constitué ces éditions manuscrites ont sélectionné les auteurs en fonction de ce critère – d'autres considérations ont présidé à ce "choix byzantin" –, mais il est évident que la survie de ces œuvres a paradoxalement amené à la surestimation de leur témoignage et induit des biais interprétatifs dont la théorie de la *Zeitgeschichte* n'est qu'un exemple.

Ces *Entretiens*, on l'aura compris, ont cherché à s'affranchir, autant que possible, de la perspective positiviste, évolutionniste

et systématique qui influence depuis plus d'un siècle les études sur l'historiographie antique. C'est pourquoi les exposés qui forment ce volume se déploient dans quatre directions.

La première, prise par Roberto Nicolai, consiste à renverser la perspective, en montrant sur la base de toute une série de travaux récents mais déjà devenus classiques, que "l'histoire du temps présent" n'est pas sortie tout armée de la tête de Thucydide ni même de celle d'Hérodote, mais qu'elle plonge ses racines, entre autres, dans l'épopée homérique, l'*Iliade* pouvant être vue comme l'archétype et l'hypotexte de la "monographie de guerre". Cette approche a l'avantage de remettre au centre du débat un fait essentiel, trop souvent perdu de vue, à savoir que Thucydide a écrit l'histoire de la Guerre du Péloponnèse, non pas parce qu'il en était le contemporain, mais parce qu'elle était à ses yeux la plus importante de toutes celles ayant jamais existé dans le monde grec.

La deuxième direction consiste à envisager l'historiographie du passé récent ou du temps présent comme une *pratique*, diversifiée et multiforme, et donc d'envisager dans son extension maximale le corpus des auteurs de langue grecque ou latine qui l'attestent et qui l'illustrent. C'est pourquoi, à côté des historiens grecs cités plus haut, une égale attention est portée aux plus illustres représentants latins de la *Zeitgeschichte* : Tacite et Velleius Paterculus, comparés avec Cassius Dion par Adam Kemezis ; Ammien Marcellin, chez qui Bruno Bleckmann met en évidence l'effacement de la frontière (chronologique, méthodologique, narrative) entre "l'histoire ancienne" et "l'histoire contemporaine". Mais l'enquête n'est pas non plus limitée à l'historiographie littéraire : elle fait également une place, avec la communication de Nino Luraghi, à l'historiographie épigraphique, c'est-à-dire, par exemple, aux décrets athéniens des V<sup>e</sup> et IV<sup>e</sup> siècles qui comportent, outre le texte de la décision, des éléments de récit historique qui la contextualisent, généralement sous la forme d'une clause de motivation, les décrets honorifiques étant les meilleurs candidats pour abriter ce type d'informations narrativisées. De la même façon,



la communication d'Eve-Marie Becker, consacrée aux *Évangiles* de Matthieu, Marc, Luc et Jean et aux *Actes des Apôtres*, ouvre le corpus à des textes dont la valeur documentaire est incontestable, l'intention mémorielle explicite mais dont le statut historiographique fait débat.

Troisièmement, cet élargissement du corpus a permis, nous semble-t-il, de renouveler et d'enrichir les problématiques relatives à l'écriture de l'histoire contemporaine. Ces dernières ont été jusqu'à présent très largement centrées sur le "discours de la méthode" initié par Hérodote et Thucydide puis enrichi et reformulé par leurs successeurs, de manière topique ou originale, en particulier par Polybe. Il est vrai que ce "genre" historiographique s'est lui-même défini essentiellement, quels que fussent les auteurs et les époques, par le recours à l'autopsie directe des faits, certes complétée par d'autres moyens d'information et de validation. On pourrait donc considérer, au vu de la bibliographie, que cette question a été suffisamment traitée, sous un angle théorique du moins, car sur le plan pratique nous en sommes réduits aux hypothèses : la manière dont un historien a mis concrètement en oeuvre ses principes méthodologiques reste généralement invisible pour nous qui n'avons pas accès aux sources qu'il a utilisées ni connaissance du processus intellectuel et créatif dont son récit est l'aboutissement. Cependant, la communication de John Marincola parvient à renouveler le sujet, en traquant et en révélant, derrière les déclarations souvent pleines d'assurance et de superbe de l'historien contemporain, les indices de ce qu'on pourrait appeler les "angoisses" spécifiquement liées à son activité, et en particulier à l'utilisation des témoignages visuels (fiabilité, discontinuité, partialité). Adam Kemezis, dans la même veine, s'intéresse tout particulièrement aux affres où sont plongés ceux qui écrivent l'histoire de leur temps sous un autocrate : il s'agit pour lui de mettre au jour – au-delà du *metus* ou du refus de l'*adulatio* invoqués par Tacite – les véritables motivations des historiens romains qui s'interdisent d'écrire sur l'empereur régnant. Bruno Bleckmann révèle également la stratégie narrative d'Ammien : parce qu'il

veut paraître le mieux informé – et non parce qu’il est le mieux informé –, l’historien multiplie les petits détails autoptiques afin de produire un “effet de réel”, alors que l’essentiel de son information est de seconde main, puisé à des sources écrites. Valérie Fromentin, quant à elle, s’est intéressée à un sous-corpus, les histoires au long cours, soit “universelles”, soit *ab Urbe condita*, qui s’étendent jusqu’à l’époque contemporaine de leur auteur (Diodore de Sicile, Appien, Cassius Dion), et dans lesquelles deux types d’histoire (“ancienne” et “moderne”) se succèdent : quelle conscience de cette différence les auteurs expriment-ils ? L’entrée dans la section contemporaine de l’œuvre est-elle marquée par l’adoption de nouvelles modalités narratives ? Ces sections finales sont-elles des objectifs ou simplement des points d’arrêt ?

Enfin, les textes historiographiques constituent un observatoire privilégié pour qui veut comprendre comment les Anciens se représentaient le temps, en particulier le temps long, et pensaient l’Histoire. Il nous a semblé qu’un tel questionnement – qui concerne principalement l’articulation entre la description du passé et celle du présent –, nécessitait une approche comparative et diachronique, qu’Hervé Inglebert a prise en charge en retraçant l’histoire, ou plutôt l’historiographie de “l’histoire universelle” dans la pensée occidentale.

Les spécialistes de l’historiographie antique réunis pour ces *Entretiens* ont ainsi tenté d’inventorier et de décrire sur près de dix siècles (de Thucydide à Ammien Marcellin) la variété des expériences vécues et des modes d’écriture couverte par le terme d’“histoire contemporaine”, en posant à chaque fois les mêmes questions. Comment l’historien regarde-t-il l’histoire de son temps ? Quelle différence y a-t-il entre écrire l’histoire de son temps et écrire l’histoire du passé ancien ? Dans cette enquête, la prise en compte d’autres genres narratifs (poésie épique, inscriptions, biographies impériales, évangiles chrétiens) qui peuvent être également regroupés sous l’égide de l’histoire contemporaine a permis de mieux comprendre les spécificités de l’historiographie

littéraire, mais a mis aussi en évidence un jeu complexe d'influences réciproques et de fertilisations croisées. D'autre part, l'historien contemporain, en tant que *persona* construite, prisonnière d'un jeu de rôles très codifié, a été au cœur des débats : plusieurs communications se sont employées à visiter les coulisses, c'est-à-dire à mettre au jour la réalité de la pratique derrière le discours de la méthode, les intentions réelles dissimulées sous les postures, les soubassements parfois fragiles d'un récit sans aspérités, les silences explicites. La fabrique de l'histoire contemporaine a donc révélé quelques-uns de ses secrets, mais l'enquête ne fait que commencer puisque plusieurs participants envisagent de poursuivre leur collaboration.

Tous tiennent à remercier chaleureusement Pierre Ducrey et les membres de la Commission scientifique de la Fondation Hardt d'avoir accepté le principe de ces *Entretiens*. Ils expriment également leur vive reconnaissance à l'équipe de la Fondation qui, aux côtés de Pierre Ducrey, hôte attentionné et infatigable, a contribué à rendre cette semaine inoubliable.

Valérie FROMENTIN



# I

GUIDO SCHEPENS

## THE SO-CALLED *ZEITGESCHICHTE*: A REASSESSMENT

### ABSTRACT

When, in 1909, Jacoby described his plan for a new edition of the fragments of the Greek historians, he put (*griechische*) *Zeitgeschichte* at the centre stage as overarching notion for “the most important volume of the collection”. The works presented under this label focus on contemporary events but often include vast swathes of history of the past, going back even to primeval times. Jacoby’s concept of *Zeitgeschichte* presents a double problem: the modern German term fails to map onto ancient terminology and it is also used with an unstandardized large meaning that is different from the now agreed upon understanding of this notion as history or history writing of one’s own time. In order to understand the specious meaning of *Zeitgeschichte* in its application to ancient history writing, I argue (1) that it was introduced in the realm of Classical Studies at a unique juncture in the history of historiography when, after the *Sattelzeit*, the actual writing of *Zeitgeschichte* was out of order; (2) that E. Schwartz and U. von Wilamowitz inspired Jacoby to choose the term, which (3) at his hands, as a principle for ordering his collection, acquired the meaning of ‘history in time’. The conspicuously unclear generic status of the works brought together under this construct was sharply criticized by Fornara: he rejected Jacobian *Zeitgeschichte* as “inapplicable to the greater number of Greco-Roman historians”. It is my view that the notion, if understood as ‘history in time’, may continue to make sense within Jacoby’s taxonomy for designating a whole *class* of works in contradistinction to locally focused history writing, but hardly as a self-contained *genos*; and, as far as the narrower sense of contemporary history (“*Zeitgeschichte* im engeren Sinne”) is concerned, it will benefit historiographical analysis if we approach it as a practice cutting across various genres. Jacoby has bequeathed us an

unfortunately duplicitous concept but, with his fragment collection, also an indispensable resource for looking at the larger picture of Greek historiography. In it the recording of the history of one's own time, far from being solely dignified as proper history, should be valued as a significant option among many others that were valid.

On the occasion of the *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique*, held in August 1979, dedicated to *Les études classiques aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles : leur place dans l'histoire des idées*, Arnaldo Momigliano read a paper entitled "The Place of Ancient Historiography in Modern Historiography". He raised the double question as to why the ancient historians had lost their former relevance, first, in inspiring themes and approaches in the modern study of the ancient world and, second, as writers themselves of works that may have contributed to shaping the Western historiographical tradition.<sup>1</sup> As these questions have not lost their relevance today, I thought it worthwhile to briefly recall Momigliano's answers by way of introduction to the present *Entretiens* on the significance of contemporary history writing within ancient historiography. His first question received a relatively straightforward answer: if the ancient historians are no longer our recognized guides in the exploration of the historical world they lived in, it is because they did not ask the many questions that prompt historical study today. "If Thucydides was not aware of a crisis of parental authority in Athens, perhaps Aristophanes was": a witty phrase to strikingly bear out the narrow political and military focus of the 'writer' of the Peloponnesian War. While stating that this would not be a good reason for throwing the classical historians out of the window, Momigliano admits that the answer to give to his second question is more delicate. A problem, new in our time, he observes, is the existence of important currents of thought which relativize all historians – not just those belonging to the classical world – and tend to

<sup>1</sup> MOMIGLIANO (1980) 147-150.

deprive them “of any value in the search for truth”.<sup>2</sup> Opposing such a trend, he insists on an idea that is dear to him: the role that historians play as transmitters or discoverers of truth depends on the value of the critical methods they use in getting to know the facts and on the principles of organization they choose for representing them.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, Momigliano concludes, Thucydides was better than Herodotus and Livy, who also ventured to write about times in which they were not yet born.

Thucydides’ decision to write about events he lived through can, indeed, in the still predominantly oral culture at the time, be seen as the safest possible historiographical choice. And according to a view which still largely prevails, his choice may also have oriented history writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity, and beyond, towards the recording of political and military events that either fall within or are, at least, near to the historian’s own lifetime. In the second half of the previous century, not least also through the posthumous publication of his *Sather Classical Lectures*, Momigliano has been the authoritative advocate of the view just outlined. In his characteristically binary approach to the study of ancient historiography he stressed the importance of making a distinction between the ‘Thucydidean’ option for writing history, perceived as ‘proper history’, and a whole bunch of historiographical works, which, allegedly, could never aspire to the full dignity of history.<sup>4</sup> This, quite obviously, is a view which tends to confine the writing of history in Antiquity, both thematically and methodologically, within narrow confines. I will return, by way of conclusion to the present paper, to this peculiar vision; for now, though, the need to review it critically should not prevent us from acknowledging that the argument of the pre-eminence of contemporary history

<sup>2</sup> The challenge of history writing in “an age of ideologies” is also addressed in MOMIGLIANO (1984).

<sup>3</sup> To develop methods for separating truth from falsehood is also key to the difference between rhetoricians and historians; see MOMIGLIANO (1985).

<sup>4</sup> MOMIGLIANO (1990) 29-53, 54-79; also (1966), (1972), (1978).

writing in the Greco-Roman world has a respectable scholarly pedigree, one that can be traced back to the works of Eduard Schwartz, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, and Felix Jacoby.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the previous century these renowned scholars grounded the scientific study of ancient history writing. They introduced notions and interpretative frameworks that for the greater part still orient investigations into the nature, function, and history of ancient historiography. We owe them notably also the concept of *Zeitgeschichte*. When, in 1908, Jacoby announced and described his plan for a new edition of the fragments of the Greek historians, he put (*griechische*) *Zeitgeschichte* at the centre stage as the overarching notion for what he saw as “the most important volume of the collection”.<sup>5</sup> In the definitive layout of *FGrHist* it retained this prestigious place as heading of part II. In it one finds the fragments of the following types of historical works: “Universalgeschichte und *Hellenika*” (IIA: 64-105); “Spezialgeschichten, Autobiographien, Zeittafeln” (IIB: 106-261).

## 1. Historical context

The seminal lectures and publications of Schwartz, Wilamowitz, and Jacoby can virtually all be dated to the first decennium of the previous century. By then, the time-honoured tradition of contemporary history writing had become an apparently extinct species of historical reporting.<sup>6</sup> With the rise of historicism, a radical paradigm shift had taken place. The contemporary historian, it was argued, lacked reliable evidence as well as historical distance. Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884), in

<sup>5</sup> In a paper delivered at the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Berlin; published as JACOBY (1909) and now also available in English translation by CHAMBERS / SCHORN (2015).

<sup>6</sup> ERNST (1957) succinctly surveys the long history of *Zeitgeschichte*.



particular, exploded the authority of the *autoptês*-historian.<sup>7</sup> To experience the events yourself and cross-question eyewitnesses no longer counted as trustworthy and had to make room for the written records, preferably to those stored in the archives. Proximity to the event, which had always been considered an advantage, was now a drawback.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the so-called *Sattelzeit*, around 1870, the new institutionalised and academized historical science had discarded both the idea and the practice of *Zeitgeschichte* as a serious scientific endeavour. It remained during roughly the following eighty years out of order. Around the middle of the previous century H.C. Hockett still rehearsed what Bernheim and Feder, or Seignobos, had codified in their textbooks: “History is not a science of *direct* observation ... Historical method is, strictly speaking, a process *supplementary* to observations, a process by which the historian attempts to test the truthfulness of the reports of observations made by others.”<sup>9</sup>

The writing of contemporary history was to be resumed only, and somewhat reluctantly at first,<sup>10</sup> in the aftermath of the Second World War. In 1953, Hans Rothfels, in an epoch-making paper entitled “*Zeitgeschichte als Aufgabe*”, called upon his colleagues in the historical profession to take up what he saw as their moral and political duty, urging them to deal in a historically responsible way with the events of their own time, termed *Epoche der Mitlebenden*.<sup>11</sup> In Germany and all over the

<sup>7</sup> DROYSEN (1792) 70, 134, 137. As “a penetrating methodologist” (GADAMER [1990] 213, 216) Droysen played a crucial role in the emergence of the modern *science* of history. For a general assessment, see ASSIS (2014). For the imputations to the eyewitness-historian, in particular, see LURAGHI (2014b).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. NÜTZENADEL / SCHIEDER (2004); DEN HOLLANDER (2011).

<sup>9</sup> HOCKETT (1958) 7-8. Cf. BERNHEIM (1908) 227-228 and FEDER (1924) 85. More ample discussion in SCHEPENS (1980) 1-14; SPOHR READMAN (2011). SCHEPENS (1975) explores the difference between ancient and modern ‘source theory’.

<sup>10</sup> In this connection, it may be recalled that, in 1957, one of our most outstanding students of ancient historiography, Hermann Strasburger, intervened as dean in Wiesbaden to reverse the refusal of the Ministry of Education to establish an extraordinary chair for contemporary history; see HAMMERSTEIN (2017) 38-39, and, more generally, BERNSTEIN / LEPPIN (2013).

<sup>11</sup> ROTHFELS (1953).

world ‘Institutes of Contemporary History’ are now common features of the huge and variegated historiographical landscape; they testify to the scientifically acknowledged status, need and enduring importance of the revived tradition of “writing the history of one’s own time”.

The foregoing also means that Schwartz, Jacoby and Wilamowitz shaped their ideas on history writing in the ancient world, and on the special attention given by the Greco-Roman historians to narrating the events of their own time, at a unique juncture in the history of historiography: in the midst of a historiographical vacuum as far as the actual writing of *Zeitgeschichte* is concerned.<sup>12</sup> If, in particular, Jacoby has used this notion with an import and an amplitude that scarcely relate to its agreed upon understanding in today’s reinstated practice of contemporary history, we are perhaps entitled to look at the issue through the historicising lens of the time in which this very type of history was out of order.<sup>13</sup>

When considering the subject of our study we will, first, turn to Schwartz, Jacoby and Wilamowitz in order to clarify their understanding of *Zeitgeschichte* in its application to ancient historiography. An attempt will be made at delineating its different layers of meaning. We will then ask what is distinctive about *griechische Zeitgeschichte* in relation to the other historiographical genres in Jacoby’s taxonomy. As various attempts to define it as a self-contained *genos* seem to fail, it is but a logical further step to raise the question whether it could not be more beneficial, for

<sup>12</sup> *Zeitgeschichte* was not fully (re)established until after 1945. This is not to say that the *idea* was absolutely silenced. In 1915 Justus Hashagen, in a short textbook *Das Studium der Zeitgeschichte* (Bonn 1915), problematised its terminology and methodological peculiarities but equally pointed out the many possibilities of exploring contemporary history as a kind of “prehistory that is near the present state of affairs”. At the end of World War I, he called on German historians to lift *Zeitgeschichte* out of its oppressed position and do their “duty arising from the war”<sup>5</sup>: a remarkable initiative that then still failed to meet with success: see GROSE KRACHT (2004).

<sup>13</sup> On the need to historicize the history of historiography, see PAUL (2011) and Hervé Inglebert’s contribution to the present *Entretiens*.

purposes of historiographical analysis, to look at the writing of contemporary history as a *practice* with a significant presence in various forms of history. By way of conclusion, we will try to assign to contemporary history writing its proper place within ancient historiography.

## 2. Origin of the Jacobian concept of (*griechische*) *Zeitgeschichte*

E. Schwartz was the first to introduce *Zeitgeschichte* as a pivotal notion in his analytical and interpretative work on Greco-Roman historiography. In a series of contributions to Pauly-Wissowa's *Real-Encyclopädie*, covering Greek historians beginning with the letters A to E, he repeatedly called attention to their privileged treatment of present-day events. Occurrences of their own lifetime were covered much more extensively than those of earlier times. In those works, Schwartz posited, the less detailed account of past events functioned as a kind of introduction to the story of the all-important present or nearly present time. In order to account for this disparity of the narrative he devised the normative concept *Gesetz der Zeitgeschichte*. This law, in his eyes, succinctly expressed and sealed the narrow bond between history writing and politics. Key to Schwartz' view of both the development and character of ancient historiography is the nexus between *Geschichte* and *Geschichtsschreibung*. Writers of history, he insisted, got their impetus from the actual political situation: in addition to explaining their privileged treatment of present times this provided them also with the perspective in which they recovered the past.<sup>14</sup> The following

<sup>14</sup> Appositely highlighted by BLECKMANN (2015) 79, 82-85 and *passim*. For SCHWARTZ (1928) the bond between *Geschichtsschreibung* and *Geschichte* is the hallmark of Greek historiography; cf. CANFORA (1999) 90. FORNARA (1983) 52-54 warns for overestimating the political role played by the Greek historians. In turn CHANIOTIS (1988) 124-125 calls attention to the politically active citizens who engaged in writing the history of their own cities. For the political relevance of local history writing see SCHEPENS (2000); CLARKE (2008); THOMAS (2014a), (2014b), (2019). The figure of the 'politician-historian' is dealt with in

statements make clear how adamant Schwartz was in upholding the validity of his law for the whole of ancient historiography.

“So unsicher manches bleibt, das für die gesamte griechische Historiographie gültige Gesetz, daß die Zeitgeschichte den breitesten Raum einnimmt, tritt auch bei Ephoros scharf und deutlich hervor.” (Schwartz [1907] 6). “Für sie (die Historiographie) vornehmlich gilt das Gesetz, daß der Stoff der Geschichtsschreibung die Zeitgeschichte ist, wobei [...] die Grenzen nicht allzu eng gezogen werden dürfen.” (Schwartz [1928] 15). “Unverbrüchlich gilt für die Historiographie des Altertums das Gesetz, dass sie in Zeitgeschichte ausläuft.” (Schwartz [1909] 490).<sup>15</sup>

What Schwartz means with the phrase *Gesetz der Zeitgeschichte* should primarily be understood as law of ‘contemporary history’ not as law of contemporary history *writing*.<sup>16</sup> While these two notions of history may in historiographical praxis somehow interrelate, it is important to note the distinction. In the present quotes the references to *Zeitgeschichte* all denote *res gestae*. It was left to Felix Jacoby to make, in the scholarly discourse on *Zeitgeschichte* in Greek historiography, the shift from *res gestae* to *historia rerum gestarum*. Whereas, of course, the term retained the twofold meaning it intrinsically shares with ‘history’ – referring to historical reality *or* its recording in works of history –, the latter gained prominence in the context of his life’s work on the monumental collection of the fragments of the Greek historians. For arranging the materials Jacoby had decided to adopt the principle of the different *types* of history writing in the chronological sequence in which they gradually came into existence.<sup>17</sup> In his well-known view of the development,

SCHEPENS (2010c). The specific historical temporality involved in ‘presentist’ history writing is broached in GABBA (1990) 46 and the central issue explored in the essays of HARTOG (2005).

<sup>15</sup> Quotes borrowed from BLECKMANN (2015) 63 n. 52.

<sup>16</sup> SCHWARTZ (1928) 15 explicates what the “law of contemporary history” prescribes, namely “daß *der Stoff der Geschichte* die Zeitgeschichte ist” (my italics).

<sup>17</sup> According to the plan set out in JACOBY (1909); on his struggle with this plan, see SCHEPENS (2010a).

Greek historiography, after have gone through the stages of *Genealogy* and *Ethnography*, revealed by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC its true nature in the appearance of “die Gattung ... die nun dauernd die vornehmste und wichtigste bleibt, ... die *Zeitgeschichte*.”<sup>18</sup>

We must now try to answer the question why Jacoby gave, or rather ended up with giving a German name to his main and most representative type of history writing in Antiquity. First of all, one is, of course, entitled to suppose that Schwartz’ *Gesetz der Zeitgeschichte* was not alien to this choice. At the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Eduard Schwartz was the towering figure in the field of study of ancient historiography; his views inform Jacoby’s foundational paper of 1908/09 throughout.<sup>19</sup> This can be endorsed with a later statement of Jacoby, in which he declares that both Wilamowitz and Schwartz had a strong influence on his drawing up “the intended arrangement of the new collection of the fragments of the historians”. Actually, what he states is that he was “then too much” under their spell.<sup>20</sup> I intend to return at the end of my talk to this remarkable introspective note. This being said, it would be a mistake to think that choosing the label *Zeitgeschichte* was a matter of course for Jacoby. The principle he upheld for establishing his taxonomy of Greek historical writing was to adopt, where possible, the *generic* terms used by the ancient writers themselves.<sup>21</sup> Yet, there was no such term available for “all authors who ... narrated general Greek history of their own time, or down to their own time, without limitation to any locality”. Jacoby discusses the problem in a lengthy footnote,<sup>22</sup> starting from the observation that many of the works destined for this category simply bear the title Ἱστορίαι, deemed “too imprecise, because

<sup>18</sup> JACOBY (1909) 98.

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, the explanation he gives, with reference to Schwartz, for Ephorus’ more detailed treatment of the history of his own time (p. 104 n. 1).

<sup>20</sup> JACOBY (1949) 382 n. 10.

<sup>21</sup> JACOBY (1909) 83.

<sup>22</sup> JACOBY (1909) 96-97 n. 1.

this term can refer to all forms of historical writing” (including *Genealogies* and *Local Histories*). Nor does the practice of the Greek historians, he goes on to argue, show that Ἱστορίαι would be preferred to designate *Zeitgeschichte* rather than historical literature in general. Yet, what we are given to understand is that the main reason for not retaining the title *Histories* for the group of works in question was that it would carry the implication that the other genres were something other or less than ‘history’. In Jacoby’s view, all historiographical genres together add up to what constituted ‘history’ for the Greeks.

At this point, I may be forgiven for making a little aside on the use of the terms ‘genre’ and ‘subgenre’ in modern discussions of Jacoby’s views. It was this scholar’s great ambition (even for solving the practical problem of the best possible, and at the same time, ‘scientific’ arrangement of his fragment collection) to trace the gradual development of history. To that end he did not work ‘top down’, setting out from some abstract notion of history that, with time and in the practice of history-writing – with authors choosing various subjects responding to changing historical situations as well as to the various expectations of their intended audiences – would gradually materialize and diversify into sub-genera.<sup>23</sup> It suited Jacoby’s purpose better to follow a ‘bottom up’ approach, one which looks for the building blocks that emerge from history being written in various forms and which, joined together, constitute the historical *genos* as a whole. Whereas the top-down approach raises the question of who may have been credited, at the start, with ‘inventing’ the overarching idea of history, Jacoby’s view leaves room for the idea that no form of historiography succeeds or can ever succeed in capturing *Clio* completely. Subgenres take shape as particular ‘literary forms’, for instance as *Hellenica*, Universal histories, and *monographs* within the category or ‘Gattung’ *Zeitgeschichte*. In the same way are the *Atthides* a ‘subspecies’ of the genre of local history.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. MURRAY (2000) 330: history emerged from the “undifferentiated sphere of early Greek prose”.

Jacoby does not state any specific reason as to why he eventually settled the question of the appropriate name for the works now collected in *FGrHist* II in favour of *Zeitgeschichte*. Schwartz may have inspired him but employed the term primarily to denote historical interest in present events and not in the sense in which Jacoby intended to utilize it to characterize a particular type of history writing. In this connection the larger picture of the history of historiography may be relevant as well: at the beginning of the previous century the writing of *Zeitgeschichte* had ceased to be practiced as a scientifically respectable form of doing history; *historiographically* thus, the concept was out of order and free for possible (re)use in another context. It is my submission that Jacoby must have realised that the idiosyncratic German compound had some interesting potential for being employed with an import that seemed tailored to the practical demands of classifying the indistinctive group of works, many of which were simply named Ἱστορίαι. *Zeitgeschichte* typically illustrates the capability of the German language to combine two nouns into a single concept. The second item, called the ‘primary word’ establishes the general category (‘history’), whereas the first, the ‘determiner’, defines the specific subcategory (‘time’). On the one hand, *Zeitgeschichte* carried the meaning of ‘contemporary history’ established by the centennial tradition of the well-known figure of the chronicler who used to report *historia temporis sui*.<sup>24</sup> Insofar it proved fit to describe the ‘off-spring’ of Thucydides: the historians who continued his incomplete *History of the Peloponnesian War* and, thereby, started the writing of *Zeitgeschichte*.<sup>25</sup> On the other

<sup>24</sup> See ERNST (1957) 138 n. 2: “Zeitgeschichte is als Abkürzung aus ‘Geschichte der eigenen Zeit’ (*historia temporis sui*) im Sinne der zeitgenössischen Geschichte entstanden und seit etwa 1800 ... in allgemeinerem Gebrauch.” Ernst prefers the noun ‘Gegenwartschronistik’ as a more adequate counterpart to ‘Vergangheitsgeschichte’.

<sup>25</sup> For JACOBY (1909) 97 *Zeitgeschichte* begins not with Thucydides but with his ‘continuator’. He singles out Cratippus and the Oxyrhynchus historian as “die ältesten Darsteller der Zeitgeschichte, die Vertreter des Hellenikatypus im engeren Sinne.” In a similar vein FORNARA (1983) 32-34 calls them “children of the monograph”. The *Hellenica* of Cratippus (who in my view is most probably

hand, as a compound designating *Geschichte* with *Zeit* as foremost determining element the term presented itself with a broad and flexible enough range for accommodating works without specific theme but of varying chronological scope.<sup>26</sup> Whatever the grounds for Jacoby's choice, the fact is that in the presentation of his plan, in 1908, *Zeitgeschichte* appears as a key term in the two senses just outlined: with the more restrictive meaning of 'contemporary history' and, far more frequently, in the more general sense of histories recording events within a chronological framework. Mostly the context makes it clear how to understand 'history-in-time'. Where this is required for clarity's sake, Jacoby helps himself, and his reader, by making a distinction between *Zeitgeschichte* and *echte* or *reine Zeitgeschichte* or by adding the phrase "im engeren Sinne".<sup>27</sup>

### 3. *Zeitgeschichte* as history-in-time

For Jacoby, the distinguishing features of the historiographical genre are: "(1) that it perceives the main duty of the historian in the description of the time that he himself has lived through,

the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*), Xenophon, and Theopompus varied from one another in content, scope and political orientation: see SCHEPENS (1993) and (2007b) 65-77. NICOLAI (2006), (2014), LURAGHI (2017) and MARINCOLA (2017) 105-106 highlight Xenophon's innovative writing at a time when history was not yet fixed as genre.

<sup>26</sup> In this larger acceptation *Zeitgeschichte* is an artificial construct. The now agreed upon meaning is either "geschichtliche Gegenwart u. jüngste Vergangenheit" or "Geschichte der gegenwärtigen u. gerade vergangenen Zeit" (see DUDEN, *Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, Bd. 10, Mannheim <sup>3</sup>1999, 4602).

<sup>27</sup> The uniform rendering of *Zeitgeschichte* as "contemporary history" in the otherwise excellent English translation of Jacoby (1909) by CHAMBERS / SCHORN (2015) fails to convey its ambivalent historiographical coverage. CHAMBERS (1990) 206 names the class of writings assembled in *FGrHist* II "histories limited in time" and repeats this in his *BNJ* online biography of Jacoby. It is an excellent paraphrase for Jacoby's idiosyncratic notion. For this key concept *Brill's New Jacoby* uses – *horresco referens* – the term 'Chronography', which is, of course, disastrously misconceived and historiographical nonsense that demands rectification.



no matter whether he describes this age alone or begins at some earlier time of his own choosing; (2) that it takes its standpoint on the side of the Greeks; (3) that this standpoint is in no way limited to any locale but is pan-Hellenic, world-historical.”<sup>28</sup> Whereas the first feature defines *Zeitgeschichte* on the axis of time, the two latter criteria delineate it as to content and focalization against respectively ‘Ethnography’ (which takes the non-Greek vantage point) and ‘Horography’ (which deals with the history of a given place).

In spite of the fact that no ancient name covered this whole class of historical writing, Jacoby emphasized that “in comparison with the other genres it was perceived as a unity”.<sup>29</sup> The clause “in comparison with the other genres” is significant. It intimates that *Zeitgeschichte* as a whole and in its three literary forms – monograph, universal history, *Hellenika*-type – is basically only definable *per negationem*, that is to say, by the absence of the specific features that constitute the essence of the other genres.<sup>30</sup> It applies to works which are not thematically configured or at least not primarily thematically configured around notions of place (*polis*, island, *ethnos*) or specific great deeds (performed by either kings, generals or cities) or any other well-defined subject (such as a particular war), but merely across time.<sup>31</sup> In an interesting case study devoted to the ‘Continuous Histories (*Hellenica*)’ C. Tuplin plainly reveals the difficulties involved in the exercise at positive genre definition.<sup>32</sup> His considered review of all possible criteria – literary texture, chronological scope, title,

<sup>28</sup> JACOBY (1909) 98.

<sup>29</sup> JACOBY (1909) 96.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. BIANCO (2015).

<sup>31</sup> For a penetrating overall criticism of the criteria adopted by Jacoby for defining his ‘genre’ concept, see MARINCOLA (1999), (2018).

<sup>32</sup> TUPLIN (2007). Similar attempts at genre definition, with comparable inconclusive results, have been made by ROOD (2007) for the war monograph, and TULLY (2014) for universal history. We have it on the authority of POLYB. 5, 33, 2 that “Ephorus was the first and only who undertook the writing of a universal history”. Tully’s attempt to destroy this belief has some good points but ultimately fails: see WEAIRE (2021).

geopolitical and thematic focus – which individually or collectively establish genre membership, runs into the conclusion that none proves necessary or sufficient to neatly singularize this very subset, valued, though, by Jacoby as ideal type, almost exchangeable with the concept *Zeitgeschichte* itself.<sup>33</sup>

Coverage of events falling within one's own lifetime (irrespective of the point of time from which the account begins) is Jacoby's first and absolutely required criterion for assigning the label *Zeitgeschichte* to a work. However, the treatment of contemporary events, though essential, is not in itself a sufficient determinant. It is the combination of this very criterion with the other two that makes up the generic propriety of the *Gattung*. This point has been very well made by Fornara, where he observes that the "presence of contemporary history" defines these works *less essentially* than the fact that they have a common subject [Greek history], purpose [general], and methodology [*Primärforschung*, i.e., personal experience and cross-questioning of eyewitnesses].<sup>34</sup> Fornara hits home the critical historiographical weakness in the Jacobian notion of *Zeitgeschichte*. Because time is a factor common to *all* history-writing, any attempt to use this notion as a basically determining generic criterion is bound to run into difficulties.

As all history deals with time, what precisely is meant by the time of *Zeitgeschichte*? A possible singularisation vis-à-vis other genres lies in the limitation of the timespan covered to the period that is contemporaneous or quasi-contemporaneous with the author of the work. This most obvious solution, however, clashes with the peculiar clause that *Zeitgeschichte* need not be restricted to one's own lifetime or to the period for which living memory is still available. On the strength of Jacoby's definition, a general Greek history, which may begin at

<sup>33</sup> JACOBY (1909) 96-97: "Innerlich berechtigt [as title for the genre as a whole] wäre die Bezeichnung als 'Ελληνικά.'" See also, *ibid.* 100-101. But the term is apparently not wide enough to also include 'universal histories' dealing with Greeks and non-Greeks.

<sup>34</sup> FORNARA (1983) 3 (my italics).

any arbitrary point in the past, can be categorized as *Zeitgeschichte*, provided only that it brings the narrative down to the historian's own time. Schwartz too had observed that for *Zeitgeschichte* as the subject-matter of history, "die Grenzen nicht allzu eng gezogen werden dürfen".<sup>35</sup> Needless to say, such provisions add a stunning element of complexity to the exercise in definition and makes a positive conclusion virtually impossible. How this can lead to confusion and misrepresentation of the impact of contemporary history writing will briefly be discussed below. First, we must try to explain *why* so much of the history of the more distant past – even of the remotest periods – can conceivably be included in Schwartz' and, above all, Jacoby's understanding of *Zeitgeschichte*.

U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's "thoughts about the growth and the nature of historical writing in Greece", set forth in his Oxford Lecture of 1908, procure insight into the historico-theoretical rationale that underlies not only the preference given to contemporary history writing but also the large time-span that can be covered by *Zeitgeschichte*. Sharply focused on the epistemic limitations inherent in the still underdeveloped concept of history and historical method in Hellenic culture, the Berlin professor pointed out that "in general, what we call historical criticism was not only not attained, but not so much as sought after".<sup>36</sup> Self-consciously he declared: "We have over the Greeks the advantage of possessing a science of history."<sup>37</sup> In the reworked German version of this paper, published almost two decades later, he speaks out his mind even more clearly: "Historische Kritik kann erst an der *Geschichte der Vergangenheit* geübt werden."<sup>38</sup>

The conviction that the Greeks had no or hardly any interest in the past as such and were unable to develop methods for its critical study, presents a complex and multi-layered problem

<sup>35</sup> SCHWARTZ (1928) 15.

<sup>36</sup> WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1908) 14.

<sup>37</sup> WILAMOWITZ -MOELLENDORFF (1908) 25.

<sup>38</sup> WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1926) 223 (my italics).

that one cannot aim to properly discuss in passing.<sup>39</sup> Let me just state that it is a largely anachronistic and unexamined axiom that I had to bring up because, for my present purposes, it can explain the two ways in which history of the past gets incorporated within the realm of *Zeitgeschichte*: either subordinated as a preamble to the treatment of the historian's own time; or, especially in works with a large chronological scope, as a compilatory or rhetorical 'backward extension' to what really matters: the treatment of contemporary events. Whatever option an individual historian may choose, such presentist historical temporality establishes the privileged status of *Zeitgeschichte* as solely representing true history.

Both Wilamowitz and Jacoby have illustrated their case with Ephorus' *Koinai Historiai*. This historian, viewed by Polybius as the first and only one who before him attempted the writing of 'universal history', began his work with the 'Return of the Heraclids' and reached to the siege of Perinthus in 340 BC. Wilamowitz, infamous for his sharp condemnation of this "utterly thoughtless" historian who ventured to write about the past and, hence, incorporated all that is objectional in history writing, makes his point as follows, in a judgment that is more revealing of his presumptions than of the real disposition of Ephorus' narrative: "Gegenüber der Ausführlichkeit, mit der er die Zeitgeschichte behandelte, war das freilich nicht viel mehr als eine Einleitung."<sup>40</sup> Jacoby's justification of the inclusion of the *Histories* among the works of *Zeitgeschichte* (*FGrHist* 70)

<sup>39</sup> How historiography articulates the past/present relationship depends first and foremost on the individual choices made by the historians. That one 'law' would apply to all reveals more of Schwartz' thinking than of the rich variety of historical works in Antiquity and the disparate achievements of the historians. For Schwartz, "Wahrheitsforschung" in historical study amounts to uncovering the "Gesetze des Werdens": see REBENICH (2014) 408-409. For all major problems at issue here, see MARINCOLA (2009). On the research methods of the Greek historians, see SCHEPENS (2007a).

<sup>40</sup> WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1926) 226-227; cf. ID. (1908) 10-11. SCHWARTZ (1907) 6-7 differentiates between "Zeitgeschichte" and "kompilatorische Darstellung". "Beide Hälften des Werks sind gesondert zu betrachten, sind auch dem historischen Wert nach verschieden."

typically bears the stamp of his concern with historiographical taxonomy. He begins with pointing out that it would be wrong to separate Ephorus' universal Greek history from monographs and *Hellenica*, which together constitute the "rein zeitgeschichtlichen Gruppen", because "an essential difference between them was not felt and in fact does not exist". From those ideal types Ephorus' work only differs by the fact that it is "nach oben hin zur Vollständigkeit erweitert", *i.e.*, chronologically expanded backward until the narrative, as envisaged by the author, was complete. For the rest, it too exhibits the feature that "the narrative of the writer's own time always surpasses, in breadth of treatment and importance, the older parts, which usually have the character of a compilation and claim merit only for their style. In these men, ... artistic sensitivity simply ranks higher; not for nothing are they without exception rhetoricians or at least actively interested in rhetoric".<sup>41</sup>

Ephorus' *Zeitgeschichte* covered in total some seven and a half centuries of history. While he had, mainly for evidentiary reasons (cf. Diod. Sic. 4, 1), excluded the mythological period from his project, other writers of universal histories were less sceptical and produced historical narratives with an even larger chronological scope. Critical concerns were, apparently, not an obstacle to the 'orator and philosopher' Zoilus of Amphipolis (*FGrHist* 71) to write a history in three books, starting with the theogony and ending with the death of Philip II. His pupil Anaximenes of Lampsacus (rhetor, but also teacher of Alexander the Great, whom he reportedly accompanied in his military campaigns) wrote *Ἑλληνικά* (*FGrHist* 72 T 14) in twelve books, beginning from the theogony and the first generation of men – ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ θεογονίας καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων – down to battle of Mantinea and the death of Epaminondas in 362 BC (T 4).<sup>42</sup> By the same criteria Asinius

<sup>41</sup> JACOBY (1909) 103-104, and with due reference also to Schwartz' "Gesetz der Zeitgeschichte" (104 n. 1).

<sup>42</sup> JACOBY (1909) 103-104 and n. 2. The work was also referred to as Πρωτά Ἱστορίαι (F 3), which, within the work with 'gesamttitel' *Ἑλληνικά* may only

Quadratus' survey of "One Thousand Years of Roman History" (*ab urbe condita* (?)) down to the author's own time qualifies for inclusion under the heading *Zeitgeschichte* (*FGrHist* 97).<sup>43</sup>

Before we go on, let us dwell for a minute on the reasons Jacoby adduces for publishing, under the heading *Zeitgeschichte*, the fragments of a history which starts with the birth of the gods and the first generation of men. Technically, Anaximenes' work fulfils the criteria laid down for being called a *Zeitgeschichte*. His focus is general and Greek and he carries the narrative down to his own time. The battle of Mantinea constituted in several respects an epochal historical event: it marked the inconclusive end of the long ongoing inner-Greek struggle for hegemony and pointed forward to the loss of freedom and independence for the Greek world. But can one really contend that the coverage of the past from its earliest beginnings – something on which the reception of his work has been focusing when in the tradition it is also referred to as *Πρῶται Ἱστορίαι* (F 3) – was only there as an introduction to narrating the contemporary events? In the present case, this conclusion seems to be prompted more by a blanket application of the 'law of *Zeitgeschichte*' than by any relevant evidence at our disposal.<sup>44</sup> Anyhow, with his profile of a professional rhetor, Anaximenes' foray into the remotest past is a priori scorned as purely rhetorical in character: the

designate the section dealing with primal history. The *Πρῶται Ἱστορίαι*, so Jacoby (*FGrHist* IIC, Berlin 1926, 106-107) "bilden die einleitung zur zeitgeschichte". LURAGHI (2014a) interestingly suggests that Ephorus may possibly have reacted against such a far extension of the *spatium historicum*. According to T 4 (DIOD. SIC. 15, 89, 3) the first *syntaxis* in twelve books "included practically all the doings of the Greeks and non-Greeks" and should be seen as a 'universal history'; but he characterizes the work as *Hellenica*. We can only speculate about what kind of conceptual unity underlied Anaximenes' 'universalistic' history; on account of the tradition which connects Anaximenes with cynic philosophy, the theory of the equality of all human beings could be a likely option: see MAZZARINO (1966) 338-339.

<sup>43</sup> As a 'universal history'. See JANISZEWSKI (2006) 27-39 and 85-91 for his contemporary history writing in the form of the 'war monographs' *Parthica* and *Germanica*.

<sup>44</sup> Next to nothing of this work has survived but it would be methodologically improper to regard this as an indication of intrinsic inferior quality or minor importance: see SCHEPENS (1997) 145.

historically valuable part, if there was any in this work, was concerned with narrating the events of his own time.<sup>45</sup>

These examples show how far “Ergänzungen nach oben hin” can go. In how capacious a notion of *Zeitgeschichte* this eventually results is perhaps even more strikingly illustrated in the following statement made by Jacoby with regard to works composed in a climate of alleged further political and cultural decline at the end of the Hellenistic period: “Auf allen Gebieten erscheinen die grossen *Kompilationen*: in der Mythographie die Handbücher, in der Ethnographie die Exzerptenwerke Polyhistor, in der Chronographie das Sammelwerk Kastors, *in der Zeitgeschichte Diodor Nikolaos Pompeius Trogus*.”<sup>46</sup> One is surprised to see these universal histories to be reckoned as *Zeitgeschichte*; formally, they fulfil the criteria laid down for being included in the group. We may note, however, that the attribution of such a label tends to inflate the size and significance of this branch of history writing in proportions that would decidedly also seem odd to ancient standards.<sup>47</sup>

The virtually illimited stretching of the time covered by *Zeitgeschichte* is, of course, like the concept itself a modern scholarly idea. We may ask ourselves whether such a construct has any chance of meeting the thinking and practices of the ancient historians. How far would they expect or allow a writer of a work dealing with contemporary history to go back in time? Polybius provides an answer to this question in the context of his reflection on where to begin his *Histories*:

“I shall adopt as the starting-point of this book the first occasion on which the Romans crossed the sea from Italy. This is just where the History of Timaeus left off; and it falls in the 129<sup>th</sup> Olympiad. I shall accordingly have to describe what the state of

<sup>45</sup> More recent research tends to rehabilitate him from Jacoby’s unjust criticism: see PARMEGGIANI (2009); FERRUCCI (2010); GOUKOWSKY (2017) 255-264; and M.F. WILLIAMS, *Anaxamines of Lampsakos* (BNJ 72).

<sup>46</sup> JACOBY (1909) 107 (my italics).

<sup>47</sup> As to how Zoilus’ and Anaximenes’ 4<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries viewed past and present and the relationship between old and recent times, see, for instance, GRETHLEIN (2014).

their affairs in Italy was, how long that settlement had lasted, and on what resources they reckoned, when they resolved to invade Sicily. For this was the first place outside Italy in which they set foot. The precise cause of their thus crossing I must state without comment; for if I let one cause lead me back to another, my point of departure will always elude my grasp, and I shall never arrive at the view of my subject which I wish to present. As to dates, then, I must fix on some era agreed upon and recognised by all: and as to events, one that admits of distinctly separate treatment; even though I may be obliged to go back some short way in point of time, and take a summary review of the intermediate transactions. For if the facts with which one starts are unknown, or even open to controversy, all that comes after will fail of approval and belief. But opinion being once formed on that point, and a general assent obtained, all the succeeding narrative becomes intelligible.”<sup>48</sup>

The choice of a good starting point is a question of great importance to contemporary history writing. Dionysius of Halicarnassus discusses it as a key issue in his treatise *On Thucydides*. For Polybius a good beginning should be uncontroversial and known; one that is agreed upon and recognized by all, otherwise one ends up always going back further from cause to cause ... What is implied is that there is a point beyond which a writer of a contemporary history cannot go further back without compromising the character of the work one has chosen to write. I value this as an ancient ruling that dismisses the whole idea that a work of contemporary history could have its start from any point in the distant past. Polybius takes the ground away from under the rationale for stretching the notion *Zeitgeschichte* beyond reasonable chronological limits.

#### 4. *Zeitgeschichte*: an independent *genos*?

We have been looking up to now mainly at the problems of generic delineation of the specific forms of history writing

<sup>48</sup> POLYB. 1, 5 (trans. SHUCKBURGH); cf. POLYB. 5, 31.



that are subsumed under the family concept *Zeitgeschichte*. Jacoby's basically inconclusive genre definition, the bricolage with extensions or the need to specify its meaning for the sake of clarity, would all seem to indicate that *Zeitgeschichte* has at the very best only a tenuous claim as a self-contained historical *genos*. That such genre concept would once be met with fundamental criticism is less surprising than the fact that it came only late. In 1983, Fornara stated his view on Jacobian *Zeitgeschichte* in the first pages of "The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome" frankly as follows: "the term is inapplicable to the greater number of Greco-Roman historians."<sup>49</sup> Coming from a scholar who shows himself, in principle, well disposed to work with Jacoby's *genos*-theories, this is a telling statement. I cannot but repeat and fully agree with his view that the presence of 'contemporary history' in all the works united by Jacoby under the umbrella *Zeitgeschichte* defines them "less essentially than their common subject, purpose, and methodology". In his seminal paper "Genre, Convention, and Innovation in Greco-Roman Historiography" John Marincola has, in turn, exposed the deeper scope of this criticism by extending it to all historiographical genera in Jacoby's 'system'.

While I concur with Fornara's censure, I part company with the double solution he proposed to the problem. For one thing, and contrary to what Fornara states, Jacoby, by allegedly substituting in the place of history the term *Zeitgeschichte*, was *not* depriving the Greeks "of the genre they named history and regarded as the quintessential historical form".<sup>50</sup> This imputation is bound up with an "un'inaccettabile forzatura"<sup>51</sup> of Jacoby's observation according to which there has absolutely never been

<sup>49</sup> FORNARA (1983) 3.

<sup>50</sup> In order not to add to the confusion, I have omitted, in the context of this discussion, Fornara's misleading dubbing of the term *Zeitgeschichte* as 'contemporary history'. A habit that is, unfortunately, widespread in today's historiographical studies.

<sup>51</sup> See DESIDERI (1996) 957-958.

“eine streng unserer ‘Geschichte’ entsprechende, bestimmt auf die Erforschung und Darstellung geschichtlicher Ereignisse der fernen oder näheren Vergangenheit begrenzte, selbständige Wissenschaft im Altertum”.<sup>52</sup> This statement does not deprive the ancient Greeks from the genre *they* named ‘history’ – it only means to say that their conception of it was not comparable to the modern, institutionalised science of history. Insofar, Fornara’s reinstatement of the term *Historiai* for the incriminated *Zeitgeschichte* attempts a solution to a nonproblem. More fundamentally, still, the view which underlies his argument that at least one of Jacoby’s five ‘forms’ of historical writing should be recognized as ‘history’ itself, fails to carry conviction. As already noted, in Jacoby’s opinion, all five historical genres together embody what history writing was to the Greeks. No genre can claim to represent history exclusively; such view seems perfectly aligned to Polybius’ repartition of history writing in three *τρόποι*, which are all considered *μέρη τῆς ἱστορίας*.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, by assigning the general term *Historiai* to the genus called *Zeitgeschichte* by Jacoby, Fornara is committed to putting all other genres in a status “related to History”, whatever that may mean.<sup>54</sup>

Our exploration of the notion of *Zeitgeschichte* has now reached the point at which it becomes clear that the various difficulties in which one runs in attempting a definition or in working with the concept as a heuristic or hermeneutic tool, cannot adequately be solved by proposing another name for the contested *genos*. Whereas it should not be denied that the system of categories devised by Jacoby for ordering the *amethodos hylê* of historical literature and for studying its characteristics has its merits, we cannot look away from the very serious problems it poses, in particular for the two genres, *Zeitgeschichte* and Ethnography

<sup>52</sup> JACOBY (1909) 83.

<sup>53</sup> POLYB. 9, 1-2.

<sup>54</sup> As also MARINCOLA (1999) 284 n. 11 noted, Fornara’s ‘solution’ “is not without its own problems”.

without correspondent ancient name.<sup>55</sup> The logical further step is to raise the question whether it could not be more beneficial, for purposes of historiographical analysis, to look at the writing of contemporary history as a *practice* with a significant presence in various forms of history rather than as a genre in its own right.<sup>56</sup> In this, I follow the approach recommended by Ludmilla Jordanova in her book with the telling title *History in Practice* (London 2000). She sets out from the belief that the discipline of history is best understood “as a set of practices, rather than as, say, a constellation of beliefs or theories, or a stable body of subject matter. History is indeed about what historians do. This formulation”, she argues, “is not circular, as might at first sight appear. Rather it signals that there is no essence of the discipline, which is made up of what members of the community agree will count as such.” Such an approach – the polar opposite of measuring up the ancient historians against the standards of 19<sup>th</sup> century historical science as if it were the quintessence of history – seems particularly adapted to the challenge of studying ancient historiography. As Strasburger rightly pointed out, the best of the ancient historians’ theory was invested in their actual working methods. If, then, we ask about their theories, we must, for the greater part, derive them from their practices.<sup>57</sup>

And the study of these practices should not be confined, on the strength of a genre definition, to just one supposedly particular set. The truth is that the actual ‘writing of contemporary’ in Antiquity cuts across various genres. Many historians, who have not found their place in the group of authors listed in *FGrHist II Zeitgeschichte*, because as writers of historical works on cities and countries they were assigned to other parts

<sup>55</sup> MARINCOLA (1999) 295-296. For ethnography, in particular, see ALMAGOR / SKINNER (2013).

<sup>56</sup> Here, some striking resemblances could be made to the statements that result from today’s inconclusive debates about what ‘contemporary history’ really is. Thus, DUBOIS / HUDEMANN (2016) 9 write: “La *Zeitgeschichte* apparaît ainsi aujourd’hui comme une ‘pratique’ mouvante, propice aux débats historiographiques et aux querelles conceptuelles ....”

<sup>57</sup> STRASBURGER (1975) 11-12.

of the fragment collection, have often within their compass given special weight to the history of their own times. The Athenians Androtion (*FGrHist* 324) and Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328) were both politically active and wrote *Atthides* which became increasingly detailed as they approached their own time. R. Thomas concluded that they “devoted so much of their *Atthis* to events of their own lifetime that they are effectively contemporary historians”.<sup>58</sup> In the same breath R. Thomas notes that this holds true as well for Zeno (*FGrHist* 523) and Antisthenes, historians of Rhodes.<sup>59</sup> Thanks to Polybius, who critically engages with their patriotic accounts of contemporary history – they seem to have unjustly claimed that the Rhodians were victorious in the sea battle of Lade against Philip V of Macedon (ca. 201/200 BC) –, we get a glimpse of the larger scope of their narratives. We also learn from Polybius that they wrote their accounts with literary ambitions in the style of ‘great’ history. That is just one more reason for acknowledging to what extent genre distinctions, which may make sense from one point of view can become really blurred from another.<sup>60</sup>

##### 5. Felix Jacoby: “point of reference or focus for disagreement”?

By way of conclusion, I would like to place the previous critical analysis in a somewhat broader, and for Jacoby, also fairer perspective with a bit of history of classical scholarship. What I intend to argue is that Jacoby himself was quite aware of the inherently problematic nature of the evolutionist and generic ordering principle for assigning to all historians a place – their place? – in *FGrHist*.

In order to understand the daunting magnitude of the ask which Jacoby had to face with the arrangement of all the materials

<sup>58</sup> THOMAS (2019) 341-353.

<sup>59</sup> THOMAS (2019) 46-49.

<sup>60</sup> POLYB. 16, 14, 5 -15; 16, 17, 9; see LENFANT (2005).

in his collection,<sup>61</sup> several factors are important. To begin with, two closely related basic facts must be acknowledged: first, that “data are messy”, *in casu* an ἀμέθοδος ὕλη<sup>62</sup> of piecemeal remains of more than a thousand ‘writers’ known to us at least by name and who, between the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, have produced altogether a multiple of a thousand works in different historical genres; second, that there is no ready-made formula of presentation available that would be wholly satisfactory and/or capable to meet the diverse expectations of users of such a collection.<sup>63</sup> On top of that come the difficult genesis of the project and the troubled times under which it had to be carried out: H. Bloch, on occasion, aptly evoked both with the phrase “the fate of the historians”.<sup>64</sup> In what follows I recall some of the main points dealt with in an earlier paper focusing on Jacoby’s life-long struggling with the question of how best to organize the collection.<sup>65</sup>

In spite of all adversity the big historiographical categories which Jacoby put in place for organising his new fragment collection prove, in retrospect, to be remarkably resilient. His conception of the development of Greek historiography and its division into five main types of history writing provided for the past century the dominant paradigm for research in this field of classical studies.<sup>66</sup> In the introduction to his book *The Invention of Greek Ethnography*, J. Skinner seems to speak for many students of Greek historiography when he observes that it would be hard to overemphasize Jacoby’s impact. His study critically explores the

<sup>61</sup> With his wide definition of ‘history’, Jacoby had a problem of organisation rather than of selection.

<sup>62</sup> SEXT. EMPIR. *Adv. gramm.* 1, 254.

<sup>63</sup> In his “Entwurf” for *FGrHist* IV one sees Jacoby “at a loss to settle the many problems he gets involved in”: see SCHEPENS (1997) 148-149; and, more recently, SCHORN (2021). Enlightening discussion also in DONOHUE (2013).

<sup>64</sup> In his letter of May 17, 1948, answering Jacoby’s invitation to continue his work in case he should not be able to complete it: cf. SCHEPENS (2010b) 428 n. 5. For Jacoby’s biography, see WITTRAM (2004).

<sup>65</sup> SCHEPENS (2010b). Paper read on the occasion of the Berlin Jacoby commemoration fifty years after his death and written mainly on the basis of data in the Jacoby *Nachlass* – including documents which Jacoby kept carefully for himself.

<sup>66</sup> BARON (2013) 202-203.

concept of ‘Ethnography’; next to *Zeitgeschichte* it is, in Jacoby’s taxonomy, the other main category which fails to map onto ancient terminology. Skinner’s view that the notion was created “largely as a matter of convenience” for organizing the fragment collection bears resemblance to what I have been arguing here with regard to Jacoby’s appropriation, mainly for classification purposes, of the notion of *Zeitgeschichte*.<sup>67</sup>

It may well be worth remembering what O. Murray stated more generally on the continuing importance of Jacoby “whether as point of reference or as focus for disagreement”, for all subsequent students of ancient Greek historiography. “For better or for worse we cannot escape that inheritance. It would be a true revolution if we could be persuaded to cease from either repeating or contradicting the views of Jacoby; but I remain sceptical whether that is yet possible.”<sup>68</sup> Still, can we not try to receive Jacoby’s scientific legacy with some more understanding, maybe even responsiveness, if we realise that he has been himself the first and, at some point, even the sharpest critic of the notorious Berlin 1908/09 blueprint?

In these *prolegomena* to the new collection Jacoby had characterized the alphabetical order as convenient for the editor and easy-going for the occasional user, but also the most primitive and the least scientific. But his chief reason for outright rejecting it as *main* ordering principle was that it would downright “block the way towards solving all the questions that we wish to answer with the help of a collection of fragments. For this collection is not an end in itself, but only a means toward a goal.”<sup>69</sup> Jacoby’s ambitious plan engendered a fierce discussion.<sup>70</sup> Immediately after the event the Byzantinist Paul Marc published in his review a powerful critical comment that goes directly to the

<sup>67</sup> SKINNER (2012) 30-32.

<sup>68</sup> MURRAY (2001) 319.

<sup>69</sup> JACOBY (1909) 81.

<sup>70</sup> See CHÁVEZ REINO (2008) for an attempt at reconstruction of the debate.

heart of the problem. It is the first piece of the puzzle we have to put together.<sup>71</sup>

“Die Disposition nach entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Gesichtspunkten zeigt in ihrer individuellen Bedingtheit und mit ihren zahlreichen Kompromissen am deutlichsten die schweren Gefahren eines solchen Einteilungsprinzip für ein Werk, das in erster Linie praktisch und objektiv sein muss; für die Nachschlagwerke ist die äusserlichste Anordnung, in diesem Fall die alphabetische, stets die beste, weil sie die unzweideutigste und allgemeinverständlichste ist.”

Totally unexpected it took Jacoby only a few years to agree with all the objections formulated here. We know this from a letter he sent to Eduard Meyer. In it he points out the dangers of subjectivity and arbitrariness that are involved in the adoption of a developmental principle. Jacoby clarifies this view with reference to the ordering principle Hermann Diels had chosen for his *Vorsokratiker*: “er giebt eine ordnung, die die geschichte der philosophie widerspiegeln soll. Jetzt kommt Reinhardt u. will die grundlage in ganz wesentlichen punkten erschüttern.”<sup>72</sup> That mistrust was one of the reasons why Jacoby had been drawing up an alternative plan built on other principles. The plan is dated to November 17, 1915 and bears the title “Plan einer Sammlung der Griechischen Historischen Tradition”.<sup>73</sup> It is introduced with the following statement:

“Der von mir auf dem Berliner Internat. Histor. Kongress vorge-tragene plan (s. Klio IX) hat insofern eine änderung erfahren, als ich den wunschen auf möglichst mechanisch bequeme benutz-barkeit der sammlung entsprechen will, ohne das aufzugeben, was ich für wesentlich erachte, die vorlage des gesamten materials nach antiken gesichtspunkten geordnet.”

<sup>71</sup> MARC (1909).

<sup>72</sup> Jacoby's letter to Eduard Meyer (April 14, 1917), published by LANSKY (1991) 64.

<sup>73</sup> For a presentation of this plan, including full transcription and photographs, see SCHEPENS (2009), (2010b). This alternative plan remained hidden until after Jacoby's death. In fact, it was never destined to be known to anybody, not even to Herbert Bloch. We found it, to our great surprise, in the Jacoby *Nachlass*.

The plan provided for an edition of all fragmentary historians in alphabetical order, in a first part, for an edition of all texts related to ancient Greek historical theory and method, in a second part, and, in a third part, for a complete survey of “the historical tradition”. That most important part III would be structured, Jacoby wrote, “essentially according to the principles which I formerly elaborated” and all fragmentary materials, edited in part I, would be re-integrated in it.<sup>74</sup>

This was a truly imposing plan focused on presenting the whole of the historiographical tradition, the fragmentary remains of which constituted only the smallest, difficult to interpret and often disappointing part – a point Jacoby, now famous for his fragment collection, was wont to emphasize! The arrangement of the fragmentary historians in alphabetical order is one of its remarkable and interesting features because it liberated the editor of a precarious and practically insoluble problem inherent in his original plan: the conflict, namely, that constantly arises

<sup>74</sup> When Jacoby states – *wesentlich nach den von mir seinerzeit entwickelten prinzipien* –, he intends an ordering according to the principles of *genos* and *development*. Yet, this purpose is somewhat tempered by “*wesentlich*”. In fact, the proposed arrangement puts, for the first time, ethnography and the histories of the Greek poleis together in one category entitled “*Geschichte κατὰ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις*”. Their union within one section compromises the developmental principle. One may ask why, already at this early stage (between 1909 and 1915), Jacoby decided to remove ‘local history’ from the place he had assigned to it in his *Klio*-plan; there it is in ‘Band V’ which also includes the ‘antiquarian’ writings of the grammarians. SCHORN (2021) perceptively proposes an answer. His analysis is mainly based on Jacoby’s handwritten notes on both *recto* and *verso* of the well-known 1909 plan in ten sections; a photograph and transcription of this document in the *Nachlass* is added in *Appendix I* (p. 50-52). The notes, written at various moments between 1909 and 1915, show Jacoby’s uneasiness with the combination of the local historians with the antiquarians and his constant wavering over the question of a suitable nomenclature for the group. Since he did not succeed in fittingly describing the relationship of *Horography* to the (other) branches of antiquarian writing, he removed the local historians from this realm. The alternative plan of 1915 shows the first result of this operation. His survey of the whole of the historiographical tradition provides for a section (III 3) that was to be devoted to local histories of non-Greek peoples and of Greek cities alike. For an overview of the successive schemes Jacoby drafted for *FGrHist*, see SCHEPENS (2010b).



between a classification according to type of historical work and the principle of keeping all works written by one author together. At the same time, the alternative plan didn't renounce the generic and evolutionary principles: they remained (essentially) operative within the project but were removed to the presentation of the historical tradition, a section not organized by authors but by historical works; and within this survey the works written by individual authors would be included at the place or places where they had contributed to the establishment of the tradition.

The title "Plan einer Sammlung der Griechischen Historischen Tradition" no longer presents the undertaking as a *fragment* collection, and could, therefore, surely also from a historical point of view be valued as a potentially very useful one. Probing whether he should go ahead with it, Jacoby submitted, in 1917, this newly drafted plan to Eduard Meyer. He probably expected to get his approval but was disappointed in that. Meyer abhorred the presentation of the historians in alphabetical order so strongly, that, I suppose, the remainder of the plan was hardly discussed. The day after he had his conversation with Jacoby, he promptly wrote him a letter with a counter-proposal for an edition project that would keep the fragmentary historians together according to groups<sup>75</sup> and should primarily, instead of trying to embody historiographical principles, cater to the practical need of its users. Jacoby could not afford to ignore Meyer's views. It would have been impossible to start the publication without the financial support that the latter, as administrator of the fund "Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft", could procure.

In retrospect, we may perhaps consider it unfortunate that this plan did not find a favourable reception. Jacoby, somewhat reluctantly, returned to his original plan, the essence of which

<sup>75</sup> Meyer's mainly thematic groups are composed according to a mixture of criteria: ancient "geschlossene Gruppen" such as the "Logographers" or the "Peripatetics"; political historians together according to period; geographical criteria for cities and regions, ...).

he now combined to some extent with Meyer's ideas and to which a number of changes were made. The Jacoby *Nachlass* preserves a drafted version of this re-arranged plan. It prefigures the new structure that is presented in the Preface to *FGrHist* I (1923).<sup>76</sup>

It has often been noted<sup>77</sup> that Jacoby does not provide any reason as to why he made the changes to his original plan. He just adds a brief comment, saying that the arrangement is not ideal but rather one that he had decided to adopt "after all" (*schließlich doch*). Something must have bothered him. I suggest that he might have been dissatisfied in particular with the fact that the new structure did no longer, at least not in all its parts, articulate the successive stages in which Greek historiography developed.

In the period leading up to 1923, Jacoby had himself, as we have seen, come to believe that ethnography and Greek local history should be combined in one unit. As part of his plea that Jacoby should adopt a more thematic arrangement E. Meyer had equally insisted on editing together in one group the histories of peoples and cities.<sup>78</sup> Meyer and Jacoby certainly agreed on this point and, for the latter, the combination ought not to have created any problem within the framework of his alternative plan of 1915: Jacoby's draft actually already provided for a section "Geschichte κατὰ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις" within the survey of the whole of the historiographical tradition (III 3). However, since this plan was cancelled and Jacoby had returned to his 1908/09 plan of publishing *only* the fragmentary historians, he now faced the problem of how to fit the group in into a structure that was supposed to reflect his view of the development of Greek historical writing. In accordance with this view, writers of 'ethnography' should, be dealt with before *Zeitgeschichte* and writers of local history after it. Wherever he inserted the

<sup>76</sup> SCHORN (2021) 17-18 discusses it briefly, photograph and transcription in Appendix 2 (53-54).

<sup>77</sup> Even by himself: see JACOBY (1949) 382 n. 10.

<sup>78</sup> "so dass man den Bestand dieser unendlich reichen Literatur übersehn kann" (letter to Jacoby of April 12, 1917).

histories *κατὰ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις*,<sup>79</sup> they subverted the idea of an arrangement that would convey his historico-developmental view. The impossibility to provide a solution to this quandary resulted in a demotion of the value of this principle which in the *Klio* article played such a prominent role as a tool for creating order within the collection.<sup>80</sup>

At such a state of affairs, it made no theoretical difference to Jacoby whether he would assign “Ethnographie und Horographie” a place either before or after *Zeitgeschichte*. The fact that the ethnographers and local historians constitute part III of the final plan, after Genealogie (I) and *Zeitgeschichte* (II), must eventually have resulted from practical considerations, in other words from what Jacoby established for himself as the most feasible work plan to complete his project. He was aware of the fact that the editing of and commenting upon all fragmentary works in the category “Geschichte von Völkern und Städten” would give him incomparably more work than the “Mythographers” and the authors of *Zeitgeschichte*.<sup>81</sup> In order to ensure the steady progress of the publication, it was recommended to do the ‘Mythographers’ and the writers of *Zeitgeschichte* first and only then to embark on the daunting task of editing the many historians *κατὰ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις*.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> He actually tried the two options; see the scheme of 1915 compared to one of 1917 in SCHEPENS (2010b) 447.

<sup>80</sup> In fact, only a chronological order (chosen by Müller), not one according to *genre*, is really suited to convey development. Tellingly, the notion *Entwicklungsgeschichte* does no longer appear, in the published volumes of *FGrHist*, in any discussion concerning the arrangement or structure of the collection.

<sup>81</sup> Jacoby had nearly finished with *Zeitgeschichte*, when he wrote, in a letter to E. Meyer, dated to August 5, 1928, that the prospect of having to deal soon with the third part (“Horographie und Ethnographie”) caused him a certain anxiety, “da er sehr umfangreich wird”. See LANSKY (1991) 67.

<sup>82</sup> The structure of *FGrHist* may therefore show, at the face of it, a lack of coherence “tra fondamento teorico e raccolta dei frammenti”, as argued by ZAMBRINI (2006) 196. But one should not jump to the conclusion that Jacoby, after he had, allegedly, not been able to historically pinpoint where exactly ethnography functioned as a link between the Hecataean *Periegesis* and the historiography of Herodotus, eventually gave up this whole theory. Nothing could be farther from the truth. JACOBY (1949) 199-201 restates his historico-developmental

Although Jacoby had set aside his alternative plan, he remained intellectually attached to it, and increasingly so as he grew older. In nearly all *Prefaces* of the volumes of *FGrHist* he emphasizes the necessity of supplementing the edition of the fragments themselves with an overview of the entire historical tradition. From time to time Jacoby also vents his frustration that one cannot write a *proper* commentary on an individual historian if he is severed from the tradition as a whole: in one such passage he exclaims: “Ich war drauf und dran meinen alten plan wieder aufzunehmen.”<sup>83</sup> Something else too needs to be pointed out. As soon as he realized that he would never get around to the project of collecting the entire historical tradition, Jacoby took steps towards realizing that ambition, at least in part, within the framework of the collection he was trying to complete. He made a habit of placing in “Anhänge” more or less comprehensive parts of the historical tradition that could not be attributed to one or the other individual historian.<sup>84</sup> In doing so, he violated his most fundamental self-imposed rule for compiling the fragment collection. Although not at ease with it, he did not want to resist breaking that principle and even refused to apologise for it. In the Preface to *FGrHist* IIIA (1940), p. 6\* he declares to have a good reason for transgressing his stated principle, but without revealing what precisely this reason is: “these are matters that are too personal”.

view, with “Ethnography” at its ‘proper’ place. SKINNER (2012) 34-39, and (2019) unfortunately builds on Zambrini’s “entirely ground-breaking” paper. In an overly generous understatement ROOD (2020) 27-29 qualifies Skinner’s thesis of Jacoby’s effective abandonment of the evolutionary principle as “slightly too strong”.

<sup>83</sup> In his letter to Bloch of August 17, 1939.

<sup>84</sup> As a supplement to his edition of the fragments of the writers on ‘Egypt’ (*FGrHist* 608a-664) Jacoby brings together in a huge *Anhang FGrHist* 665 more than 200 relevant parallel historical, geographical, and ethnographical texts (p. 214-277). This he also saw as an attempt to reconstruct an ancient ‘idealethnographie’ of Egypt. ENGELS (2015) lxxx-lxxxi, in his review of ALMAGOR / SKINNER (2013), rightly points out, with reference to this *Anhang*, that there is some need to qualify the verdict according to which Jacoby did not (yet) have a proper understanding of ‘ethnography’.

Thanks to what we discovered in the *Nachlass* we can read this phrase as a veiled, but deep-felt allusion to the discarded ‘old plan’:

“anders der zweite punkt, der wie ein schuldbekenntnis klingt und auch als solches gelten mag, da ich über das was mir an diesem bande im tiefsten grunde unbefriedigend erscheint, hier nicht sprechen und es nicht entschuldigen kann oder will: es sind zu persönliche dinge. dass ich den kommentar ausführlicher gestaltet habe als in den beiden ersten teilen, ist mit bewusstsein und in erfüllung mir vielfach geäußelter wünsche geschehen, obwohl ich mir klar war, dass er damit auch seinen charakter ändern und stellenweise zu einer reihe von einzeluntersuchungen werden musste. das lässt sich sachlich bei der behandlung von fragmenten wohl rechtfertigen. aber es ergab ein missverhältnis im umfang von text und kommentar, das bedenklich ist.”

In one of the footnotes of his famous study *Atthis*, the 72 years-old Jacoby incidentally looks back, in a little retrospective aside, at a period in his scholarly life (1908-1923) when he laid the groundwork for his monumental new edition of the fragments of the Greek historians.<sup>85</sup> The comments on how his collection came into being, make for a good read not devoid of irony. He points out how, in a first moment, the *Klio*-article was essentially devoted to explaining the intended arrangement of the collection – “intended”, because it was not implemented; “der *Klio*-aufsatz war eben nur ein plan”.<sup>86</sup> Conversely, in a second moment, at the very start of the project in 1923, the *Preface* to the volume supplied “a new arrangement, without giving detailed reasons”. Part and parcel of this note focused on the problem of the arrangement of *FGrHist*, is the following statement: “Concerning the form I was then too much under the influence of Wilamowitz and Schwartz.” With this observation Jacoby seems to intimate, in the present context, that at the time when he was drawing up his first plan for *FGrHist*, he

<sup>85</sup> JACOBY (1949) 382 n. 10.

<sup>86</sup> So Jacoby in a letter to H. Bloch (1954, 25 Nov.).

looked so much up to them that he misapprehended the writers of local history as mere chroniclers and, hence, put them in a category with antiquarian writers (section VI of the *Klio*-plan). By way of conclusion to this note he claims the credit for having rectified this: “the preface to *FGrHist* I (1923) ... supplied a new arrangement which introduced local chronicles into the sphere of historiography by combining the history of individual cities with that of individual peoples.”

This brief text brings one more illustration of Jacoby’s ability to look back critically at his own work, and we, his critics, can perhaps learn from it that it does no harm to put the programmatic text of 1909 in perspective. Particularly interesting for our present purposes is the fact that Jacoby himself brings confirmation of the decisive influence that both Schwartz and Wilamowitz exerted on him at the beginning of his career. Regarding *Zeitgeschichte* we have been able to show to what great extent he has, indeed, been drawing on both Schwartz’ and Wilamowitz’ ideas for placing this type of history writing at the very heart of his fragment collection. By contrast, the teleological view of the development of Greek historiography bears his individual stamp.

In Jacoby’s theory the development of history reaches its zenith and ‘natural’ *telos* – τὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν – already by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC in the work of Thucydides.<sup>87</sup> The inevitable corollary of such a view is the beginning of decay right after Thucydides. In Jacoby’s model survey “Griechische Geschichtsschreibung”, the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the Hellenistic period are quickly disposed of with a few sweeping statements about history’s decline at the hands of authors who, for lack of intellectual power and critical *acumen* to engage with the facts, turned it into a literary pursuit.<sup>88</sup> Hermann Strasburger has raised the question whether Jacoby, at the end of his life,

<sup>87</sup> JACOBY (1926) 24; cf. JACOBY (1909) 97-98.

<sup>88</sup> JACOBY (1926) 24-29. This view is fortunately increasingly countered in more recent studies; see, e.g., PARMEGGIANI (2014).

informed by his unrivalled knowledge of the rich variety of Greek historiography, would still have stood by that harsh judgement passed in 1926.<sup>89</sup>

In this case, to raise the question is to answer it.<sup>90</sup> It is already on the face of it unlikely that Jacoby, with his unrivalled research experience in all branches of Greek historiography, would over all those years have remained constant in his appreciation. There is plenty of evidence for his changing views in his writings; we have called attention to some of them. And Strasburger rightly goes on to observe that Jacoby's casting review of post-thucydidean historiography must have been rather based on a dogma that was already in force before him, namely the unexamined assumption of the norm-setting validity of Thucydides as the master of political historiography: a standard introduced in modern times, not by the Greeks themselves, and one that does serious damage not only to the fair appreciation of the Hellenistic historians, but even to that of Herodotus.

The idea that the 'thucydideization' of Greek historiography cannot but do injustice to Herodotus gives me the appropriate occasion to return for a moment to the statements made by Momigliano, referred to at the beginning of my paper: those statements oppose Thucydides' safe choice of contemporary history to the risk Herodotus took by venturing to write about a time when he was not yet born. In Momigliano's view Herodotus' choice would have earned him, in antiquity, the reputation of being a liar. He states it succinctly as follows:

“As long as readers were told that Herodotus was a liar and Thucydides was the truth, Thucydides was bound to remain the ideal representative of history. Lucian stated this in words which Ranke must have known well. It was Thucydides, according to Lucian, who gave history its law – the law of saying *ὡς ἐπεράχθη*,

<sup>89</sup> STRASBURGER (1997) 8-9.

<sup>90</sup> Jacoby and Strasburger knew each other very well and met several times for 'fruitful' discussions (letter to Bloch of 13 September 1953). Among the many scholars reviewed in Jacoby's correspondence, no one is held in higher esteem than Strasburger.

what had been done (25, 41). Lucian added that Thucydides enacted this law against Herodotus.”<sup>91</sup>

It should be pointed out that Momigliano’s thesis of Thucydides’ repudiation of Herodotus is pivotal to his theory of the distinction between ‘proper history writing’ and antiquarianism in the historiographical culture of the Greeks. “If Herodotus had remained the model historian”, so Momigliano, “there would never have been any antiquarians.”<sup>92</sup>

I do not intend to repeat here what I have argued elsewhere,<sup>93</sup> namely that in spite of all his attempts, Momigliano never succeeded in putting together a fairly convincing case for the view already referred to above that “authors of local history, chronography, genealogy, erudite dissertations, ethnographical works, whatever their merits, did not rank a true historian”. This is, for instance, plainly contradicted by Polybius’ repartition of history writing in three *τρόποι*, which are all considered *μέρη τῆς ἱστορίας*.<sup>94</sup> Thucydidean-style historiography was, indeed, not the only study of the past recognized as historiography.<sup>95</sup> And the real history of ancient historiography cannot be written unless the paternity of Herodotus and his continuing influence is fully acknowledged. Recent research has abundantly demonstrated this; but, let me state it with what Jacoby wrote in one of his very last letters to H. Bloch: “Für mich ist H(erodot) in erster linie immer das was er ist und nach seinen eigenen worten sein will – der erste wirkliche historiker.”<sup>96</sup>

To acknowledge the dual legacy of Herodotus and Thucydides is fundamental and will prove stimulating also to anyone who, wanting to get to know Greek historiography in its full breadth and diversity, ventures into the ruined but plural fields of history writing that are out there in Jacoby’s *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. As O. Murray once wrote, Jacoby was

<sup>91</sup> MOMIGLIANO (1990) 48.

<sup>92</sup> MOMIGLIANO (1990) 59.

<sup>93</sup> SCHEPENS (2006), (2010a).

<sup>94</sup> POLYB. 9, 1-2.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. SCHORN (2021) 22-29; GABBA (1981), (1991) 72.

<sup>96</sup> The letter dates to September 30, 1959.



right in his central insight to include in his fragment collection a broad range of non-fiction prose writings, not just works about the deeds of men, but also mythography, ethnography, chronography, biography, literary history, and geography. The true history of Greek historiography needs to be written on the basis of all those works. That new narrative will be one that breaks out of the narrow ‘Thucydidean’ constraints that for too long have been valued as dominating the whole of history writing in Antiquity. In it, the recording of the history of one’s own time will be valued not as the type of history solely dignified as proper history writing but as a significant option among many others that were valid. Together these practices of history in Jacoby’s five main genres embody, without rigid distinctions, hierarchies or dichotomies, the ‘conglomerated’ whole of ancient historiography.

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## DISCUSSION

*J. Marincola:* One of the things that makes Jacoby's collection unusual is that he conceived of its overarching structure by the types of historical writing (as he saw them) but then he actually arranges fragmentary works not by the work itself but by author, choosing the category in which to place the author by his dominant/most important work. So already with Hecataeus he has under a single author two different types of historical writing, the *Γενεαλογίαι* and the *Περίοδος Γ' ἤς*.

What effect do you think this has on the collection as a whole, and do you think it blunts the main purpose of the collection, which is, as Jacoby himself called it, "das entwicklungsgeschichtliche Prinzip"?

*G. Schepens:* You are right to point out that the generic-developmental principle is at loggerheads with the principle of keeping together the materials attributed to each author. The issue was already discussed right after Jacoby's oral delivery of his plan in 1908. At the very end of the published version of his *Prolegomena* Jacoby comes back to that discussion. For him it is one of the practical editorial questions which will be dealt with in the actual carrying out of the project, namely "wie man sich verhalten soll, wenn ein Autor, was ja in der hellenistischen Zeit häufig ist, in mehreren Gattungen tätig ist" (Jacoby [1909] 122). The solution he proposes is to opt *a parte potiori* for the category in which to place the author. As to the other sections where the author could possibly have been placed, his virtual presence in them, Jacoby argues, will be signalled by using cross-references. He illustrates this way of proceeding with a few cases and concludes that "one can achieve a great deal by references in different places (thus Arrian's name will appear at



least four times), through the general index and the catalogues of authors in the individual volumes; in general, through the whole external organisation". From time to time, of course, one must not shy away from hacking through some Gordian knots. This technical solution to the problem has been actually implemented in the collection as we know it. Characteristic of Jacoby's handling of the issue, in 1908, is that he tends to downsize it to a practical problem to be resolved by technical means.

Fifteen years later, however, when the first volume of the collection is published, the belief that 'externalities of the system' can offset the misleading effect created by the chosen arrangement, does not seem to have survived intact. The whole preface to *FGrHist* I (Berlin 1923) is written in a different tone and, as I have pointed out in more detail in my paper, Jacoby makes no effort to hide his unease or even dissatisfaction with the 'new' arrangement that is being proposed. In my opinion, he wrote this text with in the back of his mind the radically different plan that he had drafted in 1915. In the years following upon the announcement made in 1908/1909, Jacoby had, indeed, given serious thought to a whole range of objections that had been raised against the proposed arrangement. He drew up a new, radically different plan that provided, among other things, for a *substantive* solution of the quandary that we are discussing here: the edition of the historians, in alphabetical order, would be separated from the collection of the historical tradition, presented in an arrangement that did not set out from the names of authors – "nicht von autornamen", as Jacoby duly recalls in the *Preface* (p. VII) – but from the subject matter, ordered in a way similar to the divisions of *FGrHist*: "in der gleichen teilung nach sagen-, zeit-, lokal- und erdgeschichte". As has been explained, E. Meyer prevented the execution of this plan. Left with no other choice than to return to the *Klio*-plan, Jacoby resorted, within these contours, to the old solution. The *Preface* of 1923 repropose the cross-referencing for dealing with the problem that one cannot, of course – "selbstverständlich" – tear apart the historiographical output of an individual

historian. Tellingly, this procedure now prompts the remark: “Ganz ohne gewaltsamkeiten geht das nicht ab”. The problem that bedevilled his undertaking from the very start, was obviously still there. While the arrangement of the fragmentary works by author continued to detract from the logic of “Entwicklungsgeschichte”, this very principle was in the plan presented in 1923 further disturbed by the fact that the generically akin histories *κατὰ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις* were kept together in one category. By that time, Jacoby was under no illusion that he could still uphold the idea that the sequentially-ordered genres would convey the history of their emergence. It must be acknowledged, but rather with than against Jacoby, that the *prolegomena* to the project in *Klio* 1909, with their focus on “Entwicklungsgeschichte”, have lost a great deal of their programmatic value. Jacoby himself later looked back at this text as the ‘intended’ arrangement of the new collection. “Der *Klio*-aufsatz war eben nur ein plan”, as he put it in a letter (25 Nov. 1954) to H. Bloch in answer to latter’s question as to how and when he really started working on the great project.

*B. Bleckmann:* Wenn Autoren, die von den Anfängen bis zur eigenen Gegenwart schreiben, zu den Zeithistorikern gerechnet werden, dann liegt das nicht nur daran, dass dieses letzte Stück besonders ausführlich sein kann, sondern dass es durch Primärforschung erarbeitet ist und damit gewissermaßen als höherwertig gilt, als die vorangehenden aus der Kompilation von Quellen erarbeiteten Passagen zur älteren Geschichte. In diesem Sinne „versagt“ dann auch Ephoros als Zeithistoriker, weil er selbst für die Geschichte der letzten beiden Generationen keine Primärforschung betreibt, sondern umfangreiche zeithistorische Darstellungen benutzt.

*G. Schepens:* Many thanks for making the observation that there is indeed an important methodological factor involved in the bias of many ancient historians to preferably deal with the events of their own times or close to their own times. Their

view of the greater trustworthiness of the methods for getting informed about those events – the means summarized as “Primärforschung”: autopsy and the cross-questioning of direct witnesses – allowed a fuller, more detailed historical narrative. Ephorus engaged in a metahistorical reflection on precisely this point (*FGrHist* 70 F 9). The fact that you drop his name is suitably targeted.

What you point out, however, is not concerned with Ephorus’ theory but with the methods he put in practice for elaborating his large-scale work. You correctly observe that for composing his account of contemporary or near-contemporary history Ephorus used essentially the same method as for recounting the history of the earlier periods: for both periods he draws his information from accounts that had previously been written by the then contemporary historians. Thus, for recounting the events of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the major sources for him were the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, Callisthenes, Dae-machus. The details of his actual method cannot be discussed here, but so much is clear that he did not engage in any significant “Primärforschung”. One can endorse this with Polybius’ testimony; he knew Ephorus’ work very well, appreciated him greatly for various qualities, notably also for his expert treatment of the remotest periods in the history of Hellas, but criticizes him rather harshly for his accounts on the battles of Leuctra and Mantinea (Polyb. 12, 25f: ὅταν δὲ τὴν περὶ Λεῦκτρα μάχην ἐξηγήῃται ... ἢ τὴν ἐν Μαντινείᾳ ..., γελοῖος φαίνεται καὶ παντελῶς ἄπειρος καὶ ἀόρατος τῶν τοιούτων ὄν. That Ephorus did not engage in much original research is still more poignantly ‘documented’ in the accusation of plagiarism raised against him by some ancient critics (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 10, 3).<sup>1</sup> Although the charge is to be taken *cum grano salis*, it puts Ephorus’ substantial borrowings from the works

<sup>1</sup> See MEEUS, A. (2017), “Compilation or Tradition? Some Thoughts on the Methods of Historians and Other Scholars in Antiquity”, *Sacris erudiri* 56, 395-413, esp. 403-406.

of his colleagues Daemachus, Callisthenes, and Anaximenes in evidence.

Having said this, there remains, in my opinion, margin for debate as to whether we should conclude that Ephorus failed as “Zeithistoriker”. Without going into details, I would like to make the following observations. First, the notion “Zeit-historiker”, applied to Ephorus, needs to be put in perspective. In his *Histories* the account about the events of his own time is but the last part of a work on a huge time scale, encompassing 750 years of history. Ancient tradition has it that Isocrates assigned him as historical subject τὰς μὲν ἄνω τῶν χρόνων, while Theopompus was instructed to write about Greek history after Thucydides: τὰς μετὰ Θουκυδίδην Ἑλληνικὰς (*FGrHist* 70 T 3a). Whatever the historical value of this anecdote, it shows what Ephorus’ *Histories* really are: a historical work with a focus on the past. The ancient reception history highlights this as well and makes the modern labelling of this work as *Zeitgeschichte* all the more incomprehensible. For Ephorus, history plays on a field that is much larger than one can recover by being present to the events and the cross-questioning of eyewitnesses. This is what he himself set out to explain, when he made his statement on the superior value of “being personally present at all events” (*FGrHist* 70 F 110) in a contrary-to-fact mode (εἰ δυνάτῳ ᾔην). Second, and closely related to the first point, Ephorus treated events over a larger geographical area than Thucydides. According to Polybius he was the first historian to attempt ‘universal’ history. Such large-scale works can only be written on the basis of the ‘spadework’ that has been done by previous historical writers. The so-called compilatory method is the normal way of working for composing this type of historical work.<sup>2</sup> Third, and last but not least, Ephorus should not be seen as a *mere* compiler. The time that Wilamowitz, Schwartz, and Jacoby did running battle against him is definitely

<sup>2</sup> See BUTTERFIELD, H. (1969), “Narrative and the Spade-Work Behind It”, *History* 53, 165-180 and MEEUS (2017).

over. One of the striking features of Ephorus' historical method is his extensive use of documents.<sup>3</sup>

*N. Luraghi*: I want to return to Professor Bleckmann's remark regarding the importance of historiography based on "Primärforschung" in Jacoby's views of what characterized *Zeitgeschichte*. Momigliano, whose work on early Greek historiography was profoundly influenced by Jacoby's ideas, also insisted on the difference between historiography based on the works of previous historians and historiography based on first-hand experience and the evidence of eyewitnesses. As Koselleck showed in his famous essay *Standortbildung und Zeitlichkeit*, the crisis of the notion of the eyewitness as an ideal source of historical evidence goes back to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – he traces it to the work of Johann Martin Chladenius. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Droysen's *Historik* has scathing remarks on the value and authority of the eyewitness. This is the intellectual background against which Jacoby articulated his notion of *Zeitgeschichte*, in the footsteps of Schwartz and Wilamowitz, as you have shown us. Now, in the case of Wilamowitz one may wonder whether his idea that the Greeks focused on the very recent past as the best subject matter for historiography because they were not really interested in the distant past might not have been indebted to a scholar whose influence Wilamowitz would certainly never acknowledge, namely Nietzsche. I wish our mutual friend Albert Henrichs were still here to help with this question. In any case, Jacoby did think that Thucydides represented the high point of Greek historiography, after which there had been only decadence. I suppose my question would be, to what extent was Jacoby's idea of

<sup>3</sup> See SCHEPENS, G. (2003), "L'apport des documents dans la méthode historique d'Éphore", in A.M. BIRASCHI *et al.* (eds.), *L'uso dei documenti nella storiografia antica* (Perugia), 331-365. For Ephorus' rehabilitation in general, see PARMEGGIANI (2011) and the numerous contributions in DE FIDIO, P. / TALAMO, C. (eds.) (2013), *Eforo di Cuma nella storia della storiografia greca* (= *PP* 68-69) (Napoli).

the *Zeitgeschichte* of the Greeks based on methodology, namely on the opposition between primary and derivative historiography, and to what extent, along the lines of Wilamowitz, on the mentality of the Greeks, on their notions of temporality and historicity, such as they might have been.

*G. Schepens*: Like all students of ancient historiography Momigliano owed a great debt to Jacoby. It was certainly from him, as you suggested, that he picked up the idea that the development of history writing in Greece reached its zenith in Thucydides' work, and that from then on, *Zeitgeschichte* was prevalent during the whole of ancient historiography. Regarding Jacoby himself, however, I have my doubts whether he was still fully behind such a view later in his career, especially when he got intensely involved in studying the demonstrably popular and extremely numerous Greek local histories.<sup>4</sup> Looking back, in *Atthis* (1949, 382 n. 10), at the early stage in his career when he was drawing up the conceptual framework for his fragment collection, he points out that he "was then too much under the influence of Wilamowitz and Schwartz". Already in his commentary on Ephorus Jacoby distanced himself from Schwartz' conviction that *Zeitgeschichte* was for all historians the really important thing: "derartige verallgemeinerungen schaden nur", he observed (*FGrHist* IIC, Berlin 1926, 30). With regard to Wilamowitz' view, incorporated as conceptual freight into his notion of *Zeitgeschichte* – "was wir historische forschung und kritik nennen, kennt das altertum nicht" – he later remarked that "Wilamowitz starts from the modern concept of historical criticism ... thus failing to recognize that very element which in Hellas produced the phenomenon of the individual historian" (Jacoby [1949] 381 n. 6). In this connection, it may also be worth noting that Jacoby, in his Oxford years, no longer uses the duplicitous and untranslatable term *Zeitgeschichte* and refers to the historical works in question as 'Great historiography'

<sup>4</sup> THOMAS (2019).

or, sometimes *Hellenica*. The new nomenclature puts this whole class of writings, with reference to another (and in my opinion, more appropriate) parameter, in contradistinction to the 'particular' but not therefore less important city- or region-based forms of history writing.

With regard to Momigliano's reception of the notion of *Zeitgeschichte*, I would be rather inclined to emphasize that he did very much his own thing with Jacoby's legacy.<sup>5</sup> I cannot enter into details here, but I want to make two observations. Jacoby, in spite of the statements made in "Griechische Geschichtsschreibung" (1926), never tended to position *Zeitgeschichte* as history 'proper' in contradistinction to 'antiquarianism' and at the expense of the other historiographical genres. Nor would he ever have thought of playing down the influence of Herodotus on subsequent Greek history writing by trying to include him in the narrow and unilateral Thucydidean paradigm of contemporary political and military history writing.<sup>6</sup>

The question you raise with regard to the possible, unacknowledged, influence Nietzsche might have had on Wilamowitz' presentist view of Greek history, sounds somewhat surprising to me, but is certainly worthy of consideration. Diffuse influence is not, a priori, unlikely and through Wilamowitz it might have affected Jacoby as well. To the best of my knowledge, however, Jacoby nowhere makes any reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*. And it would, in my opinion, have been curious if he had looked for inspiration in that direction. Nietzsche privileged *Zeitgeschichte* for reasons that are at odds with the academic discourse of the historians who, in the *Sattelzeit*, defined the notion and the field of history in terms that excluded the reporting on contemporary events from 'scientific' history. Speaking about Nietzsche, I would suggest that a possibly more meaningful connection to him could be made over the idea of "Klassische Philologie" as

<sup>5</sup> More detail in SCHEPENS (2006) and (2010).

<sup>6</sup> See MOMIGLIANO (1978).

“Leitwissenschaft”. This is a view which Nietzsche, Wilamowitz and Jacoby certainly had in common. Jacoby made a principled stand of being regarded, particularly in his work on the Greek historians, as a classical philologist. The year after he had arrived in Oxford, he wrote in a letter to Bloch (August 17, 1939): “man hält mich hier auch für einen historiker, was ich nicht bin”; in this context we also learn about the subject that he would have preferred, above Greek history, for his first semester course: “über die eigene arbeit philologie treiben und dichter lesen.” His trust in what could be achieved through systematic text interpretation was undoubtedly great. We may see that reflected in the assurance with which he proposed to use the genre definitions derived from his own analysis of the literary form of the variegated types of history writing, as “the only truly scientifically founded” ordering principle for his collection of the fragments (Jacoby [1909] 83): a bold choice which met, especially in Italy, with a certain amount of scepticism.<sup>7</sup>

Momigliano admired Jacoby’s fragment collection as the greatest *philological* achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an interpreter of historiography, however, Jacoby had, in his opinion, been too less concerned which seeking to determine the religious, moral, political and social views of ancient historians.<sup>8</sup> This may be true, but it should, in all fairness, be noted that one cannot really expect these views to be explored within the framework of a fragment collection. Jacoby always maintained, and with good reason, that his edition of and commentary on the fragments was only meant to be “vorarbeit” for the in-depth study of Greek historiography in all its aspects. He

<sup>7</sup> On the part of G. DE SANCTIS, *RFIC* 6 (1928) 532-541; cf. DI DONATO, R. (2009), “Lo Jacoby di Arnaldo Momigliano”, in AMPOLO (2009) 31-43. Cf. also MOMIGLIANO (1966) 248: “When I was a student it seemed almost inconceivable that Felix Jacoby should have organized his collection of the fragments of the Greek historians not in chronological order, but by literary genres. How could a historian of historiography ignore the principle of chronology in assembling his material?”

<sup>8</sup> DI DONATO (2009) 38-40.



deliberately left to others the writing of such monographs. As we do not have at our disposal Jacoby's synthetic and mature answers to the questions you ask about his views on the Greek historians' methods for writing original and derivative histories, on their mentality, notions of temporality and historicity, I prefer to leave them unanswered. It would moreover be impossible to discuss them in a nutshell.

*E.-M. Becker*: Thank you for an inspiring paper. If you were to provide to us a preliminary definition of *Zeitgeschichte* from your point of view of looking at the Jacoby-Meyer controversy on the one hand, and your reading of ancient historians on the other: what definition would you propose? You yourself have suggested to see *Zeitgeschichtsschreibung* as a kind of a practice. How would a more precise definition look like, and how would such a concept of *Zeitgeschichte* be different from contemporary history/"histoire contemporaine"?

*G. Schepens*: Trying to describe what *Zeitgeschichte* meant to the ancient historians, we must, in my view, make a clear distinction between Jacoby's delineation of the concept, on the one hand, and what our actual reading of the ancient historians reveals, on the other. In so far, the observation that the term (which Jacoby himself ceased using in his later years!) proves "inapplicable to the greater number of Greco-Roman historians" (Fornara [1983] 3) seems appropriate. As I have argued in my paper, Jacoby's *Zeitgeschichte* is a self-coined term created for the purpose of organizing his fragment collection and one with an indeterminate large timespan that is at odds with the agreed upon meaning of the concept in modern contemporary history writing. Applied to ancient historiography the term as used by Jacoby often requires on the part of the student a counterintuitive understanding; it would therefore be helpful if, in modern publications which discuss Jacoby's notion, we should stop the widespread blanket glossing of *Zeitgeschichte* as contemporary history. It also seems preferable to me to

approach *Zeitgeschichte* as a practice of the ancient historians rather than a genre, because one finds treatment of the historian's present time as a fixture across different historiographical genres, in 'ethnographies' for instance, and, quite significantly in local histories, some of which were written with a broader scope. Refusing to consider contemporary history as a separate genre enlarges the field for research and yields important potential for fresh perspectives and enhanced historiographical understanding, not least also of the blurring boundaries of genre.

You ask me how a more precise definition of *Zeitgeschichte* would look like if we examine the practices of the ancient historians. Thinking of what R. Koselleck once wrote – "*Zeitgeschichte* is a nice word but a difficult concept"<sup>9</sup> – it may be tricky to try to answer your question briefly and regardless of the varying practices. Even now, sixty years after the resumption of research activities in the field of modern *Zeitgeschichte*, there still is among theoreticians of history no generally accepted consensus on its epochal delimitation, thematic profile or methodological foundation. Any attempt at delineating 'current history' proves difficult: one way or another, it always amounts to pinning down a moving target with a notional existence between the past and the future.

What I can do is briefly mention the two principles which in the practices of the ancient historians are operative in their delineation of the timespan or field of contemporary history. In a manner that is not really different from what today practitioners of *Zeitgeschichte* do, they constitute contemporary history as a field by either putting forward principles of method or focusing on the special importance of the events that make it into a distinct period of time. In practice, of course, the criteria of the higher reliability of the sources and of the special importance attributed to the events closely operate together and

<sup>9</sup> KOSELLECK, R. (2000), *Zeitgeschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt a.M.), 246.

often overlap. Polybius illustrates this in the motivation he presents for his choice of subject:

“It falls within my own and the preceding generation, so that I have been present at some of the events and have the testimony of eyewitnesses for others. It seemed to me indeed that if I comprised events of an earlier date, repeating mere hearsay evidence, I should be safe neither in my estimates nor in my assertions. But my chief reason for beginning at this date, was that Fortune had then so to speak rebuilt the world.” (Polyb. 4, 2, 2-3)

For extending his narrative with ten more books Polybius gives a comparable justification but with the difference that he lets the methodological argument about his personal involvement in the events (not just as an eyewitness but as an active participant, even in a leading role) prevail over the disturbance and upheaval that make the events leading up to the Roman destruction of Carthage and Corinth particularly noteworthy (Polyb. 3, 4, 12-13).

*H. Inglebert*: Ma question sur ta communication complète celle d’Ève-Marie : si l’histoire doit être définie par ses pratiques, quelles sont celles de l’écriture de l’histoire du temps présent dans l’Antiquité, qui permettraient de distinguer, à partir de Ernst 1957, la *Zeit/Gegenwarts-Geschichte* et la *Vergangenheitsgeschichte* ?

*G. Schepens*: What does impel an ancient author to write not just history but history of the present? The two main reasons for that have already been outlined indirectly in my previous answer to E.-M. Becker’s question: because in the ancient world that segment of history tended to be valued as distinctive both as a *period* and as a *methodology*.

As to historical method first, it does no longer need to be argued that Greco-Roman historians held the view that occurrences of their own times or close to their own times could be narrated with greater reliability compared to those of more remote times. To put it in the terms of H. Strasburger’s

“Wesensbestimmung der Geschichte durch die antike Geschichtsschreibung”, the ancient historians were masters in the “Kunst der Primärforschung”: historical fieldwork, the collection of information firsthand, by autopsy travel and inquiry qualitatively prevails over the “Sekundärarbeit nach schriftlichen Quellen”. This tradition of making a distinction, essential to historical method, between direct and indirect or derivative sources of information was established early on in the Greek world in the still predominantly oral culture at the end of the archaic period and the beginning of classical era. I have discussed this topic since my dissertation on autopsy, in several papers and, for a succinct overview I may refer to “History and *Historia*: Inquiry in the Greek Historians” published in J. Marincola’s great *Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*. Since the relationship between historiography’s claim to truth and its critical method was fundamental to ancient history writing,<sup>10</sup> half of your question has been answered, in a general way at least.

We still have to look at the substantive part of the question as to why ancient historians considered it important or even necessary to write history of their own time. Polybius, always intent on clarifying and justifying his working methods and choices, is my guide for an answer in four points, the first three of which are formally adduced by himself.

We take our start from *συμπλοκή*. This well-known cornerstone of Polybius’ historiographical theory is key to his view of the difference between the ‘present’ and the ‘past’. The ‘present time’ of his *Histories* detaches itself from previous historical

<sup>10</sup> Splendidly confirmed by *P. Oxy.* 4808: see SCHORN, S. (2013), “Überlegungen zu *POxy* LXXI 4808”, *RFIC* 141,105-122, with my supplement “Die Rolle der Wahrheit und der aktiven Teilnahme des Geschichtsschreibers am historischen Geschehen”. On the efforts in the search for truth, see MEEUS, A. (2020), “Truth, Method and the Historian’s Character: The Epistemic Virtues of Greek and Roman Historians”, in A. TURNER (ed.), *Reconciling Ancient and Modern Philosophies of History* (Berlin), 83-122. Pace MOMIGLIANO (1972) 282 the principles of method put forward by the historians in motivation of their choice should not be belittled as “merely an additional motive”.

time by the convergence of events and peoples of the known world. This becomes for the first time manifest in the 140<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (220-216 BC) and it is at that point, when the contours of his own time began to take shape, that Polybius cuts into the course of events and separates *Gegenwartsgeschichte* from *Vergangenheitsgeschichte*. He gives his reason for the beginning of his narrative as follows:

“Up to this time (ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς πρὸ τούτων χρόνοις) the world’s history had been, so to speak, a series of disconnected (ὡσανεὶ σποράδας) transactions, as widely separated in their origin and results as in their localities. But from this time forth (ἀπὸ δὲ τούτων τῶν καιρῶν) history becomes a connected whole: the affairs of Italy and Libya are involved (συμπλέκεσθαι) with those of Asia and Greece, and the tendency of all is to unity. This is why I have fixed upon this era as the starting-point of my work.” (Polyb. 1, 3, 3-4)

*Telos* of history’s new beginning is the unexpected and amazing establishment, after only 53 years, of the supremacy of Rome.

In the Preface to book IX Polybius highlights with the verb *καινοποιεῖσθαι* the importance of the *original* work done by the contemporary historian: he writes to meet the need for record. “Because new events are constantly occurring, new narratives need to be written.” To make his point Polybius even uses the devastatingly simple argument that the ancients could not yet narrate events subsequent to their time (Polyb. 9, 2, 4). At Polyb. 1, 4 it is more sensibly noted that important events need to be recorded so that they do not pass into oblivion. Yet, the real challenge, he proudly announces, is to compose new kind of history that would be up to the unique and amazing character of the events of the time in which he lived: a treatise of universal history.

Still another feature highlighted as “the special characteristic of his present age” (τοῦτο γὰρ ἰδιόν ἐστι τῶν νῦν καιρῶν) is the scientific and cultural progress that has been attained. Rome’s conquest of the world has opened up every sea and every land:

especially for the Greeks, who are no longer politically active, this offers unprecedented possibilities for scientific research (Polyb. 4, 40, 2-3; 3, 58, 2 - 59, 3). Polybius reiterates this idea in 9, 2, 5 in the context of his argument in favour of his choice for contemporary history, stating that “progress” (προκοπή) significantly enhances the practical utility of such a history: formerly it already had the greatest utility of all types of history and pre-eminently so now (πάντων ὠφελιμώτατον αὐτὸν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μέν, μάλιστα δὲ νῦν), “when the arts and sciences have advanced to such a degree that those who love learning can deal scientifically, one might say, with any emergency that arises” (trans. Marincola)<sup>11</sup>. Such history is much more useful than the repetition of history of the past (Polyb. 9, 2, 2).

To these reasons for prioritising the writing contemporary history over history of former times, one may add a fourth motive not put forward for rather obvious reasons by Polybius himself. In his paper “Polibio, straniero a Roma”, P. Desideri has persuasively suggested that our Megalopolitan historian may also have composed his *Histories* in an attempt to come to terms with what had, so disruptively and dramatically at first, happened to him personally. Polybius represents the case of the political man converted, as a consequence of his deportation to Rome, into a historian: “con queste premesse l’attività storiografica, in quanto integrazione o complemento della politica, non può che essere rivolta verso il contemporaneo.”<sup>12</sup>

*R. Nicolai:* Guido Schepens ha affermato giustamente che la storia contemporanea tucididea era una tra molte opzioni valide: è una prospettiva del tutto opposta a quella di Momigliano che in fondo svalutava tutte le altre forme di conservazione della memoria storica. Ed è una prospettiva che si avvicina a quella del *Pensiero storico classico* di Santo Mazzarino, un’opera che ha

<sup>11</sup> MARINCOLA, J. (2017), *On Writing History from Herodotus to Herodian* (Harmondsworth).

<sup>12</sup> DESIDERI, P. (2009), “Polibio, straniero a Roma”, in S. CONTI / B. SCARDIGLI (eds.) (2009), *Stranieri a Roma* (Ancona), 15-35; esp. 21.

festeggiato poco tempo fa i cinquant'anni dalla pubblicazione e che rimane ancora una miniera di idee e di spunti.

Nella relazione è stata impiegata molte volte la parola 'genere'. Per questo motivo mi vorrei brevemente soffermare sul problema della nozione di genere letterario applicata a generi non legati a una specifica occasione di esecuzione, come erano le opere che trattavano la materia storica. In generale si può dire che la storiografia emerge nella seconda metà del V secolo a.C., quando si allentano i vincoli, le leggi, dei generi letterari: per questo motivo le forme con cui viene trattata la materia storica possono essere molto diverse tra loro, come si può riscontrare facilmente, ad esempio, nel *corpus* di Senofonte. Sulle leggi dei generi letterari il rinvio d'obbligo è allo studio epocale di Luigi Enrico Rossi, *BICS* 1971.

*G. Schepens*: First of all, many thanks for re-emphasizing once more that "ancient historiography is not a homogeneous whole, with a limited internal evolution".<sup>13</sup> I fully agree: we cannot do justice to the rich and varied practice of history writing in Antiquity by limiting ourselves to a few great historians regarded as canonical. In this connection you rightly recall the kaleidoscopic picture that Santo Mazzarino has drawn of ancient historiography. His study is based on the whole corpus of texts, made available among other things by the *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, yet without in fact being guided by Jacoby's framework in his approach or interpretation. His three volumes fittingly bear the notion "pensiero" in their title. In his attempt to grasp how history was thought about in the ancient world and how the historians contributed to shaping culture and literature, Mazzarino did not restrict himself to examining the evidence of what we strictly call 'historiography'; he thought it no less noteworthy to look for what poets or philosophers had to say. In line with this is, for instance, the

<sup>13</sup> See NICOLAI, R. (2007), "The Place of History in the Ancient World", in MARINCOLA (2007), 13-26.

likely suggestion that Anaximenes owed the inspiration for the idea of the unity of all men which possibly underlies his ‘universalistic’ approach to history-writing, to his connection with cynical philosophy.

In his own way Jacoby sharpened the focus on the diversity of Greek historiography by setting great store on the genre distinctions which, he believed, could be identified. As you observe, such an endeavour poses a particular challenge in the case of a literary genre that is not linked to a specific occasion of performance. Historical works were, as a rule, not written for a given occasion.<sup>14</sup> Yet, there were historians who travelled from city to city, one could almost say, in search for an occasion. On them Polybius makes the disparaging comment that they “gained their living by their pens” (Polyb. 12, 25e) and, to that end, made deliberate misstatements in the interest of the audiences by which they were, in several cases known to us, officially commissioned to compose and to perform their works.<sup>15</sup> Here the ‘civic arena’ provides the historian with a specific setting and purpose.<sup>16</sup> A specimen of such a work is the history of Philippus of Pergamon (*FGrHist* 95 T 1): it was possibly written and performed for a commemoration, at Epidaurus, of the disasters caused by the Roman civil wars at the end of the Republic. We know the author and the subject dealt with thanks to an honorific inscription that includes an epigram and the prologue of his work: it described “all kinds of suffering and continuous mutual slaughter through Asia and Europe and the nations of Africa and the cities of the islanders that have occurred in our

<sup>14</sup> As pointed out by MOMIGLIANO, A. (1978), “The Historians of the Classical World and Their Audiences: Some Suggestions”, *ASNSP* serie III 8, 59-75.

<sup>15</sup> CHANIOTIS (1988) draws the fascinating panorama; see also CHANIOTIS, A. (2009), “Travelling Memories in the Hellenistic World”, in R. HUNTER / I. RUTHERFORD (eds.), *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture. Travel, Locality and Pan-Hellenism* (Cambridge), 249-269; SCHEPENS, G. (2006), “Travelling Greek Historians”, in M.G. BERTINELLI / A. DONATI (eds.), *Le vie della storia. Migrazioni di popoli, viaggi di individui, circolazione di idee nel Mediterraneo antico* (Rome), 81-102.

<sup>16</sup> THOMAS (2019) 56-73.



time (καθ' ἡμέρας)" (trans. Jones)<sup>17</sup>. It is a striking example of a work of contemporary history (περὶ τῶν καινῶν πρῆξεων ἱστορίην) concerned with telling the story of "the latest catastrophe".

If historical works were, nevertheless, in most cases not written for a special occasion, it remains an important and still understudied fact that the Greek historians wrote their *Histories* with a target audience in mind. Polybius mentions this in his introduction to book IX, where he discusses the options that are open to anyone wanting to write a historical work. His succinct conspectus divides historical literature into three great classes according to the interconnected criteria of the periods of history one can deal with (μέρη τῆς ἱστορίας), the corresponding types of historiographical works (τρόποι τῆς ἱστορίας) and the different interests of the readers/listeners (ἀκροαταί) that are associated with each of those periods and types of work. This is not the place for any detailed discussion of this highly interesting text but I cannot resist pointing out that Jacoby could have availed himself – to good effect, in my opinion – of this ready-made *ancient* classification for structuring his fragment collection. One may wonder why he showed no interest. I surmise that, at the time when he was drawing up his plan, the *systematic* arrangement proposed by Polybius failed to suit what was then his main purpose: to embody into the structure of *FGrHist* his own *historico-developmental* view of Greek historiography.

<sup>17</sup> JONES, C. (2020), "The Historian Philip of Pergamon", *JHS* 140, 120-127.



## II

ROBERTO NICOLAI

### LA MONOGRAFIA SU UNA GUERRA: DAL CICLO EPICO AL CICLO STORICO

#### ABSTRACT

This contribution aims at a better definition of the relations between epic poetry and historiography. Epic poetry has offered historiography models for structures at various levels spanning from macro-structures comprising actions (*erga*) and speeches (*logoi*) to large narrative arrangements and typical scenes that include recurring motifs. The analysis concerns mainly the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC historiography to Xenophon, in particular to the *Anabasis*, an innovative work that embeds encomiastic and technical themes into a narrative structure of *erga* and *logoi*. In the last section the focus shifts to ancient theory for historiography and, in particular, to the definition of form and content of historiography in Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

#### 1. L'epica modello della storiografia

Le opere di storiografia dedicate alla storia recente e contemporanea hanno spesso assunto la forma di una monografia, in particolare quelle che si sono concentrate su una guerra epocale. Per questo motivo è importante esaminare quali modelli letterari avevano a disposizione gli storici e in quali forme se ne sono serviti.

Se potessimo, per assurdo, chiedere a un Greco del V secolo a.C. quale sia la prima opera dedicata al racconto di una guerra che gli venga in mente, non avrebbe alcuna esitazione a rispondere:

*Iliade*.<sup>1</sup> Una simile risposta deve essersela data anche Erodoto quando si è accinto a narrare il conflitto tra Grecia e Asia.<sup>2</sup> Erodoto aveva di fronte un epos fissato in cicli, destinati alle esecuzioni nelle feste, all'interno dei quali spiccavano due monumenti di particolare estensione e qualità: *Iliade* e *Odissea*. Il ciclo troiano, in particolare, prendeva le mosse dagli antefatti più lontani della guerra di Troia, il giudizio di Paride narrato nei *Kypria*, per giungere fino ai *nostoi* degli eroi achei. Erodoto, sia pure in forme diverse, muove da antefatti remoti (1, 1, 1 - 1, 5, 2: i rapimenti di donne, Elena compresa) e li distingue dalle vicende del primo che mosse guerra ai Greci, Creso (1, 5, 3). La storia della progressiva espansione dell'impero persiano, con tutti i *logoi* dedicati alle singole regioni con cui i Persiani erano venuti a contatto (libri I-IV), precede la sezione dell'opera dedicata alle guerre persiane, a partire dalla rivolta ionica (libri V-IX), all'interno della quale si può isolare l'ampia trattazione della seconda guerra persiana (libri VII-IX). Che il racconto della seconda guerra persiana sia una sezione fortemente unitaria, in qualche misura una monografia,<sup>3</sup> risulta chiaramente dai segnali che Erodoto lascia soprattutto nel libro VII. Erodoto quindi plasma la sua opera come una sorta di ciclo all'interno

<sup>1</sup> Vd. ROOD (2007) 153: "Historians' accounts of wars were all written under the shadow of the *Iliad*".

<sup>2</sup> Vd. RENGAKOS (2006) 184: "There was only one model Herodotus could look to for the composition and structure of the purely narrative parts of his historical work, and this was the Homeric epic, a continuous narrative of comparable extent". Vd. anche BARAGWANATH (2008) 35: fino al tempo di Erodoto i poeti erano stati gli unici a esplorare il passato e, per l'opera che Erodoto voleva realizzare, Omero era il solo modello disponibile. La letteratura sul rapporto tra Erodoto, e più in generale la storiografia, e Omero è molto ricca e mi limito ad alcuni dei contributi più importanti: HUBER (1965); STRASBURGER (1972); GRIFFIN (1990); ROMM (1998) 12-31; BOEDEKER (2002); PELLING (2006); RENGAKOS (2006); RUTHERFORD (2012). Non ho potuto tener conto degli importanti contributi nel supplemento 14 di *Histos* pubblicato mentre il mio lavoro era già in bozze: MATIJAŠIĆ, I. (a c. di) (2022), *Herodotus – The Most Homeric Historian?*, <<https://histos.org/SV14MatijašićHerodotusTheMostHomericHistorian.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Sulla difficoltà di applicare alla storiografia antica il moderno concetto di monografia vd. le giuste considerazioni di ROOD (2007), specialmente 148.

del quale emerge la seconda guerra persiana, la sua *Iliade* rovesciata, con i popoli dell'Asia che invadono la Grecia e vengono respinti. Il paragone con l'epos è particolarmente utile per comprendere le modalità di pubblicazione di un'opera come quella di Erodoto che non era destinata a una specifica occasione, ma che aveva una pluralità di occasioni di pubblicazione aurale e si avvaleva anche del canale scrittorio. È verosimile che singole *akroaseis* fossero limitate a singoli *logoi* o a insiemi di *logoi*, ma non si può escludere che vi fossero anche recitazioni dell'intera opera, analogamente a quello che accadeva con il ciclo troiano alle Panatenee.<sup>4</sup> Analogamente possiamo pensare che la pubblicazione scritta avesse una flessibilità ben maggiore di quella alla quale siamo abituati: non si può escludere la circolazione di sezioni più o meno estese accanto alla redazione integrale. Al tempo stesso l'inizio e la fine dell'opera di Erodoto ci rassicurano sull'organicità del progetto: in particolare la conclusione è una solenne *gnomè* che si incide nella mente degli ascoltatori/lettori e che chiude un cerchio iniziato con il proemio.

Se l'opera di Erodoto si può paragonare, con le dovute differenze, al ciclo troiano e si può considerare una sorta di ciclo persiano, con la grande sezione 'monografica' dedicata alla seconda guerra persiana, il racconto tucidideo della guerra del Peloponneso è più vicino all'*Iliade*, anche se l'arco temporale che affronta è di gran lunga maggiore. Tucidide aveva previsto di narrare una guerra di ventisette anni, fermandosi poi al 411 a.C., mentre l'*Iliade*, pur alludendo a più riprese all'intera vicenda troiana,<sup>5</sup> si limita a cinquanta giorni dell'ultimo anno della guerra di Troia.

<sup>4</sup> Vd. SBARDELLA (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Questo punto è evidenziato da RENGAKOS (2006) 187, che afferma che l'*Iliade* è una rappresentazione dell'intera guerra di Troia e l'*Odissea* dei *nostoi* degli eroi achei, incluso quello di Odisseo, e che lo scopo di Erodoto non è limitato alla materia dell'opera, la guerra tra Greci e Persiani, ma comprende il passato recente e quello più lontano dei popoli più importanti del mondo conosciuto.

Che il confronto con l'epos non derivi soltanto dal fatto che l'*Iliade* era il modello per eccellenza di narrazione di una guerra, ma sia ricercato e voluto dagli storici, è provato dalle esplicite dichiarazioni degli storici stessi, su cui mi soffermerò brevemente più oltre.<sup>6</sup> Ma al di là di singole formulazioni, sono le intere sezioni proemiali a confermarlo. Nel caso di Erodoto il confronto con l'epos è più mediato, filtrato attraverso la scelta di raccontare la sequenza di rapimenti di donne sulla base di presunte fonti persiane e fenicie, mentre nel caso di Tucidide è più diretto, con l'*Archaiologia* che pretende di essere una narrazione affidabile, per quanto possibile data la distanza cronologica, della storia che va dalle origini più remote alle guerre persiane. All'interno di questa narrazione Tucidide dà ampio spazio all'analisi della guerra di Troia, basandosi, come era inevitabile, sull'epos e ridimensionando l'entità di quel conflitto.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Scene tipiche, *narrative patterns* e motivi

Quello che ho cercato brevemente di mostrare è che il modello epico è un ipotesto indispensabile per la storiografia di Erodoto e di Tucidide. Che l'*Iliade* sia un archetipo per buona parte della letteratura greca, e non soltanto, è ben noto. Estendendo il detto attribuito a Eschilo si può dire che tutto quello che è venuto dopo i poemi omerici sono briciole del grande banchetto di Omero. Non arriverò ad affermare, con Raymond Queneau che ogni opera letteraria è un'*Iliade* o un'*Odisea*: questa affermazione, in parte paradossale, si riferisce alle macrostrutture del conflitto e del viaggio. Quello che cercherò di proporre è un'analisi a livello di strutture più piccole, quelle che Walter Arend ha chiamato "scene tipiche", talvolta aggregate

<sup>6</sup> Vd. MURRAY (21988) 463: le somiglianze di Erodoto con Omero fanno parte di un consapevole tentativo di presentare la storia delle guerre persiane come una nuova guerra di Troia.

<sup>7</sup> Sull'*Archaiologia* rinvio a NICOLAI (2001a).

tra loro a formare uno *story pattern*<sup>8</sup> o *narrative pattern*, allo scopo di mostrare come la storiografia, di fronte alla necessità di narrare una guerra, si sia rivolta al modello più noto e insieme più alto: i poemi omerici e in particolare l'*Iliade*.

Edwards ha definito la scena tipica “a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure, such as a sacrifice, the reception of a guest, the launching and beaching of a ship, the donning of armor”,<sup>9</sup> e l’ha distinta da altre strutture narrative di maggiore e minore estensione. Non mi soffermo sui diversi termini proposti per indicare le varie strutture narrative e sulle interazioni della metodologia di analisi fondata sulle scene tipiche con la narratologia.<sup>10</sup> In questa sede mi interessa in particolare distinguere la scena tipica da strutture di maggiore e di minore estensione. Per quanto riguarda le strutture più ampie, si può ricorrere, come ho detto poco fa, al nesso *story pattern* o *narrative pattern*, che, secondo Edwards, indica “a recurrent structure of plot, of the type associated particularly with Vladimir Propp (1968; first published 1926). Among the most familiar of these is the ‘withdrawal, devastation, return’ pattern, easily traceable in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*”.<sup>11</sup> Strutture di minore estensione rispetto alle scene tipiche sono i motivi, che possono concorrere a formare una scena tipica. Per usare le parole di Edwards, “Any recurrent small-scale item (a trope, a topos) that does not fit well within either of the above terms may conveniently be termed a motif”.<sup>12</sup>

Un’analisi condotta sui tre gradi, *story pattern*, scena tipica, motivo, permette di superare il livello impressionistico e anche

<sup>8</sup> Il nesso “traditional story-patterns” e il termine *pattern* sono impiegati da PELLING (2006) specialmente 84, a proposito del rapporto di Erodoto con Omero, ma in un’accezione più generica rispetto a quella proposta da Edwards, che è incardinata nella metodologia di indagine fondata sulle scene tipiche.

<sup>9</sup> EDWARDS (1992) 285.

<sup>10</sup> Sulla tecnica narrativa omerica ripresa da Erodoto e Tuciddide vd. soprattutto RENGAKOS (2006).

<sup>11</sup> EDWARDS (1992) 286.

<sup>12</sup> EDWARDS (1992) 286. Le due strutture a cui si riferisce sono la scena tipica e lo *story pattern* o *narrative pattern*.

la ricerca di citazioni e allusioni puntuali, andando a cogliere la *ratio* profonda del rapporto tra gli storici e l'epos omerico. Molto opportunamente John Marincola parla in termini di *patterning*: "Although it would be an exaggeration to speak of Herodotean formulae, it is nevertheless undeniable that patterning is an important part of the way Herodotus structures his work and integrates the particularity of historical events into the universality of the lessons to be learnt from the past."<sup>13</sup>

La storiografia condivide alcune funzioni con la poesia epica, ma ne sviluppa di nuove e diverse. In termini molto generali si può dire che epica e storiografia condividono lo scopo di narrare vicende caratterizzate da grandezza ed eccezionalità<sup>14</sup> e che offrono lo spunto per proporre paradigmi di comportamento e di discorso. La funzione paideutica è certamente comune a entrambi i generi, ma è declinata in forme molto diverse secondo i generi e secondo gli obiettivi che gli autori si propongono. Se il poema epico, secondo la celebre definizione di Lotman, è un "libro di cultura" nel quale vengono proposti al pubblico, attraverso i comportamenti degli eroi, i valori condivisi dalla comunità, la storiografia, già quando muove i primi passi, prende strade diverse. Erodoto propone paradigmi prevalentemente etici o etico-politici, volti a mostrare la mutevolezza delle sorti umane e la necessità di non superare i limiti imposti all'azione degli uomini. I paradigmi di Tucidide sono, invece, prevalentemente tecnici, volti a formare una classe dirigente competente in ambito politico e militare attraverso l'esempio delle vicende occorse nella guerra più grande che si sia combattuta fino a quel momento. La natura tecnica dell'opera di Tucidide ha comportato quella necessità di un'accurata ricerca, dichiarata nel passo programmatico (1, 22), che ha indotto tanti studiosi moderni a considerarlo, erroneamente, come un nostro collega. Ancora diversa sarà la strada intrapresa da Senofonte, che sperimenterà generi diversi di contenuto storico per proporre il proprio messaggio paideutico.

<sup>13</sup> MARINCOLA (2018) 4.

<sup>14</sup> Vd. CANFORA (1972).



Il passo programmatico di Tucidide chiarisce quali sono i principali contenuti della sua opera: λόγοι ed ἔργα. E λόγοι ed ἔργα sono anche i due principali contenuti della storiografia di Erodoto e, con poche eccezioni, della storiografia successiva a Tucidide. Sui discorsi, che presentano specifici problemi di definizione in termini di scene tipiche, mi soffermerò più oltre, ma posso anticipare che i discorsi degli storici presentano elementi ricorrenti presenti anche nell'epos. Meno problematica appare la sfera degli ἔργα, alla quale appartengono scene tipiche omeriche (classificate da Edwards in scene di battaglia, di rapporti sociali, di viaggio e di rituali religiosi) che sono state riprese e adattate in storiografia.

Una premessa è indispensabile. La narrazione di ἔργα ha alla base gli ἔργα stessi, le azioni degli uomini che possono seguire un andamento più o meno simile, anche in contesti diversi.<sup>15</sup> Alcuni punti di contatto insomma derivano dal fatto che a essere simili sono le vicende narrate. Quello che mi interessa sono le forme narrative impiegate dai poeti epici e dagli storici, mediante le quali le vicende sono incastonate in uno schema che in tutto o in parte si ripete indipendentemente dal reale svolgimento dei fatti: lo schema si ripete perché un determinato fatto viene abitualmente narrato in un determinato modo. All'interno dello schema, la scena tipica, il poeta epico, che fa uso di formule, usa spesso le stesse parole o gli stessi versi formulari per proporre quelle strutture di minor estensione che, con Edwards, ho chiamato motivi. Diverso è ovviamente il comportamento degli storici che adattano le scene tipiche omeriche a un genere diverso, per giunta prosastico e non poetico, e naturalmente non fanno uso di formule.<sup>16</sup> Non posso soffermarmi sul problema

<sup>15</sup> Si veda in proposito la formulazione di MARTIN (1989) 45: "Homer would not have 'traditional scenes' if it were not traditional for actual Greek warriors to arm, fight, eat, sleep, and die."

<sup>16</sup> La possibilità di usare lo strumento della scena tipica per analizzare la storiografia è suggerita da RUTHERFORD (2012). Si veda specialmente p. 25 sulle scene di dialogo tra Serse e i suoi *wise advisers*; si veda anche p. 29 per la ripresa tucididea della figura del *wise adviser*, che in Tucidide è sempre direttamente coinvolto nell'azione. Non mi occuperò di riprese puntuali di sintagmi epici da

dell'oralità connessa con la dizione formulare e sulle questioni relative alla pubblicazione prima orale e poi aurale dell'epos. Mi limito a ricordare nuovamente che anche l'opera di Erodoto e/o sue parti hanno avuto anche una pubblicazione aurale, almeno in una prima fase.<sup>17</sup> Le scene tipiche subiscono un processo che non si limita alla ripresa delle scene tipiche omeriche, ma comporta l'adattamento al nuovo contesto e spesso la rifunzionalizzazione. Inoltre gli storici possono creare nuove scene e nuovi *narrative patterns*, secondo un modello a matrice per cui sulla base di una scena tipica propria dell'epos o di un *narrative pattern* epico si creano una nuova scena o un nuovo *narrative pattern* non presenti nell'epica. Occorre precisare che questi fenomeni erano già presenti, almeno in parte, nell'epos: le scene tipiche omeriche non erano quasi mai riproposte in modo assolutamente identico, ma venivano riplasmate attraverso variazioni ed espansioni, ad esempio introducendo similitudini. Questo meccanismo potrebbe essere chiamato *modulazione della scena tipica*, intendendo con modulazione tutti i processi di adattamento funzionali ai nuovi contesti in cui una scena viene inserita. Il concetto di modulazione è stato applicato ai paradigmi storici negli oratori da Michel Nouhaud,<sup>18</sup> che ha parlato di *modulation du paradigme*, ma può adattarsi bene anche al modo in cui strutture narrative presenti nell'epica vengono riadattate e rifunzionalizzate in storiografia.

### 3. Un *narrative pattern* epico in Erodoto

Nel suo fondamentale libro erodoteo Henry R. Immerwahr ha definito con il termine *logoi* alcune macroarticolazioni interne dell'opera, la cui struttura a sua volta “falls into patterns”,

parte di Erodoto e nemmeno di quelle formulazioni che nascono dalla familiarità con la lingua dell'epos. Per alcuni esempi vd. BOEDEKER (2002) 101-102.

<sup>17</sup> Su questo rinvio a QUADRELLI (2020) 8-13.

<sup>18</sup> NOUHAUD (1982) 359.

peraltro più difficili da identificare.<sup>19</sup> Tra i *logoi* storici, Immerwahr si sofferma sulle cronache dei re, la cui caratteristica più evidente è la sequenza di campagne militari. Per la narrazione delle campagne militari Erodoto si serve di una sequenza fissa di argomenti (*topics*), che variano secondo le circostanze, ma sono idealmente presenti in tutti i *logoi*:

1. piano dell'aggressore;
2. preparazione dell'attacco;
3. analisi delle cause;
4. marcia dell'aggressore verso il luogo dell'azione;
5. preparativi dei difensori;
6. marcia dei difensori verso il luogo dell'azione;
7. battaglia;
8. epilogo: conseguenze della battaglia (ritirata e inseguimento; atti di valore compiuti nella battaglia; ulteriore inseguimento dei nemici).<sup>20</sup>

Utilizzando la terminologia messa a punto per l'epica omerica il racconto di una campagna militare potrebbe essere considerato come uno *story* o *narrative pattern*. Altri *patterns* sono individuati da Immerwahr, senza distinzione tra strutture più ampie e strutture più ridotte, per le quali si può utilizzare la categoria di scena tipica. Un esempio è la scena di battaglia, articolata in movimento dell'aggressore; movimento dei difensori; consiglio dei difensori; consiglio degli aggressori; descrizione dell'azione; epilogo.<sup>21</sup> Risulta chiaro, confrontando i due schemi, che la scena di battaglia coincide con i punti 4-8 della narrazione di una campagna militare. Altri *patterns* sono, ad esempio, la sequenza consiglio – decisione – azione e il *pattern of advice*, consistente di tre parti principali: formulazioni gnomiche, avvertimento generale, in genere di segno negativo, consiglio specifico, che

<sup>19</sup> IMMERWAHR (1966) 67.

<sup>20</sup> IMMERWAHR (1966) 68.

<sup>21</sup> IMMERWAHR (1966) 69; per le grandi battaglie delle guerre persiane vd. l'analisi alle pp. 238-305.

comprende un piano di azione.<sup>22</sup> Infine, è opportuno segnalare il *pattern of the rise and fall of a ruler*, articolato in tre momenti: origine del sovrano (nascita, conquista del potere); prima parte del regno fino alla conquista dei pieni poteri; ultima parte del regno che conduce alla distruzione o al declino.<sup>23</sup> Questo *pattern*, che appartiene alla categoria dei *narrative patterns*, può essere considerato come una struttura ricorrente elaborata da Erodoto sulla base di quel modello a matrice di cui parlavo prima.

In questa sezione proporrò un esempio di *narrative pattern* di chiara ascendenza omerica nel libro VII. In un articolo scritto a quattro mani con Pietro Vannicelli, ho proposto che alla base della *fabula* dei *Persiani* di Eschilo vi sia un ipotesto omerico, il II libro dell'*Iliade*, caratterizzato dalla presenza contemporanea di tre scene tipiche: il consiglio, il sogno e il catalogo delle truppe.<sup>24</sup> Nei *Persiani* il modello omerico è ripreso attraverso una procedura di rovesciamento: non sono più i Greci ad attaccare una città barbara, ma i barbari ad attaccare la Grecia.<sup>25</sup> Eschilo sfrutta sapientemente la possibilità di rimodulare le scene omeriche, ad esempio moltiplicando il catalogo e introducendo dapprima un catalogo dei Persiani partiti per la guerra e poi due cataloghi di Persiani uccisi. Pietro Vannicelli, dal canto suo, ha individuato lo stesso ipotesto nei primi 100 capitoli del VII libro di Erodoto, dove al modello omerico si unisce quello eschileo dei *Persiani*. Vannicelli chiarisce l'uso che Erodoto fa del modello epico:

“Rispetto all'uso eschileo di Omero, Erodoto è per alcuni aspetti più vicino al modello offerto da *Iliade* II (p. es. nel mantenere, e dunque rendere più riconoscibile, la sequenza omerica consiglio

<sup>22</sup> IMMERWAHR (1966) 73-74.

<sup>23</sup> IMMERWAHR (1966) 76-78.

<sup>24</sup> Nicolai in NICOLAI-VANNICELLI (2019). Vd. anche l'importante contributo di CAREY (2016). Sulla scena di consiglio in Omero, negli storici e nei tragici vd. BARKER (2009); sulla scena di sogno vd. MATTALIANO (2007); sul catalogo, oltre all'imponente letteratura sul *Catalogo delle navi*, vd. NICOLAI (2013).

<sup>25</sup> Per la dinamica polare che si crea tra *Iliade* e *Sette a Tebe* vd. GIORDANO (2006).

del re/assemblea-sogno-catalogo), ma, in linea e insieme in gara con Omero e con Eschilo, introduce una serie di variazioni aumentando il numero delle scene tipiche (più assemblee, più sogni, più cataloghi), rendendo più complessa la loro interazione (interazione tra consiglio del re e sogno, tra queste scene e i successivi cataloghi, nonché tra i cataloghi stessi) e costruendo, grazie a ciò, un intreccio drammatico, nel quale ogni scena costituisce una tappa dello sviluppo narrativo e della riflessione generale sui temi politico-militari, etici e religiosi posti dall'impero e dall'espansionismo dei Persiani.<sup>26</sup>

In particolare, è evidente il procedimento amplificante, per cui le assemblee diventano quattro, come pure i sogni e i cataloghi. Cito ancora Vannicelli:

“Non meno rilevanti sono l'interazione tra queste scene e il loro sapiente inserimento nell'intreccio narrativo: anche in questo Erodoto perfeziona, e rifunzionalizza, l'applicazione eschilea della struttura narrativa di *Iliade* II alla spedizione di Serse. I discorsi del primo 'consiglio dei Persiani più eminenti' (σύλλογον ἐπίκλητον Περσέων τῶν ἀρίστων, 8-11), e in particolare quelli di Serse (8 e 11), illustrano la storia e la natura dell'espansionismo persiano, impostando al contempo il tema, epico e tragico, del rapporto tra il piano umano e quello divino della vicenda. Quest'ultimo tema viene drammatizzato con la vicenda dei sogni (12 ss.), sapientemente alternati alle scene del consiglio del re (8-11: prima riunione; 12: primo sogno di Serse; 13: seconda riunione; 14: secondo sogno di Serse; 15-16: dialogo con Artabano e discussione sulla natura dei sogni; 17: sogno di Artabano; 18: ultima riunione; 19: terzo sogno di Serse).<sup>27</sup>

All'interno della ripresa delle scene di sogno, consiglio/assemblea e catalogo compaiono numerosi motivi, alcuni dei quali presenti anche in Eschilo, che mi limito a elencare, rinviando alla puntuale analisi condotta da Pietro Vannicelli,<sup>28</sup> che distingue i motivi legati alla scena di consiglio/assemblea, quelli legati alla scena di sogno e quelli legati alla scena di catalogo.

<sup>26</sup> VANNICELLI, in NICOLAI-VANNICELLI (2019) 209.

<sup>27</sup> VANNICELLI, in NICOLAI-VANNICELLI (2019) 210.

<sup>28</sup> VANNICELLI, in NICOLAI-VANNICELLI (2019) 212-218.

Motivi legati alla scena di consiglio/assemblea

- l'uso della genealogia da parte di Odisseo nei confronti di Tersite (*Il.* 2, 259 ss.) e di Serse contro Artabano (Hdt. 7, 11, 2);
- la rinuncia a combattere e la reazione degli Achei (*Il.* 2, 142 ss.) e dei notabili persiani (Hdt. 7, 13, 3);
- l'intervento divino, centrale nel proemio dell'*Iliade* e presente a più riprese nei *Persiani*, compare nel primo discorso di Serse (7, 8 $\alpha$ , 1).

Motivi legati alla scena di sogno

- l'ingannatore: al sogno ingannatore di Agamennone corrisponde il sogno che appare a Serse; il sogno non promette la vittoria al re persiano, ma nella sostanza lo inganna inducendolo a compiere la spedizione;
- i segni premonitori: alla lotta tra animali di *Il.* 2, 308-320 corrisponde una molteplicità di segni premonitori in Erodoto;
- gli interpreti di sogni e di prodigi: a Calcante (*Il.* 2, 321-330) corrispondono le compiacenti interpretazioni dei Magi in Erodoto (7, 19, 1; 7, 37, 3).

Motivi legati alla scena di catalogo

- pochi contro molti: alla presenza del motivo in *Il.* 2, 119-133 corrispondono le numerose occorrenze erodotee;
- dieci: il motivo, che nell'*Iliade* sottolinea la sproporzione numerica tra Greci e Troiani (2, 123-128), torna in Erodoto a proposito del metodo per contare i soldati a Dorisco (7, 60) e dell'organizzazione decimale dell'esercito persiano (7, 81);
- le similitudini animali: presenti in *Iliade* e *Persiani*; in Erodoto vi si allude, forse, attraverso i recinti per contare i soldati a Dorisco (7, 60, 2-3);
- i capi come oggetto esclusivo del racconto: principio dichiarato nel proemio del Catalogo delle navi (*Il.* 2, 487-493) e puntualmente applicato, compare in Erodoto alla fine del catalogo delle truppe (7, 96);
- le informazioni prosopografiche sui comandanti persiani, che superano quelle occasionalmente offerte da Eschilo e si riallacciano al modello omerico;

- l'ordinamento geografico dei contingenti: anche in Erodoto, come nel *Catalogo delle navi*, le regioni di provenienza dei contingenti seguono un ordine a spirale.

La ripresa del modello iliadico è essenziale per comprendere la natura monografica del racconto erodoteo della seconda guerra persiana: all'interno del grande ciclo narrativo, che parte dal primo che commise azioni ingiuste nei confronti dei Greci, Erodoto isola la guerra più grande e per dare risalto alla spedizione di Serse si serve in maniera del tutto scoperta come modello del secondo libro dell'*Iliade*. Occorre precisare che il modello epico prevede, come è noto, che l'aedo scelga la materia del canto e possa decidere da quale punto di una saga conosciuta nelle sue grandi linee iniziare il racconto (*Od.* 1, 10). Spesso l'aedo sceglie un episodio compiuto e importante, come la presa di Troia, oggetto del canto di Demodoco nell'*Odissea*. Il caso dell'*Iliade* è del tutto particolare: intorno alla fase decisiva della guerra si aggregano vari episodi e momenti, non tutti perfettamente fusi nel contesto del poema dal punto di vista redazionale. La pausa costituita dalla pestilenza e la ripresa della guerra contribuiscono a dare ai primi due libri dell'attuale suddivisione un carattere incipitario, quello di una grande premessa al racconto della fase cruciale della guerra di Troia. Che la guerra non finisca con la fine dell'*Iliade* non è essenziale: la morte di Ettore è il preludio della fine di Troia, che altri aedi racconteranno. La ripresa erodotea è un chiaro segnale del fatto che Erodoto considera il conflitto tra Greci e Persiani, tra Europa e Asia, non come un evento episodico, ma come una vicenda, direi, di lunga durata, come mostra il proemio con i rapimenti di donne da una parte e dall'altra. All'interno di questa vicenda viene isolato il conflitto di maggiori proporzioni e di maggior impatto su tutta la storia successiva, come all'interno del ciclo troiano vengono isolati nell'*Iliade* i cinquanta giorni decisivi. Ma Erodoto si pone in concorrenza con Omero: se il ciclo troiano, dagli antefatti ai *nostoi*, copriva le vicende di poco più di un ventennio, il conflitto tra Europa e Asia ha una durata e

una portata ben maggiore; è quella che si potrebbe chiamare una costante della storia.

La competizione con Omero è apertamente dichiarata in 7, 20, 2:

στόλων γὰρ τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν πολλῶ δὴ μέγιστος οὗτος ἐγένετο, ὥστε μήτε τὸν Δαρείου τὸν ἐπὶ Σκύθας παρὰ τοῦτον μηδένα φαίνεσθαι, μήτε τὸν Σκυθικόν, ὅτε Σκύθαι Κιμμερίους διώκοντες ἐς τὴν Μηδικὴν χώραν ἐσβαλόντες σχεδὸν πάντα τὰ ἄνω τῆς Ἀσίας καταστρεψάμενοι ἐνέμοντο, τῶν εἶνεκεν ὕστερον Δαρεῖος ἐτιμωρέετο, μήτε κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα τὸν Ἄτρείδεων ἐς Ἴλιον, μήτε τὸν Μυσῶν τε καὶ Τευκρῶν τὸν πρὸ τῶν Τρωικῶν γενόμενον, οἱ διαβάντες ἐς τὴν Εὐρώπην κατὰ Βόσπορον τοὺς τε Θρήικας κατεστρέψαντο πάντας καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἴόνιον πόντον κατέβησαν, μέχρι τε Πηγειοῦ ποταμοῦ τὸ πρὸς μεσσαμβρίας ἤλασαν.

Le quattro guerre sono elencate in ordine cronologico, dalla più recente alla più antica, con la guerra di Troia in terza posizione. Da notare che la guerra di Troia è incastonata in mezzo ad altre spedizioni, che non avevano avuto la fortuna di essere celebrate in un'opera così grandiosa come l'*Iliade*, anche se la prima, la spedizione di Dario contro gli Sciti, era narrata da Erodoto stesso nel IV libro. Merita di essere segnalato anche il nesso *κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα*, con cui Erodoto getta un'ombra sulle tradizioni poetiche relative alla guerra di Troia.<sup>29</sup> Il ridimensionamento della guerra di Troia, che pure Erodoto considera un fatto storico, ma di cui fornisce un'eziologia differente rispetto a quella omerica (2, 112-120),<sup>30</sup> trova un parallelo nell'*Archaialogia* di Tucidide, il cui scopo è dimostrare la superiore grandezza della guerra del Peloponneso rispetto a tutte le guerre precedenti, in particolare la guerra di Troia e le guerre persiane.<sup>31</sup> Lo stesso

<sup>29</sup> Su questo punto vd. CAREY (2016) 72-73.

<sup>30</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2012).

<sup>31</sup> THUC. 1, 10, 5: πρὸς τὰς μεγίστας δ' οὖν καὶ ἐλαχίστας ναῦς τὸ μέσον σκοποῦντι οὐ πολλοὶ φαίνονται ἐλθόντες, ὡς ἀπὸ πάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος κοινῇ πεμπόμενοι. Cfr. 1, 11, 2: ἀλλὰ δι' ἀχρηματίαν τὰ τε πρὸ τούτων ἀσθενῆ ἦν καὶ αὐτὰ γε δὴ ταῦτα, ὀνομαστότατα τῶν πρὶν γενόμενα, δηλοῦται τοῖς ἔργοις ὑποδεέστερα ὄντα τῆς φήμης καὶ τοῦ νῦν περὶ αὐτῶν διὰ τοὺς ποιητὰς λόγου κατεσχηκότος. A proposito della superiorità della guerra del Peloponneso rispetto a



Tucidide ribadisce nel cosiddetto secondo proemio che la guerra del Peloponneso è un unico grande conflitto durato ventisette anni (5, 26, 1 ἔτη δὲ ἐς τοῦτο τὰ ξύμπαντα ἐγένετο τῷ πολέμῳ ἑπτὰ καὶ εἴκοσι).

#### 4. Scene tipiche omeriche in Erodoto e Tucidide (con spunti senofontei)

Nel proporre una breve esemplificazione delle scene tipiche omeriche riprese dai grandi storici del V secolo a.C., mi servirò della classificazione proposta da Edwards, che prende le mosse dalle *scene di battaglia*. Mi limiterò ad alcuni esempi, rinviando per le scene omeriche ai classici studi di Fenik e Latacz e all'ulteriore letteratura segnalata da Edwards.<sup>32</sup> In particolare per Erodoto mi avvalgo del contributo di John Marincola<sup>33</sup> e del recente studio di Silvia Quadrelli,<sup>34</sup> che ha preso in esame il modo in cui lo storico ha ripreso scene tipiche e motivi omerici, esaminando in particolare le scene di sogno, di vestizione e di seduzione e di battaglia. Non potrò soffermarmi sulle varie tipologie di battaglia, tra le quali spicca per la sua particolarità la battaglia notturna, che presenta una serie di elementi ricorrenti in tutta la letteratura greca: segni e prodigi, difficoltà di vedere e necessità di affidarsi all'udito, situazione di confusione generalizzata.<sup>35</sup>

Seguendo lo schema di Edwards, inizierò con le *aristie* e i *duelli*, frequentissimi nell'epos e meno frequenti negli storici. Mi soffermerò in particolare su Tucidide, i cui rapporti con

tutte le guerre precedenti vd. 1, 1, 3: τὰ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαιότερα σαφῶς μὲν εὐρεῖν διὰ χρόνου πλῆθος ἀδύνατα ἦν, ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν ἐπὶ μακροτάτον σκοποῦντί μοι πιστεῦσαι ζυμβαίνει οὐ μέγала νομίζω γενέσθαι οὔτε κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους οὔτε ἐς τὰ ἄλλα.

<sup>32</sup> FENIK (1968); LATACZ (1977); EDWARDS (1992) 299-301.

<sup>33</sup> MARINCOLA (2018).

<sup>34</sup> QUADRELLI (2020); sulle scene di battaglia si vedano in particolare le pp. 51-72. Sulle scene di battaglia nell'analisi di Immerwahr vd. *supra*.

<sup>35</sup> Una prima analisi delle scene di battaglia notturna in epica e in storiografia è stata condotta da Lorenzo Sardone in una tesi di laurea inedita discussa nell'anno accademico 2011-2012.

l'epos sono stati meno studiati. Dei motivi presenti, con variazioni, nelle scene omeriche soltanto alcuni sono ripresi in Erodoto: in particolare mi riferisco al catalogo degli uccisi e alla lotta intorno al cadavere di un guerriero. Nel primo caso un buon esempio è costituito da 7, 224 e 227.<sup>36</sup> Nel secondo dai passi relativi all'uccisione di Leonida (7, 224-225) e a quella di Masistio (9, 22-23).<sup>37</sup> In Tucidide un trattamento epico viene riservato ai ferimenti di Brasida (4, 12, 1; 5, 10, 8) e alla morte di Lamaco (6, 101, 6).<sup>38</sup>

Brasida viene presentato nell'atto di esortare gli altri, di costringere il pilota ad approdare e poi nel momento del ferimento e della perdita dello scudo, che viene recuperato dagli Ateniesi e in seguito usato come trofeo (4, 12, 1). In particolare quest'ultimo dettaglio richiama la lotta per le armi del guerriero ucciso. Il ferimento letale di Brasida sarà descritto in 5, 10, 8 e la sua morte in 5, 10, 12: in questo caso Tucidide si diffonde in dettagli e specifica che gli Ateniesi non si accorgono che Brasida è caduto, consentendo in questo modo ai suoi compagni di trasportarlo in città, dove spirerà poco dopo la notizia della vittoria. Si potrebbe dire che viene a mancare la lotta per impossessarsi del nemico caduto (e non ancora morto) perché gli Ateniesi non si accorgono del fatto che Brasida è caduto. Lamaco, dal canto suo, si precipita in aiuto degli Ateniesi in difficoltà, si trova isolato con pochi compagni e viene ucciso; i Siracusani mettono al sicuro i cadaveri dei nemici uccisi. I cadaveri di Lamaco e dei suoi compagni vengono restituiti agli Ateniesi nel quadro dello scambio dei corpi dei guerrieri uccisi previsto dalla tregua (6, 103, 1). Rispetto all'epos queste scene sono tratteggiate molto più rapidamente, ma alcuni motivi ritornano. Hornblower segnala che nella *Vita di Nicia* di Plutarco la morte di Lamaco è arricchita di dettagli drammatici che avvicinano la scena al duello tra Eteocle e Polinice nei *Sette a*

<sup>36</sup> Vd. QUADRELLI (2020) 62-64.

<sup>37</sup> Vd. QUADRELLI (2020) 64-65.

<sup>38</sup> Vd. HORNBLOWER (2004) 343.

*Tebe* di Eschilo (18, 2):<sup>39</sup> Lamaco si scontra in singolar tenzone con un cavaliere siracusano di nome Callicrate e i due guerrieri si uccidono a vicenda. Non sappiamo se Tucidide conoscesse questa versione e l'abbia deliberatamente evitata, come ipotizza Hornblower, ma in Plutarco, oltre alla morte contemporanea dei due guerrieri, vi sono anche altri due motivi che meritano di essere segnalati: Callicrate è definito *πρῶτος ἀντῶν*, è insomma un *πρόμαχος* e, inoltre, sfida Lamaco a duello singolare, un comportamento che non sembra consono alle abituali tecniche di combattimento di quel periodo.

L'analisi delle narrazioni di battaglia in Erodoto condotta da John Marincola prende in esame sei elementi ricorrenti in quattro battaglie, Maratona, Termopile, Salamina e Platea: i segni e i prodigi che precedono la battaglia, la comunicazione della strategia, l'enfasi sull'importanza della battaglia, la descrizione della battaglia, gli eventi importanti e inusuali avvenuti nel corso della battaglia, la rassegna di fatti importanti e inusuali avvenuti dopo la battaglia. Marincola sottolinea come è nella descrizione delle battaglie che Erodoto appare più distante da Omero: mentre le scene di battaglia omeriche sono formulari e in qualche misura prevedibili, la scelta dei dettagli da parte di Erodoto appare quasi casuale; punti di contatto sono il focus su singole personalità e il trattamento del nemico, considerato degno, anche se alla fine risulterà inferiore ai Greci.<sup>40</sup>

Le scene di *vestizione del guerriero*, molto frequenti nell'epica, sono associate da Quadrelli alle scene di seduzione.<sup>41</sup> I passi erodotei richiamati per la vestizione del guerriero sono tutti in contesti di tipo etnografico: questo vale per 4, 180, 3-4, vestizione di una ragazza prescelta presso il popolo libico degli Ausei, e anche per le descrizioni dell'armamento dei vari contingenti nel catalogo delle truppe di Serse nel libro VII. In Tucidide

<sup>39</sup> HORNBLOWER (2004) *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> MARINCOLA (2018) 13.

<sup>41</sup> Per Erodoto vd. QUADRELLI (2017) e QUADRELLI (2020) 27-50. Sulle scene di vestizione del guerriero vd. anche REITZ (2012), soprattutto 5-8, con ulteriore bibliografia.

la scena di vestizione del guerriero non compare, mentre riemerge in Senofonte, *Cyr.* 6, 4, 1-3 nel racconto di Pantea e Abradata.<sup>42</sup> La scena si dispiega su tre livelli: dapprima la vestizione dell'esercito, che coinvolge anche i cavalli, poi l'inizio della vestizione di Abradata, infine l'arrivo di Pantea con le nuove vesti e con le nuove armi. Le armi brillano al sole e la reazione di Abradata è di stupore (*ἐθαύμασε*), come quello prodotto dalle straordinarie armi degli eroi omerici.

Un'altra scena di vestizione, priva del catalogo delle vesti e delle armi, è quella di Senofonte prima dell'assemblea dei soldati, sottolineata dal triplice poliptoto del superlativo (*An.* 3, 2, 7):<sup>43</sup>

ἐκ τούτου Ξενοφῶν ἀνίσταται ἐσταλμένος ἐπὶ πόλεμον ὡς ἐδύνατο κάλλιστα, νομίζων, εἴτε νίκην διδοῖεν οἱ θεοί, τὸν κάλλιστον κόσμον τῷ νικᾶν πρόπειν, εἴτε τελευτᾶν δέοι, ὀρθῶς ἔχειν τῶν καλλίστων ἑαυτὸν ἀξιώσαντα ἐν τούτοις τῆς τελευτῆς τυγχάνειν.

Le scene di *catalogo*, *androktasia* e *commemorazione dei caduti* presentano, almeno per quanto riguarda le *androktasiai* e le commemorazioni dei caduti, aree di sovrapposizione con le scene di *aristia* (per cui vd. *supra*). Per quanto riguarda i cataloghi, frequenti nell'epos, si possono trovare parallelismi nel grande catalogo dell'esercito di Serse nel VII libro di Erodoto,<sup>44</sup> nell'elenco dei popoli dell'esercito di Amilcare in 7, 165 (prima della battaglia di Imera) e nel catalogo della flotta greca in 8, 1 (prima della battaglia dell'Artemisio) e in 8, 42-48 (prima della battaglia di Salamina).<sup>45</sup> In Tucidide il modello del catalogo si intreccia con quello dell'*archaiologia* nel proemio della spedizione

<sup>42</sup> Vd. GOLDHILL (2010) 53.

<sup>43</sup> Vd. HUITINK / ROOD (2019) 107, che confrontano, tra l'altro, le scene di armamento degli eroi omerici prima delle aristie (richiamandosi a TUPLIN (2003) 121) e l'adesione di Senofonte al *topos* di Chirisofo: occorre scegliere tra la vittoria e una morte nobile.

<sup>44</sup> Su cui vd. NICOLAI (2013) 144-146; VANNICELLI (2013) 50-62 e il commento in VANNICELLI (2017).

<sup>45</sup> Per questi cataloghi rinvio al commento di ASHERI (2003) 195-199 e 243-251. Per altri cataloghi erodotei di truppe vd. ASHERI (2003) 195.

siciliana (6, 2-5),<sup>46</sup> una sezione chiaramente isolata e messa in risalto all'interno del racconto della guerra del Peloponneso.<sup>47</sup> La sequenza dei popoli che hanno via via occupato la Sicilia rappresenta una novità nelle strutture proemiali, pur restando fermo lo scopo dell'esaltazione della grandezza e della potenza dell'isola e quindi dell'importanza della spedizione di cui lo storico sta per parlare.

I *discorsi prima o durante la battaglia* sono un'interessante test per la categoria di scena tipica e per la sua possibilità di applicazione alla storiografia. Nella letteratura recente prevalgono i dubbi sull'uso dello strumento della scena tipica per analizzare i discorsi presenti nei poemi omerici e, di conseguenza, anche quelli presenti in Erodoto.<sup>48</sup> Sono stati evidenziati elementi ricorrenti sia nell'ambientazione dei discorsi sia nel loro contenuto, ma, al di là delle somiglianze sul piano delle situazioni e delle funzioni dei discorsi, non sono stati ravvisate analogie sufficienti per parlare di scena tipica. È stato invece messo in risalto che i meccanismi di transizione tra sezioni narrative e discorsi diretti presentano chiare somiglianze nei due generi.<sup>49</sup> In epica come in storiografia i discorsi sono quantitativamente molto rilevanti e non minore è la loro importanza per la ricostruzione

<sup>46</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2013) 147-151.

<sup>47</sup> RUTHERFORD (2012) evidenzia che Tucidide rimane l'erede di Erodoto, e quindi di Omero, e che ciò si può osservare con particolare chiarezza nella sezione dedicata alla spedizione siciliana.

<sup>48</sup> Vd. QUADRELLI (2020) 79-106. Da una prospettiva diversa, di tipo antropologico, muove lo studio di MARTIN (1989): vd. in particolare 43-88, dove individua tre categorie di discorsi autorevoli: *commands, boast-and-insult contests, recitation of remembered events*. Da segnalare che Martin (p. 45) sottolinea la maggiore libertà compositiva dei discorsi rispetto alle sezioni narrative: "It is even more likely that the speech portions of the poem are more freely composed, made up more from the poet's knowledge of how his contemporaries argue and talk, since the poet presumably has no need to include archaic coloring in the speeches of his heroes. In other words, although we see Mycenaean memories in the narrative of Iliadic fighting, there is no comparable body of material for the poet to recall when reporting what Agamemnon, Odysseus, or Achilles says. Composition is less subject to tradition here. Speech is qualitatively different; unlike diegesis, it is the arena for pure mimesis".

<sup>49</sup> Vd. ORTOLA GUIXOT (2002), che ha messo a confronto Omero e Tucidide.

e per l'interpretazione dei fatti, specialmente in storiografia. Un'altra questione non piccola è il rapporto con la retorica: quanto dei discorsi degli storici deriva dall'insegnamento retorico e dalla prassi della retorica coeva?

Dall'ampia messe di discorsi presenti negli storici sceglierò qualche esempio di discorso parenetico alle truppe, un genere che presenta elementi ricorrenti e topici e che appare più di altri indipendente dal reale contenuto degli eventuali discorsi tenuti dai comandanti.<sup>50</sup> Propongo come ipotesi di lavoro la possibilità che questi discorsi presenti negli storici riprendano, con variazioni, uno schema comune. Come esempio dei discorsi erodotei mi servo del discorso di Milziade al polemarco Callimaco prima di Maratona (6, 109).<sup>51</sup> Pur trattandosi di un discorso rivolto a un solo interlocutore, il discorso intreccia *topoi* del discorso deliberativo e del discorso parenetico alle truppe. Il primo argomento addotto, la possibilità di far cadere Atene in schiavitù o di renderla libera e potente, addirittura prima tra le città greche, appartiene al patrimonio dei *topoi* parenetici, ma è piegato alla funzione deliberativa, come pure tipicamente parenetico è l'argomento delle sofferenze che sarebbero causate dalla sottomissione ai Persiani. La sezione centrale del discorso è tutta deliberativa, incentrata com'è sul ruolo decisivo del polemarco e sul pericolo che la decisione di non combattere possa avvicinare gli Ateniesi ai Persiani. La conclusione, in composizione anulare, richiama l'argomento iniziale delle conseguenze della scelta di Callimaco: libertà e potenza *vs.* schiavitù e rovina. A ben vedere il discorso di Milziade non è paragonabile ai colloqui tra i comandanti prima di battaglie decisive perché Callimaco non replica, ma, nel racconto erodoteo, si lascia immediatamente

<sup>50</sup> I discorsi di esortazione dei generali prima di battaglie decisive sono stati oggetto di un ampio dibattito negli ultimi decenni. Per un'equilibrata messa a punto vd. IGLESIAS ZOIDO (2007), con riferimenti alla bibliografia precedente. Vd. anche ABBAMONTE (2009) e MATTALIANO (2010).

<sup>51</sup> Per un puntuale commento al discorso vd. NENCI (1998) 281-283, e in particolare la sottolineatura dei tratti drammatici del discorso che lo avrebbero reso gradito a un pubblico abituato alla poesia epica e soprattutto alla tragedia.

convincere dagli argomenti dello stratego: per questo motivo la funzione deliberativa confluisce in quella parenetica. Qualche parola va spesa sul contesto del discorso: Erodoto ci informa sulla procedura di votazione del collegio degli strateghi, a cui si aggiungeva come undicesimo il polemarco, ma non descrive né le precedenti discussioni tra gli strateghi né la votazione decisiva. Un altro discorso erodoteo in cui si intrecciano funzione deliberativa e parenetica è quello di Dionisio di Focea agli Ioni prima della battaglia di Lade (6, 11).

Elementi di contesto si incontrano nell'introduzione a molti discorsi e anche nell'esposizione delle conseguenze dei discorsi, specialmente quando è presente un interesse, per così dire, etnografico. Un caso molto particolare è costituito dall'epitafio di Pericle in Tucidide, con lo storico che dedica spazio alla descrizione del rituale in cui il discorso si inseriva (2, 34). Questa sezione, che non si spiegherebbe pensando a un pubblico costituito di soli Ateniesi, acquista un senso in una prospettiva panellenica e in relazione al contenuto dell'epitafio: una descrizione delle istituzioni e dello stile di vita degli Ateniesi proposti come modello per l'intera Grecia (2, 41, 1: *ξυνελών τε λέγω τήν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι*).

Un esempio di discorso parenetico tucidideo, quello di Archidamo ai comandanti e ai maggiorenti delle città alleate di Sparta (2, 11), può esemplificare bene alcune differenze nel trattamento di questo genere di discorso. Archidamo prende le mosse dall'esperienza di guerra dei convenuti, ma sottolinea subito la grandezza senza precedenti dell'apparato bellico allestito dagli Spartani e dai loro alleati e la potenza degli avversari (2, 11, 1 *ὁμως δὲ τῆσδε οὐπω μείζονα παρασκευὴν ἔχοντες ἐξήλθομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ πόλιν δυνατωτάτην νῦν ἐρχόμεθα καὶ αὐτοὶ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι στρατεύοντες*). L'idea della grandezza della guerra richiama le affermazioni proemiali di Tucidide (1, 1, 1), come pure il concetto della preparazione al conflitto si ritrova nella parte finale dell'*Archaiologia* (1, 19). Il richiamo a non apparire inferiori ai padri e alla propria fama (2, 11, 2) è topico del discorso parenetico, mentre il concetto della Grecia

intera che osserva con apprensione gli eventi e parteggia per gli Spartani (*ibid.*: ἡ γὰρ Ἑλλάς πᾶσα τῆδε τῆ ὀρμῆ ἐπῆρται καὶ προσέχει τὴν γνώμην) richiama il proemio (1, 1, 1: καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ὄρω̃ν ζυγιστάμενον πρὸς ἑκατέρους, τὸ μὲν εὐθύς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοούμενον). La parte centrale del discorso è dedicata al tema della necessità di un'accurata preparazione e di un atteggiamento costantemente vigile e attento (2, 11, 3-5). La potenza di Atene e i suoi accurati preparativi sono richiamati in 2, 11, 6 (per la preparazione dei contendenti alla guerra si confronti 1, 19), mentre nei paragrafi successivi vengono messi in risalto la prevedibile violenta reazione degli Ateniesi alla devastazione del loro territorio e il loro atteggiamento arrogante, per cui pensano che a loro spetti il dominio su tutti gli altri (2, 11, 7-8). La *peroratio* finale (2, 11, 9) riassume gli argomenti addotti nel discorso: la potenza della città nemica; l'eccezionale fama, positiva o negativa, che potranno conseguire; la necessità della vigilanza e della disciplina. I precetti disseminati nel discorso di Archidamo richiamano alla mente altri discorsi ricchi di precetti e di insegnamenti: mi riferisco a molti discorsi di Ciro nella *Ciropedia*<sup>52</sup> e ad alcuni discorsi di Senofonte personaggio nell'*Anabasi*.<sup>53</sup>

I rinvii intratestuali al proemio e all'*Archaiologia*, sezioni in cui l'autore parla senza mediazioni, mostrano che i discorsi sono stati composti da Tuciddide sulla base della verosimiglianza, ma anche tenendo sempre in mente il quadro interpretativo che lo storico aveva costruito e che andava a rinsaldare e a precisare anche attraverso i discorsi messi in bocca ai personaggi.<sup>54</sup>

Molte delle numerose scene tipiche della categoria del *social intercourse* non sono presenti in storiografia e altre sono presenti soltanto in alcuni storici: penso per esempio alla scena di *accoglienza*, presente in Erodoto, ma non in Tuciddide. Un bell'esempio erodoteo è la scena di ospitalità e di banchetto in

<sup>52</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2014a).

<sup>53</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2020).

<sup>54</sup> Per i richiami alle sezioni iniziali dell'opera nel discorso di Brasida in 4. 126 vd. NICOLAI (2001b). Sui discorsi tucididei vd. NICOLAI (2011).



occasione dell'arrivo degli ambasciatori persiani alla corte di Aminta I di Macedonia (5, 18-20). L'inizio della narrazione rientra nei canoni omerici (5, 18, 1 ὁ δὲ ταῦτά τε ἐδίδου καὶ σφραεὶς ἐπὶ ξείνια καλέει, παρασκευασάμενος δὲ δεῖπνον μεγαλοπρεπὲς ἐδέκετο τοὺς Πέρσας φιλοφρόνως), anche se la richiesta di acqua e terra comporta la completa sottomissione, una richiesta che difficilmente in Omero sarebbe stata avanzata da un ospite. La vicenda si allontana però ben presto dalla tipicità omerica: i Persiani chiedono che siano chiamate le donne, contro l'usanza macedone, pretendono che si siedano accanto a loro e cominciano a molestarle sessualmente. Mentre il re Aminta si trattiene ed evita di intervenire, il figlio Alessandro fa ritirare il padre e, allontanate le donne con il pretesto di mandarle a lavarsi per accogliere i Persiani nei loro letti, traveste da donne dei giovani imberbi che uccidono tutti gli ambasciatori persiani.<sup>55</sup> Particolarmente interessante è il discorso ingannatore di Alessandro, che può essere paragonato alle tante *Trugreden* di Odisseo (5, 20, 4). Ovviamente la pretesa di unirsi alle donne macedoni contravviene alle norme che regolavano l'ospitalità e richiama il rapimento di Elena da parte del troiano Paride, ma Alessandro, mentendo, dichiara di accettarla di buon grado per acquistare la benevolenza dei Persiani e del loro re.

Mi limito ad accennare ad altre due scene erodotee di banchetto. Una sorta di scena di banchetto con punte di ironia è quella della preparazione del banchetto reale imposta dai Persiani in Tracia in occasione del passaggio dell'esercito di Serse (7, 119-120). Un uso particolare, che si potrebbe definire didattico, di una scena di banchetto è quella del confronto tra banchetto persiano e banchetto greco dopo la battaglia di Platea in 9, 82.

Quando Tucidide descrive con qualche dettaglio un banchetto lo fa in funzione della ricostruzione dei fatti e dell'analisi

<sup>55</sup> Pietro Vannicelli, che ringrazio per i tanti suggerimenti che mi ha dato, mi ha segnalato che l'atto di allontanare le donne prima della strage potrebbe essere un preciso richiamo all'analogo comportamento di Telemaco che allontana la madre prima della strage dei Proci nell'*Odisea* (22, 343-353).

storica: in 6, 46, 3-4 i Segestani raccolgono vasellame d'oro e d'argento per i banchetti con gli ambasciatori ateniesi per dare l'impressione che la loro città fosse più ricca di quanto non era in realtà.<sup>56</sup>

Un'altra scena tipica presente con frequenza negli storici è quella dell'*arrivo di un messaggero*. In Erodoto è celebre la scena del messaggero ateniese Fidippide che dapprima incontra il dio Pan presso Tegea (6, 105) e poi arriva a Sparta, dove era stato mandato a chiedere aiuto contro i Persiani (6, 106). A differenza di quello che accade nei poemi omerici, dove il messaggio viene dapprima esposto al messaggero e poi questi lo riferisce al destinatario per lo più con le stesse parole, in Erodoto non vi è ripetizione del messaggio, ma vi sono i motivi caratteristici della scena: circostanze dell'invio del messaggero, messaggio, esito della richiesta. Una particolare scena di arrivo di un messaggero, peraltro di eccezione, è quella che vede come protagonista ancora Alessandro di Macedonia. Mardonio decide di inviarlo come messaggero ad Atene con una proposta di pace e di alleanza (8, 136). Ma Alessandro non riferisce soltanto il discorso di Mardonio, ma, all'interno di questo, anche il messaggio di Serse a Mardonio, a cui aggiunge le proprie considerazioni (8, 140).<sup>57</sup> Mi limito a riportare le prime parole, da cui si coglie il triplice livello del discorso di Alessandro (8, 140, α 1-2):<sup>58</sup> ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, Μαρδόνιος τάδε λέγει. ἐμοὶ ἀγγελίη ἦκει παρὰ βασιλέος λέγουσα οὕτω. Mardonio non può parlare a suo nome, ma soltanto a nome del re, anche se il tentativo di stringere alleanza con Atene è presentato come il risultato della consultazione degli oracoli da lui promossa e come il frutto di sue riflessioni (8, 133-136). Il motivo ne è che nessun Persiano è libero di prendere decisioni al di fuori del re e Mardonio vuole caricare

<sup>56</sup> Devo questa osservazione a Bruno Bleckmann, che mi è gradito ringraziare.

<sup>57</sup> Secondo ASHERI (2003) 355 Alessandro funge in questo passo da 'saggio consigliere'.

<sup>58</sup> Sui diversi livelli di stile dei tre discorsi vd. ASHERI (2003) 357, da quello asciutto e ufficiale di Serse, esemplato sui documenti epistolari achemenidi, a quello più articolato di Mardonio, e infine allo stile più libero di Alessandro.

il messaggio della massima autorevolezza possibile. Erodoto sviluppa la scena di invio di messaggeri fornendo dettagliate informazioni sulle circostanze che avevano spinto Mardonio a prendere questa decisione e sulla genealogia dei re macedoni (8, 137-139) e la inquadra nel dibattito sui rapporti con i Persiani, che doveva essere al tempo molto vivo: “la scelta tra medismo e resistenza”, per usare le parole di Asheri.<sup>59</sup>

Una variazione interessante della scena di invio di messaggeri è presente in Thuc. 7, 8. Nicia si trova in grave difficoltà in Sicilia e decide di inviare messaggeri con una lettera perché il suo messaggio possa arrivare con la massima precisione. Le tre motivazioni addotte per la scelta di inviare un messaggio scritto sono l'incapacità nel parlare, un difetto di memoria o la possibilità che venisse fatto un annuncio non corrispondente alla realtà per compiacere la folla. Il testo della lettera di Nicia è contenuto nei capitoli 11-15 e la lettera si può considerare come un discorso per interposta persona.<sup>60</sup> Va sottolineato come nella maggior parte dei casi il messaggio di Nicia confermi la narrazione di Tucidide, creando un intreccio tra discorso diretto e narrazione che accresce l'autorevolezza del racconto.

## 5. Da Omero a Senofonte: ancora un *narrative pattern* epico

Nel suo *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes* del 2010 Vivienne Gray ha cercato di applicare le categorie di *patterned narrative* e di *formulaic scenes* sia ai casi in cui Senofonte rielabora scene omeriche sia in quelli in cui crea “new narrative formulae for his presentation of good leadership that are in the tradition of Homer's arming scenes or Herodotus' scenes of wise advisers”.<sup>61</sup> La Gray chiama queste scene *topoi*. Emerge con chiarezza un problema

<sup>59</sup> ASHERI (2003) 355.

<sup>60</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2011) 166-167.

<sup>61</sup> GRAY (2010) 179.

di definizione delle categorie che si usano per analizzare i testi, e non si tratta soltanto di un problema terminologico.

In questa sede non affronterò tutte le opere cosiddette storiche di Senofonte, ma circoscriverò le mie osservazioni all'*Anabasi*. L'*Anabasi* di Senofonte condivide con l'opera di Tucidide la materia storica, articolata in λόγοι ed ἔργα, e la narrazione in terza persona, ma rappresenta un esperimento letterario del tutto inedito.<sup>62</sup> Anzitutto Senofonte, a partire dal III libro, pone al centro dell'opera se stesso, pur evitando accuratamente di far coincidere la voce narrante con quella del protagonista. Anzi, per creare un filtro tra autore e protagonista, nasconde l'identità dell'autore dietro uno pseudonimo: Temistogene di Siracusa (*Hell.* 3, 1, 2). In secondo luogo in Senofonte sono presenti componenti e funzioni auto-elogiative e apologetiche del tutto assenti in Tucidide, se non nei sobri riferimenti al proprio operato. Infine la componente e la funzione tecnico-didascalica, che acquista uno spazio di rilievo, non sono sviluppate soltanto attraverso l'analisi dei comportamenti, ma prendono anche la forma di discorsi diretti, in due diverse direzioni: da un lato vi sono i tanti discorsi ricchi di indicazioni tattiche e logistiche, dall'altro discorsi sulla gestione del potere regale, come quello a Seute nel VII libro, che, non casualmente, è posto a suggello dell'intera opera. L'*Anabasi* è un grande paradigma sul potere e sulla sua gestione, specialmente in ambito militare, ma non soltanto, che al suo interno propone modelli di vario livello e di varia qualità: dal persiano Ciro, il più degno di salire al trono dopo Ciro il Grande (1, 9, 1), al greco Senofonte, che pur non avendo precedenti esperienze di comando, si dimostra – o meglio: viene presentato – come la più valida guida per l'esercito dei mercenari greci. Ma vi sono anche esempi di segno integralmente o parzialmente negativo: è il caso dei ritratti di Clearco, Prosseno e Menone (2, 6). Parte

<sup>62</sup> Sul genere dell'*Anabasi*, messa a confronto con le opere di Isocrate, rinvio a NICOLAI (2018). Sul *corpus* di Senofonte e sulla natura sperimentale delle sue opere vd. NICOLAI (2014b).

integrante del paradigma sono anche i discorsi messi in bocca ai vari personaggi, anche in questo caso con vari livelli di qualità e di efficacia: al vertice si collocano ovviamente i discorsi di Senofonte stesso.<sup>63</sup>

L'ossatura costituita da λόγοι ed ἔργα permette in ogni caso di avvicinare l'*Anabasi* sia al racconto erodoteo della seconda guerra persiana sia all'opera di Tucideide: si tratta del racconto di una spedizione militare che, per le sue particolari caratteristiche, viene caricato di nuove connotazioni e di nuove funzioni. Per questo motivo ritengo lecito trattarne in questa sede.

L'inizio del III libro dell'*Anabasi*, che coincide con l'ascesa di Senofonte a protagonista della vicenda, si presenta come una ripresa consapevole del II libro dell'*Iliade*,<sup>64</sup> ovviamente con variazioni nelle scene tipiche e nei motivi: si tratta dello stesso *narrative pattern* ripreso da Erodoto nel proemio del libro VII. La ripresa della guerra dopo la battaglia di Cunassa e l'uccisione degli strateghi, con la situazione di estrema difficoltà che ne consegue, sfociano anzitutto nel sogno di Senofonte, che può paragonarsi al sogno di Agamennone, anche se di diverso segno;<sup>65</sup> inoltre l'assemblea dei soldati viene preparata da due altre assemblee, quella dei locaghi di Prosseno e quella degli strateghi e dei locaghi dell'intero contingente; tra queste ultime due assemblee si verifica l'incidente di Apollonide, che può essere ben paragonato allo scontro tra Odisseo e Tersite (3, 1, 26-32).<sup>66</sup> Lo schema è simile: Apollonide, caratterizzato subito dal dialetto beotico, critica chi pretende di salvarsi senza il consenso del re; Senofonte lo interrompe e lo rampogna duramente, proponendo di degradarlo a facchino; Agasia di Stinfalo fa notare che Apollonide non è un greco

<sup>63</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2020) e NICOLAI (c.d.s.).

<sup>64</sup> Così RINNER (1978). ORTH (2003) individua, accanto a *Il. 2*, un altro modello omerico: la *Dolonia* di *Il. 10*. La compresenza di più modelli conferma la natura tipica della scena e degli elementi che la compongono.

<sup>65</sup> Secondo HUITINK / ROOD (2019) 79 l'inserimento di un sogno di un personaggio di alto livello richiama la tecnica di Omero e di Erodoto.

<sup>66</sup> Vd. HUITINK / ROOD (2019) 90, che richiamano RINNER (1978) 146-147.

perché ha le orecchie forate come i Lidi; come conseguenza Apollonide viene cacciato.

L'episodio si può confrontare con il discorso di Antileone di Turi, un altro personaggio che alle fatiche dalla vita militare preferisce un comodo ritorno a casa (*An.* 5, 1, 2):

ἐγὼ μὲν τοίνυν, ἔφη, ὦ ἄνδρες, ἀπειρήκα ἤδη ξυσκευαζόμενος  
καὶ βαδίζων καὶ τρέχων καὶ τὰ ὄπλα φέρων καὶ ἐν τάξει ὄν καὶ  
φυλακὰς φυλάττων καὶ μαχόμενος, ἐπιθυμῶ δὲ ἤδη παυσάμενος  
τούτων τῶν πόνων, ἐπεὶ θάλατταν ἔχομεν, πλεῖν τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ  
ἐκταθεῖς ὡσπερ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀφικέσθαι εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα.

L'insistito polisindeto, rafforzato dall'uso costante dei participi, con o senza complementi, che si conclude con la fatica più grande, quella del combattimento, apre la strada alla scelta di Antileone: un *nostos* per mare alla maniera di Odisseo. Il riferimento è ovviamente all'ultima parte del viaggio di Odisseo, quello che dall'isola dei Feaci lo riporterà a Itaca.<sup>67</sup>

Ma ritorniamo all'inizio del III libro. Manca in questa sezione l'elemento catalogico, che è in parte compensato dall'elenco dei nuovi strateghi in 3, 1, 47. Peraltro il sistema di reclutamento e il catalogo delle truppe erano stati già proposti in 1, 1, 6 ss. e la situazione non era per nulla mutata dopo la battaglia di Cunassa: non c'era quindi bisogno di un nuovo catalogo. Come Erodoto moltiplicava i sogni e i consigli dei capi rispetto al modello omerico, così Senofonte, che torna a un solo sogno, moltiplica le scene di consiglio/assemblea, che, dopo due riunioni dei comandanti (prima i locaghi di Prosseno, poi gli strateghi e i locaghi dell'intero contingente), sfociano in un'assemblea generale delle truppe greche. In Senofonte inoltre il sogno è compiuto da un uomo che diventerà stratego, analogamente al sogno del re o del comandante (Nestore in *Il.* 2, 79-83 afferma che il sogno, essendo giunto ad Agamennone, comandante della spedizione, non può che essere veritiero; cfr. Artabano a Serse in *Hdt.* 7, 16γ, 1-3).

<sup>67</sup> Vd. BEVILACQUA (2004) 510 nota 3.

L'inizio del III libro dell'*Anabasi* può essere confrontato con *An.* 1, 3:<sup>68</sup> anche in questo caso, in una situazione di difficoltà, con l'ipotesi concreta che i mercenari abbandonino Ciro e la spedizione, Clearco parla due volte alle truppe; l'ultimo discorso, quello risolutivo, non è tenuto da Clearco che preferisce far intervenire altri soldati per convincere i mercenari a proseguire la marcia al seguito di Ciro. Anche qui c'è chi spinge per tornare a casa (vd. 1, 3, 14), ma la narrazione mette l'accento sull'accurata preparazione dell'assemblea da parte di Clearco che inganna consapevolmente il suo uditorio nascondendo il vero scopo della spedizione.

## 6. Il dialogo filosofico/socratico: una nuova scena tipica all'interno della storiografia

Una scena presente in Senofonte, ma del tutto assente nei modelli epici è quella che deriva dal genere dei *logoi Sokratikoi*: nell'*Anabasi* è presente all'inizio del III libro, con la discussione tra Senofonte e Socrate sull'opportunità di partecipare alla spedizione e sul quesito posto da Senofonte all'oracolo di Delfi, e nel IV libro, con il dialogo tra Senofonte e Chirisofo sul tema della *paideia* e delle differenze tra istituzioni e stili di vita di Spartani e Ateniesi. Nella *Ciropedia* si trova nel III libro, con il dialogo tra Ciro e il figlio del re d'Armenia, educato da un sofista che si rivela subito come una *figura Socratis*; in quest'ultima scena il ruolo di maestro viene assunto da Ciro che conduce l'interlocutore sulle proprie posizioni.<sup>69</sup> Naturalmente un tramite fondamentale per questo tipo di scene è Erodoto, che svolge un ruolo importante, accanto a Tucidide e alla per noi poco conosciuta produzione dei sofisti (*Dissoi logoi*, antilogie), nel processo che porterà alla creazione del dialogo filosofico. Un esempio importante a questo proposito è il dialogo tra Creso e Solone,

<sup>68</sup> Per le connessioni tra i due passi vd. HUITINK / ROOD (2019) 69.

<sup>69</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2014a).

a cui possono essere accostati il *logos tripolitikos* del III libro, i dialoghi tra Serse e Artabano, soprattutto quello presso Abido in Erodoto 7, 46-52, il dialogo tra Tersandro di Orcomeno e un anonimo Persiano prima della battaglia di Platea in 9, 16 e quello tra Ciro e Artembare in 9, 122. Proprio il dialogo tra Creso e Solone si può accostare ai tanti dialoghi tra sovrani e saggi consiglieri presenti nelle letterature del Vicino e del Medio Oriente. In questi dialoghi, nella maggior parte dei casi, il consigliere si trova in una situazione di estrema difficoltà, da cui riesce a salvarsi offrendo al re i frutti della sua saggezza.<sup>70</sup>

La discussione tra Senofonte e Socrate sull'opportunità di partecipare alla spedizione di Ciro (3, 1, 4-7) è una pagina famosa che può essere accostata alle opere cosiddette socratiche di Senofonte e in particolare ai *Memorabili*. Il Socrate di Senofonte è, a suo modo, un saggio consigliere, che offre al giovane discepolo un consiglio pratico e al tempo stesso improntato a grande rispetto per la sfera religiosa. Le preoccupazioni di Socrate nascono dal sostegno fornito da Ciro agli Spartani durante la guerra del Peloponneso e dal rischio che Senofonte possa essere accusato per questo motivo.<sup>71</sup> È del tutto assente in Socrate qualsiasi interesse speculativo e teorico e il discorso resta a livello puramente pratico. Il verbo usato per indicare l'atto di Senofonte di rivolgersi a Socrate è lo stesso usato per l'oracolo di Delfi (*ἀνακαινόσται, ἀνακαινῶσαι*): Socrate è in qualche misura assimilato all'oracolo, al quale ci si rivolgeva in vista di difficili decisioni, come la fondazione di una colonia o una campagna militare. La novità, rispetto al consueto schema del dialogo socratico, nel quale il maestro porta gli allievi verso le sue posizioni, risiede nel fatto che qui Senofonte inganna Socrate, ponendo all'oracolo un quesito diverso da quello che avrebbe dovuto porre. Senofonte sembra sfruttare la genericità

<sup>70</sup> Vd. NICOLAI (2016) con bibliografia.

<sup>71</sup> Secondo HUITINK / ROOD (2019) 74 la presentazione di Senofonte non sarebbe integralmente positiva proprio a causa del fatto che ignora l'avvertimento di Socrate. Si potrebbe però spiegare la scelta di Senofonte con il *topos* della giovane età, non sbandierato, ma lasciato latente: la narrazione in terza persona vuole presentarsi infatti come neutra e oggettiva.



della formulazione di Socrate (περὶ τῆς πορείας) per spostare la domanda dall'opportunità di partecipare alla spedizione al modo in cui farlo con maggior sicurezza e successo. L'ironia con cui Socrate tratta i suoi interlocutori in qualche modo si ritorce contro di lui ad opera del giovane Senofonte. Ma Socrate offre comunque un insegnamento a Senofonte: il responso del dio, qualunque sia il modo in cui si è arrivati a ottenerlo, va rispettato.

Il dialogo tra Senofonte e Chirisofo relativo al confronto tra Spartani e Ateniesi si inserisce in un dialogo tra i due comandanti sul modo migliore di conquistare un'altura situata in posizione strategica. Del passo riporto soltanto la pericope che ci interessa (4, 6, 14-16):

ἀτὰρ τί ἐγὼ περὶ κλοπῆς συμβάλλομαι; ὑμᾶς γὰρ ἔγωγε, ὦ Χειρίσοφε, ἀκοῦω τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους ὅσοι ἐστὲ τῶν ὁμοίων εὐθὺς ἐκ παίδων κλέπτειν μελετᾶν, καὶ οὐκ αἰσχρὸν εἶναι ἀλλὰ καλὸν κλέπτειν ὅσα μὴ κωλύει νόμος. ὅπως δὲ ὡς κράτιστα κλέπτῃτε καὶ πειρᾶσθε λανθάνειν, νόμιμον ἄρα ὑμῖν ἐστίν, ἐὰν ληφθῆτε κλέπτοντες, μαστιγοῦσθαι. νῦν οὖν μάλα σοι καιρὸς ἐστίν ἐπιδείξασθαι τὴν παιδείαν, καὶ φυλάξασθαι μὴ ληφθῶμεν κλέπτοντες τοῦ ὄρους, ὡς μὴ πληγὰς λάβωμεν. ἀλλὰ μέντοι, ἔφη ὁ Χειρίσοφος, κἀγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἀκοῦω δεινοὺς εἶναι κλέπτειν τὰ δημόσια, καὶ μάλα ἔντος δεινοῦ κινδύνου τῶ κλέπτοντι, καὶ τοὺς κρατίστους μέντοι μάλιστα, εἴπερ ὑμῖν οἱ κράτιστοι ἄρχειν ἀξιοῦνται. ὥστε ὦρα καὶ σοὶ ἐπιδείκνυσθαι τὴν παιδείαν.

In questo dialogo all'ironia di Senofonte su uno degli aspetti dell'educazione spartana Chirisofo replica ricordando la fama degli Ateniesi, e specialmente di quelli più eminenti, che abitualmente ricoprono le cariche, nel rubare il denaro pubblico. Anche in questo caso l'ironia, fondata sul valore del verbo κλέπτω (rubare e occupare di sorpresa una posizione), è decisiva e coinvolge entrambi gli interlocutori, che giocano sulle forme di educazione, sulle istituzioni e sugli stili di vita delle due città. La difficoltà, o meglio l'impossibilità di comprendere i νόμοι di altri popoli dà vita a una pagina leggera, ma per nulla banale, nella quale Senofonte fa i conti con le due città che sono state fondamentali nella sua vita.

## 7. La monografia su una guerra tra scelte letterarie e forme di pubblicazione

In epoca augustea la storiografia è un genere ormai consolidato, con i suoi modelli e con una grande varietà di generi e di sottogeneri, ciascuno di essi legato a proprie tematiche, a propri metodi di indagine e a proprie scelte letterarie. Dionigi di Alicarnasso, nell'introdurre la sua *Storia antica di Roma* si contrappone apertamente all'autore che aveva scelto come punto di arrivo, sotto il profilo cronologico, della sua opera: Polibio. Nel proemio del libro IX Polibio aveva chiarito la sua scelta della storia di *πράξεις*, contrapponendosi a chi si era dedicato ad altri *μέρη τῆς ἱστορίας* e specificando che il suo pubblico di riferimento erano gli uomini politici, non i lettori avidi di storie fantastiche o gli eruditi amanti dei racconti di fondazione e di colonizzazione.<sup>72</sup> Polibio inoltre, rifacendosi al passo programmatico di Tucidide (1, 22, 4), aveva dichiarato che la finalità della sua opera era l'utile, non il diletto. Completamente diversa è la scelta di Dionigi (1, 8, 3):

*σχῆμα δὲ ἀποδίδωμι τῇ πραγματείᾳ οὐθ' ὁποῖον οἱ τοὺς πολέμους μόνους ἀναγράψαντες ἀποδεδώκασι ταῖς ἱστορίαις οὐθ' ὁποῖον οἱ τὰς πολιτείας αὐτὰς ἐξ' ἑαυτῶν διηγησάμενοι οὔτε ταῖς ἱστορικαῖς παραπλήσιον, ἅς ἐξέδωκαν οἱ τὰς Ἀθίδας πραγματευσάμενοι· μονοειδεῖς γὰρ ἐκεῖναί τε καὶ ταχὺ προσιστάμεναι τοῖς ἀκούουσιν· ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀπάσης ἰδέας μικτὸν ἐναγωνίου τε καὶ*

<sup>72</sup> POLYB. 9, 1, 2-6: οὐκ ἄγνωῶ δὲ διότι συμβαίνει τὴν πραγματείαν ἡμῶν ἔχειν αὐστηρόν τι καὶ πρὸς ἓν γένος ἀκροατῶν οἰκιοῦσθαι καὶ κρίνεσθαι διὰ τὸ μονοειδὲς τῆς συντάξεως. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοι συγγραφεῖς σχεδὸν ἅπαντες, εἰ δὲ μή γ', οἱ πλείους, πᾶσι τοῖς τῆς ἱστορίας μέρεσι χρώμενοι πολλοὺς ἐφέλικονται πρὸς ἔντευξιν τῶν ὑπομνημάτων. τὸν μὲν γὰρ φιλήκοον ὁ γνεαολογικὸς τρόπος ἐπιπᾶται, τὸν δὲ πολυπράγμονα καὶ περιττὸν ὁ περὶ τὰς ἀποικίας καὶ κτίσεις καὶ συγγενείας, καθὰ που καὶ παρ' Ἐφόρω λέγεται, τὸν δὲ πολιτικὸν ὁ περὶ τὰς πράξεις τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ πόλεων καὶ δυναστῶν. ἐφ' ὃν ἡμεῖς ψιλῶς κατηντηκότες καὶ περὶ τοῦτον πεποιημένοι τὴν ὅλην τάξιν, πρὸς ἓν μὲν τι γένος, ὡς προείπον, οἰκειῶς ἠρόσμεθα, τῷ δὲ πλείονι μέρει τῶν ἀκροατῶν ἀψυχαγωγῆτον παρεσκευάσαμεν τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν. τίνας δὲ χάριν ἄλλα μέρη τῆς ἱστορίας ἀποδοκιμάσαντες αὐτὰ τὰ κατὰ τὰς πράξεις προειλάμεθα γράφειν, ἐν ἑτέροις ἡμῖν εἴρηται διὰ πλείονων, κεφαλαιωδῶς γε μὴν οὐδὲν ἐπέχει καὶ νῦν ἐμφάσεως χάριν ὑπομῆσαι τοὺς ἀκούοντας.

θεωρητικῆς καὶ ἡδείας, ἵνα καὶ τοῖς περὶ τοὺς πολιτικοὺς δια-  
 τρίβουσι λόγους καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὴν φιλόσοφον ἐσπουδαχόσι θεω-  
 ρίαν καὶ εἴ τισιν ἀοχλήτου δεήσει διαγωγῆς ἐν ἱστορικοῖς ἀνα-  
 γνώσμασιν, ἀποχρώντως ἔχουσα φαίνεται.

Dionigi elenca tre forme di storia parziali o monotematiche (μονοειδεῖς), quelle dedicate esclusivamente alle guerre, le πολιτεῖαι e le storie locali, e dichiara di scegliere una forma mista che possa soddisfare sia chi si interessa attivamente di politica sia chi studia la teoria politica sia chi cerca diletto nelle opere di storia. L'opera di Dionigi si pone quindi su una linea diversa da quella rappresentata da Polibio e dal suo modello Tucidide e adotta una formula, quella della forma mista, ripresa dal proemio dell'*Antidosi* di Isocrate (12: *χρῆ δὲ τοὺς διεξιόντας αὐτὸν πρῶτον μὲν ὡς ὄντος μικτοῦ τοῦ λόγου καὶ πρὸς ἀπάσας τὰς ὑποθέσεις ταύτας γεγραμμένου ποιεῖσθαι τὴν ἀκρόασιν, κτλ.*). Che il riferimento polemico di Dionigi sia Polibio risulta evidente sia dalla ripresa di *μονοειδής* sia dalla tripartizione del pubblico. Le tre categorie di lettori non si sovrappongono completamente. Provo a schematizzare il contenuto del passo di Dionigi, indicando con un numero la posizione nell'elenco.

| Contenuti – Polibio     | Lettori – Polibio     | Contenuti – Dionigi    | Lettori – Dionigi                          |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--|
| genealogie - 1          | chi ama ascoltare - 1 | storie locali - 3      | chi cerca diletto - 3                      |
| fondazioni, colonie - 2 | lettore curioso - 2   | πολιτεῖαι - 2          | chi è interessato alla teoria politica - 2 |
| storia di πράξεις - 3   | politico - 3          | opere sulle guerre - 1 | chi si occupa di discorsi politici - 1     |

Dionigi inverte l'ordine delle categorie polibiane, partendo proprio dalla categoria scelta dal suo predecessore. Le categorie di contenuti e di lettori non si sovrappongono perfettamente: le genealogie sono sostituite dalle storie locali, esemplificate

dalle opere degli attidografi; il genere dei racconti di colonizzazione e di fondazione dalle πολιτεΐαι. Sul versante dei lettori, il lettore πολυπράγμων καὶ περιττός di Polibio corrisponde, ma solo in parte, a chi si interessa di teoria politica. Nella formulazione piuttosto generica riferita ai lettori ho identificato la speculazione filosofica con la teoria politica a causa della corrispondenza con il genere delle πολιτεΐαι. Non è questa la sede per indagare le ragioni delle variazioni apportate da Dionigi: cambiamento dei gusti e degli interessi del pubblico, volontà di evidenziare l'ambito degli interessi per la teoria politica, forse anche imperfetto ricordo del passo polibiano. Quel che mi preme evidenziare è invece l'identificazione della storia di πράξεις polibiana con l'opera di storia che si occupa soltanto delle guerre. Il lettore di riferimento rimane il politico, anche se Dionigi si serve di una perifrasi (τοῖς περὶ τοὺς πολιτικούς διατρίβουσι λόγους) che potrebbe trarre in inganno e indurre a credere che si stia riferendo specificamente a chi è interessato all'oratoria politica. Ma sappiamo che per i Greci chi pratica l'oratoria politica è l'uomo politico. Occorre infine segnalare che Polibio aveva criticato le opere storiche che si occupavano di singoli eventi (κατὰ μέρος),<sup>73</sup> naturalmente allo scopo di esaltare la superiorità del soggetto della propria opera.

Passiamo ora alle forme di pubblicazione, prendendo le mosse da quell'Erodoto che pubblicava la sua opera in pubbliche recitazioni – che nella maggior parte dei casi saranno state parziali, anche se non si può escludere un'esecuzione dell'intera opera – mentre ne curava una redazione scritta integrale e organica. Che le pubbliche letture siano rimaste a lungo in uso è testimoniato *ad abundantiam* dalle tante epigrafi ellenistiche e di età imperiale che ricordano le esibizioni di storici.<sup>74</sup> Ma certamente, almeno a partire da Tuciddide, la lettura privata è diventata una forma di pubblicazione abituale per le opere di storia, e in particolare per quegli autori che, per parafrasare le parole di Polibio,

<sup>73</sup> Vd. ROOD (2007) 148-153.

<sup>74</sup> Vd. CHANIOTIS (1988): si veda nell'indice *s.v. Vortrag, historischer*.

non cercavano il diletto del pubblico, ma si rivolgevano ai politici e miravano all'utile (9, 2, 5).

La nascita del ciclo storico,<sup>75</sup> la tendenza a collegare le opere di storia per evitare di lasciare periodi non trattati, appare evidente già con Teopompo, continuatore di Tucidide, che scrive anche un'epitome di Erodoto.<sup>76</sup> Le opere di storia generale tendono già nel IV secolo a.C. ad assumere dimensioni via via più grandi con tutte le inevitabili conseguenze sul piano della pubblicazione e della conservazione. Di opere in trenta, quaranta o più libri si produceva verosimilmente un numero ridotto di copie complete, destinate alle biblioteche e a pochi privati particolarmente interessati. In molti casi la circolazione sarà stata limitata ad alcuni libri e certamente furono realizzate selezioni ed epitomi. All'interno di monumentali storie generali potevano spiccare sezioni dedicate a un evento, in genere bellico, particolarmente importante, che venivano messe in risalto mediante appositi proemi: un esempio è già in Erodoto con la trattazione della seconda guerra persiana evidenziata da un'ampia sezione introduttiva (vd. *supra*). Tali sezioni potevano anche godere di una circolazione autonoma dal resto dell'opera e, in qualche caso, essere pubblicate prima che l'intera opera fosse completata. La perdita della storiografia ellenistica, con le parziali eccezioni di Polibio e di Diodoro Siculo, non ci permette di valutare appieno questo fenomeno, ma ne abbiamo testimonianza in una celebre lettera di Cicerone, rivolta allo storico Lucceio, in cui ricorda gli storici che separarono il racconto di una guerra *a perpetuis suis historiis* (5, 12, 2).<sup>77</sup> Le tre opere menzionate (Callistene, Timeo, Polibio) sono in tutto o in parte perdute, ma, se crediamo alle parole di Cicerone, doveva trattarsi di un costume abituale per gli storici greci. Non mi soffermo qui sui tanti problemi posti dalla lettera, dalla serietà di intenti dell'autore, al rapporto dell'opera che Cicerone chiedeva a Lucceio

<sup>75</sup> Vd. CANFORA (1971).

<sup>76</sup> Vd. CORCELLA (2013).

<sup>77</sup> Sulla lettera vd. NICOLAI (1992) 164-176.

con l'encomio, fino all'eventuale superamento delle *leges historiae* richiesto a Lucceio: mi interessa invece la prassi di isolare, in forma monografica, il racconto di una guerra. Alla luce della parole di Cicerone e della prassi di pubblicazione che possiamo in parte ricostruire emerge che il nostro concetto di unità dell'opera letteraria per noi fissata in modo netto dalla forma libraria, specialmente dopo l'invenzione della stampa, non si può applicare meccanicamente al mondo antico:<sup>78</sup> la pluralità di forme di pubblicazione, aurali e scritte, la situazione del mercato librario e la varietà dei modi di fruizione determinano un'elasticità oggi impensabile.<sup>79</sup> In quest'ottica è necessario ridiscutere l'idea per cui la monografia storica implicita nel racconto erodoteo della spedizione di Serse emergerebbe in forma esplicita nell'opera di Tucidide.<sup>80</sup> Questa prospettiva nasce da una concezione moderna dell'unità dell'opera letteraria e non tiene conto né delle forme di pubblicazione e nemmeno dei segnali espliciti che gli autori inseriscono nelle loro opere, come, appunto, la funzione proemiale dei primi cento capitoli del VII libro di Erodoto. Insomma, non bisogna individuare una contraddizione tra l'organicità dell'opera erodotea nel suo complesso e la natura 'monografica' della trattazione della seconda guerra persiana, che si può paragonare all'*Iliade* all'interno del ciclo troiano. Peraltro, se la categoria di monografia storica è moderna e se le categorie antiche, come le polibiane storie *κατὰ μέρος*, rivelarono la loro utilità soprattutto come bersagli polemici,<sup>81</sup> altri problemi emergono in rapporto alla

<sup>78</sup> Vd. ROSSI (2000).

<sup>79</sup> Vd. IMMERWAHR (1966) 8-9, che parte dalla questione della presunta incompletezza dell'opera di Erodoto: "If the assumption of Herodotus' lecturing activities is correct, the individual parts of the work must have undergone a long process of revision in oral delivery. Under such circumstances, the work did not take shape in a straight line (as it were), but its different layers became inextricably fused. Essentially, the relation of oral tradition, lecture, and written work resembles the Homeric problem of the relations of short epics to the *Iliad*, except that the process of transformation falls within a single lifetime".

<sup>80</sup> FORNARA (1983) 32; ROOD (2007) 147.

<sup>81</sup> Vd. ROOD (2007) 158.

categoria di storia universale. Mettendo da parte i pericoli che sorgono dall'aggettivo 'universale', che rinvia a concezioni molto lontane da quelle antiche, credo che sia più proficuo indagare le funzioni delle opere di storia, e in particolare la funzione paradigmatica nelle sue varie declinazioni. Insomma, se Tucidide riesce a proporre paradigmi perenni (o comunque durevoli), è perché coglie fattori ricorrenti (1, 22, 4) quasi cristallizzati nelle vicende della guerra più grande combattuta fino ai suoi tempi.

Un corollario. All'interno della monumentale opera storica di Tito Livio in 144 libri lo storico seleziona una guerra, la seconda punica, alla quale attribuisce un'importanza e un rilievo particolari, isolandone la trattazione con un proemio al mezzo (21, 1, 1-3):

*In parte operis mei licet mihi praefari quod in principio summae totius professi plerique sunt rerum scriptores, bellum maxime omnium memorabile quae unquam gesta sint me scripturum, quod Hannibale duce Carthaginienses cum populo Romano gessere. Nam neque ualidiores opibus ullae inter se ciuitates gentesque contulerunt arma, neque his ipsis tantum unquam uirium aut roboris fuit, et haud ignotas belli artes inter sese sed expertas primo Punico conferebant bello, et adeo uaria fortuna belli ancepsque Mars fuit ut propius periculum fuerint qui uicerunt. Odiis etiam prope maioribus certarunt quam uiribus, Romanis indignantibus quod uictoribus uicti ultro inferrent arma, Poenis quod superbe auareque crederent imperitatum uictis esse.*

Alla consueta affermazione proemiale sulla guerra più grande, motivata come già in Tucidide dalle risorse e dalla preparazione dei due contendenti, si unisce il motivo drammatico dell'incertezza dell'esito. La storiografia compete con i generi di cui si è nutrita, l'epica e la tragedia,<sup>82</sup> e propone paradigmi grandiosi, i più grandiosi che sia possibile scegliere. Ma nella scelta degli eventi da isolare monograficamente emerge ogni volta prepotente la memoria di quel primo grandioso epos dedicato ai cinquanta

<sup>82</sup> Vd. ORTOLÁ GUIXOT / REDONDO / SANCHO (2000) e, per Erodoto, NICOLAI (2012).

giorni che avevano cambiato il corso della guerra di Troia.<sup>83</sup> Nel caso di Livio, l'ira di Achille, motore delle vicende narrate nell'*Iliade*, riaffiora, come un'eco lontana, nell'*odiis etiam prope maioribus certarunt quam uiribus*, attribuito a Romani e Cartaginesi, quasi a ricordare ai lettori che alla base dei grandi conflitti vi sono sempre violente passioni.

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<sup>83</sup> Sull'ambizioso intento "of getting the whole of the war covered within the compass of the narrower theme of the wrath of Achilles", vd. ROOD (2007) 153. Può essere utile segnalare che l'opera di Tito Livio, dopo la *praefatio*, inizia con le vicende successive alla presa di Troia e con Enea e Antenore che salpano alla volta dell'Occidente.



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## DISCUSSION

*V. Fromentin:* Si les liens entre l'historiographie classique et la poésie épique ont déjà été étudiés pour Hérodote, c'est moins le cas pour Thucydide. Aussi votre démonstration de l'utilisation par ce dernier de micro-structures narratives, de scènes typiques, de motifs empruntés à l'*Iliade* en particulier est-elle à la fois neuve, convaincante et suggestive. Elle conduit aussi à poser la question de l'intentionnalité d'une telle imitation, à une époque qui n'est pas celle de la Seconde Sophistique et par un historien dont le récit vise d'abord à reconstituer un enchaînement de causes et d'effets. Cette imitation introduit-elle un autre niveau de sens ou sert-elle seulement à renforcer la connivence entre l'auteur et son public ?

*R. Nicolai:* Nell'*Archaiologia* il riferimento ai poemi omerici è certamente intenzionale e sottolinea la superiorità del soggetto scelto da Tucidide sotto il profilo della grandezza e, di conseguenza, anche sotto quello dell'esemplarità. La ripresa di scene tipiche omeriche nel resto dell'opera è, a mio avviso, in parte intenzionale e legata alla stessa logica che presiede al confronto con Omero nell'*Archaiologia*, in parte quasi spontanea e irriflessa, connessa con quella che si può chiamare una memoria omerica, che Tucidide condivideva con gli altri Greci del suo tempo. Se nell'*Archaiologia* Omero è espressamente citato e usato come fonte per la ricostruzione del passato più antico, anche dove questo non avviene in forma esplicita il pubblico poteva riconoscere strutture alle quali era abituato da una lunga consuetudine di recitazioni dell'epos e al tempo stesso riconosceva in Tucidide il nuovo educatore dei Greci.

*J. Marincola:* I think you have presented a most convincing interpretation, and I think that the way in which the ancient

themselves often refer to their own or others' historical writing using terms such as πόλεμος and *bellum* (e.g., Isoc. *Panath.* 1-2; *Antid.* 45-46; Dion. Hal. *A.R.* 1; Cic. *Fam.* 5, 12, 2; Sall. *Jug.* 5, 1) bolsters your contention that they were thinking ultimately of Homer and especially the *Iliad*. My question is specifically about Herodotus, and in particular about those 'typical scenes', where you note that Herodotus does not take these over wholesale but rather modifies what he found in Homer by various means. In light of this, do you think that the well-known figure of the 'wise advisor' is a modification of a 'typical scene' in Homer?

*R. Nicolai:* La segnalazione dell'uso di πόλεμος e *bellum* per indicare opere di storia è una conferma importante, per la quale ti sono molto grato. Negli studi sulle scene tipiche (Arend, Edwards) non è stata compresa alcuna scena nella quale un *wise advisor* dialoga con un re o con un comandante offrendo i frutti della sua sapienza. Nei poemi omerici non mancano figure di consiglieri, su tutti Nestore, ma i loro interventi non seguono uno schema fisso e spesso non sono ascoltati o non producono esiti positivi. Nelle letterature vicino-orientali, invece, simili scene ripetono, con variazioni, lo stesso schema: in genere il saggio consigliere si trova in una situazione critica, ma, grazie ai suoi buoni consigli riesce a guadagnarsi la fiducia del potente di turno e a scampare alla morte. Questo tipo di scena compare in Erodoto, che ha certamente attinto al repertorio narrativo vicino-orientale. Su questo punto mi permetto di rinviare al mio *Politica e filosofia prima della filosofia* (2016), 25-34.

*B. Bleckmann:* Meine Frage bezieht sich auf die *logoi* und *erga* (S. 77 Ihres Vortrags). In den *Hellenika Oxyrhynchia* finden wir nur *erga*, keine Reden. Es fehlt bekanntlich auch das religiöse Element (als Teil der *erga*). Möglicherweise war diese Ausklammerung von Reden beabsichtigt. Können wir das in dem Sinne deuten, dass hier ein Prozess der Emanzipation der Geschichtsschreibung von epischen Strukturen zu greifen ist?

R. Nicolai: La domanda pone una questione cruciale, alla quale possiamo purtroppo dare soltanto una risposta parziale a causa della perdita di quasi tutta la storiografia del IV secolo e della storiografia ellenistica a eccezione di Senofonte, Polibio e Diodoro Siculo. Certamente il dibattito sul modo di riferire i discorsi diretti era molto importante, come testimoniano il libro XII di Polibio e il proemio del XX libro di Diodoro Siculo. Quale fosse la prassi degli altri storici e quanti di loro evitassero di includere nelle loro opere discorsi diretti resta un problema aperto. L'autore delle *Elleniche di Ossirinco* e Cratippo (Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 16), sempre che non siano la stessa persona, certamente evitarono i discorsi diretti, ma credo che la maggioranza degli storici continuò la tradizione di inserire i *logoi* accanto agli *erga*. Una prova indiretta è costituita dalla storiografia latina, con gli autori che danno la parola ai personaggi delle loro opere.

G. Schepens: Through convincing and refined analysis, you have shown how much the archetypal subtext of Homer's *Iliad* has been instrumental to the shaping of the historiographical war narrative in Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon. The two latter historians wrote works of contemporary history. Herodotus' work has a different profile. The general question I would like to ask is what place we can assign to Herodotus with regard to the theme of the present colloquium.

According to ancient tradition, Herodotus was born "a little before the Persian Wars" (Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 5). He nowhere claims to have been an eyewitness of any of the major events he narrates, but records conversations with those who were involved. In other words, his subject still fell within living memory. We also know that he commented on contemporary history, but only indirectly, by templates derived from earlier events. At the same time, there is the large temporal scope of his narrative which is not just limited to recounting the Persian Wars: it encompasses of all the major Greek and non-Greek participant peoples in the war both the recent and more distant past. Herodotus' focus on the past is clearly revealed in the title of Pietro

Vannicelli's book *Erodoto e la storia dell'alto e medio arcaismo (Sparta – Tessaglia – Cirene)* Roma 1993.

Of some interest for the answer which Herodotus himself may have given to the question asked is a passage in the *Histories* which puts the Persian War at considerable distance in time from the Peloponnesian War. It is the story of the awakening again of the anger of the hero Talthybius “*a long time thereafter, during the war between the Peloponnesians and Athens*” (Hdt. 7, 137, 1). This sounds as if he were speaking of some quite distant war.<sup>84</sup>

Another matter on which I would like to have your opinion concerns the difference between the narrative of a war in a *historical work* like Herodotus' *apodexis historiês* – a work of research for which the author himself bears responsibility – and an epic poem, which starts with the invocation of the Muses.

*R. Nicolai:* Il problema posto da Guido Schepens è centrale per la discussione che stiamo svolgendo: quali limiti cronologici possiamo fissare per considerare un'opera come storia contemporanea? Si tratta di un problema che nella mia relazione non ho affrontato, cercando di privilegiare l'analisi delle forme con cui Erodoto, Tuciddide e Senofonte hanno narrato tre guerre: la seconda guerra persiana, la guerra del Peloponneso e la spedizione dei Diecimila. Esistono differenze non piccole tra le tre opere, ma la più cospicua risiede nell'esplicita dichiarazione di Tuciddide di aver iniziato a scrivere all'inizio del conflitto, una dichiarazione che Erodoto certamente non avrebbe potuto fare. E, a proposito di Senofonte, occorre ricordare che l'*Anabasi* fu scritta a una certa distanza di tempo dai fatti narrati. Tutte e tre le opere propongono dei grandi paradigmi e li sviluppano in forme che sono almeno in parte debitorie dell'epos. Secondo lo schema tripartito usato da Tuciddide nell'epitafio di Pericle

<sup>84</sup> As observed by W. RÖSLER (2002), “The *Histories* and Writing”, in E.J. BAKKER / I.J.F. DE JONG / H. VAN WEES (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden), 79-94, esp. 93.



(2, 36) la generazione contemporanea è quella di Tucidide e degli altri protagonisti della guerra del Peloponneso; più arduo è stabilire se le guerre persiane rientrano tra le imprese dei πατέρες ἡμῶν o tra quelle dei πρόγονοι. Di Erodoto e Tucidide non conosciamo con esattezza la data di nascita, ma è del tutto ragionevole pensare che Erodoto sia nato poco più di vent'anni prima di Tucidide. Come ha osservato giustamente Schepens, Erodoto non è un testimone oculare, ma ha potuto certamente parlare con testimoni oculari. Peraltro l'idea di 'contemporaneo' era, per così dire, a geometria variabile e non era delimitata da rigidi vincoli di cronologia. Un esempio interessante è offerto da Strabone che parla dei tempi a lui contemporanei riferendosi al periodo che inizia con la riorganizzazione dell'Asia da parte di Pompeo e che egli considerava storicamente significativo: su questo vd. S. Potheary (1997), "The Expression 'Our Times' in Strabo's *Geography*", *CPh* 92.3, 235-246.

Passando alla seconda domanda, concordo con Guido Schepens a proposito delle profonde differenze tra epos e storiografia. Pur con tutte le difficoltà e le differenze, le opere storiche che ho preso in esame non riguardano mai fatti di remota antichità, come quelli narrati nell'epos e, se le forme presentano dei punti di contatto, la distanza tra i due generi resta enorme: basti pensare all'anonimato dell'aedo epico e, di converso, al nome degli storici orgogliosamente proclamato da alcuni di loro e, inoltre, all'uso di fonti, spesso esplicitate e discusse, da parte degli storici, a fronte della narrazione epica che poggia unicamente sull'autorità della Musa.

*H. Inglebert*: Au-delà du schéma narratif global (monographie de guerre) et des divers parallèles narratifs précis entre les narrations du cycle épique et du cycle historique, quelles seraient les différences entre les genres de l'épopée et de l'histoire ? Les questions complémentaires seraient :

- jusqu'à quand ont existé ces parallèles entre cycle épique et cycle historique (existe-t-il des parallèles dans la *Guerre des Gaules* ou la *Guerre des Juifs* ?) ;

- si on peut imaginer un cycle romain livien où la seconde guerre punique est une monographie de guerre (et donc parallèle au cycle hérodotéen), qu'en est-il chez Polybe ?

*R. Nicolai:* Le differenze tra poesia epica e storiografia sono molte e profonde e dipendono dalla differenza di genere, legata alla differenza di funzioni. In particolare, come ha sottolineato Guido Schepens nel suo intervento, una differenza fondamentale risiede nell'uso critico delle fonti di informazione da parte degli storici e nel fatto che talvolta queste fonti sono esplicitamente citate. Le funzioni della poesia epica sono in parte mutate nel corso del tempo, a partire dalla fase di formazione dell'epos in contesto orale fino al V secolo e oltre; e un mutamento di funzioni ha interessato anche la storiografia. Quest'ultima poi non può essere considerata come un blocco omogeneo e indistinto, ma comprende tutte le varie forme in cui la materia storica è stata trattata.

Passando alle questioni più specifiche sollevate dalla domanda, si può dire che le opere di Cesare, comprendendo anche quelle del *Corpus Caesarianum*, *Bellum Alexandrinum*, *Bellum Africum* e *Bellum Hispaniense*, sono dedicate a distinte e circoscritte vicende militari, ma nel loro insieme formano un racconto che potrebbe essere chiamato ciclo di Cesare. Nel caso di Flavio Giuseppe, il *Bellum Judaicum* isola una vicenda militare, presentata come straordinariamente grande, dalla sequenza della storia ebraica narrata nelle *Antiquitates*, che si fermano proprio nel momento in cui inizia la trattazione del *Bellum*. Occorre però sottolineare che le condizioni della comunicazione letteraria sono molto cambiate dai tempi di Erodoto a quelli di Cesare e di Flavio Giuseppe, con il prevalere della diffusione delle opere attraverso copie scritte.

Per quanto riguarda Polibio, infine, da Cicerone (*Fam.* 5, 12) sappiamo che trattò in maniera separata il *Bellum Numantinum*: anche nel suo caso si può quindi constatare una dinamica tra la storia continua e il trattamento monografico riservato a una guerra. Si può pensare alle *perpetuae historiae* come a un ciclo o

come a parti di un ciclo, all'interno del quale si potevano isolare guerre particolarmente rilevanti.

*E.-M. Becker:* Thank you very much for your paper. What is – in your view – the significance of paraenetic *topoi* for the historiographical outline? How does *paraenesis* lead to the present time of the historian? Would you – on the basis of various parenetical patterns applied by historians – accordingly distinguish between different outlines of historiography up to the concept of 'contemporary history'?

*R. Nicolai:* Occorre premettere che i *topoi* propri dei discorsi parenetici compaiono soprattutto in contesti militari, quando i comandanti devono esortare le truppe prima di battaglie decisive. La discussione su questo genere di discorsi è stata molto vivace perché da un lato è stata messa in dubbio la prassi di tenere lunghi e articolati discorsi a grandi eserciti prima delle battaglie, dall'altro è stato considerato poco probabile che gli storici antichi riuscissero a ottenere informazioni attendibili sulle parole pronunciate dai comandanti. Se escludiamo la possibilità che gli storici potessero (e volessero) riprodurre *verbatim* le parole pronunciate, possiamo pensare che questo genere di discorsi sia più di altri influenzato dalla tradizione letteraria, che risale alla poesia epica, e che gli storici non potessero esimersi dall'inserirli nelle loro opere. I grandi *erga* devono essere preceduti da adeguati *logoi*. La critica di Polibio a Timeo nel libro XII riguarda, tra l'altro, proprio un discorso di questo genere, che Polibio considera inverosimile: si tratta di un discorso di Timoleonte (12, 26a). A ben vedere, Polibio non afferma che Timeo non è stato fedele alle parole realmente pronunciate, ma che il discorso che ha composto è una sorta di esercizio retorico, per giunta poco riuscito. Anche gli storici che affrontavano le vicende contemporanee o recenti inserivano nelle loro opere questo genere di discorsi che, nella maggior parte dei casi, ripetono gli stessi *topoi*, scegliendo ovviamente quelli più adatti alle circostanze.

*A.M. Kemezis:* Many thanks for this rich and well-developed paper. Seeing the correspondences you have pointed out, I want to ask about the literary self-consciousness in play with this kind of motivic or patterned narrative, and its effect on the credibility of historical narrative. Of course, there are many areas in which early historiography explicitly positions itself in relation to epic, I am thinking especially of informational status and of verisimilitude. How does story-patterning fit in with that, or to put it another way, are historians saying “I am going to talk about similar events to Homer, so I will tell the same kind of story”, or are they saying “I am going to tell a story the way Homer tells it”?

*R. Nicolai:* Il grado di consapevolezza nella ripresa di *narrative patterns*, scene tipiche e motivi omerici varia da storico a storico. Al livello più alto credo che si debba porre la ripresa omerica nei primi 100 capitoli del VII libro di Erodoto, nei quali si vuole presentare la spedizione di Serse come una guerra di Troia a parti invertite e, per giunta, di proporzioni molto maggiori rispetto a quella narrata nel ciclo troiano. Al livello più basso di consapevolezza si collocano le riprese di scene e di motivi per i quali la ripresa di Omero avviene in forma quasi inconscia, tanta è l'abitudine ad ascoltare le vicende di una guerra narrate al modo epico. Si può dire che, in linea di massima, tanto più ampie e complesse sono le strutture tanto maggiore è la consapevolezza di imitare Omero e di entrare in competizione con lui. Sul grado di consapevolezza degli storici incide certamente anche la pretesa, tutta epica, di narrare la guerra più grande, connessa con l'esemplarità che gli autori attribuiscono alla vicenda da loro prescelta. Insomma, in alcuni casi, come quello di Erodoto VII, si potrebbe attribuire agli storici un ragionamento del genere: “racconto una storia in forme epiche perché è una storia grandiosa, che può competere e superare la guerra di Troia”. Quanto alla questione della credibilità storica, è mia opinione che non sia intaccata dall'uso di *patterns*, scene tipiche e motivi di derivazione epica: il pubblico

era avvezzo a quelle forme narrative e le considerava del tutto normali.

*N. Luraghi:* Nella tua esplorazione del rapporto tra poesia epica e le prime generazioni degli storici greci, vedo un'oscillazione tra riferimenti al ciclo epico nel suo complesso e riferimenti ai poemi omerici presi da soli – specialmente all'*Iliade*. Mi chiedo se quest'oscillazione non rischi di distorcere la nostra valutazione di questo rapporto. Per quanto ne sappiamo, il ciclo epico non si presentava ai Greci come un'opera letteraria compatta, ma come una serie di poemi che attribuivano ad autori diversi – e di cui noi sappiamo non molto, a parte generiche indicazioni sui loro contenuti narrativi. Ma quando il confronto passa agli schemi narrativi, di estensione maggiore o minore, ovviamente il confronto si sposta sui poemi omerici. Ora, il fatto che Erodoto possa aver formulato l'architettura delle *Storie* con in mente il ciclo epico, cosa che non mi pare a priori molto ovvia, e il fatto che nella narrativa erodotea ci siano scene di genere di derivazione omerica mi paiono comunque due fenomeni di natura molto diversa, e non sono sicuro che ci sia molto da guadagnare in termini esegetici, nel metterli insieme nella categoria "influenza dell'epica su Erodoto".

*R. Nicolai:* L'oscillazione deriva dal fatto che il pubblico di Erodoto era abituato a recitazioni in sequenza dell'epos, per esempio durante le Panatenee, per le quali è stato supposto che al tempo di Ipparco fosse realizzata una redazione scritta completa del ciclo troiano (Sbardella [2012]). Poiché anche Erodoto recitava singoli *logoi* o gruppi di *logoi* o forse, in più *akroaseis*, l'intera opera, si può pensare che abbia concepito le *Storie*, specialmente nella redazione scritta completa, come una sorta di ciclo, all'interno del quale spiccava, per importanza e per estensione, il racconto della seconda guerra persiana, come l'*Iliade* spiccava nel ciclo troiano. L'influenza del ciclo epico quindi può essere riferita alle modalità di pubblicazione e per alcuni aspetti alle macrostrutture, mentre l'influenza dell'*Iliade*, nella

prospettiva che ho cercato di delineare, riguarda le strutture narrative più piccole, di varia estensione, dai *narrative patterns* ai motivi, che Erodoto trova nell'epos e che sono per lui la forma più naturale che può assumere il racconto di una guerra.

### III

JOHN MARINCOLA

## THE ANXIETIES OF THE CONTEMPORARY HISTORIAN\*

### ABSTRACT

The prefaces of historians who write of contemporary events are often full of confidence in themselves (as competent and well-placed to narrate such events) and praise for their subject (as being great and important). There is evidence, however, to suggest that contemporary historians were all too aware of the limitations inherent in their attempts, and these ‘anxieties’ can be seen in occasional remarks by the historians themselves and by other authors in Antiquity. This paper looks at three areas in which the limitations of contemporary history were especially recognised – methodology, impartiality, and historical revisionism – and suggests that behind the bravado displayed by the historians, they were very much aware both of the difficulties attendant on writing contemporary history and of the slim odds of success that their efforts would result in an authoritative account.

The contemporary historian was a fixture of the cultural landscape of Greece and Rome from the time of Thucydides onwards.

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Through the centuries, even under regimes notably hostile to the free expression of ideas, the contemporary historian was to be found. From the remarks made by the historians themselves, we can see what they thought the advantages of their contemporary histories were: the events were great; they themselves were present and witnessed what happened; and they had the advantage of other eye-witnesses, when they did not see the events themselves. Such claims, usually at the outset of a history, project self-confidence and assuredness.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, however, I want to argue that from remarks in both the historians themselves and in other writers we can sense under the surface a recognition of the problematic nature of many of these claims, and that there were in fact a number of what we might call 'anxieties' associated particularly with the writing of contemporary history. This could be approached from a number of angles but here I will concentrate on three: methodology; the issue of bias; and historical revisionism.

## 1. Methodology

The contemporary historian's methodology was codified early on, largely under the influence of Thucydides. Thucydides does not praise the genre of contemporary history explicitly but indicates its superiority by the contrast he draws between the way one can write about ancient times and contemporary events. The distant past is the province of poets who exaggerate and magnify so as to make their subjects great, but such material cannot be tested because of the distance in time. One can make conjecture, based on probability and a sceptical handling of the evidence, but this is about all.<sup>2</sup> In writing of contemporary affairs, by contrast, one can see matters for oneself and/or inquire of eyewitnesses, whose accounts, if needed, can be compared. This

<sup>1</sup> Conventional claims in the historians: MARINCOLA (1997) 34-174.

<sup>2</sup> THUC. 1, 1, 3; 1, 9, 4; 1, 10, 3; 1, 20, 1; 1, 21, 1-6.



Thucydidean methodology – one’s own autopsy and inquiry of those present at events – becomes standard for all later contemporary historians,<sup>3</sup> and forms the heart of their claims to reliability.<sup>4</sup>

There is no reason to disbelieve the majority of contemporary historians when they claim autopsy and reliable sources, but more than anyone they must have been aware of its limitations in all senses of the word. An examination of the contents of most contemporary histories shows a vast variety of locales, participants, and types of events (e.g., battle narratives, assemblies, strategy sessions, etc.) and even the most diligent historian could have been present at only a handful of such events. Where he could not be present, he would have to rely on the questioning of witnesses, and already in Thucydides the latter difficulty is recognised: he notes that eyewitnesses do not always tell the same story about the same events, and witnesses are limited by their memory and/or by their favouritism for one side or the other (1, 22, 3).<sup>5</sup> Thucydides’ “solution”, he tells us, was to go through each detail in conformity with ἀκριβεία, although what this technique actually entailed is never explained – and of course it must have differed in different cases.<sup>6</sup> Nor was Thucydides himself unaware of autopsy’s limitations, since he had called attention to them in the “Archaeology” when he warned that examination someday hence of the ruins of Athens and Sparta would not necessarily give an accurate estimate of how great they had actually been (1, 10, 2-3).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> WOODMAN (1988a) 15 with 56 n. 83 points out that this methodology can already be seen in Homer: *Od.* 8, 489-491 (Odysseus to Demodocus, “as if you were there yourself or heard it from one who was”).

<sup>4</sup> So much so that Lucian could easily parody it at the outset of his *True Histories* (1, 4): “I write about things that I neither saw nor experienced nor learnt from others”.

<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps worth remarking that Thucydides mentions only favouritism (εὐνοία), not its opposite, whereas all other later historians mention favouritism and hostility and two sides of the same coin.

<sup>6</sup> On ἀκριβεία in general see FANTASIA (2007); on Thucydides in particular, SCHEPENS (1980) 113-133.

<sup>7</sup> For historical revisionism see below, §3.

But a more important point is precisely the absence of any explanation by Thucydides of *how* he resolved conflicts in his sources: in this case he bequeathed to his successors no suggestions on what one might look for other than favouritism or faulty memory. Yet it seems clear that this is deliberate on Thucydides' part, for although he says in a general way that discovering the truth was "laborious" (ἐπιπρόνως, 1, 22, 3), he does not wish to call attention to his decisions on each occasion but rather to have his audience experience the relatively smooth surface of the narrative. Whereas Herodotus had offered his audience source-citations by which they could themselves evaluate whether or not the 'speakers' of those citations might be making a self-interested defence of their actions, Thucydides has deliberately occluded the nature and extent of his sources in the service of an 'authoritative' narrative, one that must establish its authority not by citing or comparing the sources (i.e., the parts that make up the narrative) but by the relatively untroubled surface of the narrative.<sup>8</sup>

What is true for Thucydides is true for his followers: aside from complaints in general terms about the bias of their sources, they virtually never object to the testimony of eyewitnesses,<sup>9</sup> perhaps because of what would have resulted if they had removed such a structure: no witnesses, no history. In other genres, however, we do see questioning of the reliability of the senses and of eyewitness accounts. The Presocratic philosophers had already discussed some pitfalls of sense-perception, and they were followed in this by Plato.<sup>10</sup> In tragedy, Euripides can

<sup>8</sup> On Thucydides' narrative manner, ROOD (2004) is an excellent overview.

<sup>9</sup> An interesting exception is at TAC. *Hist.* 4, 81, 3, discussing the witnesses to Vespasian's "miracles" in Alexandria: *utrumque qui interfuere nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium*. Even here the narrator's disbelief is expressed in an implicit manner.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., HERACLIT. 22 B 107 D-K = D33 L-M: "eyes and ears are bad witnesses for men who have souls that cannot understand the language"; PARM. F 7 D-K = D8 L-M: "heedless eye or echoing ear" (line 4); PL. *Phaed.* 65b: "do men find any truth in sight or hearing?", a sentiment attributed to οἱ ποιηταί. Discussion in LLOYD (1979) 129-146.

sometimes play with the well-known confidence of the messenger who tells the audience that he offers a reliable account because he was present and saw for himself, but this can be given various shadings, depending on the playwright's purposes.<sup>11</sup> In the *Electra*, for example, when Orestes asks how one could distinguish the noble man from the base, he suggests that one might look to conduct in war, but dismisses this by saying, "who could be a reliable witness when facing the enemy's spears?";<sup>12</sup> a remark that calls into question the kinds of testimonies that might be used to build up a battle narrative. This thought is expressed more fully by Theseus in the *Suppliants*, where the Athenian hero Theseus, in asking for a report from Adrastus on the seven heroes who have just lost their lives in the struggle before Thebes, offers him a cautionary word (840-856):

"And now Adrastus, I ask you: how was it that these men came to be such exemplars of courage? You have the skill, the knowledge: speak to our young Athenians here. For they saw<sup>13</sup> the acts of bravery, begging description, by which these men were hoping to capture Thebes. One thing I will not ask you, in case I am thought ridiculous: which of the enemy each of them clashed with in battle, sustaining the deadly thrust of the spear. Such reports are worthless, doing no service to the teller or his listeners; how can

<sup>11</sup> On messenger speeches in tragedy in general see BARRETT (2002). For the restricted viewpoint of the messenger (which follows naturally from a first-person narrative in general) in Euripidean tragedy see DE JONG (1991); for ignorant narrators in tragedy, see SCODEL (2009).

<sup>12</sup> *El.* 377-378: ἀλλ' εἰς ὅπλ' ἔλθῶν; τίς δὲ πρὸς λόγχην βλέπων | μάρτυς γένοιτ' ἂν ὅστις ἐστὶν ἀγαθός; Many modern editors follow WILAMOWITZ in deleting 373-379, but see DENNISTON (1939) 94-95; DONZELLI (1991) 113-117.

<sup>13</sup> The MSS read εἶδον, either "I saw" or "they saw". COLLARD (1975) II.321 defends the latter, arguing that Theseus wants Adrastus to explain "how the heroes became so brave, not describe their deeds"; and in support of his interpretation, that is in fact what Adrastus does. But if it is the correct interpretation, then the words that follow, "One thing I will not ask ... beyond his own immediate danger" must be seen as a clarification of what Theseus does *not* want, and this reads somewhat disjointedly. One can see why MORWOOD (2007) 208 thinks a change from εἶδον to εἶδες would make good sense. The transposition of lines 844-845 to after 859, defended by KOVACS (1996) 93, would make Adrastus the one who says, "I saw", and would thus make for a close connection with historiographical methodology.

a man who is in battle, with volleys of spears flying before his eyes, give a reliable account of where courage has been shown? I could neither ask a question like this nor put any trust in those who presume to answer it. A man facing the enemy head on could barely see beyond his own immediate danger.”

Here Theseus points out the basic fact that a warrior’s perspective is limited, since he must give all his attention to the immediate matter at hand, i.e., fending off death. Theseus is not rejecting battle accounts *tout court*, but only those that claim a level of detail not likely to correspond to the actual conditions of the battlefield. It is not necessarily the case, of course, that Euripides has historians or historical accounts in mind in this passage; but the wariness expressed by Theseus concerning battle reports does find some echo in Thucydides’ comments before narrating the night battle at Epipolae, where he observes that even in the daytime individual soldiers hardly know what is happening beside them (7, 44, 1). As it happens, the Euripides passage is sometimes compared with Thucydides’ remarks, even though the narrative that follows, though generalised, has more or less the same assurance as elsewhere in Thucydides.<sup>14</sup>

From a much later period, Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* likewise takes aim at the claims proffered by historians (1-2):

“I wish to record what happened in heaven three days before the Ides of October in the new year, at the beginning of a most auspicious era. ... These things are true just as I state them. If anyone should ask how I know, first I shall not reply if I do not wish to do so. Who is going to compel me? ... If I do choose to respond, I shall say whatever comes into my mouth. Who ever demanded sworn witnesses from an historian?”

Though satirical, the reference to “sworn witnesses”<sup>15</sup> shows that readers of historical works did not necessarily expect the material

<sup>14</sup> As DOVER (1973) 28-29 points out, Thucydides has more or less the same level of narrative assurance in this particular episode as elsewhere. See further on this passage ROOD (2006) 237, 245 and HORNBLOWER (2011) 617-630.

<sup>15</sup> The word translated as “sworn witnesses” is *iratores*, “minor civil servants responsible for collecting the sworn returns of individuals taxable assets and other

to have the same truth value as testimony under oath, and perhaps too that much of what was written by historians was not based on any kind of witness.

To return to the historians. Polybius, as always, is the most explicit theoretician on historiographical issues, consistently expressing his belief in the superiority of contemporary history over all others. At one point he distinguishes three types of history, and assigns each to a particular kind of reader (9, 1, 2-4), claiming that he himself deals exclusively with “actions of peoples, cities, and dynasts”, a kind of history that “attracts the statesman”,<sup>16</sup> and thereafter he emphasises the positive aspects of contemporary history (9, 2, 4-6):

“... first, because new events are constantly occurring and need new narratives (since the ancients could not narrate for us events in their future); second, because it is the most useful of all genres: this was so even in times before ours but it is especially the case in our time, when the arts and sciences have advanced to such a degree that those who love learning can deal scientifically, one might say, with any emergency that arises.”

Yet even if Polybius thinks contemporary history superior, he does not think that all contemporary historians are equal. Quite the contrary: more than any other historian, Polybius makes the case that the good historian not only practises autopsy and inquiry on a grand scale, but also has experience in political and military affairs, an experience that is necessary because inquiry is not a straightforward matter (12, 26a, 6-10):

“... in inquiring about battles, it is necessary that those without experience will make serious errors. For how could such a person judge well about a battle, siege, or naval combat? How could such a person understand those who are giving detailed reports when he himself has no conception of such things? The inquirer

liabilities at a *census*”: EDEN (1984) 64-65, who notes, however, that at PETRON. 118, 6 Eumolpus distinguishes history from poetry because in the former one expects *religiosae orationis sub testibus fides*.

<sup>16</sup> For the chronological progression inherent in this distinction see MEISTER (1975) 45, n. 173.

contributes no less to the narrative than his informants, since the very recollection of the concomitant details guides the informant from point to point. For this reason the man without experience is not capable of properly judging those who were present, nor when present himself does he know what is happening, but even if he is present it is manifest that in a certain sense he is not really present.”

Now it may be the case that everything that Polybius says here is already nascent in Thucydides’ methodological remarks, but Polybius makes this kind of political and military experience an *explicit* precondition for the successful examination of eyewitnesses and thus for writing a successful contemporary history.<sup>17</sup> Polybius does not always deserve the benefit of the doubt in his polemical passages, but I think that here, as a practising historian, he is aware of the pitfalls of believing autopsy and inquiry are straightforward and unproblematic matters. He is trying above all to distinguish himself as a ‘professional’ from the many other amateurs who claimed to write truthful history.<sup>18</sup>

The difficulties of discovering the events of history were only exacerbated by the challenges facing those who wrote about or under an autocrat. When Theopompus decided to orientate his history around Philip of Macedon, he needed to do the usual kinds of inquiry throughout the Greek world (and he seems to have boasted of this<sup>19</sup>), but the question of access to Philip and his court now also became important, for without such knowledge Theopompus could hardly claim to be reporting how and why Philip made particular decisions or took particular actions; yet if Theopompus did discuss this particular challenge, it has left no trace in the fragments of his work.

In imperial writers we do find explicit remarks about the difficulties of discovering the truth under autocracy. Tacitus notes that as imperial rule progressed, “truth was crushed in

<sup>17</sup> On the importance of the historian’s experience, MARINCOLA (1997) 133-148; on experience in Polybius see now MOORE (2020).

<sup>18</sup> For Polybius as a ‘professional’, see DEROW (1994).

<sup>19</sup> DION. HAL. *Pomp.* 6, 1-3 = *FGrHist* 115 T 20a.

several ways, first by an ignorance of public affairs as if they were others' concerns" (*Hist.* 1, 1, 1) and at the death of Germanicus he observes "that all the greatest matters are ambiguous, inasmuch as some people hold any form of hearsay as confirmed, others turn truth into its converse, and each swells among posterity".<sup>20</sup>

The most famous and most complete expression of these difficulties is found in Cassius Dio in a justly admired passage,<sup>21</sup> at the point when he marks the crucial difference in the quality of his knowledge, now that he has left Republican history and is moving on to imperial history: here Dio notes that by contrast with the Republic, where there was a multiplicity of writers and public records, in the Empire from Augustus onwards decisions were made in private and by a select group; nor could such decisions when made public be tested in any way, the result being that "many things that do not occur are repeated over and over again, while much that in fact does happen is unknown, and everything so to speak is reported in a way other than how it actually occurred". (There is also the problem of the vastness of the Empire and the difficulties attendant on knowing about events occurring over such a wide geographical range.) Finally, he says that his procedure in what follows will be to give the 'public' version, whether true or not, adding something of his own conjecture where he feels competent based on his knowledge arising from what he read, heard, or saw for himself (53, 19, 1-6).

Tacitus and Dio, then, realise that the business of inquiry under the empire presented some unique difficulties. Their remarks, however, stand in stark contrast to those of Lucian on the topic of inquiry (*Hist. conscr.* 47):

"The events themselves must be gathered together not at random but with the historian making repeated enquiries about the

<sup>20</sup> TAC. *Ann.* 3, 19, 2 (trans. WOODMAN). Cf. the *arcana imperii* at *Hist.* 1, 4, 2 and *Ann.* 2, 36, 2, each slightly different in meaning, though both are relevant to the present topic. (I thank Alexander Meeus for calling the Tacitus passages to my attention.)

<sup>21</sup> See KEMEZIS (2014) 95, n. 9 for a long list of appreciative scholars.

same matters, with industriousness and painstakingly; best of all he should be present and be an eyewitness of events, but if not, he should give his attention to those who tell of the events more impartially, and those whom one would reckon least likely either from favouritism or from enmity to add to or detract from events. And at that point let him be skilful at perceiving and putting together the more probable account.”

If anything, this represents an enormous step backwards.<sup>22</sup>

We do not have a great deal of evidence under the Empire for interaction between a historian and someone in power who might provide information, but there are at least three passages of interest. The first is found in Josephus’ remarks in the *Life*, where he notes that his account of the Jewish War was approved by Titus and that King Agrippa promised to inform him of many things done in the war that were not generally known.<sup>23</sup> The second is the Emperor Lucius Verus writing to Fronto and promising him all sorts of materials to write up his campaigns against the Parthians, noting that these will allow Fronto to understand the reasons for what was done both by himself and his commanders: “I can bring you, as it were, right on the spot” (*Ad Ver. Imp.* 1, 2, 1-2). The third passage is found in Dio who says that the emperor Septimius Severus after his death appeared to Dio in a dream, bidding him come close “so that you might learn accurately and compose everything that was said or done”.<sup>24</sup> These scenarios differ in important ways, but what unites them is the sense that no contemporary history could be written under an autocrat without some sort of access to an inner circle. Yet such access brings its own difficulties, for it can call into question the historian’s independence and impartiality, a subject to which we next turn.

<sup>22</sup> Lucian has in mind writers of war monographs – see KEMEZIS (2010) for an excellent discussion of this and other aspects of the essay – so this advice also takes no notice of the particular difficulties of battle narratives noted above.

<sup>23</sup> It is significant that we find this information not in the *War* itself but in the *Life*: see below, pp. 140-145.

<sup>24</sup> DIO CASS. 79 [78], 10, 1-2: ἵνα πάντα καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ μάθῃς ἀκριβῶς καὶ συγγράψῃς.



## 2. Bias and impartiality

In his advice about the historian's inquiry, as we saw, Lucian said that one should use those sources that one reckoned least likely to be speaking in a biased manner. In emphasising the more impartial account, Lucian highlights a second matter of importance for the contemporary historian, namely impartiality. I say "second" because of the order in which I am treating these, but there is no doubt that for ancient writers and readers their most consistent and persistent concern is with the impartiality of the historian. Remarks about bias and favouritism dwarf those of all other issues,<sup>25</sup> and A.J. Woodman has clearly demonstrated that a claim of impartiality by an ancient historian is functionally equivalent to a statement of veracity.<sup>26</sup>

We saw above Thucydides' recognition that informants' favouritism was one factor that made it difficult to discern what had really happened, and one can see this issue, though less pronounced, also in Herodotus, who, before his narrative of the final battle of the Ionian Revolt at Lade in 494 BCE, expresses an inability to say which contingents performed bravely because "they all accuse one another" (6, 14, 1).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, one could argue that Herodotus' use of source-citations is done precisely so that readers can judge for themselves the veracity of the claims made by individuals and states which are clearly designed to advance their own interests.<sup>28</sup> In these cases, however, it is the historian speaking not of his own partiality but of that of his informants.

<sup>25</sup> AVENARIUS (1956) 46-54, 157-163 lists many of them.

<sup>26</sup> WOODMAN (1988a) *passim*. Note that whereas Lucian treats inquiry in a single paragraph, the issues of bias and impartiality appear in his essay from beginning to end.

<sup>27</sup> Here, by the way, we may see one of the reasons that Thucydides thought he needed to supply a narrative even where informants contradicted one another, and it may be the case that as he was writing contemporary history, he had a larger number of sources for the various events than Herodotus, writing at least a generation after his events, could find.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted, however, that explicit source-citations are much rarer in Books VII-IX than in I-VI.

Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon neither speak of, nor make claims for, their own impartiality, and since this is a fully developed trope by the time of Polybius, we must assume that concern with the historian's own impartiality arose in the later 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, perhaps in connexion with the Alexander historians: the obviously laudatory reports sent back by some Greeks about Alexander (one thinks of Callisthenes) may, for the first time, have brought the issue of the historian's own partiality to the fore.<sup>29</sup>

Praise and blame were a part of history from the outset, of course, as seen most clearly in Herodotus' preface with its concern for *kleos*. Thucydides eschews the direct link of historiography with praise of individuals, though he is full of praise for his subject, the war, indicating its greatness from the preface onwards, reinforcing it by magnification throughout,<sup>30</sup> which culminates in remarks at the conclusion of the Sicilian expedition where the campaign against Sicily is said to be "the greatest event in the war and, it seems to me, even of those Greek events we know from tradition ... most glorious to the victors and most ill-starred to the defeated" (7, 87, 5). For later writers and critics, however, praise and blame become something of an obsession, and ancient readers correspondingly were always on the lookout for anything in a history that might indicate either too much or too little praise and blame.

Since impartiality is a vast topic, I want to concentrate here mainly on the way it plays out for those writing contemporary history particularly under an autocrat.<sup>31</sup> We can see traces of 'anxiety' in remarks such as Livy's in his preface that in treating ancient history "I shall be free of that care which can trouble the mind of a historian, even if it cannot deflect him from the truth" (*praef.* 5); that is, he is free of *cura* because he is, at least

<sup>29</sup> On bias, see, besides WOODMAN, see LUCE (1989) and MARINCOLA (1997) 158-174. Alexander Meeus reminds me that local history will also have played a role here.

<sup>30</sup> WOODMAN (1988a) 28-40.

<sup>31</sup> LUCE (1989) 17 = (2011) 293 notes that assertions of impartiality are a feature only of those who write contemporary history.

for the present, writing non-contemporary history. Horace in describing Asinius Pollio's contemporary history warns the author forthrightly, "you take in hand a work full of dangerous chance" – there is danger both in the subject matter and for the author – and "you step over fires that lie hidden beneath the treacherous ash" – "treacherous" again here both in subject and for the author (*Carm.* 2, 1, 6-8). Likewise, Pliny when trying to decide whether he will write contemporary or non-contemporary history, asks himself, "Shall I treat recent events that have not been treated? Here offences are serious, gratitude slight" (*Ep.* 5, 8, 12). The offences are serious (*graves*) because they have to do with those in power. Historians, then, were keenly aware that contemporary history, in the natural course of things and if written honestly, could (and most likely would) offend those who might in turn harm the historian himself.<sup>32</sup>

And it is not only contemporary history, strictly speaking, which could be dangerous: Tacitus' account of the trial of Cremutius Cordus shows the danger *in the present* of writing about recent past events, since contemporaries can be offended even when the history is not about them (*Ann.* 4, 33, 4):

"There is also the fact that writers of old rarely find a detractor, and it makes no difference to anyone if you praise Punic or Roman armies more floridly; by contrast, the descendants of many who were punished and disgraced in Tiberius' reign are still alive. And even if those families are now extinct, you will find people who, because of a similarity of character, think the evil deeds of others are being ascribed to themselves."

Now Cremutius' fault, as is well known, was to have praised Brutus and Cassius (*FRHist* 71 F 3), and it is clear that this is an issue precisely because Tiberius, the reigning emperor, remains implicated in those events even from a distance. No one could know in the early empire that the principate was going to endure as it did, and periodic calls then and later for the "restoration of the Republic" (whatever people imagined that to mean) show

<sup>32</sup> This showed itself especially in hesitancy towards writing about any living emperor: see WOODMAN (1988b) 160 and Adam KEMEZIS in this volume.

the uncertainty of the political status quo, a status whose origins continued to be discussed and analysed – with the accompanying questions that such discussions might raise.

It is also clear that contemporary historians were subject to all sorts of pressure from their own contemporaries, as seen in Cicero's famous letter to Luceius, with its request to "neglect the laws of history" (*Fam.* 5, 12, 3) so as to write a more encomiastic history of Cicero's deeds. Cicero, of course, even at the peak of his political fortunes, could hardly have compelled Luceius to write such a work, still less when he was in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes. But this was not the case when the person applying the pressure was an emperor. Lucius Verus' desire to have Fronto write up an account of Verus' deeds makes it very clear that the emperor sees the putative historian as having an important role to play and that – even more importantly – he expects that his deeds will be portrayed in a thoroughly encomiastic manner: "my accomplishments, of whatever kind, are only as great as they actually are; they will, however, *seem* as great as you wish them to seem" (*Ad Ver. Imp.* 1, 2, 3). Nor, again, was the pressure limited to the powerful: Pliny asks his friend Tacitus to find a place in his history for an occurrence that he thinks will win him future fame, and in words somewhat similar to Verus' says that "these matters, such as they are, you will make better known, more distinguished, more important", even though he adds that Tacitus need not exceed the truth (*Ep.* 7, 33, 10). Pliny also tells of a recitation in which an historian of a *uerissimus liber* (neither the historian nor his interlocutors are named) was approached during one of his recitations by the friends of someone whose deeds the historian was about to narrate. They begged the historian not to read the remaining parts, and he complied, though he did not alter his text. It need hardly be added that the person whose deeds were to be related was someone in power.<sup>33</sup>

So the historian, even before he set out to write, was already aware that contemporary history had special challenges and

<sup>33</sup> *Ep.* 9, 27. SYME (1958) I.120 detects a possible reference to Tacitus.

hurdles to be overcome. And he must surely have known that, added to this, it was common for later historians to criticise their predecessors who had written contemporary history: indeed, if we are to judge by their later critics, contemporary historians of Sicilian tyrants or Macedonian kings or Roman emperors were consistently portrayed as *least* well placed to write the histories of their eras; later writers suggest that the attitude of contemporaries towards those in power was so compromised as to demand an entirely new history. One sees this particularly well in the preface to Tacitus' *Annals* (1, 1, 2-3):

“The affairs of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero were falsified because of fear while they were alive, and, after they had died, were compiled with hatreds still fresh. My plan, therefore, is to record a few things concerning Augustus, and matters concerning the end of his reign, and then the principate of Tiberius, and the rest, without anger or partisanship, the reasons for which I keep far off.”<sup>34</sup>

The proximity of contemporary historians to the events they narrate is itself the problem, since they are assumed to be under the sway of their subjects either because of flattery or its opposite.

The perils of partiality were obvious. But of course, to write under an autocrat one needed, as noted above, *some* access to the corridors of power, and this entailed one of the most serious dilemmas faced by the contemporary historian: if he is to know what happened, the historian needs access to those in power; but that very access will ensure that your readers look especially closely for indications of partiality. And again, you cannot try to over-compensate by writing a relentlessly negative account, for that too would set off alarms in the minds of more perceptive readers (Tac. *Hist.* 1, 1, 2):

“Yet whereas you would easily discount a writer's self-interest, disparagement and spite are listened to with ready ears: naturally,

<sup>34</sup> Naturally, this particular preface strikes a rhetorical pose – notice that all historians must fall into one category or the other – and is not to be read as an objective analysis by Tacitus of his predecessors' strengths and weaknesses: MARINCOLA (1999).

since obsequiousness incurs a shameful charge of servitude, while malice gives a false impression of freedom of speech.”

So there seems to be no way out: a flattering account can be discounted, but then so can a critical account.<sup>35</sup>

The contemporary historian would also have been well aware of this, of course, but it would not have left him with many choices. Various ‘solutions’ to this problem were tried. One might, for example, simply “pass over” a particularly fraught time-period, as the emperor Claudius seems to have done, starting with Caesar’s assassination but then beginning again with the ending of the civil wars.<sup>36</sup> This, however, would deprive the historian of actually being an historian! Another ‘solution’ that we hear of several times under the Empire is that of deferred publication, the author explicitly stating that his work or certain parts of it would be published only later, and this as a way of “proving” that his work was impartial and would bring him no benefit in the present: the heading of Book 121 of the Livian *periochae* state that the book “is said to have been published after the death of Augustus”.<sup>37</sup> Seneca tells us that Titus Labienus, though famous for his frankness, once rolled up a scroll while he was reading his history and said, “What I pass over here will be read after my death”.<sup>38</sup> And Pliny the Elder says that his contemporary history is finished and finalised, but has been given to his heir to publish after his death, “lest my life be

<sup>35</sup> And the detection of such bias was particularly dangerous for a historian’s credibility since, if we are to believe Polybius (though perhaps here we should not take him too much at his word), the detection of bias anywhere was enough to invalidate the entire work (12, 25a, 1-2): “Whenever one or two falsehoods are discovered in treatises and this is deliberate, then it is clear that nothing said by such authors is reliable or certain.”

<sup>36</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 41, 2 = *FRHist* 75 T 1: *et transit ad inferiora tempora, coepitque a pace civili.*

<sup>37</sup> Liv. *Per.* 121: *qui editus post excessum Augusti dicitur; dicitur* suggests that Livy did not state this explicitly. On the problems of the authenticity of this heading see JAL (1984) I.cxx-cxxi. Tony Woodman points out to me that this heading applies only to Book 121, although scholars often assume that it referred to Books 121-142.

<sup>38</sup> Labienus, *FRHist* 62 T 2 = Sen. *Controv.* 10, pr. 4-8.

judged to have conceded anything to ambition".<sup>39</sup> Here too it should be obvious that deferred publication was not a solution that all would find congenial, since one of the reasons historians wrote history was to win glory for themselves as well as their subjects.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, so far as we can tell, the issue of bias was never resolved, and imputations of, and defences against, the charge of partiality were simply part and parcel of the historian's craft as practised in Antiquity. One possible avenue of amelioration was seen (not surprisingly) by Polybius, who early in his work, and following on from his criticisms of the bias of Fabius Pictor and Philinus in their accounts of the First Punic War, says that when someone "takes up the character appropriate to history" he must (1, 14, 5-8)

"often speak well of his enemies and adorn them with the greatest praises, when the events demand this, while he must often reproach and reprove severely those closest to him, whenever their failure of conduct deserve such treatment ... In history one must keep some distance from the actors, and instead apply to the deeds themselves the opinions and judgements that are appropriate."

From this we might deduce that the best possible way for a history to win credence was by offering praise and blame regularly, and not always for the same characters. But given that contestation was in the life-blood of the ancients, and that history was an important place where that contestation played out, it seems unlikely that any account could be free from the criticism that it was biased.<sup>41</sup> To put it another way, a reader determined to find grounds for condemning a history as biased would almost always have found something to use.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> PLIN. *NH praef.* 20 = *FRHist* 80 T 5: *ne quid ambitioni dedisse uita iudicaretur.*

<sup>40</sup> See MARINCOLA (1997) 57-62.

<sup>41</sup> And as is well known, all of Polybius' teachings on the need for impartiality go out the window when he comes to speak of the Aetolian League: on Polybius' prejudice against the Aetolians see MENDELS (1984-1986).

<sup>42</sup> A particularly egregious example is Dionysius of Halicarnassus' statement that Thucydides portrayed the Athenians in his history in a negative light because they had sent him into exile: *Pomp.* 3, 15.

Before moving on to the final issue, that of historical revisionism, I want to come back to the Josephus passage mentioned above. We are singularly fortunate in having two accounts of how Josephus wrote up his history of the war between the Romans and the Jews, namely, in the preface of the *War* itself and in some remarks made in the later *Life*, the apologetic treatise appended to his *Jewish Antiquities*.<sup>43</sup> Comparison of the two allows us to see some of the issues surrounding both inquiry and bias that will have faced virtually every historian writing in the Empire.

In the preface to the *Jewish War* itself, we find a number of traditional motifs: the war between the Jews and Romans was the greatest of all time; its previous chroniclers did not do it justice because they cared little for accuracy or were blinded by partiality; and so Josephus, who was present at these events, has set himself the task of writing an account (1, 1-3). Josephus also offers a praise of contemporary history, branding those who write of earlier events as inferior in sense and judgement because those writers fail to realise that “each of those writers of old gave their efforts to writing events of their own time, where their presence at events would make their narrative vivid, and lying was shameful since one was writing amongst those who knew” (1, 13-14). He thus sees a two-fold benefit in contemporary history, the ability to write vividly,<sup>44</sup> and a contemporary audience that will hold the writer to standards of truth and honesty.<sup>45</sup> This second observation – that one could hardly lie amongst those who knew – is an argument that one often finds and continues to be employed by modern scholars who will often note that this or that author could not possibly be

<sup>43</sup> For full discussion of the *Life* passages with references to previous bibliography see MASON (2001) 135-150; also of value is the brief discussion in LUCE (1989) 26 = (2011) 305-306.

<sup>44</sup> Josephus may be thinking of Polybius' claim in his attack on Timaeus (12, 25g, 2) that only a man of experience and a contemporary can write a narrative that is full of *enargeia*.

<sup>45</sup> HDN. 1, 1, 3 (ὅτι οὐ νεαροῖ δὲ τῆ ἐν τευξομένων μνήμη) may be hinting at this notion.



lying (especially if speaking in public) because he would be caught out and shamed. I have never myself found this very persuasive, since even in our own age, when we have all sorts of ways of recording what has happened, people will deny (sometimes persistently) what can easily be shown to be true. Still less for Antiquity, where word-of-mouth and witness' reliability will have counted for much more, does it make sense to assert that contemporaries *had* to tell the truth.<sup>46</sup> But it's a useful argument that Josephus needs and to which he will return. Josephus ends the preface with renewed praise of contemporary history, criticism of the Greeks for their lack of truthfulness, and a re-assertion of his own efforts and honesty (1, 15-16). In many ways this preface is an excellent exemplar of the kinds of claims made by historians writing contemporary history.

If we turn to the remarks in the *Life*, we find not a contradiction to what Josephus says in the preface of the *War*, but an entire side to his work that finds no expression in the *War*'s preface, but must yet have come into play for virtually every contemporary historian writing during the Empire, or indeed under any autocracy. These remarks take us behind the scenes, so to speak, and reveal the kinds of conditions and constraints under which many contemporary historians will have operated.

The occasion for revisiting his account of the *War* is Josephus' defence against a rival account, that of Justus of Tiberias.<sup>47</sup> Josephus begins by asserting that his account is true, and expresses this in the usual terms (*Vita* 336-339):

“Since I have come to this point in my narrative, I wish to say a few things to Justus, the very one who has written an account of these events, as well as to the rest who promise to write history but have little regard for the truth and who, because of either hatred or favour, are not ashamed of falsehood. Such writers are

<sup>46</sup> Relevant here too is WOODMAN's discussion of the 'bi-focal' capacity of the ancients: “The Greeks and Romans were capable of accepting reality and the representation thereof each on its own terms, no matter how much the latter ‘misrepresented’ (as we see it) the former”: (1988a) 14.

<sup>47</sup> On Justus see RAJAK (1973); BLOCH (2012).

similar to those who compose false documents when making contracts, but unlike those men such writers fear no punishment, and so they despise the truth. Justus, for example, when he attempted to compose an account of the events having to do with these matters, did not tell the truth even about his own country. And so now I, who have had these falsehoods told about me, am compelled to defend myself, and I shall speak on matters about which up to this point I have been silent. And no one should be surprised that I did not make any revelations about this long ago. It is necessary that one who writes history must tell the truth, but one should not reproach people's wicked acts bitterly, and not because of any favouritism towards them but rather on account of one's own moderation."

Josephus' claim to have written without favour is, of course, a common one, while his reference to the absence of bitterness and to his own 'moderation' might be an attempt to align himself with Polybius' emphasis (12, 14, 3-7) that a historian must not indulge in bitter accusation, and that he must be measured in his criticism, not dealing out what people really deserve but rather what is in accord with the dignity of history.

Josephus next suggests that Justus was neither an eyewitness himself nor an inquirer of any who were (*Vita* 357-358):

"I am amazed at your shamelessness at daring to say that your account is better than all others who have treated this topic, even though you do not know what happened in Galilee (for at that time you were in Berytus with the king) nor did you follow closely all the things that the Romans suffered or did to us in the siege at Jotapata, nor were you able to learn all the things that I accomplished through my own agency during the siege, since everyone who might have informed you perished in the siege. ... But perhaps you will say that you have written accurately about what happened at Jerusalem. And how is that possible? You neither happened to be present during the war nor did you read the memoranda of Caesar. Here is the strongest proof: you have written an account which contradicts Caesar's memoranda."

Now, in addition to not being present or not having learnt from people who were, Justus is faulted for not having read the *commentarii* of Vespasian. Josephus here appeals to a special

source, something not uncommon in classical historiography,<sup>48</sup> and indeed, by employing it here, Josephus can claim that this allows him insight into the man's (and thus Rome's) motivations and purposes. The special source "guarantees" the claims made by the historian – but only up to a point.

What follows next is criticism of Justus for withholding his account until after the deaths of the commanders (*Vita* 359-360):

"And if you are confident that your account is the best of all, why did you not publish your work when Vespasian and Titus, the emperors who took charge of the war, were still alive, and while King Agrippa and his family, people with the highest degree of Greek culture, were still living? You had your account written already twenty years before and no doubt I suppose that you were going to obtain evidence of your accuracy from those who knew. But as it is, you have been emboldened because those men are no longer with us and you do not think that you can be refuted."

Josephus here reverts to something he said in the preface to the *War*, namely that contemporaries are more reliable because if they do not tell the truth, they will be caught out. Yet this claim goes against all of the remarks that we saw above which suggest that contemporaries are not reliable because they are too close to the subjects of their history. In that context, deferred publication, as we saw, was advanced as a guarantee of reliability, a strategy of the historian by which he can remove himself from being seen as an immediate beneficiary at the hands of the men he writes about. Josephus here must take a different tack, and he thus allies himself even more closely with the protagonists of his work in what follows (*Vita* 361-367):

"I was not at all frightened about my own account in the way that you were, but I gave my books to the commanders themselves, when the deeds were almost still in view, because I was conscious that I had taken care to hand down the truth, nor was I disappointed in my expectation that I would receive evidence of this. I immediately gave my history to many others, some of whom had been present in the war, such as King Agrippa and

<sup>48</sup> See MARINCOLA (1997) 99-117 *passim*.

some of his relatives. The emperor Titus wanted the knowledge of these events to be handed down to mankind from my books alone, and so having inscribed them with his own hand, he ordered that they be published. In addition, King Agrippa wrote sixty-two letters, testifying that I had handed down the truth. Two of them I include here, and from them you may, if you wish, know what he has written: 'King Agrippa sends greetings to his dearest Josephus. I went through your book with the greatest pleasure, and you seemed to me to have taken much greater care over your accuracy than others who have written about these matters. Send me the remaining volumes. Farewell.' 'King Agrippa sends greetings to his dearest Josephus. From what you have written you seem to need no instruction in how we might all learn of events from the beginning. When you meet me, however, I myself shall inform you of many things that are not known.' And when my history was completed, then in truth and without trying to flatter me (for he was not like that) and without speaking ironically (as you, of course, will claim, but he was far from such maliciousness), he testified to the truth of my account, as did all the others who have read my history."

Having decided that the appeal to authority figures was the best way to prove the accuracy of his account, Josephus then follows this to its logical conclusion. Such an appeal to the truthfulness of a king is not as ridiculous as it may appear. One can see it in Arrian's remark at the outset of his *Anabasis*, that he has followed Ptolemy's account not only because he campaigned with Alexander but because "he was a king and it would have been more disgraceful for him to tell falsehoods than for any other" (*praef.* 2). The reasoning may seem strange to us but from the Hellenistic period onwards, the ideal king was thought to embody human virtues to the highest degree, and, being conscious of his status, he would take pains to maintain that in the eyes of his subjects.<sup>49</sup>

But the main issue is to note the difference in how Josephus presented himself in the preface to the *Jewish War* and how he does so here in the *Life*. If he had access to the *commentarii* of the emperor, and if he gave his history to emperor and king

<sup>49</sup> See BOSWORTH (1980) 43.

to validate, why is there no mention of this in the preface of the *Jewish War* itself? The answer, of course, is not because there was no rival account when it was published,<sup>50</sup> but rather because he was well aware there that the historian cannot portray himself as so closely allied with the subjects of his history without immediately being suspected of being their wholehearted supporters and of writing at their behest. Given that he criticises the bias of previous historians in the preface, he can hardly allow himself to raise suspicion in the mind of his audience by noting at this juncture that he has been in communication with, and has the approval of, those in power. To portray himself as free and fair-minded, he must make it appear as if he has relied solely on his own efforts, those traditionally claimed by the contemporary historian: autopsy, participation, inquiry. But the comparison of these two accounts shows a more complicated and problematic situation where competing goods – the desire to appear reliable and the desire to write an authoritative history – are constantly in play.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. The meaning of history

Let us turn finally to a common trope employed by the contemporary historian, the claim that the magnitude of the events in his own lifetime demanded that those events be written up, a claim that goes back ultimately to Thucydides' famous opening sentence (1, 1, 1):

“Thucydides of Athens composed the war of the Peloponnesians and Athenians, how they fought against each other, beginning as

<sup>50</sup> Josephus actually says there were false histories of the events before his own: *BJ* 1, 1.

<sup>51</sup> There are obvious similarities with Dio's dream of Septimius Severus (above, p. 132) who promises him accurate information. In Dio's case, however, we do not know how he portrayed any special information about Severus in the actual narrative, nor is it easy to imagine how a dream could validate a particular piece of information; perhaps the dream was meant to validate only in a general way what the reader would find in the ensuing narrative.

soon as the war broke out, and expecting that it would be a great war and more worthy of account than those which had gone before ...”

The greatest war of all, he claims, and he does so even though he recognised that the perspectives of contemporaries were not reliable (1, 21, 2):

“As for this war, although those taking part in a war always think their present war is the greatest but once they have concluded the war, they again marvel at ancient events, nonetheless an examination that proceeds from the events themselves will show that it was much greater than the wars that preceded it.”

The shifting viewpoints that Thucydides here details seem to work against the interests of the contemporary historian, since people always return to *ta archaia* once the war which they are fighting is over. There was, of course, good reason for them to do so, since for the Greeks *ta archaia* comprised the time period when the great heroes and demi-gods walked the earth and performed their incomparable actions. Historian after historian, beginning with Herodotus, makes comparisons between his own war and the Trojan War,<sup>52</sup> and for a very good reason: to most Greeks, the Trojan War had been the greatest war because of the incomparable heroes who took part in it, and if you believed (as many did) that humanity had declined since that great era, it was hard to imagine how any war fought by mere mortals today could match it. This fascination with the past helps to explain why historians, even in Lucian’s time, continued to compare their contemporary commanders to Agamemnon and Achilles (*Hist. conscr.* 8, 15).

Thucydides’ assurances based on notions of size and greatness start the whole trend in historians of magnification of the deeds, a familiar feature usually found in prefaces and elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Historians will sometimes portray contemporary events as unique

<sup>52</sup> On the importance in historiography of the Trojan War and Homer’s account of it, see NICOLAI in this volume.

<sup>53</sup> MARINCOLA (1997) 34-43.

in some way (Sallust in the *Catiline*), or as especially full of wars, dangers, slaughters, and so forth (Tacitus' *Histories*, Herodian) or as the culmination of the history that preceded them (Velleius).<sup>54</sup>

Yet in making such claims, contemporary historians take an enormous risk, since future generations looking back might very well revise the verdict offered by the historian or even completely disparage his subject. Thucydides' "greatest war ever" is omitted by Polybius in his catalogue of earlier empires, and he can spare only half a sentence for the Spartan hegemony following the war.<sup>55</sup> The fact that Thucydides continued to be read and emulated, indeed even his status as the greatest historian in Antiquity, had nothing to do with the later evaluation of the Peloponnesian War itself. The contemporary historian must, therefore, *hope* that the events as they appear to him at the time will seem the same to those who come after. In this sense it is worth going back a moment to Thucydides' opening sentence (1, 1, 1) where he says that he began writing up the war as soon as it broke out, "expecting" (ἐλπίζαε) that it would be great and more worthy of account than all those that had gone before. The Greek verb ἐλπίζω covers a spectrum of meanings in English ranging from "expect" to "hope", and this helps to remind us that every contemporary historian had to bring equal parts expectation and hope to the writing of his history.

For one of the greatest threats to the contemporary historian's enterprise is historical revisionism, the fact that history moves on and that what *seems* to be a great and amazing enterprise today

<sup>54</sup> SALL. *Cat.* 1, 4, 4 speaks of the "newness and the danger of the crime" of Catiline and his fellow conspirators; Tacitus claims that his *Histories* embrace numerous changes of fortune, battles, seditions (*Hist.* 1, 2, 1 - 1, 3, 2); Herodian asserts that the 49-year span of his history contained more successions to the throne, more changes of fortune, more disturbances and destructions than the previous 200 years from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius (1, 1, 4-5).

<sup>55</sup> POLYB. 1, 2, 2-3. Thucydides had similarly discounted Herodotus' "greatest expedition ever" (7, 20) by conceding its greatness but by claiming that it was of short duration and amounted to only two land and two sea battles (1, 23, 1).

will be seen by tomorrow's readers to be nothing of the sort. I don't mean here exactly what Thucydides was talking about: he seems to suggest that it is the experience of being in a war that causes contemporaries to overestimate temporarily its greatness, and in any case he says that when the war is over people look *backwards* to events of old. My point is that future events must always cast the great events of the past in a different light, and the onward march of time may very well render the 'great' events of the past not so great in retrospect. What the contemporary historian lacks above all – and what he can never have – is the *perspective* afforded by time.<sup>56</sup> This is one reason why historians sometimes change the end-point of their histories, because later actions cause a reinterpretation of earlier events. I think there is little doubt, however he himself portrays it, that Polybius was motivated to extend the end-point of his history by the events that took place in Greece in 146 and thereafter. He could not look at the Roman enterprise in the same way once Carthage and Corinth had been razed. One can, then, move the goalposts, so to say, and look at events from a new perspective.<sup>57</sup> One might also recognise the movement of time by constructing an 'open' ending which suggests that the present cannot but affect the future, even if the effect cannot yet be known.<sup>58</sup>

One alternative to making great claims about one's subject matter, although not a particularly frequent one, is to portray oneself as the chronicler of contemporary events without claiming that the events themselves are the greatest of all time, or sometimes even great at all. There are glimpses of this in Dio's history, perhaps most famously after he has narrated a particularly

<sup>56</sup> It is something that Agatha Christie's Mr Quin understands very well: "The contemporary historian never writes such a true history as the historian of a later generation. It is a question of getting the true perspective, of seeing things in proportion. If you like to call it so, it is, like everything else, a question of relativity": CHRISTIE (1930).

<sup>57</sup> For Dio's changes to the terminus of his history see Valérie FROMENTIN in this volume.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., the 'open' ending of Sallust's *Catiline* (60, 8-9); further discussion at MARINCOLA (2005) 302-304.



comic encounter of Commodus in the arena, when that emperor slew a hundred bears by throwing javelins from the safety of the railings (73, 18, 3-4):

“No one should think that I am defiling the lofty nature of history by narrating these events. Ordinarily I would not have written such things, but since this was done by the Emperor, and I was present, saw, heard, and discussed the events, I thought it was right to conceal none of it, but to record for future generations all these things as if they were great and indispensable events. The rest of the deeds that occurred in my lifetime I shall take particular care over and treat in greater detail than previous events, because I was present at them, and because I know of no one as capable of writing an account worthy of record as I.”

Here the magnitude of the events is replaced with the presence of the chronicler, who says, in effect, “I was there, I saw it, it concerned the emperor, therefore it should be recorded; I shall leave to others – i.e., my future audience – what to make of it”.<sup>59</sup> One can, of course, see this as already inherent in Xenophon’s *Hellenica*, where there is no claim that the events to be narrated are the greatest ever, and where the historian at the end recognises that he has come to the end without making any particular sense of the events, and that someone else may take up the call to history thereafter (*Hell.* 7, 5, 27).

But there is another way to address the issue of changing perspectives, again pioneered by Thucydides. In claiming utility for his history, he suggests a type of “recurrence” of events (1, 22, 4):

“And in the hearing perhaps the lack of a mythic element will seem less pleasurable; but if all those who wish to examine the clarity of events – both those that occurred and those that will occur at some time or another in the same or similar ways in accordance with human nature – will judge this useful, that will be sufficient.”

<sup>59</sup> Space precludes a discussion of memoirs (*ὑπομνήματα*, *commentarii*) which are contemporary but have a limited perspective (that of the author) and are not, or do not present themselves as, history proper.

This claim, which is allied to, but independent of, his belief about the greatness of the war, is, one might say, Thucydides' 'insurance policy', his hedge against the future in which it might very well be the case that the Peloponnesian War is revealed to be rather less great than Thucydides claimed for it in his own time. Even if the war itself was not the greatest, Thucydides' work can be used by his audience to understand eternal truths about human society, for what he records will be of value so long as human beings behave in the same way as they did in his own time. He here recognises an important problem, and shows that the contemporary historian can address the changes of perspective that may occur as a result of the passage of time by providing a 'universal' aspect to his work.

The lesson was not lost on later historians, though they took a somewhat different turn. Beginning with Xenophon, and largely under his influence, later historians claim a kind of 'universality' for their histories by giving their attention to the study of character and by developing a consistent concern (which can be explicit or implicit) with exemplarity.<sup>60</sup> By the time of Diodorus, history has become a storehouse of *exempla* (1, 1, 1 - 1, 2, 4), and it is these that give consistent value to a history, for even if certain claims about the greatness of a war or of a particular moment will no longer be true in the future, the examination of character and the recommendation of *exempla*, both positive and negative, become an important way of addressing the challenge of changing perspectives that result from the transitory nature of men and their actions – just as for Thucydides, the 'universals' which occur as the result of human nature (e.g., self-interest, the striving for power, the conflict between honour and utility) guarantee the value of his history, regardless of the 'greatness' of the Peloponnesian War.

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<sup>60</sup> On *exempla* in historiography see FORNARA (1983) 108-120, with WALBANK (1985) 211; POWNALL (2004) *passim*.

To sum up, then. I have tried to outline here some of the challenges faced by contemporary historians. Some of these were specific to the individual historian's circumstances (e.g., does he write under an autocracy?) while others were attendant on the nature of contemporary history itself: the difficulties of inquiry given the physical realities of the ancient world, and the unreliability of eyewitness testimony; the knowledge that contemporaries were regularly subject to, and accused of, being partisan, whether for or against; the lack of the long perspective, and the inability to predict how contemporary events would fit into future events. The contemporary historian takes a risk that his chronicle of the events of his own time will be of value: he may assert it confidently, like Thucydides, or somewhat more diffidently, like Dio. Yet as we have seen, even in asserting the value of his history, the contemporary historian must have been aware of the slim odds of success, and of the enormous difficulty of writing an authoritative account, much less of composing a possession for all time.

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## DISCUSSION

*N. Luraghi*: In *The Beauty and the Sorrow*, a book that came out for the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War, Peter Englund put together a collection of short biographical sketches of men and women who participated in the war in different capacities, and from different countries, based on diaries they left behind. One of the characters is a Hungarian hussar called Pál Kelemes; commenting on his entry for August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1914 Englund writes: “Like everyone else involved, he has only a very hazy picture of what has actually happened and it will be years before anyone pulls together all the various impressions into a narrative called the Battle of Lemberg”. Englund may or may not have been thinking of the famous impressions of Fabrice del Dongo the evening of the battle of Waterloo, as described by Stendhal in *La Chartreuse de Parme*. In any case, the attention to the limits of the eyewitness’ perspective that both texts express is a typical feature of 19<sup>th</sup>-century historical thought, expressed for instance in Droysen’s *Historik*. This is usually seen as the result of a paradigm shift that culminated around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the old idea of historical knowledge and historiographical practice, in which the truthfulness of a narrative was essentially measured in terms of the physical distance, in space and time, of the narrator from the events themselves, was replaced by the notion of temporal distance as a facilitating factor for historical understanding, that offered the historian a vantage point from which whole epochs could be apprehended and explained. I had the impression that your contribution would tend to undermine the notion of a paradigm shift, suggesting instead that the ancient preference for eyewitness or quasi-eyewitness accounts should be seen, already in Antiquity, as one end of a spectrum, while distance

and perspective was the other end, and both could be mobilised as sources of authority for (ancient) historians. Am I understanding correctly your line of argument?

*J. Marincola:* You are. I would add, however, that what I am arguing here would contribute to *diminishing* the distance between what ancient historians and 19<sup>th</sup>-century historians were doing but not *eliminating* that distance. For the latter, as you say, the purpose was greater historical understanding, whereas for the former the purposes are less historical and more rhetorical. We would probably not say that Tacitus' purpose in the *Annals* was to understand the specific historical circumstances of Tiberius' rule, still less that Dionysius of Halicarnassus' history was an attempt to understand early Rome. (There were, of course, complicated reasons for this, having to do with both ancient society and ancient literature, which I have discussed elsewhere.) What I do think, however, is that a number of ancient writers (including historians) realised that there were not only practical but intellectual disadvantages to writing in the moment and (correspondingly) certain advantages when considering historical events in the perspective afforded by temporal distance. They exploited these to the extent that they could, even if they could not approach the kind of consciousness that we find in Droysen.

*V. Fromentin:* Je trouve très suggestive votre idée selon laquelle l'autorité de l'historien contemporain n'est pas fondée, comme celle de l'historien des périodes plus anciennes, sur la mention et la critique de ses sources, mais au contraire sur la production d'un récit lisse et univoque des événements, qui occulte la question de son information, autoptique ou autre (sa nature, son étendue, sa fiabilité). C'est évident chez Thucydide et vérifiable aussi, quoique à des degrés divers, chez Diodore, Appien et Cassius Dion dans les sections contemporaines de leurs histoires respectives. Mais l'historien contemporain chez lequel, me semble-t-il, cette "narrative assurance" se manifeste le plus

est Hérodien, qui s'efface entièrement derrière un récit d'un bout à l'autre univoque et sans aspérités. Pensez-vous qu'on puisse expliquer cette spécificité par une imitation délibérée de Thucydide ?

*J. Marincola:* Yes, I think that is a very important part of Herodian's narrative *persona*. We can see from Lucian's *How to Write History* that although imitation of Thucydides was rampant in the imperial era, this imitation was often merely formal in nature, when it was not outright appropriation, like the historian who took over Thucydides' description of the plague outright (15). We would know a great deal more, of course, if we had more of the kinds of contemporary history that Herodian wrote, that is, of a specific period of time; the only other one remotely comparable is Xenophon's *Hellenica*, which, with its anonymous narrator, may also have been an influence on Herodian. It is significant, I think, that modern scholars have little sense of Herodian's life, social status, and even his nationality: the text becomes foremost and the author himself seems to recede. Even Herodian's two statements of autopsy (1, 15, 4; 3, 8, 10; cf. 3, 1, 7 for implied autopsy) are somewhat generic, noting things that 'we' saw at the games of Commodus and Severus (respectively). Even Polybius, the most unreticent of historians, who has no compunction about interrupting his narrative to explain this or that, does not in the contemporary portions (or at least so far as we can tell) tell us what the sources for individual events were. Here, as seems to be the 'rule' in contemporary history, one must simply rely on the author's competence.

*B. Bleckmann:* Ich möchte auf die von Agatha Christie Mr Quin in den Mund gelegte Äußerungen zur Zeitgeschichte eingehen: Der zeitgenössische Historiker schreibt niemals eine so wahre Geschichte, wie diejenigen, die aus dem Rückblick und dem späteren Verlauf der Geschichte eine richtige Einordnung und Bewertung vornehmen können. Das ist zutreffend, andererseits



hat die Nachwelt keinen wirklichen Eindruck von einer Epoche, die sie nicht selbst miterlebt hat, und ist daher zu einer echten *enargeia*-Darstellung nicht in der Lage. Der ideale Historiker wäre also derjenige, der einerseits die Epoche, die er beschreibt, miterlebt hat, sie andererseits aber schon aus einer gewissen Distanz beurteilen kann. Das Optimum zeitgeschichtlicher Beschreibung könnte man also bei denjenigen als gegeben sehen, die im hohen Alter Zeitgeschichte verfassen.

*J. Marincola:* Yes, these are excellent points, and I did not discuss some of the benefits of contemporary history, of which one is, as you say, the ability to convey, as a contemporary, what was actually going on at the time in a narrative containing *enargeia*. Another is that the first historian to write up a series of events creates, as it were, the framework for all later accounts, and in this way gets to shape the tradition in a way that non-contemporary historians rarely can. Later historians can argue about the causes of the Peloponnesian War or the actions of the antagonists, but they do so always in the shadow (and framework!) of Thucydides. The portrait of the ideal historian that you sketch – a contemporary, but one with distance and writing in old age – seems hard to imagine in the classical world, not because the circumstances would never have arisen, but rather because the historian was never a ‘professional’ in our sense, and was almost always intensely involved in the events of his time: Ronald Syme’s remark, made at these *Entretiens* sixty-five years ago, that the Roman historian in retirement “fought again the old battles of Forum and Curia” may be somewhat exaggerated but it contains the basic truth that for the Greeks and Romans critical distance may have been especially difficult for contemporary historians to achieve.

*A.M. Kemezis:* Thank you for a paper that has covered so many important topics, but in particular for drawing my attention to two passages of Dio that I’ve worked on separately but never looked at together. The first is from Book 53, where he

talks about how even biased contemporary histories of the same events can be useful to later authors, which seems like a very candid account of the procedure that Tacitus must have used but not spoken about (though granted Dio considers the procedure valid only for the Republic), and then in Book 73 when he talks about his own experience as an eyewitness writing with different, more relaxed critical standards than previously. My question then is, are we seeing here an acknowledgement that the roles of contemporary and non-contemporary historian are different and complementary, and that the contemporary historian writes in some measure as a resource for later authors? We see later authors like Arrian talk this way about contemporary sources, but it seems very unusual for a contemporary author to be explicit in this way. And then further, should we look for places in other authors where this idea is implicitly acknowledged or resisted (i.e., a contemporary author tries to ensure that their work will remain definitive rather than be superseded by later efforts)?

*J. Marincola:* These are good questions, though it is hard to know the answers. When Dio, for example, narrates the events at which he was present, even if he thinks them ‘unworthy’ of history, is he expecting that later writers will be able to make better sense than he of what is going on in his world? Or is he writing for later senators to instruct them in the ways of dealing with difficult or dangerous emperors? Possibly both, though I would incline more to the second than the first. Writers of ὑπομνήματα or *commentarii* may have suggested that their works could be the foundation for a more adorned history – there are indications that this is how later writers saw them – but here again we are hampered by the loss of all of them except Caesar’s – which, it seems pretty certain, were not typical.

I am not aware of any historian who suggests that his own work can or will or should be quarried by later writers, though it’s hard to imagine that they were not aware that it could be. You are correct that Arrian talks this way about his contemporary

sources, but it seems difficult to believe that Ptolemy or Aristobulus in their histories suggested that what they wrote was anything other than the ‘true’ or ‘accurate’ history of Alexander. As to whether historians tried to ensure that their works would be definitive, I can’t think of particular passages other than the most famous and influential, of course, Thucydides’ claim for his work as a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί*. Yet even here, it is worthwhile to note how he phrases this claim: “it has been composed as” (*ξύγκειται*) rather than “it will be”. Lucian in his essay on history suggests that it must be left to future generations to determine whether a history survives or not: that seems to be the point of the closing simile (62), where Sostratos, the constructor of the lighthouse of Alexandria, does his work honestly and well, but his name is discovered only in the future long after he and his contemporaries are gone.

*R. Nicolai:* Anzitutto grazie per la splendida relazione. Quella che propongo è soltanto una piccola nota, su una questione marginale rispetto al tema della relazione, ma che mi interessa molto. Si tratta di una formulazione su quelli che i Greci definivano *ta archaia*: “for the Greeks *ta archaia* comprised the time period when the great heroes and demi-gods walked the earth and performed their incomparable actions”. In realtà i confini tra le varie epoche erano piuttosto fluidi; la tripartizione tucididea di 1, 1 mira a isolare il periodo contemporaneo, quello in cui si è svolta la guerra più grande rispetto alle vicende precedenti (τὰ ... πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαιότερα); simile è la tripartizione di 2, 36, dove però si mette in risalto l’apporto della generazione precedente e di quella attuale, contrapposte a un lungo periodo antico (i πρόγονοι). Tuttavia definire un fatto come antico dipende da vari motivi, tra cui la presenza di testimoni oculari: questo risulta evidente nell’*Edipore* di Sofocle, dove l’assassino di Laio è presentato come un fatto antico (103-104 ἦν ἡμῖν, ὄναξ, Λαίος ποθ’ ἡγεμῶν / γῆς τῆσδε, πρὶν σὲ τήνδ’ ἀπευθύνειν πόλιν), perché, in un primo tempo, non si trovavano testimoni (293 ἡκουσα κάγω. τὸν δ’

ἰδόντ' οὐδεις ὄρῃ). Un tema di ricerca interessante credo che possa essere la percezione, la rappresentazione e la periodizzazione del tempo passato. Qual è la tua opinione in proposito?

*J. Marincola:* I agree wholeheartedly that study of these terms would repay careful investigation. You are quite right that τὰ ἀρχαῖα and τὰ παλαιά do not contain in themselves indications of a fixed time, but rather are dependent on context and can be employed by a speaker to make particular points. This might be connected as well with the historical revisionism that I discussed in the last part of my paper, and the terms could be employed as a way of characterising a past action or era, whether positively or negatively. This is something that I will need to think more about.

*E.-M. Becker:* Thank you for a stimulating paper. I would like to pose a question regarding Josephus' concept of history-writing as *Zeitgeschichte*. There are obvious interconnections between Josephus and Thucydides, especially in the preface to the *War*. What about Josephus and Polybius? Except for Gruen, Eckstein, and Cohen, not much work has been done on that interconnection. You yourself mention two motifs Josephus might have taken up from Polybius and which might have informed Josephus' outline: (1) Josephus might have learnt from Polybius how to attack competitors (see Polybius and Timaeus); and (2) he might be inspired by Polybius regarding the demand that the "good historian will practice autopsy and inquiry on a grand scale" as you say with reference to 12, 26a, 6-10. Could this motif possibly explain why Josephus is eager – in the *War* but also in the *Vita* – to emphasise his active involvement in the military events (in Galilee)? Could we, accordingly, speak of an 'additive concept' of history-writing as developed by Josephus, based on the usage of various historiographical principles (esp. Thucydides and Polybius, but also Dionysius of Halicarnassus)? And finally: could the way in which Josephus possibly interconnects his writing to Polybius' very motif of personal

experience further illuminate how *Zeitgeschichtsschreibung* appears to be an (individual) 'practice'?

*J. Marincola*: These are all good questions, and especially relevant to Josephus, where your notion of 'additive concept' is particularly apt. Because he works in two traditions, the Jewish one and the Greco-Roman one, Josephus is a historian for whom interdisciplinary study can yield rich results: one needs to know both traditions to understand him fully. But even in the Greco-Roman one, Josephus' approach is additive. Josephus writes both contemporary and non-contemporary history. For the former he adopts the method and *personae* of Thucydides and Polybius, emphasising autopsy and participation, while for his non-contemporary history, he adopts the persona, above all, of Dionysius, arguing, like his predecessor, that his work is based on early sources and treats material abridged or omitted by earlier writers (*AJ* 1, 5; 1, 10-14 ~ *Ant. Rom.* 1, 4, 1; 1, 7, 1-3). As for the attack on competitors, one sees that particularly well in the *Life*, but it is more generalised and less pronounced in the *War*, so in this sense Polybius is more a presence in the background. I think there is something to be said for the writing of contemporary history as an individual practice, or at least the historian is at pains to present it that way. Unlike the writing of a non-contemporary, where one was expected to use one's predecessors and to cite them on a more or less regular basis, in contemporary history the historian presents himself as the pioneer, even when (as must surely have been the case) he was using the works of other contemporaries.

*H. Inglebert*: Dans le domaine de la géographie (également retenue par Jacoby comme faisant partie du genre historique), il existe une tradition de critique des témoignages selon la dignité sociale que l'on peut accorder aux témoins : on peut croire Mégasthène, qui était ambassadeur, sur l'Inde ; on peut croire Jules César, qui était général, sur les Gaules ; mais on se méfierait de Pythéas, qui était commerçant, donc suspecté de

mentir, sur l'Atlantique (mais Marin de Tyr et Ptolémée acceptèrent les informations de Maes Titianos sur le voyage de commerçants romains en Chine). Existe-t-il des remarques équivalentes des historiens sur la critique des témoignages recueillis, en dehors bien entendu de l'empereur-témoin et garant suprême de la vérité que l'on retrouve dans la *Vie* de Flavius Josèphe, dans le *Panegyrique* latin de 311 à propos de l'apparition d'Apollon à Constantin et de la *Vie de Constantin* d'Eusèbe à propos de l'apparition de la Croix dans le ciel, trois textes qui ne relèvent pas du genre littéraire de l'histoire ? En particulier, y aurait-il un traitement différencié des témoignages entre Strabon géographe et Strabon historien ? Et ceci peut-il s'expliquer par le fait que l'autorité de l'historien serait fondée sur l'autopsie, ce qui minimise l'importance des autres témoins, et celle du géographe sur l'acribie, puisqu'on ne lui demande pas de visiter le monde pour le décrire, mais de savoir porter un jugement selon le *logos* sur les informations qu'il recueille ?

*J. Marincola:* Thank you for bringing in geography, since by considering another genre, one can sometimes see distinctive features by comparison, and geography is obviously relevant to historiography, certainly at least for someone such as Polybius. His criticism of Pytheas' social status is connected with his belief that because Pytheas was a private citizen and a poor man, it was not credible that he should have travelled such great distances (34, 5, 7). This is not to say that social snobbery is absent from historiography, though it is usually expressed by inverse means, i.e., the historian asserts his own social standing as a way of guaranteeing his reliability. What I find especially interesting in your remarks is the way in which geographers need have no hesitation in accepting the authority of important individuals: might it be because there, unlike in history, it is not a question of constructing a flattering or vituperative portrait? As to possible differences between Strabo's history and his geography, the preface of the latter suggests that both were written for a similar audience and in a similar way (1, 1, 22-23;

C13-14), and even in the geography one finds Strabo criticising Megasthenes' account of India as untrustworthy (2, 1, 9; C70), and noting that writers have falsified geography in order to flatter Alexander (1, 2, 35; C43). Your final point is an important one, because it highlights that unlike other areas of study in Antiquity, which were more collaborative and could build on the accomplishments of predecessors, history, especially contemporary history, remained the work of individuals who were eager to present their work as largely their own.





## IV

VALÉRIE FROMENTIN

### LE PASSÉ RÉCENT DANS LES HISTOIRES UNIVERSELLES OU *AB URBE CONDITA*: *TERMINUS, TELOS* OU APPENDICE ?

#### ABSTRACT

The status attributed to contemporary events in long-term histories varies widely: they constitute either the 'natural' terminus of a story which aims at the greatest spatio-temporal extension, or the end point (*telos*) of a historical process which the historian tries to reconstruct the steps, or a postscript addition to the initial project. In all cases, however, the author must assume a new role, that of 'primary' historian. The challenge of this paper is therefore to understand how he negotiates this change. This is why, beyond the comments, often very codified, from the historians themselves on the advantage or difficulty of relating events of which one has been a actor or witness, it is the narration that will be scrutinized here, in order to know to what extent it expresses a difference in point of view and treatment between the recent historical period and the previous ones (rhythm and structure of the story, auctorial posture, representation of time).

L'image que nous avons de l'historiographie antique de langue grecque est très incomplète en raison de la disparition de quatre-vingts pour cent des œuvres. Elle est également informée en profondeur par les définitions génériques, les nomenclatures et les canons que les historiens anciens mais surtout les rhéteurs et les doxographes ont élaborés pour tenter de décrire et d'ordonner une production foisonnante. À ces catégories, évolutives et instables, se surimposent nos propres conceptions modernes du genre historique, parfois sans appui dans la réalité antique. C'est

pourquoi certaines désignations consacrées par l'usage – auxquelles nous recourons dans cette communication – sont polysémiques ou anachroniques. C'est le cas respectivement de "l'histoire universelle" (κοινή ιστορία), dont la définition varie d'un auteur à l'autre en fonction du sens donné au nom ιστορία et à l'adjectif κοινός,<sup>1</sup> et de la *Zeitgeschichte*, un terme qui n'a pas d'équivalent ni en grec ni en latin et se trouve en décalage avec l'idée que Thucydide et Polybe – les plus éminents représentants de ce sous-genre selon F. Jacoby – se faisaient de leur œuvre.

D'autre part, notre corpus, constitué d'histoires au long cours, soit "universelles", soit *ab Urbe condita*, qui s'étendent jusqu'à l'époque contemporaine de leur auteur, présente des caractéristiques qui sont autant d'obstacles à son étude. En effet, l'héritogénéité des œuvres (leur répartition sur plusieurs siècles, la variété des contextes de leur production et de leur diffusion) ne facilite pas la comparaison entre elles. À cela s'ajoute leur état de conservation (semi-complet ou entièrement fragmentaire) : leur amplitude et leur volume (chacune compte plusieurs décades de livres) les ont rendues au cours de leur transmission manuscrite particulièrement vulnérables aux accidents matériels, et des sections entières sont aujourd'hui entièrement disparues ou transmises uniquement à travers le "filtre byzantin" des florilèges d'extraits et des abrégés, si bien que le corpus réellement accessible est beaucoup plus réduit que le corpus théorique. En outre, comme les pertes affectent non seulement la narration elle-même mais aussi les énoncés extra- ou méta-diégétiques (programmatisques, commentatifs) pris en charge par l'auteur, nous avons beaucoup d'interrogations et peu de certitudes concernant la genèse de ces œuvres, depuis leur conception jusqu'à leur publication ; en particulier se pose la question du statut de la partie contemporaine qui constitue leur point

<sup>1</sup> On écrit une histoire universelle soit parce que tous les hommes, ayant une parenté originelle, partagent une histoire commune (DIOD. SIC. 1, 1, 3), soit parce que l'histoire du monde habitée cesse à partir d'un certain moment d'être compartimentée et devient interconnectée, et donc commune ; elle forme comme un tout organique (POLYB. 1, 3, 3-4 ; 1, 4, 3).

d'aboutissement. Nous consacrerons à cette problématique la première partie de notre exposé.

Une autre difficulté, enfin, a trait à la pratique historiographique des auteurs de notre corpus (méthode historique et mise en forme du récit). En effet, si les sources antiques établissent de manière topique une différence entre l'historien des périodes anciennes qui s'appuie sur des ouvrages antérieurs qu'il compile sans discernement ou soumet à un examen critique, et l'historien "primaire" des périodes (péri-)contemporaines qui "fait du nouveau", puisqu'il ne dispose le plus souvent d'aucun récit préexistant, et dont l'information est principalement autoptique ou recueillie auprès de témoins vivants,<sup>2</sup> elles sont généralement muettes sur le problème que posent, au moins en théorie, les ouvrages dont l'amplitude chronologique est maximale et au sein desquels les deux types d'histoire ("ancienne" et "moderne") se succèdent. Quelle conscience de cette différence les auteurs expriment-ils ? L'utilisation, pour les faits récents, d'un nouveau type de sources a-t-elle une incidence sur "le discours de la méthode" ? L'entrée dans la section contemporaine de l'œuvre est-elle marquée par l'adoption de nouvelles modalités narratives et comment l'historien-narrateur endosse-t-il, le cas échéant, son nouveau rôle d'acteur ou de témoin des événements ? C'est à ces questions que tentera de répondre notre seconde partie.

## 1. Le statut de la partie contemporaine

Dans les histoires au long cours, en particulier "universelles", la période récente (contemporaine ou péri-contemporaine de l'auteur) fait partie pour ainsi dire du "cahier des charges", puisque l'historien est censé donner à son œuvre l'extension temporelle maximale.<sup>3</sup> Il doit néanmoins fixer un terme à cette

<sup>2</sup> EPHOR. *FGrHist* 70 F 9 ; POLYB. 9, fr. 2 ; JOS. *BJ* 1, 14-15 ; HDN. 1, 1, 3 ; DEXIPP. F9 MECCELLA (*FGrHist* 100 F1).

<sup>3</sup> Par exemple : DIOD. SIC. 1, 3, 2 (τὰς κοινὰς πράξεις ... ἀναγράφειν μέχρι τῶν καθ' αὐτοὺς καιρῶν) ; 1, 3, 6 (ἀναγράψαι κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν μέχρι τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν καιρῶν).

section, une date qui a pour particularité de marquer aussi la fin de l'histoire tout entière, et qu'il doit pouvoir justifier comme étant historiquement signifiante. Le cas de Polybe, quoique périphérique à notre corpus, puisque son "histoire universelle" ne se déploie pas sur le temps long mais se limite à la période récente, montre que si le choix du *telos* se pose avec moins d'acuité que celui de l'*archê*,<sup>4</sup> il est aussi moins contraignant :<sup>5</sup> la date de fin initialement prévue peut être actualisée<sup>6</sup> en chemin, en fonction de l'évolution des événements ou de l'agenda personnel de l'auteur ; cette modification ne rend pas nécessairement caduque le premier *telos* ; une histoire peut donc avoir plusieurs fins, un *telos* et un *telesiourgêma*.<sup>7</sup> Trois auteurs (Diodore, Appien et Cassius Dion) enrichissent encore, comme on va le voir, le champ des possibles traitements d'une section finale d'histoire contemporaine.

La *Bibliothèque historique* que nous lisons aujourd'hui dans la tradition manuscrite, directe et indirecte, dont le *terminus* est fixé dans la préface générale à l'année 60 av. J.-C.<sup>8</sup> et qui fut très probablement publiée vers 30, après Actium,<sup>9</sup> est la version complète et définitive, révisée par l'auteur avant publication.<sup>10</sup> Cependant, la postface conservée par les *Extraits constantiniens De Sententiis* nous apprend qu'une version antérieure du texte avait fait l'objet d'une "prépublication" non autorisée par Diodore :

"Ayant été dérobés avant d'être révisés et d'avoir reçu une finition méticuleuse, certains livres ont fait l'objet d'une première publication alors que nous n'étions pas encore satisfait du style. Ces livres, nous les rejetons. Afin d'autre part que maintenant

<sup>4</sup> FOULON (2001) 55-59 ; FROMENTIN (2008).

<sup>5</sup> La date de début cesse d'être (potentiellement) modifiable à partir du moment où les premiers livres sont publiés.

<sup>6</sup> POLYB. 3, 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> POLYB. 3, 4, 12. Sur les raisons de ce changement, voir FERRARY (1988) 288-291.

<sup>8</sup> Soit la première année de la 180<sup>e</sup> olympiade (DIOD. SIC. 1, 4, 7).

<sup>9</sup> CHAMOÛX / BERTRAC (1993) VIII.

<sup>10</sup> DIOD. SIC. 1, 4, 6.

qu'ils ont été rendus publics, ces livres ne portent pas préjudice à l'ensemble de notre entreprise historique, nous avons jugé que nous devons exposer le sujet de notre étude afin d'écarter toute méprise. Ayant en effet fait le tour de notre sujet en quarante livres, nous avons relaté dans les six premiers les faits historiques antérieur à la guerre de Troie ainsi que les récits mythiques, etc."<sup>11</sup>

Quand on sait que les livres ainsi dérobés étaient souvent falsifiés ou circulaient sous de faux noms,<sup>12</sup> on comprend que Diodore s'efforce dans cette postface de prévenir toute confusion entre les deux versions. Cependant, la façon brutale dont il renie la première version, tout en disant qu'il ne lui manquait qu'une finition cosmétique, d'ordre stylistique, intrigue. Un autre élément, apparemment sans rapport avec celui-là, n'est pas moins surprenant. Il concerne le *terminus* de l'œuvre, une date (l'année 61/60) qui est justifiée dans la préface générale comme étant celle du "début de la guerre des Gaules" ou des "premières actions de César",<sup>13</sup> mais qui semble remise en cause dans d'autres passages où Diodore envisage de relater la conquête de la Bretagne (58-55),<sup>14</sup> et même de poursuivre jusqu'à la fin de la guerre des Gaules (46/45 av. J.-C).<sup>15</sup> Il n'y a pourtant dans les fragments conservés de la dernière pentade de la *Bibliothèque historique* (livres 35-40), aucune trace de ces développements annoncés : tout laisse au contraire penser que le livre 40 n'allait pas au-delà de l'année 60. Enfin et surtout, la mise en relation de cette année 60 – qui vit la fin des guerres mithridatiques et le triomphe de son vainqueur – avec la carrière de Jules César paraît bien maladroite : ce fut l'année de Pompée, nullement celle de César ! Le meilleur moyen d'expliquer ces

<sup>11</sup> DIOD. SIC. 40, fr. 9 (ES 481) éd. GOUKOWSKY (2020b), dont nous reprenons la traduction.

<sup>12</sup> Voir par exemple GAL. *Libr. propr.*, Prologue 1-2 ; 5 ; 6-8 BOUDON-MILLOT (2007).

<sup>13</sup> DIOD. SIC. 1, 4, 7.

<sup>14</sup> DIOD. SIC. 3, 38, 2-3 ; 5, 21, 2 ; 5, 22, 1.

<sup>15</sup> DIOD. SIC. 1, 5, 1 (triomphes de César sur la Gaule, l'Égypte, le Pont et l'Afrique).

incohérences consiste donc à postuler l'existence d'une première version "pompeïenne" de la *B.H.* et d'une seconde version, de coloration "césarienne", une évolution sans doute dictée par la situation politique après Pharsale, et plus particulièrement par l'histoire agitée de la patrie de Diodore, la Sicile, pendant le second Triumvirat. Il est en effet vraisemblable que Diodore retourna en Sicile après l'assassinat de César et qu'il y passa les années 43/42-36 sous le gouvernement de Sextus Pompée : la *Bibliothèque historique* qui circula (sans doute dans des cercles privés) au cours de cette période avait pour point d'aboutissement le triomphe du Grand Pompée. Mais, après la conquête de la Sicile par le jeune César, Diodore s'empressa de désavouer cette version et d'annoncer une nouvelle édition à la gloire de (Jules) César, se terminant par un récit de la guerre des Gaules. Comme il ne reste rien de l'appendice annoncé, il faut supposer qu'il y renonça ; mais il trouva néanmoins le moyen de se faire passer pour césarien aux yeux du vainqueur d'Actium : il inséra dans les livres déjà rédigés quelques passages proleptiques célébrant les victoires ou les vertus de César<sup>16</sup> et il "resémantisa" le *telos* de 61/60.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Par exemple, à propos de la destruction de Corinthe par Mummius en 146 av. J.-C. (DIOD. SIC. 32, 27, 3) : "Gaius Julius César, celui auquel ses exploits valurent le nom de *Diuus*, fut envahi à la vue de Corinthe par une telle compassion et une telle envie de gloire qu'il la refonda avec beaucoup d'empressement. C'est pourquoi il est légitime de juger que cet homme et son extraordinaire clémence méritent une grande considération, et de lui accorder à perpétuité, par le truchement de l'Histoire, l'éloge que mérite la qualité d'homme de bien. Ses ancêtres ayant traité cette cité avec trop de dureté, lui, par sa douceur, répara leur brutalité en préférant le pardon au châtement. Cet homme surpassa ses prédécesseurs par la grandeur de ses réalisations, et acquit légitimement son surnom, qui lui fut donné à cause de sa valeur. Bref, cet homme mérite la considération pour sa noble naissance, son talent oratoire, ses dons de stratège et son désintéressement ; et il vaut la peine que, par le truchement de l'Histoire, on lui accorde l'éloge que mérite sa qualité d'homme de bien. Par la grandeur de ses actions, il s'est placé en effet au dessus de tous les Romains qui l'avaient précédé." Voir aussi à propos d'Alésia, DIOD. SIC. 4, 19, 1-2 (GOUKOWSKY [2004] 613).

<sup>17</sup> Nous reprenons ici l'hypothèse de GOUKOWSKY (2004).

L'*Histoire romaine* d'Appien constitue un tout autre cas de figure. Il s'agit d'une œuvre inclassable : une histoire romano-centrée qui, comme celle de Polybe, a pour sujet l'extension progressive de l'Empire, mais qui se déploie sur le temps long et avec une structuration "par peuple" peut-être analogue à celle que la tradition attribue à Éphore. Comme elle est en grande partie fragmentaire, nous ne connaîtrions pas toute son extension si nous disposions uniquement des indications floues et incomplètes fournies par l'auteur. En effet, la préface générale, qui accompagnait très probablement la publication des trois premiers livres,<sup>18</sup> annonce une liste de neuf livres *kata ethnos*, mais en la laissant ouverte,<sup>19</sup> ainsi que la série des livres consacrés aux guerres civiles, mais sans en préciser le nombre. De la même façon, Appien publia les deux premiers livres des *Guerres civiles* avec un *prooimion* intégré au livre 1 dans lequel les livres suivants sont évoqués de façon collective et indifférenciée.<sup>20</sup> Et il est aussi fait mention dans ces avant-textes d'autres livres de l'*Histoire romaine* en préparation : une "histoire de l'Égypte", commençant avec le récit de la bataille d'Actium,<sup>21</sup> et un "livre final"<sup>22</sup> consistant en un tableau des ressources de l'Empire. C'est donc uniquement grâce à Photius, qui eut entre les mains vers 850 une édition complète de l'*Histoire romaine* en trois volumes et vingt-quatre livres<sup>23</sup> (aujourd'hui disparue), que l'on peut se faire une idée plus précise de ce qui fut effectivement rédigé et publié : l'*Histoire romaine*, une fois achevée, comptait douze livres *kata ethnos* et neuf livres de *Guerres civiles*, dont les quatre derniers consacrés à l'Égypte (*Aigyptiaka*) – ce qui s'avère globalement cohérent avec les énoncés programmatiques d'Appien –, mais également trois livres d'"histoire péri-contemporaine"

<sup>18</sup> Ils constituent la "section italique" : *Basilikê, Italikê, Saunitikê* (APP. HR, Préface 14, 53-56).

<sup>19</sup> APP. HR, Préface 14, 57 (καὶ ἐφεξῆς ὁμοίως).

<sup>20</sup> APP. B Civ. 1, 6, 25.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> APP. HR, Préface 15, 61.

<sup>23</sup> Il en donne les titres et les numéros d'ordre (PHOT. cod. 57). GOUKOWSKY (2020a) 34-35.

inconnus des préfaces et dont rien ne subsiste ni dans la tradition manuscrite directe ni dans la tradition indirecte,<sup>24</sup> en dehors de deux ou trois fragments douteux. Il s'agit de l'*Hekatontaeteia*, une histoire des cent ans séparant le règne d'Auguste de celui de Trajan, et de deux récits consacrés aux campagnes de ce dernier contre les Daces (la *Dakikê*) et contre l'Arabie (l'*Arabios*). Une *Parthikê* devait probablement compléter ce tableau des conquêtes de l'empereur.<sup>25</sup>

Tous ces éléments laissent penser qu'Appien, contrairement à Cassius Dion (qui ne commença à écrire qu'après avoir réuni toute la matière de son grand œuvre), travailla simultanément à la collecte des informations et à la rédaction des livres, élaborant parallèlement les livres *kata ethnos* et ceux des *Guerres civiles* qui puisaient à la même documentation, et les publiant au fur et à mesure de leur achèvement. Cependant, si Appien reste évasif s'agissant des différentes étapes de la réalisation du projet, la finalité qu'il assigne à son Histoire est en revanche très claire : il s'agit d'exposer les causes et les fondements de la grandeur et de la prospérité actuelles de l'Empire<sup>26</sup> et, dans cette optique téléologique, le choix de l'année 31/30 comme *terminus* de la série des *Guerres civiles* fait sens, cette date marquant la fin des guerres civiles et du régime républicain, et ouvrant sur une nouvelle période, celle de la *monarchia* instituée par Auguste, source selon Appien de paix et de stabilité.<sup>27</sup> Mais quel *terminus* ce dernier voulait-il donner à l'*Histoire romaine* prise dans son ensemble ? Le tableau économique, fiscal et militaire de l'Empire annoncé dans la préface générale<sup>28</sup> mais dont on ne trouve aucune trace dans les éditions antiques ? Et cette

<sup>24</sup> GOUKOWSKY (2020a) 34-104.

<sup>25</sup> Nous savons qu'Appien préparait une *Parthikê* (incluant les guerres parthiques de Trajan), qui resta probablement inachevée : le texte transmis sous ce nom par quelques manuscrits (et dont Photius atteste l'existence) est, sans aucun doute possible, apocryphe. Cf. ENRICO (2019).

<sup>26</sup> APP. *HR*, Préface 11, 43-44.

<sup>27</sup> APP. *HR*, Préface 14, 60 ; APP. *BC* 1, 6, 24.

<sup>28</sup> APP. *HR*, Préface 15, 61. On suppose, sans certitude, qu'Appien envisageait par là une version actualisée du *Breviarium totius imperii* d'Auguste.



question elle-même a-t-elle un sens quand on sait que chaque livre *kata ethnos* possède son propre *terminus*, à savoir le moment où “les Romains ont donné [au territoire conquis] son organisation actuelle”, c’est-à-dire où il fut réduit en province.<sup>29</sup> Quel est dans ces conditions le statut de ce qu’il est convenu d’appeler “l’extension péri-contemporaine” de l’*Histoire romaine* ? Certainement pas, selon nous, celui d’un *addendum* dicté par l’actualité politique ou par l’agenda personnel d’Appien. Car son existence et son contenu sont déjà, en réalité, en germe dans la préface générale : la *Dakikê* et l’*Arabios* continuent la série des livres *kata ethnos* laissée *délibérément* ouverte par Appien, et relatent des guerres offensives qui relèvent de l’expansionnisme sélectif dont l’historien fait précisément l’éloge dans ce *prooimion*, en tant qu’il ne vise pas à agrandir l’Empire mais à le renforcer de manière ciblée.<sup>30</sup> Il faut donc admettre que la section post-augustéenne de l’*Histoire romaine*, et en particulier la partie contemporaine, ne sont rien d’autre que le développement naturel du cadre initialement prévu par Appien.

La genèse de l’*Histoire romaine* de Cassius Dion est une *crux* des études sur cet auteur. Certes, les principales étapes en sont connues car nous avons conservé plusieurs passages dans lesquels l’historien exprime ses intentions ou justifie ses choix *a posteriori*, nous faisant ainsi pénétrer dans son cabinet de travail. Mais la datation relative de chacune de ces étapes et leur synchronisation avec les différents moments de la longue carrière du sénateur Cassius Dion restent très discutées.<sup>31</sup> Nous n’entrerons pas ici dans le détail de ce débat complexe qui nous semble en partie biaisé par un postulat implicitement admis mais contestable : Dion ayant à plusieurs reprises modifié le *terminus* de son *Histoire romaine* (197, 211, puis 229 ap. J.-C.),

<sup>29</sup> Voir par exemple : APP. *HR*, Préface 12, 4, à propos de la Sicile (μέχρι κατεστήσαντο αὐτήν ἐς τὸν κόσμον τὸν παρόντα) ; Livre *Syriaque* 52, 260 (ὅπως μὲν ἔσχον Συρίαν Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ συνέστησαν ἐς τὰ νῦν ὄντα, εἴρηται).

<sup>30</sup> APP. *HR*, Préface 7, 24-26.

<sup>31</sup> Voir KEMEZIS (2014) 282-293 pour le dernier état de la question.

on considère généralement qu'il aurait "retenu" son œuvre jusqu'à la fin de sa vie, ne cessant de la compléter et de la réviser,<sup>32</sup> cette idée d'une publication tardive voire posthume, n'intervenant qu'après que l'œuvre fut entièrement rédigée (c'est-à-dire en l'occurrence au bout d'environ trente ans), est une projection moderne qui contredit les usages antiques. La publication 'au fil de l'eau', par livre ou par groupe de livres, fut en effet la norme pour les œuvres historiographiques, durant toute l'Antiquité – jusqu'à ce que le *codex* commence à remplacer le *uolumen* (IV<sup>e</sup> siècle) –, comme en témoignent les *incipit* et les clausules narrativisés (c'est-à-dire rédigés par les auteurs eux-mêmes) qui figurent dans certains livres chez Thucydide, Polybe, Diodore,<sup>33</sup> Denys d'Halicarnasse, Hérodien,<sup>34</sup> par exemple, et qui ne s'expliquent que si leur "publication"<sup>35</sup> s'est étalée sur un certain laps de temps, fût-il court. Ce qui n'exclut pas la possibilité, comme on l'a vu pour Diodore et comme Photius<sup>36</sup> l'atteste pour Eunape, d'une "seconde édition" complète, mais il existe bien d'autres histoires éditoriales. Celle de Polybe par exemple se laisse assez bien reconstituer : il entreprit de rédiger pendant sa captivité à Rome (162-151) les neuf premiers livres

<sup>32</sup> KEMEZIS (2014) 282 ; FOULON / MOLIN (2020) XXII.

<sup>33</sup> Au début de chaque livre chez Diodore : rappel du contenu du ou des livres précédents, annonce de ce qui va suivre ; en fin de livre : conclusion brève et formelle (CHAMOIX / BERTRAC [1993] XXIV-XXXV).

<sup>34</sup> Par ex. HDN. 2, 15, 6 : "J'exposerai donc dans les livres suivants les plus importantes des entreprises de Sévère" ; 3, 1, 1 : "Le livre précédent a raconté la fin de Pertinax, le meurtre de Julianus, l'arrivée de Sévère à Rome et son expédition contre Niger" ; 3, 15, 7 : "Ce livre a raconté la mort de Sévère et l'avènement de ses fils et successeurs à l'Empire" ; 4, 1, 1 : "Le livre précédent a relaté ce que fut l'action de Sévère pendant les dix-huit ans de son règne" ; 7, 1, 1 : "Le livre précédent a raconté la vie et la mort d'Alexandre, dont le règne dura quatorze ans" ; 7, 12, 9 : "Dans ce livre nous avons montré la révolte de la Libye, le déclenchement de la guerre civile à Rome, les faits et gestes de Maximin, et son arrivée en Italie. La suite des événements sera relatée dans les livres suivants".

<sup>35</sup> "Publication" n'implique pas nécessairement commerce de librairie : des lectures publiques ou privées, la diffusion de livres ou de parties de l'œuvre au sein de cercles restreints sont des pratiques bien attestées pour toute l'Antiquité. Cf. MILLAR (1964) 30-31.

<sup>36</sup> PHOT. cod. 77 ; GOULET (2014) 37-48.

d'une histoire dont le point d'aboutissement (*synteleia*) était alors fixée à l'année 168 (Pydna) ; il publia les deux premiers seulement (qui forment la *prokataskeuê*) lors de son retour en Grèce en 150/149 ; puis, à partir de 145/144, revenu d'Afrique où il avait accompagné Scipion Émilien devant Carthage, et jusqu'en 125 au plus tard, il révisa les livres 3 à 9 et rédigea les suivants (10 à 40) à la lumière des événements récents (prise de Carthage et de Corinthe) et dans la perspective dessinée par le nouveau *telos* (146), leur publication s'échelonnant probablement sur ces vingt années.<sup>37</sup>

Ce cadre étant posé, nous pouvons revenir à la question qui nous occupe, celle de la genèse de l'*Histoire romaine* de Cassius Dion, qui s'étend dans sa forme actuelle *ab Urbe condita* jusqu'en 229 après J.-C. L'adoption par Dion du modèle livien de "l'histoire universelle romano-centrée" ne doit pas faire oublier qu'il fut d'abord l'historien de l'extrême contemporain puisque son premier ouvrage "publié" (*ἐδημοσίευσεν*)<sup>38</sup> concernait les songes et les prodiges qui avaient annoncé l'avènement de Septime Sévère, et qu'il rédigea peu après un récit des guerres civiles (193-197) auxquelles la victoire de Sévère sur Clodius Albinus avait mis fin. Ce second texte (diffusé en petit comité) ayant reçu l'approbation du nouvel empereur, Dion conçut le projet (ou reçut commande) d'un ouvrage de bien plus grande ampleur, rassemblant "tout ce qui concernait les Romains", dans lequel il "incorporerait" le récit des guerres civiles, au lieu de le publier séparément :<sup>39</sup> avait-il à l'origine l'intention de faire de l'avènement de Septime Sévère le *telos* de cette histoire au long cours, ou entendait-il, comme il le prétend,<sup>40</sup> laisser à la Tychè le soin de décider de la date de fin ? Toujours est-il qu'il présente, dans un passage fameux, probablement rédigé

<sup>37</sup> FERRARY (1988) 276-291.

<sup>38</sup> DIO CASS. 73 [72], 23, 1.

<sup>39</sup> C'est ainsi en tout cas que nous comprenons la phrase : *καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐκέτι ἰδίᾳ ἐκείνο ὑπολιπεῖν ἀλλ' ἐς τήνδε τήν συγγραφὴν ἐμβαλεῖν ἔδοξέ μοι* (73 [72], 23, 3).

<sup>40</sup> DIO CASS. 73 [72], 23, 4.

autour de 219, la mort de Septime Sévère (211) comme le *point d'aboutissement* du long travail d'enquête et de rédaction qu'il a mené pendant les vingt-deux dernières années :<sup>41</sup> "J'ai mis dix ans à recueillir tous les faits qui se sont accomplis depuis l'origine des Romains jusqu'à la mort de Sévère, et douze autres années à les rédiger" (73 [72], 23, 4). Cependant, l'histoire (dans tous les sens du terme) ne s'arrête pas là, puisque Dion annonce dans le même passage, à la phrase suivante, que ce *terminus* (qui coïncidait, semble-t-il, avec la fin du livre 77)<sup>42</sup> sera dépassé : "Quant à la suite, je l'écrirai au fur et à mesure que les événements se produiront."

Cette suite, qui sera justifiée plus loin, au livre 79,<sup>43</sup> est encore, au moment où Dion rédige les livres 73-77, laissée ouverte. Le contraste est donc apparemment net (mais nous reviendrons plus loin sur cette impression) entre "le grand œuvre" soigneusement borné en amont et en aval par des "dates historiquement signifiantes" (752 av. J.-C., 211 ap. J.-C.), dont l'élaboration a pris vingt-deux ans et qui fut peut-être publié sous cette forme (provisoirement) "complète" autour de 219, et cette

<sup>41</sup> KEMEZIS (2014) 282 : "No precise start-date can be established for the 22 years, but one hesitates to place the start long after 197, and it could easily be as early as 195, with end points accordingly in the late 210s."

<sup>42</sup> La division en livres pour les deux dernières décades fragmentaires de l'*Histoire romaine* est très hypothétique et a donné lieu à plusieurs tentatives de restitution (BOISSEVAIN [1901] *Praefatio* X-XI). Les fragments (de Xiphilin) attribués par les éditeurs modernes au livre 77 relatent la mort de Septime Sévère et dressent un portrait physique, moral et politique de l'empereur.

<sup>43</sup> Dion aurait eu un songe, peu après le mort de Septime Sévère, dans lequel ce dernier lui demandait d'écrire l'histoire du règne de Caracalla (DIO CASS. 79 [78], 10, 1-2) : "Voilà quelle fut l'histoire de cet empereur (Caracalla). Mais avant même qu'il parvint à la monarchie, son père m'avait prédit en quelque sorte que j'écrirais aussi son histoire. Sévère en effet était déjà mort quand j'eus cette vision : dans une grande plaine, toute l'armée romaine était sous les armes tandis que lui, assis là sur une haute estrade dressée sur un tertre, échangeait quelques paroles avec les soldats ; quand il vit que je me tenais devant lui pour écouter ce qu'il disait, il déclara : 'Ô Dion, Viens là, tout près de moi, t'informer avec exactitude, en vue d'en faire le récit, de ce qui est dit et de ce qui est fait.'" (traduction FOULON / MOLIN [2020]). Voir KEMEZIS (2014) 286.

“histoire de l’Empire après Septime Sévère”<sup>44</sup> (livres 78-80) – dont la rédaction se fera désormais au fil de l’eau, son achèvement étant comme laissé au hasard. Or, la fin du livre 80 nous a été miraculeusement conservée par Xiphilin :<sup>45</sup>

“Alexandre ... m’honora ... en me désignant pour être consul une deuxième fois conjointement avec lui et en promettant de régler lui-même les dépenses liées à cette charge. Mais les prétoriens s’en irritant, il craignit qu’ils ne me missent à mort en me voyant dans tout l’éclat de ma charge et il m’ordonna de passer le temps de mon consulat quelque part en Italie, hors de Rome. C’est ainsi qu’ensuite je revins à Rome et en Campanie, auprès de lui. Après avoir passé quelques jours avec lui et m’être montré aux soldats sans courir le moindre risque, je fus, du fait de mon affection aux pieds, autorisé à rentrer chez moi pour vivre tout le reste de ma vie dans ma patrie, ce qui était d’ailleurs conforme à la volonté de la divinité, qu’elle me signifia très clairement alors que j’étais déjà en Bithynie. Un jour, en effet, j’eus un songe dans lequel elle m’ enjoignait d’écrire à la toute fin de mon histoire les vers que voici : ‘Hector fut soustrait par Zeus aux projectiles, à la poussière, au carnage, au sang et au tumulte’ [*Iliade* 11, 163-164].”

On voit que dans cet épilogue Dion se montre fidèle au principe annalistique qui structure toute *l’Histoire romaine*, y compris le récit des règnes impériaux, puisqu’il fait coïncider la fin de sa “chronique” avec la fin d’une année consulaire (229). Cependant, cette date, quoique officielle, ne constitue pas, à la différence de l’année 211, un *telos* “reconnu et admis de tous”, ou “historiquement susceptible d’être considéré en soi” :<sup>46</sup> elle ne fait sens que pour Dion, qui exerça cette année-là le consulat ordinaire (pour la deuxième fois) avec l’empereur Sévère Alexandre, une marque honorifique insigne mais qui se solda par un fiasco et entraîna, avec la maladie, son retrait de la vie

<sup>44</sup> Pour paraphraser Hérodien, dont l’histoire est intitulée dans les manuscrits qui nous l’ont transmise : *ἱστορία τῆς μετὰ Μάρκον βασιλείας* (*Histoire de l’empire après Marc Aurèle*). Cette séquence traite de manière complète les règnes de Caracalla, Macrin et Elagabal, et brièvement celui de Sévère Alexandre.

<sup>45</sup> DIO CASS. 80 [80], 4, 2-5, 3.

<sup>46</sup> POLYB. 1, 5, 4 ; 3, 1, 5 .

publique.<sup>47</sup> L'année 229 vit donc à la fois l'élévation du sénateur Dion Cassius aux honneurs suprêmes et la fin de sa carrière politique. Mais le récit se prolonge de façon proleptique un peu au-delà de cette date puisque le narrateur, redevenu simple *priuatus* et rentré dans sa patrie bithynienne "pour y vivre le reste de sa vie", parachève son *Histoire*<sup>48</sup> par ce qu'il appelle une "ultime fin" (*ἄκροτελεύτιον*), une citation de deux vers d'Homère – dans lesquels Hector est sauvé par Zeus du champ de bataille –, dont l'interprétation divise encore les modernes :<sup>49</sup> est-ce par désenchantement et pessimisme quant à l'avenir de l'Empire ou simplement parce que les forces viennent à lui manquer que le sénateur décide de se retirer du cours de l'histoire et que l'historien cesse d'écrire ? Toujours est-il que ce "finale" si personnel, au-delà de ce qu'il révèle des sentiments de l'homme Cassius Dion, pose une question essentielle sur laquelle nous reviendrons dans la seconde partie de notre exposé : celle du risque – assumé ou non – de dérive autobiographique qui menace tout récit d'histoire contemporaine dans lequel le narrateur est aussi un acteur des événements.

Nous avons jusqu'à présent envisagé les sections contemporaines des histoires au long cours uniquement du point de vue de leur genèse, avouée, réelle ou supposée. Il s'agissait de vérifier si elles faisaient ou non partie dès le début du projet d'ensemble, et quelles limites temporelles leur avaient été assignées par l'auteur. C'était, selon nous, un préalable nécessaire à l'enquête

<sup>47</sup> DIO CASS. 80 [80], 5, 2-3. Traduction FOULON / MOLIN (2020) légèrement modifiée.

<sup>48</sup> Sur ordre du *daimonion* (qu'il appelle ailleurs Tychè), qui est le véritable commanditaire de son Histoire du début jusqu'à la fin : "Cette déesse [Tychè] m'encourageant à écrire l'histoire lorsque je me tenais sur la réserve et que je craignais de m'en charger, me fortifiant dans des songes lorsque la difficulté me faisait renoncer à mon entreprise, et me donnant la flatteuse espérance que, dans la suite, le temps laisserait subsister mon œuvre sans la ternir en rien, j'ai eu, vraisemblablement, en elle un surveillant pour régler ma conduite dans la vie, et c'est pour cette raison que je lui suis dévoué" (73 [72], 23).

<sup>49</sup> Voir en dernier lieu FOULON / MOLIN (2020) LVII-LVIII et note *ad loc.*

que nous abordons maintenant et qui porte quant à elle sur la structuration et la mise en récit de ces séquences et, pour commencer, sur leur intégration au sein d'une œuvre qui se déploie sur le temps long et embrasse plusieurs passés, plus ou moins éloignés du point d'aboutissement.

## 2. Principes et formes de la narration dans les sections d'histoire contemporaine

Toutes les histoires au long cours ne comportent pas nécessairement, comme celles de notre corpus, une section consacrée aux événements les plus récents. Alors que les *Antiquités juives* de Flavius Josèphe racontent l'histoire du peuple juif depuis la création du monde jusqu'aux prémices de la révolte de la Judée contre Rome en 66 ap. J.-C., les événements dont il fut l'exact contemporain, le témoin et, dans certains cas, l'acteur font l'objet d'un traitement séparé dans deux ouvrages de nature différente et qui n'entretiennent aucun rapport génétique avec les *Antiquités*. La *Guerre des Juifs*, une monographie associant guerre étrangère et guerre civile, dans laquelle l'imitation de Thucydide et de Polybe est patente,<sup>50</sup> a été rédigée avant les *Antiquités*. Quant au *Bios*, que Josèphe annonce à la fin du livre 20 des *Antiquités juives* et qui figure à leur suite dans les manuscrits,<sup>51</sup> il n'est pas pour autant leur complément : il ne s'agit d'ailleurs pas d'une "autobiographie" à proprement parler – le genre n'existe pas encore – ni d'un texte historiographique, mais de la réponse argumentée de Josèphe aux attaques que Juste de Tibériade venait de publier contre son action en tant

<sup>50</sup> HADAS-LEBEL (1999).

<sup>51</sup> JOS. *AJ* 20, 266-267 : "Peut-être ferais-je une œuvre qui ne provoquera pas l'envie en parlant brièvement de ma famille et de ce que j'ai fait au cours de mon existence, tant que vivent encore ceux qui pourraient ou me réfuter ou bien témoigner en ma faveur. C'est sur ces sujets que me mettrai le point final à l'ouvrage sur les Antiquités comprenant vingt livres et soixante mille lignes. Et si Dieu le permet, j'y évoquerai deci-delà la guerre et tout ce qui nous est arrivé jusqu'à ce jour..."

gouverneur militaire de Galilée et contre son récit de la révolte juive contre les Romains :<sup>52</sup> insérer cette réfutation en annexe ou en appendice aux *Antiquités* à paraître prochainement avait pour seul but de lui assurer une efficacité immédiate et une large diffusion.<sup>53</sup> Dexippe d'Athènes constitue un autre cas de figure, puisqu'il y avait recouvrement chronologique partiel entre sa *Χρονική ἱστορία*, une histoire universelle d'inspiration diodoréenne qui s'étendait des temps grecs mythiques jusqu'au règne de Claude II inclus (268-270) –, et les *Scythica*, dans lesquels l'historien relatait en détail des événements déjà évoqués sommairement au dernier livre de son *Histoire* (les opérations militaires menées par Rome entre 250 et 271 contre diverses tribus du Nord) : il est très probable que c'est le rôle qu'il avait personnellement joué dans la résistance athénienne à l'invasion des *Heruli* en 267 qui l'avait incité à raconter à nouveau, de manière plus complète, et cette fois selon les conventions de l'historiographie thucydidéenne semble-t-il, la riche histoire militaire du milieu du III<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>54</sup> Malheureusement, les fragments de Dexippe conservés, dont l'attribution à l'une ou l'autre œuvre par les citateurs et florilèges byzantins est souvent flottante, ne permettent pas de comparer la façon dont les mêmes événements étaient relatés dans l'histoire universelle et dans la monographie d'histoire contemporaine.

Ces deux exemples aident selon nous à comprendre quelles solutions, au moins théoriques, s'offraient aux auteurs de notre corpus pour intégrer la période contemporaine au sein de leur histoire universelle ou *ab Urbe condita*. Tout, justement, est affaire de périodisation. Chez Diodore, le temps est divisé en trois grandes séquences et à chacune correspond une série de livres : les événements antérieurs à la guerre de Troie (livres 1 à 6) ; les événements qui vont de la guerre de Troie jusqu'à la mort d'Alexandre (livres 7 à 17) ; les événements qui vont de

<sup>52</sup> *BNJ* 734 T5f.

<sup>53</sup> PELLETIER (1959) XVII-XVIII.

<sup>54</sup> MILLAR (1969) 23-25 ; MARTIN (2006) 168-256 ; MECCELLA (2013) 71-118.



l'époque des Diadoques jusqu'au début de la guerre des Gaules (livres 18 à 40).<sup>55</sup> Ce séquençage, annoncé dans la préface générale, repose sur la distinction entre temps mythiques et temps historiques et, à l'intérieur des temps historiques, entre les événements anciens et ceux postérieurs à la mort d'Alexandre, auxquels est dévolu le plus grand nombre de livres (23) : c'est donc à cette histoire *récente* (celle des deux derniers siècles) que Diodore accorde la plus grande importance, sans doute parce qu'il peut se flatter d'être le premier à en produire un exposé d'ensemble ; quant aux décennies *contemporaines*, c'est-à-dire correspondant à son propre *floruit* (ca 90-30 av. J.-C.), elles ne sont pas identifiées comme telles et font partie intégrante de cette période *post mortem Alexandri* que nous appelons hellénistique, s'insérant de manière fluide dans une *historia continua* qui "ramasse, dans les limites d'une seule synthèse, les événements passés dans leur enchaînement, se prête à une lecture aisée et favorise une appréhension des faits facile et complète".<sup>56</sup> Cette unité et cette cohérence sont en partie assurées par le fait que la *persona* de l'historien ne varie pas, celle d'un narrateur externe d'événements dont il ne se présente jamais ni comme un acteur ni comme un observateur engagé.<sup>57</sup>

Il va en tout autrement chez Cassius Dion. Ce dernier fait précisément commencer la période dont il est le contemporain en 180, avec un événement qui marqua son entrée dans l'âge adulte et l'éveil de sa conscience historique : il assista avec son père en octobre de cette année-là au premier discours de Commode au sénat, sept mois après le décès de son père Marc Aurèle.<sup>58</sup> Or cette date n'a pas seulement une signification personnelle pour l'historien : elle marque également, selon lui, le

<sup>55</sup> DIOD. SIC. 1, 4, 6-7.

<sup>56</sup> DIOD. SIC. 1, 3, 8.

<sup>57</sup> Les seules références "à son temps" faites par Diodore se trouvent dans les livres relatifs au passé ancien, pour souligner des permanences, des continuités (μέχρι τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς βίου, μέχρι τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς καιρῶν, μέχρι τῶν νεωτέρων καιρῶν): par ex. 1, 61, 4 ; 3, 59, 7 ; 3, 66 ; 4, 30, 4 ; 12, 26, 2.

<sup>58</sup> DIO CASS. 73 [72], 4, 2-3. Comme l'exige la règle, il a dix-sept ans révolus (cf. DIO CASS. 52, 20, 1).

passage d’“une royauté d’or” (les règnes impériaux d’Auguste à Marc Aurèle) à “une royauté de fer et de rouille” incarnée par Commode mais aussi par tous ses successeurs jusqu’à Sévère Alexandre.<sup>59</sup> En réactivant et en renouvelant le *topos* littéraire de la succession des âges des métaux,<sup>60</sup> Dion souligne donc de manière métaphorique une forte césure entre l’avant et l’après Marc Aurèle, une périodisation qui découle du sens qu’il donne à la marche de l’histoire et qui, du fait de sa propre implication dans les événements, induit un nouveau mode narratif, comme nous le verrons plus loin. Le risque est alors patent d’une “monographisation” c’est-à-dire d’une autonomisation du récit d’histoire contemporaine.

En tout cas, l’exemple de Dion montre le danger d’une approche purement *génétiq*ue de ces œuvres, qui tend à occulter d’autres niveaux de structuration et de sens : les trois derniers livres de l’*Histoire romaine* (78-80) qui, comme on l’a vu plus haut, n’ont pas le même statut éditorial que le “grand œuvre” (livres 1 à 77, dont le *telos* tombe en 211), s’inscrivent pourtant dans la même période “métaphorique” que les livres 73 à 77 (“la royauté de fer et de rouille”).

S’agissant d’autre part du “discours de la méthode” porté par les historiens de notre corpus, force est de constater que ce qui a été conservé par la tradition directe et indirecte manque de substance et d’originalité. De façon générale, les historiens grecs d’époque impériale se cantonnent à quelques déclarations de principe sur l’histoire ‘servante de la vérité’, sur le nombre et la qualité des sources qu’ils ont consultées et confrontées entre

<sup>59</sup> DIO CASS. 72 [71], 36, 4 : Après un long éloge de Marc Aurèle il conclut : “Une seule chose fut mise sur le compte de son infortune : c’est qu’après avoir élevé et instruit son fils aussi bien que possible, [Marc Aurèle] fut complètement déçu dans ses espérances. Il faut, dès à présent, parler de ce fils, puisque, pour les Romains de ce temps et pour nous aujourd’hui, l’histoire est tombée d’un règne d’or dans un règne de fer et de rouille.”

<sup>60</sup> Cette métaphore est aussi une manière ironique de répondre à Commode, qui avait obtenu du sénat que son règne fût qualifié d’âge d’or (DIO CASS. 73 [72], 15, 6).

elles, sur l'originalité et l'utilité du sujet qu'ils ont choisi de traiter.<sup>61</sup> On trouve toutefois chez des auteurs de monographies d'histoire contemporaine des considérations plus directement inspirées de Thucydide et de Polybe, mais terriblement réductrices puisqu'elles semblent ignorer la dimension anthropologique de l'histoire de Thucydide qui excède le cadre du récit d'une seule guerre, fût-elle la plus importante de toutes, ainsi que les subtiles définitions que Polybe donne de "l'histoire universelle" et de "l'histoire pragmatique". C'est ainsi que Josèphe, au début de son *Bellum Judaicum*, fait l'éloge de ce qui est probablement une création de la rhétorique d'école : "l'historien de son temps", le seul capable, selon lui, par son information autoptique et le recours à des témoins vivants, de produire une relation véridique des événements ; et si la collecte et la vérification de ces témoignages exigent de lui beaucoup de travail et même du courage, cet historien a la satisfaction et la fierté d'écrire une histoire entièrement nouvelle, qui aura le statut de "source primaire" pour les générations futures :<sup>62</sup>

"Les historiens anciens se sont appliqués, chacun de son côté, à écrire l'histoire de leur propre temps, travail où le fait d'avoir été contemporains des événements donnait de la clarté au récit et où le mensonge les eut déshonorés aux yeux de gens qui connaissaient les faits. À coup sûr, livrer à la mémoire des hommes des événements dont l'histoire n'avait pas encore été écrite et présenter à la postérité les événements dont on a été contemporain et digne de louange et d'estime. L'auteur courageux n'est pas celui qui remanie simplement la composition et le plan d'un autre mais celui qui, outre qu'il dit du neuf, donne au corps de son histoire une structure qui lui est propre..."<sup>63</sup>

Josèphe insiste aussi sur le fait que, relatant une expérience partagée par sa génération et dont la mémoire est encore vivante, "l'historien de son temps" courrait, s'il mentait, le risque d'être désavoué et déshonoré. Cette idée selon laquelle cet historien se

<sup>61</sup> Voir par exemple DION. HAL 1, 1-4.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. POLYB. 9, fr. 2.

<sup>63</sup> JOS. BJ, Préface 14-15 traduction PELLETIER (1975).

place pour ainsi dire sous le regard et le contrôle de ses contemporains se trouve également chez Hérodien.<sup>64</sup> Cela dit, on sait bien que la référence explicite ou implicite à Thucydide ou à Polybe, loin d'exprimer une véritable filiation, sert d'abord et surtout de label de qualité à leurs prétendus zéloteurs, et que l'imitation de Thucydide, quand elle transparait dans leur récit, est uniquement d'ordre stylistique et littéraire : la mention et la critique des sources, écrites ou orales, sont le plus souvent inexistantes. Chez Hérodien, par exemple, les occurrences des verbes "voir" et "entendre dire", nombreuses dans la préface, sont en revanche rarissimes dans la narration elle-même. Cette dernière, lisse et univoque, ne fait jamais état de divergences entre les sources, et le mélange d'informations de première et de seconde main y est si homogène qu'il est impossible de savoir si l'auteur était présent à telle occasion ou non : Hérodien, si discret sur sa propre personne, l'est aussi sur son travail d'historien.<sup>65</sup>

Les commentaires méthodologiques de Cassius Dion s'agissant de l'histoire contemporaine tranchent avec ces lieux communs. On les trouve principalement dans deux passages fameux, entre lesquels sa position a manifestement évolué. Dans le premier, au livre 53, 19, Dion explique pourquoi il n'est pas possible d'écrire l'histoire de l'époque impériale comme celle de l'époque républicaine. Il oppose la publicité des mesures officielles adoptées par le Sénat et le peuple sous la République au secret qui entoure les décisions prises par le pouvoir impérial, et en conclut que l'absence ou la non-fiabilité des sources rend plus difficile le travail de l'historien à partir de l'époque d'Auguste : le changement de régime entraîne un changement de

<sup>64</sup> "Ce sont les événements postérieurs à la mort de Marc Aurèle dont j'ai ma vie durant été le témoin oculaire ou auriculaire et auxquels j'ai même pris part dans les fonctions impériales ou publiques que j'ai assumées, qui constitue le sujet de mon récit" (HDN. 1, 2, 5). "Pour moi je n'ai pas pris chez autrui les faits historiques que je relate : loin d'être inconnus et sans témoin, ils restent encore présents dans la mémoire de mes lecteurs et j'ai mis un soin scrupuleux à les recueillir et à les mettre en œuvre" (HDN. 1, 1, 3).

<sup>65</sup> Sur cette question, voir *infra*.

méthode. À cette difficulté s'en ajoute une autre, qui est la taille de l'Empire romain et la multiplicité des événements : il est impossible de savoir tout ce qui se passe, et donc d'en donner un récit précis. C'est pourquoi, dit-il, il reproduira la version officielle des événements, quelle qu'elle soit, tout en se réservant la possibilité de proposer une version alternative appuyée sur des preuves tirées de ce qu'il aura entendu ou vu.<sup>66</sup> Comme dépassé par l'ampleur et la difficulté de sa tâche, Dion renonce, semble-t-il, à produire un récit qui soit marqué de bout en bout du sceau de l'*alêtheia* et de l'*acribeia*. Cependant, au livre 73, il annonce un changement de méthode qui induit un nouveau mode narratif. En effet, après avoir relaté l'exhibition ridicule de Commode en gladiateur à l'amphithéâtre, il concède qu'il n'aurait pas en d'autres circonstances mentionné ce non-événement, indigne de figurer dans une histoire, mais ajoute :

“Comme ce spectacle était donné par l'empereur et que, étant moi-même présent, j'ai tout vu et j'ai participé à chacune des discussions, j'ai pensé qu'il était approprié de ne rien dissimuler de ces choses mais de les transmettre, comme s'il s'agissait de choses très importantes et tout à fait nécessaires, à la mémoire de ceux qui viendront après nous. Et toutes les autres actions qui ont été accomplies de mon temps, j'en ferai la description avec plus de minutie (λεπτοσυργήσω) et de détails (λεπτολογήσω) que les précédentes pour la raison que j'y ai été impliqué et que je ne connais personne, parmi ceux qui sont capables d'écrire l'histoire valablement, qui en ait une connaissance aussi fine que moi.”<sup>67</sup>

On voit donc qu'il n'y a pas seulement coïncidence temporelle entre l'avènement de “l'âge de fer et de rouille” et l'accession du jeune Dion au statut de témoin oculaire mais que ce statut conduit aussi Dion l'historien à adapter sa méthode, qui sera désormais essentiellement autoptique, et surtout non discriminante : alors qu'il affectait auparavant de ne relater que les événements qu'il estimait “dignes de mention ou de mémoire”

<sup>66</sup> MILLAR (1964) 37-38 ; MANUWALD (1979) 93-97 ; KEMEZIS (2014).

<sup>67</sup> DIO CASS. 73 [72], 18, 3-4.

– quelque sens qu’il donnât à ce qualificatif<sup>68</sup> –, désormais tout ce à quoi il aura assisté méritera, pour cette seule raison, de devenir récit d’histoire. L’envers de la médaille, dira-t-on, est que ce qui échappe à son attention échappe aussi au récit. Or, ce n’est pas, en pratique, entièrement le cas : si la stratégie rhétorique de Dion consiste ici à insister sur l’autopsie, il distingue ailleurs<sup>69</sup> entre les événements dont il a été l’observateur direct et qui font l’objet pour cette raison d’une relation détaillée,<sup>70</sup> et ceux qui se sont déroulés en son absence (soit à Rome soit en dehors de Rome) et dont il donne un simple résumé, fondé sur des témoignages de seconde main (*ἔξ ἄλλοτρίας παραδόσεως*).<sup>71</sup> Bref, tout ce que semble promettre Dion pour les livres 73 à 80 finaux, c’est un récit d’“histoire immédiate”, saisi sur le vif, à hauteur d’homme, non sélectif, dont le seul but semble être d’enregistrer, de consigner les faits à titre conservatoire pour les générations à venir. Ce travail “primaire” n’a rien à voir avec la méthode longue et laborieuse adoptée pour le corps de l’œuvre : collation, critique et sélection des sources, puis rédaction. Il manque aussi à ce récit – essentiellement anecdotique –, à ce “discours du particulier”, la dimension réflexive et méta-diégétique qui, dans les livres républicains, était portée par les nombreux

<sup>68</sup> ἀξιόλογον, ἄξιον λόγου, ἄξιον μνήμης ; voir par exemple DIO CASS. 40, 31, 1 ; 43, 25, 1 ; 55, 28, 2 ; 57, 14, 1 ; 59, 22, 5. Cette notion est commune à beaucoup d’historiens (Polybe, Denys d’Halicarnasse) mais jamais explicitée.

<sup>69</sup> C’est surtout le cas pour la partie qui va au-delà de la mort de Septime Sévère : si Dion dit avoir donné des règnes de Caracalla et d’Élagabal un récit détaillé (dont il ne reste pour nous que le résumé de Xiphilin), pour la suite et jusqu’à son deuxième consulat en 229, il doit se limiter à un récit sommaire (80 [80], 1, 2) : τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ἀκριβῶς ἐπεξελεθῆναι οὐχ οἷός τε ἐγενόμην διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἐν τῇ Πρώμῃ διατρεῖψαι... κεφαλαιώσας μόντοι ταῦτα, ὅσα γε καὶ μέχρι τῆς δευτέρας μου ὑπατείας ἐπράχθη, διηγήσομαι.

<sup>70</sup> DIO CASS. 76 [75], 4, 1-5 ; 76 [75], 8, 1 ; FOULON / MOLIN (2020) XXV-XXVI.

<sup>71</sup> DIO CASS. 73 [72], 4, 2. Dion avait des informateurs au sénat et dans les provinces. Par exemple son information sur le séjour d’Élagabal à Nicomédie à l’hiver 218/219 provient explicitement de deux sources (79 [78], 7, 4) : “d’hommes dignes de foi”, probablement des Romains installés sur place ; de l’enquête qu’il a lui-même “menée avec soin et de près, depuis Pergame, cité dont Macrin [lui] avait confié la charge”. MILLAR (1964) 121-122. Il avait également accès à des documents écrits (archives du sénat) : BARNES (1984) ; LETTA (2016) 251-252.

passages gnomiques insérés dans les discours ou assumés en première personne par l'auteur dans ses commentaires : s'y exprimait une réflexion sur la nature humaine, une anthropologie proprement thucydidéenne<sup>72</sup> dont l'absence ici peut s'expliquer, entre autres, par la nécessité pressante d'enregistrer les faits à mesure qu'ils se produisent, et donc par le manque de recul par rapport à eux. Mais tous ces renoncements sont sans doute le prix à payer par Dion pour que sa narration, désormais affranchie du discours officiel et de la propagande des mauvais empereurs, puisse renouer avec la vérité et la précision.<sup>73</sup>

Dans toutes les histoires contemporaines mentionnées ou étudiées dans cet exposé, à l'exception de la *Bibliothèque historique* de Diodore de Sicile,<sup>74</sup> les auteurs interviennent dans le récit, de façon continue ou ponctuelle, à un moment ou un autre, comme acteurs des événements. Même Appien est dans ce cas, comme en témoigne le plus long des deux seuls fragments conservé de son *Arabios*<sup>75</sup> où il relate à la première personne du singulier un souvenir personnel relatif à la révolte juive des années 116-117, une périlleuse traversée du désert probablement nécessitée par une mission officielle, lors de laquelle il fut poursuivi par des Juifs rebelles.<sup>76</sup> Ce récit précis, vif, mouvementé, teinté d'humour, où l'auteur analyse ses propres émotions, laisse entrevoir un autre Appien et permet peut-être aussi de se faire une idée de l'*Autobiographie* (entièrement perdue) que la tradition lui attribue. Mais cet emploi de la première personne n'est pas la norme chez les historiens antérieurs à

<sup>72</sup> BERTRAND / COUDRY / FROMENTIN (2016) 312-314.

<sup>73</sup> Pour autant la réflexion sur les événements n'est pas absente du récit de "la monarchie de fer et de rouille": elle s'exprime à travers la dénonciation explicite ou implicite des maux de son temps et des dysfonctionnements du régime impérial (indiscipline de l'armée, incompétence des dirigeants) au point qu'on peut y voir une contre-récit de la propagande dynastique sévérienne (KEMEZIS [2014] 143-146 ; [2020]).

<sup>74</sup> HAU (2018).

<sup>75</sup> GOUKOWSKY (2020a) 39-43.

<sup>76</sup> GOUKOWSKY (2001) pense qu'Appien avait été chargé par les Grecs d'Alexandrie de transmettre un message à Trajan.

Appien (Thucydide, Polybe, Flavius Josèphe) : quand le narrateur est impliqué dans les événements, il objective dans son récit sa “*persona* historique” en la désignant par son nom et à la troisième personne du singulier et réserve la première personne à sa “*persona* historienne” (commentaires extra ou méta-diégétiques).<sup>77</sup> Hérodien, à cet égard, constitue une exception : il ne se nomme jamais et bien qu’il ait été un ‘spectateur engagé’ de l’histoire de son temps, les passages à la première personne du singulier ou du pluriel sont rares, et même dans ces passages, il ne parle pas directement de lui. Tout se passe en outre comme si l’homme s’effaçait totalement derrière l’historien, au point que, sur le plan chronologique, la durée de sa propre vie et l’amplitude temporelle de l’œuvre se superposent exactement.<sup>78</sup>

Cependant, dans ces constructions textuelles que sont les “Moi” auctoriaux, la perméabilité entre les différents rôles est patente. Ainsi, l’identité de Cassius Dion comme sénateur (son Moi extra-textuel) n’est pas seulement un fait historique mais un aspect essentiel de sa *persona* de narrateur, et les deux d’ailleurs tendent d’ailleurs à se confondre, à partir du livre 73, avec l’emploi de plus en plus fréquent dans le récit de la première personne. Cependant, en dehors des tout derniers livres où s’affirme le “Je” singulier, cette première personne est plurielle, la *persona* historique de Dion n’est pas individualisée mais incluse dans un “Nous” collectif : “Nous, les sénateurs” (ἡμεῖς βουλευταί). Or, ce collectif est systématiquement montré comme *passif* : il observe, il ressent des émotions mais ne participe pas.<sup>79</sup> Dion, dans cette partie de son histoire, n’apparaît pas, au travers les anecdotes qu’il rapporte, comme un *insider* privilégié et son intention n’est pas que ses lecteurs le voient comme tel : la position constante de l’historien est de faire ressortir l’inaction

<sup>77</sup> À vrai dire, si ce partage des rôles est très net chez Polybe (à partir du livre 24), il l’est beaucoup moins chez Thucydide qui parfois parle de l’historien à la troisième personne (clausules d’année et/ou de livre : par ex. 2, 103, 2 ; 3, 25 ; 3, 88, 4 ; 6, 93, 4) et de son personnage historique en disant “Je” (par ex. 6, 26, 1-6).

<sup>78</sup> HDN. 1, 2, 5 (cf. *supra* note 64).

<sup>79</sup> WARD (2011) 38-68.



des sénateurs et leur incapacité à influencer sur le cours des événements, voire leur hypocrisie et leur lâcheté. Ce qui est frappant, c'est que Dion aligne son comportement sur celui peu glorieux du sénat.<sup>80</sup> Il ne se désolidarise jamais de ses collègues<sup>81</sup> et ne se montre jamais sous un jour exemplaire ou plus flatteur. Cette représentation est donc de toute évidence une construction narrative et non le reflet exact d'une réalité historique. Pourquoi Dion a-t-il fait ce choix ? Probablement pour démontrer à ses lecteurs le caractère inévitable d'un tel comportement à une telle époque mais aussi pour laisser toute latitude à sa *persona* d'historien de fustiger les mauvais empereurs et leurs serviteurs, une liberté dont le sénateur Dion, engagé et englué dans les affaires de son temps, n'avait pu user.<sup>82</sup>

L'étude que nous avons tenté de mener portait sur un corpus éclaté, fragmentaire, tributaire des aléas de la transmission manuscrite, non représentatif de l'ensemble de la production des histoires au long cours, et dont le rassemblement pouvait paraître artificiel, eu égard à l'hétérogénéité fondamentale des œuvres soumises à comparaison. Qu'y a-t-il en effet de commun entre la *Bibliothèque historique* de Diodore et l'*Histoire romaine* de Cassius Dion, entre l'œuvre d'Éphore et celle de Polybe, autrement dit entre les histoires universelles 'à la grecque' et les histoires romano-centrées ? Car Polybe a beau vouloir inscrire ses *Histoires* dans la prestigieuse tradition de la κοινὴ ἱστορία, la rupture est profonde entre lui et ses prédécesseurs, à la fois sur le plan géopolitique (succession des empires, modification du centre de gravité de l'*oikoumenê*) et sur le plan historiographique (histoire téléologique, construction du sens fondée sur une lecture presque exclusivement politique et institutionnelle des événements). C'est pourquoi nous avons dû conduire des études de cas plutôt que de chercher à reconstituer

<sup>80</sup> Par ex. DIO CASS. 74 [73], 12, 2-3 ; 76 [75], 4, 2 ; 80 [80], 2, 5-6.

<sup>81</sup> DIO CASS. 78 [77], 17, 2.

<sup>82</sup> SCOTT (2018).

l'histoire d'un pseudo-sous-genre historiographique. En revanche, il nous a été possible, pour chacune des œuvres au long cours que nous avons étudiées, de scruter le point de basculement, celui où l'historien des périodes anciennes devient historien de son temps, que cette transformation soit affirmée, revendiquée, voire théorisée, ou non. Au-delà des différences, nombreuses là encore, qui tiennent à la personnalité des auteurs, à leur histoire personnelle, à leur engagement public, au contexte historique, aux multiples influences culturelles qui ont pu déterminer chez eux les modalités de l'écriture de l'histoire et de l'écriture de soi, des constantes apparaissent cependant, qui dessinent la *persona* de "l'historien contemporain" (que ce dernier écrive une "histoire universelle" ou une monographie) et qu'on ne saurait réduire à une collection de lieux communs déconnectés de la pratique effective de ces historiens. Écrire l'histoire de son temps, quel que soit ce temps, soumet en effet à celui qui se lance dans l'entreprise à un haut niveau d'exigence : il éprouve tout à la fois la conscience et la fierté (le plus souvent sincères) de relater ce qui ne l'a encore jamais été, d'être le *primus auctor*, son œuvre étant destinée de ce fait à devenir, pour les générations futures, une "source primaire" ; mais il entretient aussi avec son lectorat immédiat une relation complexe et non dépourvue de risques puisque, partageant avec son public une commune expérience de vie, il fait de lui le juge de la véracité de son récit, le danger étant évidemment d'une tout autre nature quand l'historien contemporain travaille à la manifestation de ce qu'il considère être la vérité, en contredisant l'histoire officielle ou la propagande impériale. C'est pourquoi on ne saurait – décidément pas – conclure avec P. Veyne<sup>83</sup> que l'histoire de l'historiographie antique se résume à un "problème purement littéraire et philologique qui n'intéresse pas la philosophie de l'histoire" et que le temps est un impensé des historiens anciens.

<sup>83</sup> VEYNE (1971) 111-112.

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## DISCUSSION

*R. Nicolai* : Soltanto una breve nota per sottolineare un contributo importante della relazione di Valérie Fromentin. A mio avviso è di cruciale importanza aver messo a fuoco il problema delle modalità di pubblicazione e delle fasi redazionali, problema complesso che non può essere affrontato con i metodi, altamente ipotetici, della questione tucididea ottocentesca. Per questo motivo condivido il metodo di indagare a partire dalle affermazioni dei vari autori. Ad esempio, in Diod. Sic. 40, fr. 9 Goukowsky va segnalata la presenza del lessico della revisione critica (διόρθωθήναι) e della pubblicazione (προεξεδόθησαν); in particolare quest'ultimo termina indica una pubblicazione anticipata, analoga a quella nota per le *Argonautiche* di Apollonio Rodio. Peraltro il passo di Diodoro può essere utilizzato per gettare luce sulle informazioni molto discusse e controverse sulla *proekdosis* di Apollonio.

*V. Fromentin*: Ce fragment de Diodore constitue un témoignage rare car les historiens anciens sont généralement peu diserts sur les modalités de rédaction et de circulation de leurs œuvres, si bien que les modernes leur ont souvent attribué des pratiques éditoriales anachroniques, oubliant que dans la majeure partie des cas, le livre à pages (*codex*) qui nous est familier n'avait pas encore remplacé les *uolumina* de papyrus et que ces historiens, qui écrivaient pour être lus (d'abord) par leurs contemporains, dans l'espoir d'y gagner de leur vivant quelque notoriété, n'attendaient pas d'avoir rédigé l'intégralité de leur ouvrage (qui comptait souvent plusieurs dizaines de livres-rouleaux) pour le diffuser : aussi la publication du texte au fil de l'eau (par livre ou groupe de livres) était-elle probablement la norme. Pour l'époque impériale, la question est parasitée par le

présupposé (évoqué par A. Kemezis dans sa communication), selon lequel un récit d'histoire ne pouvait avoir pour sujet l'empereur qui régnait au moment de sa mise en circulation, ce qui a conduit, dans le cas d'Hérodien, historien contemporain des années 180-238, à supposer que son *Histoire* aurait été entièrement rédigée et publiée après coup, c'est-à-dire à partir de 240-250. Or les *incipit* et les clausules de chacun des sept livres plaident en faveur d'une autre hypothèse, celle d'une chronique élaborée au fil du temps et d'abord diffusée en cercle restreint, livre après livre, avant de faire l'objet d'une édition complète, peut-être posthume, peut-être l'une des toutes premières sur *codex*, pour laquelle le *prooimion* du livre 1 aurait été actualisé.

*N. Luraghi*: Choosing an endpoint for a historical narrative is, among other things, a way of determining the meaning of that narrative. This notion can be traced quite early in Greek historiography. Thucydides' argument about the duration of the Peloponnesian War (5, 26) is implicitly also about the length of his history thereof (one thinks of his peculiar opening sentence "Thucydides wrote the war", with the comments by Nicole Loraux and Lowell Edmunds). Tellingly, the three continuations that are documented, by Cratippos, Xenophon, and Theopompos, each have a different endpoint, thereby turning the history of the Peloponnesian War into three different stories. Cratippos, concluding with the reconstruction of the Long Walls in 393, as Guido Schepens has remarked, turned the story of the Athenian defeat into a story of fall and rise, as it were, while Theopompos, taking the battle of Knidos as his endpoint, narrated the fall of the Spartan hegemony as a pendant to the fall of the Athenian empire, as shown once again by Guido Schepens. As for Xenophon, by ending his narrative after the battle of Mantinea rather than continuing until the common peace which followed a few months later, managed not to say that, in political terms, the battle had been a catastrophic defeat for the Spartans. In historical narratives, the endpoint is the point, as Mark Smith

remarked in the case of the *Old Testament* book of *Judges*. Polybius makes his reflections on the endpoint explicit, and it takes little speculation to see that the inclusion of the destructions of Carthage and Corinth potentially changed the meaning of the overarching story he told. This all makes me wonder about the choices of endpoints by the historians whose works you have been investigating.

V. *Fromentin*: Denys d’Halicarnasse dans son traité *Sur Thucydide* (10, 1) s’interroge justement sur ce qu’est, pour un ouvrage d’histoire, “une fin appropriée” (τέλος ... τὸ πρέπον). Il la définit comme celle à “laquelle on n’a rien à ajouter”, autrement dit celle qui contribue avec la date de début à donner au sujet son unité et son sens. Ailleurs, cependant (*Lettre à Pompée Gémios* 3, 10), il reproche à Thucydide tout à la fois la *fin annoncée* de son histoire (Aigos Potamos) et la *fin effective* (Kynosséma), au motif qu’il aurait dû choisir pour *telos* non pas une défaite ou un événement secondaire, mais “l’épisode le plus admirable, le plus susceptible de plaire aux auditeurs”, c’est-à-dire de flatter ou de ménager leur orgueil patriotique – un développement polémique auquel l’exemple, bien connu de Denys, des “continuateurs” de Thucydide (Cratippe, Théopompe, Xénophon) n’est probablement pas étranger. Cependant, la question du “point final” ne se pose pas de la même façon pour les “monographies de guerre” que pour les histoires au long cours (universelles ou *ab Urbe condita*), dont le *terminus* peut, comme dans le cas de Cassius Dion, coïncider avec la fin de la carrière politique ou les dernières années de la vie de l’historien, ce dernier ayant choisi d’écrire “aussi longtemps que la Fortune le lui permettrait”. Mais une telle extension (jusqu’à l’extrême contemporain), avec le risque de dérive autobiographique qu’elle comporte, est rare : généralement les auteurs d’histoire mondiale (Polybe, Diodore, Appien, Dion) assignent à leur récit, au moment de commencer, une date précise de fin, *i.e* un événement déjà reconnu comme historiquement signifiant (167 av. J.-C. pour Polybe, 60 av. J.-C. pour Diodore, 197 ap. J.-C. pour

Dion). Cependant, comme j'ai tenté de le montrer, cette date peut être resémantisée (Diodore) ou dépassée au profit d'un nouveau *telos* dont la justification (avouée) n'est pas toujours ou pas seulement, comme chez Polybe (146 av. J.-C.), d'ordre historique.

*B. Bleckmann*: Die ursprünglich ins Auge gefassten Enddaten für ein historiographisches Projekt können sich im Verlauf der Arbeit am Projekt verschieben. Natürlich spielen dabei biographische Zufälle eine Rolle: Thukydides wollte bis 404, nicht nur bis 411 schreiben; Sozomenos kündigte in seinem Proömium, die Zeit bis 439 zu beschreiben, kam aber nur bis 411 bzw. 422. Beim umgekehrten Fall, einer Revision des ursprünglich ins Auge gefassten Endes des Geschichtswerks, ist der klassische Fall natürlich derjenige des Polybios. Die Motivation, den Endpunkt zu verändern, liegt dabei nicht nur in der weiter voranschreitenden Zeit, sondern darin, dass man bedeutende Ereignisse, die einer Veränderung der Bewertung der Gesamtgeschichte führen, erlebt hat. Hier kann man auf Theopomp verweisen, der sein ursprüngliches Hellenika-Projekt, das vielleicht über 394 hinausging, als er sich in seinem Projekt der Schlacht von Leuktra näherte, unter dem Eindruck der Erfolge Philipps von Makedonien aufgab und die Arbeit an die Philippika aufnahm (*FGrHist* 115 T 19, 3). Im Regelfall werden Historiker gewissermaßen zu ihren eigenen Fortsetzern. Sehr schön lässt sich das bei Theophanes von Byzanz (*Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 64) zeigen, der seinem ursprüngliches auf zehn Bücher beschränktes Geschichtswerk andere Bücher anfügte und auch vorangehen ließ. Ähnliches gilt auch für Malchos. Diese Praxis der Erweiterung nach hinten und nach vorne (auch bei Polybios gibt es nicht nur die Anfügung der Bücher, die von 168 bis 146 reichen, sondern sind, worauf Sie hinweisen, die ersten beiden Bücher als zusätzliche Prokataskeue später vorangestellt werden, die den Plan, eine Geschichte ab 220/221 zu schreiben, gewissermaßen modifizieren), könnte auch erklären, warum der Profanhistoriker Euseb nach Euagrios 5, 24 ein



Geschichtswerk verfasst hat, das mit Octavian, Traian und Mark Aurel einsetzte.

*V. Fromentin*: Les exemples que j'ai évoqués montrent effectivement que le point final peut être modifié en cours d'écriture (Polybe, Cassius Dion) ou chargé d'un sens nouveau (Diodore) parce que la perception qu'a l'historien des événements dont il est contemporain évolue avec le temps. Je vous remercie d'attirer mon attention sur le cas de Théophraste de Byzance, qui ajouta des livres supplémentaires aux dix initialement prévus pour son *Histoire* : malheureusement, Photios ne nous dit pas ce qui motiva cette suite. Quant au seul *testimonium* que nous possédions sur l'énigmatique historien (profane) Eusebios (*BNJ* 101 T1 = Évagre le Scholastique, *HE* 5, 24), son interprétation n'est pas tranchée : comment expliquer ce triple début (Octavien, Trajan, Marc Aurèle) ? Eusebios a-t-il ajouté, en amont d'un récit d'histoire (péri)contemporaine qui commençait après la mort de Marc Aurèle en 180 (comme chez Hérodien) et s'achevait en 283, des séquences rétrospectives (Octavien – Domitien ; Trajan – Marc Aurèle) ? Personnellement j'imagine plutôt une sorte de *compendium* d'histoire impériale organisé autour des trois figures majeures et positives d'Auguste, Trajan et Marc Aurèle.

*J. Marincola*: One of the things that your paper made clear was how the contemporary part of Dio's history is closely related to Dio himself and to his status as one of a group of senators, even if, as you note, the senators do not cut a glorious figure in Dio's time. Now one important difference, it seems to me, between (say) Dio's history and Herodian's is that Dio provides for his readers a vast sweep of time going back to Roman origins and tracing the development of Roman institutions, not least the Senate, which we see in its various phases, in the early, middle, and late Republic, and in the early and middle Empire. So my question is what (if any) effect does the vast historical background of Dio's history have on the way

we think of and respond to the actions of Dio and his fellow senators?

*V. Fromentin:* À la différence de Tite-Live, auquel il emprunte le modèle de l'histoire *ab Urbe condita*, Cassius Dion est un historien du pouvoir, pour qui les grandes périodes de l'histoire de Rome sont scandées, comme chez Polybe, Denys d'Halicarnasse et Appien, par les transformations et adaptations successives de la *politeia*. Mais il est le seul chez qui cette lecture politique des événements détermine et informe en profondeur le récit *dans toute son étendue*, si bien que A. Kemezis (2014) a pu identifier dans l'*Histoire romaine* quatre "modes narratifs" correspondant aux quatre grandes mutations du régime (République, *dynasteiai*, Principat, époque contemporaine). Cette structuration, qui fait alterner des séquences où la *politeia*, républicaine ou impériale, fonctionne normalement et d'autres où elle dysfonctionne, n'est évidemment sensible qu'à l'échelle de l'œuvre entière, par le jeu des comparaisons, mais sa cohérence, comme le montrent les travaux les plus récents, se vérifie jusque dans le détail du vocabulaire politique et moral utilisé par Dion. Dans ce système interprétatif, le rôle que joue ou ne joue pas le sénat, en tant qu'acteur institutionnel et politique et en tant que personnage collectif, est un marqueur essentiel de l'état de santé du régime, sous la République et sous l'Empire.

*E.-M. Becker:* Thank you very much for your paper. If I understand correctly, the historiographical concept behind *telos*-thinking (in Polybios) could be seen as a strategy of establishing a structure behind historical events that leads toward a goal or an end of history and, from here, helps to illuminate the historian's present time. How would you relate, by comparison, the concept of aitiological thinking which might be understood as an analogous principle of illuminating the historian's present time by – however, and possibly in contrast to teleology – providing threads of explanation which lead from the (mythical) past to the present?

V. *Fromentin*: Un bon exemple de conception étiologique de l'histoire – par opposition à la vision téléologique de Polybe – se trouve chez Denys d'Halicarnasse, qui tente d'expliquer le “miracle romain” par les origines grecques (et non pas seulement troyennes) qu'il assigne au peuple de l'*Urbs* : le livre I des *Antiquités romaines*, qui rattache la préhistoire de Rome (antérieure à la fondation) au vaste fonds légendaire hellénique, propose un nouveau mythe des origines qui fait de la grécité (ethnique et culturelle) des Romains l'une des causes de leur stabilité politique, de leur concorde civique et de leurs succès militaires.



NINO LURAGHI

## POLITICS OF THE (RECENT) PAST

EARLY HELLENISTIC ATHENIAN DECREES BETWEEN  
EPIGRAPHY AND LITERATURE\*

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the connections and exchanges between inscriptions and the writing of contemporary history, with a special focus on the case of Athens between the death of Alexander the Great and the Chremonidean War. After briefly tracing the use of inscriptions by Greek historians up to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the article touches upon the famous ‘false documents’ on the Persian Wars that started circulating in Athens around the time of the King’s Peace; these documents, certainly related to the re-inscription of old laws in Athens (Dracon, Solon), are taken as an indication of the increasing authority of documents in general, and of inscribed decrees in particular. The same phenomenon is then traced in the speeches of Athenian orators. The article then provides some perspectives on the role and perception of inscribed decrees as cultural artifacts in classical Athens. Finally, it turns to early Hellenistic decrees from Athens, showing how the historical narratives embedded in them can be seen as the product of attempts by Athenian politicians to control the

\* I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Valérie Fromentin for inviting me to participate in the *Entretiens*, and to Pierre Ducrey for being such a congenial host. My friends Mirko Canevaro, Matthias Haake, and Stephen Lambert have read a preliminary version of this text, generously sharing with me their knowledge of Athenian politics and epigraphy. This contribution deals with questions I have been interested in for a while: I hope the reader will excuse me for making reference to previous works of mine more than a polite author normally should. Errors of commission and omission are of course my responsibility.

narrative on key and controversial political events and their protagonists. Their overlap with historiography and antiquarian research points to these different textual expressions originating within the same political milieus, in dialogue with one another from the outset.

Looking at Greek inscriptions as texts in their own right, rather than as documents that have a value only for the information they convey, has been a growing tendency in the scholarship of the last decades.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, considering inscriptions as carriers of historical narratives relating to the recent past is but a logical step in a volume like the present one, that focuses on the writing of what we might call contemporary history in Antiquity. Within the broad field of Greek inscriptions, my contribution focuses on one particular kind of documents, mostly preserved in inscribed form, but very often referred to and occasionally even quoted word by word in ancient Greek literary works, namely decrees of the Athenians.<sup>2</sup> The choice of parameters is dictated by several considerations. First of all, Greek decrees in general allow the modern scholar to pose the question of authorship and purpose with a higher degree of confidence than most other Greek inscriptions. Second, decrees display a much higher level of textual complexity than other kinds of inscriptions whose purpose and authorship can be ascertained, such as dedications in sanctuaries, temple inventories or epitaphs. Third, decrees, inscribed or not, were the product of a very specific kind of political process that was characteristic of the world of the Greek polis, and as such provide specific insight into the culture of that world. Finally, as I hope to show in my paper, no other kind of Greek inscriptions has been engaged in a process

<sup>1</sup> For recent examples with a broad scope, see OSBORNE (2011) on Greek inscriptions and history-writing and CHANIOTIS (2016) for Hellenistic inscriptions as evidence for rhetoric and diplomacy.

<sup>2</sup> The Greeks' peculiar habit of inscribing decisions of the political community on public monuments makes the distinction between inscriptions and public documents particularly slippery; see below on the interchangeability of "decree" and "stele" in Greek parlance.

of bilateral entanglement with literary sources and with political practice that can compare in terms of intensity and complexity to the case of Athenian decrees.

In order to set my remarks in their appropriate historical context, I will start with a very concise overview of the presence of inscriptions and documents in Greek historiography from the generation of Herodotus to the generation of Demosthenes, devoting some attention to the retrospective publication of earlier Athenian documents, a subject that straddles epigraphy, historiography and rhetoric. A brief survey of the cultural history of Athenian decrees, focusing on perceptions of agency and authorship, will round off the stage-setting. The main body of my paper will be devoted to textual features of Athenian decrees between the end of the Lamian War and the end of the Chremonidean War and to their circulation and destruction. I hope to shed some light on a historical context in which indeed inscriptions operated as a way of “*écrire l’histoire de son temps*”.

## 1. Inscriptions as evidence from Herodotus to Demosthenes

Greek historians display from early on an interest in inscriptions. This interest has often to do with the potential for the written word to preserve texts over long periods of time, even after the corresponding memory had gone lost. If genuine, the anecdote about the father of Acusilaus of Argos digging up bronze tablets inscribed with long-forgotten genealogies from the mythic age would be a case in point.<sup>3</sup> It is only with Herodotus, however, that the question of the use of inscriptions can be posed in a precise fashion.<sup>4</sup> Famously interested in

<sup>3</sup> *FGrHist* 2 T 1; Jacoby attributed this story to the forgery mentioned in T 7, but see FOWLER (2013) 624-625, who sees it as Acusilaus' way of claiming authority for his work.

<sup>4</sup> The two recent and excellent contributions of FABIANI (2003) and HAYWOOD (2021) cover most aspects of the subject and provide an even-handed evaluation of the evidence.

non-Greek cultural practices, Herodotus refers roughly as often to inscriptions in other languages as he does to inscriptions in Greek. His use of inscribed monuments is diverse and sophisticated, alert to the problem of their authenticity, as in the case of the Lacedaemonian dedicatory inscription associated to an item actually sent to Delphi by king Croesus (1, 51, 3-4). While perfectly capable of using inscriptions as evidence in support of an argument, as shown for instance by his excursus on the origin of the Greek alphabet (5, 58-61), Herodotus does not show a real interest in the potential for the written word to bridge the gaps of oral tradition, which is both his main source and the main mechanism for the transmission of knowledge about the past in his mental world.<sup>5</sup> Tellingly, even in the case of the Cadmean dedications from Thebes, it was the shape of the inscriptions more than their texts that proved his argument. Still, Herodotus' use of inscriptions points to a cultural context in which the diffusion of writing was growing at a fast pace, and with it also the value and authority associated to the written word.

A few decades later, Thucydides uses documents and inscriptions in a distinctly different way, in order to undermine oral tradition and broadly shared notions about the past, as in his reference to the dedication of Pisistratus the Younger and to the stele on the injustice of the tyrants as evidence for the fact that Hipparchus was not the ruling tyrant when he was assassinated, contrary to what the Athenians generally believed (6, 54, 6 - 55, 2). On the other hand, Thucydides famously reported verbatim nine diplomatic documents of different sorts dating between 423 and 411 BCE. Two or three of them might conceivably derive from inscriptions, namely the texts of the alliance between Athenians, Argives, Mantineians and Eleians

<sup>5</sup> His treatment of the Egyptian priests' knowledge of the distant past is particularly interesting here: while being perfectly aware of their reliance on written records, Herodotus applies to them the terminology of memory and tradition, as though he did not see a categorical difference between memory conveyed orally and written records; for more detail, see LURAGHI (2001) 153-154.



(5, 47, cf. *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 83, 420 BCE), which Thucydides could have copied in Olympia, and of the Peace of Nicias and of the subsequent alliance between Spartans and Athenians (5, 18-19 and 23-24), but among the rest, some actually refer to negotiations that never reached fruition, so they most likely come from copies in possession of the negotiators. Robin Lane Fox may have exaggerated the haphazard nature of these insertions, but he is right to insist that they do not point to any specific methodology for the selection and use of documents or to a particularly sophisticated reflection on their evidentiary value.<sup>6</sup> As was the case for Herodotus, for Thucydides, too, historical knowledge was transmitted and collected orally – and then transformed into a perennial textual artifact by the historian himself.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a Socratic, Xenophon does not display a particularly strong sense of the evidentiary value of written evidence, including inscriptions and documents more broadly, which is not to say that he did not make any use of them, of course.<sup>7</sup> Already during his lifetime, however, an important development can be observed, which is of general importance for the relation of inscriptions and historiography and for the authority of the written word in documentary form. Around the time of the King's Peace or immediately thereafter, at Athens texts of decrees dating to the era of the Persian Wars began to appear.<sup>8</sup> By the forties of the century, reference to these documents had become commonplace in the speeches of Athenian orators, but they were hardly responsible for putting them in circulation in the first place. The earliest signs of this documentary revival bring us back to an earlier moment, when the memory of Athenian achievements in the struggle against the Persians gained a new lease of life against the backdrop of

<sup>6</sup> See LANE FOX (2010); the article tracks the likely ways Thucydides had access to each one of these documents.

<sup>7</sup> On Xenophon and documents, see BEARZOT (2003) and LIDDEL (2020) 194-197.

<sup>8</sup> On these documents, see the classic study by HABICHT (1961). My views on the question owe much to DAVIES (1996) and THOMAS (1989).

the renewed Athenian ascendancy that was going to come to fruition in the Second Athenian League. This small corpus of documents includes very famous items such as the Peace of Callias or the Decree of Themistocles alongside somewhat more obscure and arguably less momentous ones such as the Decree against Arthmius of Zeleia.<sup>9</sup> Whether or not these celebrated documents, or some of them, were genuine, or at any rate based on the texts of 5<sup>th</sup>-century originals, has been debated ever since Antiquity – actually the debate appears to have started within a couple of decades of their appearance or reappearance. Regardless of how one adjudicates the question, the emergence of these documents points to the growing prestige, among a broad audience, of the documentary form itself. As Rosalind Thomas pointed out, the Athenians had been appealing to the glories of the Persian Wars for a long time, without ever feeling the need to display documents in support of their story.<sup>10</sup> If they did so now, it means that now they felt that written documents, and inscribed ones in particular, added to the persuasive force of their patriotic memories.

It is important to underline that what we are looking at is not a mere literary phenomenon. At least some of the decrees in question were actually inscribed, a crucial point that shows that they had an existence of their own outside of oratory or historiography – they were not literary products, much as they did get picked up and debated in historiography and bandied about in oratory.<sup>11</sup> Scholars have long since noticed that the way Isocrates refers to the Peace of Callias in his *Panegyric* (4, 120, 380 BCE) suggests that he had in mind an inscription, presumably a stele. Every doubt on the point is cancelled by the way Theopompus attacked the authenticity of Athenian documents relating to the Persian Wars, including the Peace of

<sup>9</sup> On this rather peculiar ‘document’, see ERDAS (2002) 181-185.

<sup>10</sup> THOMAS (1989) 86.

<sup>11</sup> I am not referring to the Decree of Themistocles (MEIGGS / LEWIS<sup>2</sup> 23) and the Oath of Plataea (OSBORNE / RHODES 88), in whose case the inscriptions on stone are or may be later than the first references in oratory.

Callias (115 F 154): by pointing to the use of Ionian letters instead of the old Attic ones, which had been discontinued by the decree of Archinus in the year of the archon Euclides, Theopompus implicitly signals that the debate revolved around actual inscriptions.<sup>12</sup> The decree condemning the shadowy Arthmius of Zeleia was inscribed in bronze on the Acropolis in the time of Demosthenes (19, 272). In other words, the scenario we are most likely looking at is one in which, approximately from the late eighties of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, inscriptions purporting to display texts of Athenian decrees from the time of the Persian Wars started appearing in Athens, most likely presented as re-inscriptions of old documents.<sup>13</sup>

This phenomenon needs to be seen in the context of another important development that had started in Athens in 409 BCE and continued after the restoration of democracy in 403, namely the republication of the old laws of Dracon and Solon, that an ad hoc committee was supposed to identify and bring to the assembly for approval. Once approved, the laws were to be inscribed and displayed in front of the Stoa Basileios. The prescript of Dracon's law on homicide, inscribed in 410/9, is the best-preserved example of this procedure.<sup>14</sup> In other words, reinscribing the text of an old document was a very visible practice of the Athenian democracy between the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>15</sup> This process is inseparable from the inscription, purporting to be a reinscription, of (some of) the decrees from the time of the Persian Wars.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> THEOPOMP. *FGrHist* 115 F 154 and 155 with POWNALL (2008) 121-122. On Archinus' reform, see D'ANGOUR (1999).

<sup>13</sup> See DAVIES (1996) 35.

<sup>14</sup> OSBORNE / RHODES 183. The evidence for this process is presented and explained in CANEVARO (2015).

<sup>15</sup> Re-inscription is of course a much broader phenomenon; two especially striking examples from Thebes in PAPANAKADAS (2014). In the Athenian case, however, we are looking at a large-scale initiative promoted and regulated by the political community itself: clearly, a procedure that was meant to have a significant impact.

<sup>16</sup> For the sake of clarity, no statement is here being made regarding the authenticity of the decrees from the time of the Persian Wars, nor, for that matter, on the laws of Dracon and Solon. At any rate, the alternative between forgery

Most of these decrees soon became a standard component of Athenian oratory, to the point that Demosthenes, by the time of the trial for the embassy of 343 BCE, could refer to the Peace of Callias as if he expected his audience to be sick of hearing it mentioned (19, 273). Meanwhile, historians had started debating their authenticity, deploying antiquarian knowledge to a surprising level of sophistication; if Theopompus appears to have undermined the Peace of Callias, it must be pointed out that Ephorus, who seems to have accepted it as historical, was also aware of the change in the official alphabet used at Athens, which may suggest that he, like many modern historians, did not find Theopompus' arguments conclusive.<sup>17</sup> Callisthenes on the other hand put forward a peculiar compromise, arguing that the Peace itself was not historical, but the Great King had been so impressed by the victories of the Athenians that he behaved exactly as the terms of the Peace would have required him to behave.<sup>18</sup>

There was, as always, another face to the coin. While historians debated the authenticity of certain documents from the past, trying to undermine patriotic claims based on them, orators deploying old and recent decrees in their speeches developed a notion of public documents as the foundation of democratic process and the ultimate touchstone of truth. Aeschines in particular has been seen as a pathbreaker in this process.<sup>19</sup> His references to the dates of documents preserved in the public archives point to a very specific awareness of their format and of the potential implications of it. In his speech on the embassy to Philip, from 343 BCE, he tells the judges (2, 89):

“You have a practice which in my judgment is most excellent and most useful to those in your midst who are the victims of

and genuine archival documents is simplistic; see HAAKE (2013) for a more nuanced spectrum.

<sup>17</sup> EPHOR. *FGrHist* 70 F 106.

<sup>18</sup> CALLISTH. *FGrHist* 124 F 16.

<sup>19</sup> THOMAS (1989) 69-71; Aeschines' particularly punctilious use of documents should of course not be seen in isolation from the common practice of using documents of all sorts in Athenian judicial practice.

slander: you preserve for all time in the public archives your decrees, together with their dates and the names of the officials who put them to vote.”

Again, in the speech against Ctesiphon (3, 24) he claims that the dates of Demosthenes' magistracies, documented in the relevant decrees, prove his case. His aggressive use of recent documents, arguing from their implications based also on their formal properties, was novel enough that his opponents could still try and turn it against him: in his speech for the crown, Demosthenes calls him *γραμματοκύφων*, “somebody who bends his back over documents” (18, 209), clearly counting on his audience's approval of the characterization. At the same time, however, both he (19, 129) and Lycurgus (1, 67) subscribe to the image of the Metroon as the guardian of the records of the Athenian democracy first propagated by Aeschines. There was no turning back from there.

By the time Alexander succeeded his father on the Macedonian throne, in Athens decrees were being re-inscribed, perhaps forged, certainly manipulated, debated by historians, collected by antiquarians and mobilized in public discourse by the leading orators of the time. They had acquired a crucial role in the imagination of the Athenians as an objective and intrinsically democratic sort of evidence for the past, distant and recent.

## 2. Athenian decrees: a cultural history

The peculiar habit of making political decisions by voting on a text, that is, a decree proposal, in a session of the general assembly, and then, in some cases, inscribing that text and putting it on display in a public space at public expenses, correlates to a number of equally peculiar mental habits and ways of thinking and arguing, which find their clearest expression in a specific set of metaphors and metonyms connected to Athenian decrees, some of which would not make sense in any other

historical context.<sup>20</sup> For a modern observer, an easy way of getting to the core of the matter consists in focusing on a small number of semantic slippages whose comprehensibility for the users was supported precisely by the specific combination of practices and mental habits generated by the political process in Athens.

The first slippage is in many ways the simplest one, easiest to recognize, rather common among the Greeks well beyond Athens, and for this reason, not often noticed, let alone commented upon. In a seminal contribution, Enrica Culasso Gastaldi refers to it as “the phenomenon whereby the stele becomes the materialization of the inscribed text”.<sup>21</sup> This phenomenon is visible in countless expressions, most of the time documented in the inscriptions themselves. A most striking and rather early example mentioned by Culasso Gastaldi appears in the Athenian decree for the foundation of a colony at Brea, where we read (*IG I<sup>3</sup> 46*, trans. Lambert & Rhodes):

“If any one puts a motion to the vote contrary to the stele or any speaker proposes or tries to issue a summons detracting from or annulling any of what has been decreed [τὰ *ἠεφσεφισμένα*] he shall be without rights, himself and the sons born from him, and his property shall be confiscated and a tithe given to the Goddess, unless the colonists themselves make a request (?).”

Obviously, here “the stele” and “what has been decreed” are equivalent. Culasso Gastaldi concludes: “the stele *does not recall* a political action *but is* the political action itself”.<sup>22</sup> Correspondingly, in epigraphic Greek at Athens and elsewhere, “to abide by a decision” is said “to remain within the stele”. By the same

<sup>20</sup> I here acknowledge my debt to LIDDEL (2020), a true monument of scholarship that will remain a reference for decades to come – and one whose full implications will take a long time to be absorbed. I am not entirely sure that the common notion that the texts of inscribed decrees represented extracts of the complete texts preserved in the archives should be accepted in every case and without doubt; see the references in FARAGUNA (2003) 489 n. 36.

<sup>21</sup> CULASSO GASTALDI (2010) 140; I am quoting from the English translation published as *AIO Papers* 3.

<sup>22</sup> CULASSO GASTALDI (2010) 141.

token, with reference to the destruction of inscriptions under the regime of the Thirty, an Athenian decree from the early 4<sup>th</sup> century reinstates the proxeny for (the descendants of) Xanthippus with the motivation “because the Thirty destroyed the proxeny”, with reference to the original stele.<sup>23</sup> The same language was parodied in comedy: the decree-seller in Aristophanes’ *Birds* uses *stele* in the sense of decree, too (*Av.* 1049-1050). Against this background, one understands why the Thirty’s attack on democracy took the form of smashing stelae – a highly symbolic way of signaling the rescission of democratic political decisions.<sup>24</sup>

The second slippage has to do with the very nature of the Athenian stelae/decrees. Simply put, Athenian decrees are often spoken of as if they had a personality and an agency of themselves: they could be good or bad, and even unfavorable, as the stelae mentioned in the Aristoteles decree (Osborne / Rhodes 22, 31-35, 378/7 BCE). A decree could be thrown in like a spark and set a whole city on fire (*Ar. Pax* 608-609). It could be called upon to speak in court like a witness (*Dem.* 23, 16). In general, decrees were seen as performing a vital function for the success of the Athenian democracy (*Dem.* 24, 91-93). An Athenian audience was even prepared to believe that their agency went beyond the borders of the polis itself, as shown by a passage from Demosthenes’ speech *Against Aristocrates*:

“And so that you may not be quite surprised to hear that decrees made in Athens have such great power (τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν ψηφίσματα τηλικαύτην ἔχει δύναμιν), I shall remind you of something that

<sup>23</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 52 with CULASSO GASTALDI (2003b) 244-245.

<sup>24</sup> A reference to the destruction of (stelae carrying) democratic laws by the Thirty is found in the *Constitution of the Athenians* 35, 2, but most of the evidence is epigraphic, coming in the form of new inscriptions that refer to the destruction of the old ones; see CULASSO GASTALDI (2003b) 244-248 and LAMBERT (2012) 257-259. SHEAR (2011) provides a detailed treatment of the impact of the Thirty on Athenian memory. It has to be noted that the mere fact of the survival of a stele did not by itself mean that the provisions recorded in it were still valid, as pointed out by BOLMARCICH (2007). The “unfavorable stelae” of the Aristoteles decree, here below, were documents of the first Athenian League, which obviously had no surviving legal force when the Athenians promised to take them down.

happened in the past that you all know. After the revolt of Miltokythes against Kotys, when the war had already lasted a considerable time, when Ergophilos had been superseded, and Autokles was on the point of sailing to take command, a decree was proposed here in such terms (ἐγράφη τι παρ' ἡμῶν ψήφισμα τοιοῦτον) that Miltokythes withdrew in alarm, supposing that you were not well disposed towards him, and Kotys gained possession of the Sacred Mountain and its treasures".<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, orators could reproach the Athenians for not living up to their decrees, almost as though the latter did not emanate from the former.<sup>26</sup> To be clear, it is not that the Athenians thought that their decrees had some magical power or a will of their own; rather, it is an aspect of their decreed-mindedness, as Peter Liddel has called it, that they could easily refer to decrees as if they were autonomous entities provided with an agency. In political terms, this mental habit must have reinforced the sense of the implications and consequences of the democratic process. At the same time, it gave expression to the high cultural prestige of decrees among the Athenians.

Almost in direct contradiction to the tendency to talk about decrees as independent entities, the Athenians also appear to have been very prone to attributing decrees to their proponents, as though, as Thucydides would say (8, 1), they had not voted on them themselves. The modern habit of referring to a decree by the name of its proponent continues directly ancient Athenian usage. In the minds of the Athenians, though, this form of expression correlated with a much deeper sense of the way in which the very text of a decree was an expression of its proponent: the author of a proposal which gained approval in the assembly could be described as "victorious" or "the winner" (*Ath. Pol.* 45, 4), while decrees proposed by this or that orator could be mobilized as evidence for their ongoing political agenda and even for their character, in the way in which much

<sup>25</sup> DEM. 23, 104, on which see LIDDEL (2020) 163-164.

<sup>26</sup> LIDDEL (2020) 104-106.



later Plutarch will refer to decrees moved by Pericles.<sup>27</sup> The close identification between the proponent and the decree found visual expression in the use of reserving one line of the inscription for the name of the proponent, or leaving empty spaces before and after it, making it more visible on the stele; documented in the early thirties of the 4<sup>th</sup> century for decrees of Demades and Lycurgus, this habit became more common after 307 BCE.<sup>28</sup>

Taken together, these mental habits, which find expression in the peculiar semantic slippages I just pointed out, indicate a close entanglement of inscriptions, decrees, memory, public and personal agency, and historical argument, which constitutes the cultural and historical background for the phenomena addressed in the next part of this paper.

### 3. Construction and destruction of documents and memories

The potential for decrees to convey bits of historical narrative had always existed in theory, whenever the text of the resolution needed to include the background for the decision, typically in the form of a motivation clause. Accordingly, decrees conferring honors of various sorts were the best candidates to harbor this kind of information. Still, as Klaus Rosen pointed out in a seminal contribution, 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athenians were perfectly satisfied with very laconic references to the fact that the people they were honoring had indeed deserved their honors by their behavior *vis-à-vis* the Athenians themselves, and the evidence from other *poleis*, such as it is, does nothing to change the picture.<sup>29</sup> During the 4<sup>th</sup> century, however, the narrative potential

<sup>27</sup> On inscriptions as evidence for character in Plutarch, see LOW (2016) 148-150; on the case of Pericles, LIDDEL (2020) 200-203.

<sup>28</sup> See TRACY (2000).

<sup>29</sup> See ROSEN (1987) with the remarks of FORSTER (2018) 89-90; on the increasing engagement with the past in Athenian inscriptions during the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, see also LAMBERT (2012).

of honorary decrees started to be realized. Strikingly, in one of the earliest examples, dating to 387/6 BCE, historical detail comes in a rider in which the influential politician and orator Cephalus added to the decree proposal the statement that Phanocritus of Parion was particularly deserving of honors because he had warned the Athenian *stratêgoi* regarding the movements of the enemy fleet, and if they had listened to him, they would have captured the enemy triremes. The historical reference may seem strangely sibylline, and it is of course possible that the main decree supplied the background – but then again, the addressees of Cephalus' tirade knew perfectly well what the background was; they hardly needed to be reminded of the names of the *stratêgoi*, left nameless in the text. To state the obvious, Cephalus' addendum was as much about Phanocritus' helpfulness as about the ineptitude of the Athenian *stratêgoi*. We are looking at a bit of assembly rhetoric captured in the text of a decree and inscribed on stone.<sup>30</sup>

The evidence assembled by Rosen points to a recognizable turning point in the age of Alexander the Great. Almost symbolically, the transition from laconic to talkative motivation clauses is realized in the two Athenian decrees for Euphron of Sicyon, a loyal ally of the Athenians in the struggle against the Macedonians.<sup>31</sup> The first decree, from 323/2 (*IG II*<sup>3</sup> 1, 378), was rescinded and destroyed by the Macedonian-backed oligarchy after the defeat of the Athenians in the Lamian War, but in

<sup>30</sup> The inscription is *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 29, to be consulted in the new autoptic edition by CULASSO GASTALDI (2004) 89-101; the events alluded to are generally identified with those narrated in XEN. *Hell.* 5, 1, 25-29. On Cephalus, see BESSO (1997) and FORNIS / PLÁCIDO (2008) 66-67. Demosthenes (18, 219) regarded him as one of the great orators of a previous generation, alongside Callistratus of Aphidna; Cephalus prided himself on having proposed more decrees than any other Athenian yet never having been denounced for making an illegal proposal (*AESCH.* 3, 194). Aristophanes mocks him in his *Assemblywomen* (*Ecl.* 248-253), the *Hel-lenica Oxyrhynchia* (7, 2) lists him among the politicians who received bribes from Timosthenes of Rhodes (see also PAUS. 3, 9, 8), and Dinarchus (*DIN.* 1, 38) refers to him as a supporter of the Theban democratic exiles.

<sup>31</sup> From here onwards, see HABICHT (2006) for a reliable guide to the complex historical background.

318/17, under the restored democracy, it was reinscribed, accompanied by a new decree (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 448*); the old decree, beyond a general reference to Euphron's benevolence for the Athenians, referred to his announcing Sicyon's support for the war, but the new one included also a laudatory reference to his ancestors, added details on his return from exile at the time of the outbreak of the war, and completed the story with his heroic death after the defeat – in other words, the second decree, beyond updating the first one as it were, added a significant amount of historical detail to the deeds already covered in a more general way in the first decree. It also added an explicitly pan-Hellenic dimension to the Lamian War, here called “the Hellenic War, which the demos of Athens undertook on behalf of the Greeks”.<sup>32</sup>

The second decree for Euphron opens the way to a veritable sea-change in the style of Athenian honorific decrees, which now very often include specific historical detail on the actions performed by the honorees and the circumstances in which those actions had been performed.<sup>33</sup> The rather sudden increase in detail may be to some extent the consequence of a new legal framework for the granting of public honors at Athens.<sup>34</sup> This

<sup>32</sup> On the decrees for Euphron, see especially CULASSO GASTALDI (2003a) 66-68 and WALLACE (2014). On the ancient designations of the Lamian War, see ASHTON (1984).

<sup>33</sup> Examples: *IG II<sup>2</sup> 450*, ll. 18-21, decree for Asander (314/13 BCE); *IG II<sup>2</sup> 467*, decree for Timosthenes of Karystos (306/5 BCE); *IG II<sup>2</sup> 469*, decree for Jtimos (306/5 BCE or slightly later); *IG II<sup>2</sup> 479*, decree for Pyrros (?) of Herakleia (305/4 BCE, including two archon dates of previous benefactions of the honoree); *IG II<sup>2</sup> 492*, decree for Apollonides, previously naturalized (303/2 BCE) etc.

<sup>34</sup> See *I.Eleusis* 95, a decree of the deme of Eleusis and the garrison stationed there in honor of Xenocles of Sphettos, dated to 321/0 or 318/7, which opens with the words (lines 7-10) “...since the law requires that it be specified in the decree what benefit the recipient of a grant has done to the city...”, with ROSEN (1987) 280, who remarks, rightly in my opinion, that the wording of the decree suggests that the law was still relatively new; as Stephen Lambert points out to me, *per epist.*, “the date, shortly after the end of the Classical Democracy, is surely significant”. Note however that non-detailed motivation clauses continued to exist: clearly the law, whatever its precise formulation, could be satisfied with rather perfunctory indications, as in the cases of the several decrees proposed by Stratocles for friends of Demetrius Poliorcetes, such as *SEG* 36, 164 or *IG II<sup>2</sup> 495*.

new style is represented most strikingly by a series of very famous honorary decrees for Athenians, often referred to in scholarship as “highest honors” or μέγιστα τιμαί decrees.<sup>35</sup> Two interconnected aspects of this group of documents, namely their impact on the literary tradition and the survival of a critical number of them in a good state of preservation, recommend focusing attention on them, before considering the possibility of generalizing some of the observations they suggest.

Scattered from 307 to 259/8 or thereabouts, with one or two outliers towards the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century or possibly in the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, these decrees stand out for their long motivation clauses, often packed with very specific narratives of events and pointed political statements.<sup>36</sup> Until not too long ago, scholars had been more interested in the honors granted by these decrees than in their texts. Honoring fellow citizens in the aggressively egalitarian cultural context of the Athenian democracy seemed like a delicate operation, and the precedents for this practice, from the tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogiton to Conon and the military leaders of the Second League, received special attention.<sup>37</sup> The relative uniformity of these documents in terms of the honors they granted has drawn some scholars to the conclusion that the procedure was regulated by a law that defined the parameters within which an Athenian citizen or his descendants were allowed to present a request for honors to the Athenians; however, the decree from which the details of this law are deduced is the very last one in time,<sup>38</sup> which

<sup>35</sup> List and discussion of these documents in KRALLI (1999-2000).

<sup>36</sup> The latest example, *IG II<sup>3</sup> 1, 1292*, the decree for Cephisodorus, has been dated to 184/3 or 200/199 BCE, see KNOEPFLER (2015), with a strong argument in favor of the higher chronology which would completely change the historical context of this document and bring it closer to its immediate precedent, the decree for Euryclides. I am grateful to Stephen Lambert for pointing me to this important contribution. On Euryclides and *IG II<sup>3</sup> 1, 1160* see now TRACY (2015).

<sup>37</sup> For detailed discussions of Athenian honorary practices with regard to citizens during the late 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, see GAUTHIER (1985) 92-111 and DOMINGO GYGAX (2016) 139-180.

<sup>38</sup> *IG II<sup>3</sup> 1 1292*, ll. 7-10; on the date of this document, see n. 36 above.

leaves space for the possibility that in the earlier phase the procedure may not have been regulated in this specific way.<sup>39</sup> More recently, important contributions by Enrica Culasso Gastaldi, Michele Faraguna, Stephen Lambert, Julia Shear and lately by Florian Forster have shed more and more light on the complexities of these texts.<sup>40</sup> While their performative side has attracted attention to their rhetorical elaboration and proximity to encomiastic oratory, their focus on the life achievements of single individuals has inevitably invited comparisons with the development of the genre of biography.<sup>41</sup> In previous contributions, I have pointed to the way these texts created a notionally shared vision of the recent past, while at the same time giving specific Athenian politicians a way of promoting their own version thereof.<sup>42</sup> In the following, I will continue on this line of thought, reflecting also on the implications of the fact that several of these documents were transcribed and circulated in literary works, and on the practice of creating and destroying documents that revolves around this corpus.

One point of importance for the present discussion should be observed immediately: while all the decrees in this group are rather long, not all of them include in the motivation clause specific historical details about the actions performed by the honorees and the circumstances in which such actions had been performed – or indeed, their dates. As an example, the decree for Philippides of Paiania (*IG II<sup>3</sup> 1, 857, 293/2 BCE*) lists the kinds of benefactions performed by Philippides and his ancestors, referring to his tenure of the offices of general over the

<sup>39</sup> Law: GAUTHIER (1985) 104-105; FARAGUNA (2003) 485-486; doubts: FORSTER (2018) 91-95 – the possibility that the regulations came later is admitted also by FARAGUNA (2003) 487; see also the detailed discussion of KRALLI (1999-2000) 138-145.

<sup>40</sup> CULASSO GASTALDI (2003b) and (2010); FARAGUNA (2003); FORSTER (2018) 51-95; LAMBERT (2015); SHEAR (2017) and (2020).

<sup>41</sup> On the relationship between biographical narratives in inscriptions and literary biography, see among others ERRINGTON (2005) and LOW (2016), and most recently SCHULER / FORSTER (2020).

<sup>42</sup> LURAGHI (2010), (2018a), (2018b), (2019).

fleet, *basileus* and *agônotherêtês*, but provides no specific detail that would make it possible to locate precisely in time these worthy performances – to be compared, for instance, to the abundance of historical detail and the many archon dates included in the decree for Phaedrus of Sphettos (*IG II<sup>3</sup> 1, 985, 259/8?*).<sup>43</sup> The fact that the decree for Philippides of Paiania towards the end gives the honoree the option of listing his benefactions and those of his ancestors suggests that inclusion or exclusion of historical detail was a conscious choice on the part of the man who drafted the decree; it should be noted that this decree was proposed by the same man who wrote the decree for Lycurgus in 307, namely Stratocles of Diomeia.<sup>44</sup>

Of the nine decrees that are generally recognized as belonging to this category, as many as three are preserved in a documentary appendix to the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, a series of short biographies of Athenian orators that was attached to the corpus of Plutarch's *Moralia* at some point before the compilation of the *Catalogue of Lamprias* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century CE;<sup>45</sup> for one of the three, a somewhat mutilated inscription is preserved, as well.<sup>46</sup> There is, however, positive reason to think that the group of Athenian politicians who were granted this high distinction in the period in question may have been somewhat larger than the direct evidence would suggest. The orator Demades was allegedly rewarded with a statue and *sitêsis* for his diplomatic role either after the defeat of the Athenians at Chaeronea or more likely at the time of the revolt of Thebes against Alexander.<sup>47</sup> In his

<sup>43</sup> The chronological precision of the decree for Phaedrus, even in the parts that describe the worthy deeds of his father, has been pointed out in particular by FORSTER (2018) 77 and SHEAR (2020).

<sup>44</sup> On Stratocles and Philippides of Paiania, see LURAGHI (2014) 214-219; on the text of the decree, FORSTER (2018) 63-65.

<sup>45</sup> On these texts and their nature, see especially PITCHER (2005) and MARTIN (2014).

<sup>46</sup> This is of course the decree for Lycurgus, *IG II<sup>2</sup> 457 and 3207*, likely from two different stelae of the same decree, as LAMBERT (2015) suggests. For a comparison of inscription and literary version, see PRAUSCELLO (1999).

<sup>47</sup> On the honors granted to Demades and the controversies that accompanied them, see BRUN (2000) 78-83; ORSI (2002) 40. DOMINGO GYGAX (2016)

case, the continuity with the military leaders of the Second League would have been paradoxical – they had guided the Athenians to victory, Demades had attenuated the consequences of defeat or averted royal wrath.<sup>48</sup>

More interesting, and more closely connected to the other cases from the end of the century onwards, is the case of Phocion. At the end of his biography, Plutarch (*Phoc.* 38, 1) remarked that the Athenians regretted executing him, and soon enough decided to erect a statue of Phocion and to bury his bones at public expenses – initially, it had been forbidden to bury him within the borders of Attica. Clearly, this happened as a consequence of a new regime change: the regime that granted these honors to Phocion was the one imposed in Athens by Cassander, the regime of Demetrius of Phaleron.<sup>49</sup> The erection of the statue presupposes a decree. The fact that it has not survived is no wonder, considering the way the Athenians dealt with the monumental heritage of Demetrius of Phaleron.<sup>50</sup> The conjectural decree for Phocion would cast a peculiar light on that for Lycurgus, which may be seen as a rejoinder. Taken together, the two of them would represent attempts at imposing contrary interpretations of the recent past of the Athenians; in both cases, the biographical memory of the honorees may have been less important than the statement about political legitimacy associated with either one of them. After all, the

125 and n. 97, 228 sets them in the broader contexts of Athenian honorific culture. For the view that Athenians resisted at first the notion of extending highest honors from victorious generals to politicians, see KRALLI (1999-2000) 145-148.

<sup>48</sup> DMITRIEV (2021) 255-258 proposes a skeptical revisitation of the evidence for the honor to Demades, but cf. AMENDOLA (forthcoming).

<sup>49</sup> The rehabilitation of Phocion has been attributed to Demetrius by several scholars, partly independently of one another; see e.g., AZOULAY (2009) 310 and ORSI (2002) 34-35. O'SULLIVAN (2009) 159-160 is somewhat guarded on this; on the other hand, the way Phocion ended up depicted as a new Socrates in the biographical tradition (PLUT. *Phoc.* 38, 5) appears to confirm that his legend was largely a product of Demetrius' regime, in spite of the doubts of O'SULLIVAN (2008); see BAYLISS (2011) 27-33.

<sup>50</sup> See STRAB. 9, 1, 20 and DIOG. LAERT. 5, 77 with AZOULAY (2009) 322-332.

sheer fact of honoring a deceased politician marked these decrees as operations of memory politics. The same is of course true of the decree for Demosthenes proposed by Demochares in 281/0.<sup>51</sup>

One further case documented indirectly points to the question of how the texts of these decrees found reception in literature – I will use this broad category for the moment. Archon eponymous twice in a row after Demetrius Poliorcetes' conquest of Athens, Olympiodorus of Konthyle was also one of the leaders of the insurrection in 287 BCE, when he led the conquest of the Macedonian fort on the Mouseion Hill.<sup>52</sup> As in the case of Phocion, the statue of Olympiodorus mentioned by Pausanias (1, 25, 2) presupposes the existence of a decree, and in fact, the information Pausanias provides regarding the exploits of Olympiodorus reads very much as if it derived from such a decree, to whose existence, in two copies, Pausanias himself alludes (1, 26, 1-3). This point has been observed by scholars long ago.<sup>53</sup> If a decree was the ultimate source of the details on Olympiodorus' deeds however, it is quite unlikely that it was Pausanias' direct source, too. On the contrary, the decree for Olympiodorus must have been recorded, in a more or less complete form, in one of the periegetic works Pausanias relied upon – a very plausible candidate being the antiquarian Polemon of Ilion, who lived between the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> and was nicknamed "the eater of stelae".<sup>54</sup>

How closely the case of Olympiodorus relates, in terms of tradition, to those of the decrees for Lycurgus, Demosthenes

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed discussion of this decree proposal, see SHEAR (2017) and my remarks in LURAGHI (2018a) 32-34. On the date of Demochares' proposal, I follow BYRNE (2006-2007) 169-175. See IACOVIELLO (forthcoming) for a persuasive argument to the effect that, around the same time, posthumous honors were decreed for Hyperides as well.

<sup>52</sup> See HABICHT (1979) 27-30, 58-60.

<sup>53</sup> See already FERGUSON (1911) 464 – a rather uncontroversial view; HABICHT (1979) 102-107.

<sup>54</sup> On the kind of sources Pausanias drew upon, see WILAMOWITZ-MOELLEN-DORFF (1881) 206 n. 31 and SEGRE (1921) 217-218. On Polemon and inscriptions, see recently ANGELUCCI (2003) 169 and n. 16; his nickname: ATH. 6, 234 D.



and Demochares is difficult to tell. The texts of the latter three, preserved in the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, are certainly not derived from stelae: for Demochares and Demosthenes, what we have is actually the text of the request for honors that was supposed to be presented to the *boulê*, while the decree for Lycurgus is embedded in a request by his second son Lycophon for the *sitêsis* to be transferred to him, presumably after the death of his elder brother Habron.<sup>55</sup> Unless we think that the documents derive ultimately from copies owned by the drafters themselves, their originals must have been preserved in the archive of the *boulê*, in the Metroon.<sup>56</sup> In the case of Olympiodorus, we simply have insufficient evidence to even pose the question. On the other hand, in broad terms the information on the orators in the *Lives*, including the decrees, derives ultimately from the same group of periegetic/antiquarian works Pausanias drew upon, too – Faraguna has pointed to the resemblances between what Pausanias has to say about Lycurgus (1, 29, 16) and the text of Stratocles' decree, which indicate that the former depended on the latter, albeit not at first hand.<sup>57</sup> Jacoby thought that the antiquarian source behind the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, conveyed by intermediaries he identified with Hermippus and Caecilius of Cale Acte, was the antiquarian Diodorus the Periegetes, whose work *Περὶ μνημάτων* appears to be quoted regarding the burial of Hyperides.<sup>58</sup> A shadowy but intriguing scholar, Diodorus wrote a work on the demes of Attica, of which a total of 33 fragments survive, providing the tribal affiliation of as many Athenian demes – with one possible exception all the

<sup>55</sup> FARAGUNA (2003) 489.

<sup>56</sup> On Athenian archives and their use by antiquarians, see ERDAS (2002) 34-37 with further references.

<sup>57</sup> FARAGUNA (2003) 487; compare PAUS. 1, 29, 16 and Ps. PLUT. *Mor.* 852B-C; on the building projects mentioned in those passages, see HINTZEN-BOHLEN (1997).

<sup>58</sup> *FGrHist* 372 F 34; see JACOBY (1955) 140-143. The biographer Hermippus, writing in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, provides a terminus ante for Diodorus, since he appears to have known Diodorus' work, as shown by *FGrHist* 1026 F 46e with BOLLANSÉE (1999) 386-387. ANGELUCCI (2014) 13 dates Diodorus to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, without any explanation.

indications are confirmed by inscriptions.<sup>59</sup> Even though Diodorus can hardly have composed his work before 307 BCE, the existence of the two new tribes instituted in that year, the Antigonis and the Demetrias, is studiously ignored.<sup>60</sup> This potential indication of antiquarian resistance to Macedonian encroachment might recommend, in the footsteps of Jacoby, placing Diodorus' work in the years after 287, in the climate of cultural re-entrenchment which prepared in Athens the Chremonidean War.<sup>61</sup> Both the level of antiquarian competence and the potential political bias would make of Diodorus a perfect candidate for having excavated from the Metroon the documents on Lycurgus, Demosthenes and Demades.

Jacoby's attractive reconstruction may not be demonstrated, but the fact that antiquarian works of this sort included extended references to Athenian decrees, and in some cases their very texts, deserves to be kept in mind. It parallels and complements the emergence of erudite works devoted specifically to Athenian decrees, such as the collection of Craterus,<sup>62</sup> or to Attic inscriptions more broadly, such as Philochorus' *Ἐπιγράμματα Ἀττικὰ*, and provides the background to the lively interest in inscriptions documented for almost all historians active in Athens in these years.<sup>63</sup> Obviously, the boundary between epigraphy and literature was a highly porous one at this point in time, perhaps more than ever before, and it was relatively easy for texts to

<sup>59</sup> The fragments of Diodorus' *Περὶ τῶν δήμων* are *FGrHist* 372 F 1-33, all from the lexicon of Harpocration; see JACOBY (1955) 140-141. The only error is the attribution of the deme of Phegaia to the tribe Aiantis instead of the Aigeis in 372 F 31, and of course it cannot be excluded that the mistake crept in at some point between Diodorus and Harpocration, whose direct source was probably Didymus. For the tribal affiliation of Phegaia, see TRAILL (1975) 7 and table II and HUMPHREYS (2018) 884-886.

<sup>60</sup> See *FGrHist* 372 F 9, 12, 17, 23 and 33, all demes assigned to the two new tribes, which Diodorus refers only to their original Clisthenic tribes.

<sup>61</sup> LURAGHI (2018a) 30-36.

<sup>62</sup> On Craterus' collection of Athenian decrees, see ERDAS (2002) 27-38.

<sup>63</sup> On the epigraphic interests of historians operating in Athens during the last decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, see LURAGHI (2017) 197-198.

cross it. The drafters of decrees knew this, of course: some of them were themselves historians or antiquarians.<sup>64</sup> By drafting decree proposals, they could disseminate biased versions of recent history which coupled the high authority associated to decrees of the Athenians with the capacity for transmission and dissemination of literary texts.

The enduring prestige of Athenian decrees as a touchstone of truth in the perception of the Athenians, and apparently also of the other Greeks, is demonstrated by a curious document recently brought to scholarly attention by Matthias Haake.<sup>65</sup> An Arabic biography of Aristotle included in *The Best Accounts of the Classes of Physicians* by the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Damascene doctor Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah includes the story of a decree in his honor which was first passed by the Athenians, then destroyed by an Athenian by the name of Himeraeus, and finally inscribed anew by initiative of the Athenian Stephanus.<sup>66</sup> The new text included also a reference to the destruction of the previous one and to the successive execution of Himeraeus, on orders of Antipater. The story of the two decrees for Euphron immediately comes to mind;<sup>67</sup> this time, however, the destruction of the inscription is attributed to the initiative of one of the leaders of the anti-Macedonian democracy at the time of the Lamian War, Himeraeus, brother of Demetrius of Phaleron and a victim of Antipater’s repression after the war.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> As I pointed out in LURAGHI (2017) 194 and 201.

<sup>65</sup> HAAKE (2006).

<sup>66</sup> See now the edition of SAVAGE-SMITH / SWAIN / VAN GELDER (2020) 4.6.2.2. The passage is presented as a quote from Ptolemy’s *Epistle to Gallus on the Life of Aristotle*, itself extant in an Arabic translation preserved in a manuscript from the 16<sup>th</sup> c.; see now the commented edition by RACHED (2021) 6-8 (I am grateful to Matthias Haake for bringing this recent contribution to my attention). The text probably derives from a version in Syriac, itself going back to a late-imperial Greek original, see HAAKE (2006) 337-338 and RACHED (2021) cxi-cxii.

<sup>67</sup> HAAKE (2013) 96 n. 130; on the decrees for Euphron, see p. 214-215 above.

<sup>68</sup> Himeraeus was one of the orators condemned to death by the Athenian assembly on proposal of Demades; he was then hunted down alongside Hype-rides by the notorious Archias of Thourion, who proceeded to deliver him to

While most unlikely to be genuine, the decree for Aristotle, whose traces Haake follows back to the work of Andronicus of Rhodes in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, even in the Arabic rendition shows the typical phraseology of an Athenian honorary decree of the Hellenistic period, which convinces Haake that it probably originated in 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Athens.<sup>69</sup> The apologetic purpose of the decree is obvious, and may well belong in the contestation of the role of the philosophical schools in Athens between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, which Haake himself has investigated in other contributions.<sup>70</sup> The point of interest here is that inventing a decree was seen by this pro-Aristotelian tradition as a strong way of affirming that, far from being a political traitor, Aristotle had in fact been highly appreciated by the Athenians. One could scarcely imagine a more eloquent indication of the prestige and truth-value associated with decrees and of the way they were employed and manipulated in order to write, or in this case, rewrite, the history of the recent past. The Athenian decree for Zeno, transmitted by Diogenes Laertius with a striking textual fidelity to the preambles and formulae of Athenian decrees, drives the point home: even for the philosophers, a decree of the Athenian demos was the touchstone of social prestige.<sup>71</sup>

Drawing together the somewhat disparate lines of enquiry evoked up to this point, it is possible to formulate some tentative remarks on the cultural logic of historical narratives of the recent past in Athenian decrees of the early Hellenistic period. The high social authority of decrees in Athenian public discourse,

Antipater, who had him executed; see PLUT. *Dem.* 28, 3-4 and the complete collection of evidence on Himeræus in HAAKE (2006) 342-343.

<sup>69</sup> See the close analysis of the text in RACHED (2021) cv-cxix, who pleads for its authenticity. I find Haake's arguments more persuasive. The traces of apologetic writings defending Aristotle from several politically-motivated accusation indicate a context for the original fabrication; see HAAKE (2006) 344-348 and FORD (2011) 54-67.

<sup>70</sup> See especially HAAKE (2008).

<sup>71</sup> *IG II<sup>3</sup>* 1, 980, from DIOG. LAERT. 7, 10-12; HAAKE (2004) argues in this case for manipulation of an original Athenian document.

documented already by 5<sup>th</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-century literature, and the way decrees were at the same time seen as expressions of their drafters but also as potent entities with an agency in themselves, form part of the background. The ingenuity lavished on proving or disproving their authenticity indicates that the question of their truthfulness was taken very seriously. On the other hand, the facility with decrees displayed by all sorts of politically-involved writers, specifically historians, antiquarians and orators (categories that variously overlap in the period we are looking at), tells us something about the skills and intellectual personalities of the drafters. Against this background, it is clear that adding historical details to decree proposals presented to the Athenian assembly could easily be seen as a way of creating a specific historical record, and a highly authoritative one at that.<sup>72</sup> The destruction of documents, associated explicitly in our inscriptions with the oligarchs but in fact practiced by all political parts, is the other side of the coin – a radical way of influencing the historical record, by erasing parts of it. To state the obvious, the action of destroying stelae in order to cancel the memories they conveyed takes for granted the role of inscribed decrees in creating historical narratives and transmitting historical memory.<sup>73</sup>

The interventions of the Macedonian-backed oligarchies, especially the one that followed the capitulation of Athens to Antipater, were reviving the example of the Thirty, whose destruction of decrees with democratic associations has left traces in the epigraphic and literary record. The anti-Macedonian democrats responded in kind, with Stratocles mobilizing the memory of Lycurgus as a model democratic citizen, uncompromisingly opposing Macedonian encroachment, as a way of setting the record straight as regards the conflicts between the Athenians

<sup>72</sup> On this, see LURAGHI (2010).

<sup>73</sup> LURAGHI (2019) 115-126 explores the battle for memory waged within the Athenian political elite in the course of the late-4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, culminating in the *damnatio memoriae* of the Antigonids in 200 BCE, on which see LIV. 21, 44, 4-8 and BYRNE (2010).

and the Argeads. The democratic restoration, too, built on the foundations of its late-5<sup>th</sup> century predecessor, even in terms of manipulating memory by way of a combination of re-inscription and – we may be confident – destruction.<sup>74</sup> In the years following 307 BCE, a whole series of decrees appeared, packed with references to the Lamian War and to the struggles against Cassander, undertaken for the freedom of the Greeks.<sup>75</sup> Their purpose to establish a historical narrative of the Athenians' struggle for independence is transparent. Judging by the texts of the decrees he proposed, Stratocles may have played an especially prominent role in this process, but by no means an exclusive one: other citizens also proposed decrees with embedded historical narratives and an explicit ideological agenda. In the years that followed, more decrees operated on the same level, including veritable historical narratives and conveying specific, occasionally pointed statements on recent political events and their interpretation – the proposal for Demochares being perhaps the most striking example, with its implicit claims about the oligarchic nature of Stratocles' Athens.<sup>76</sup> The decree for Phaedrus of Sphettos, currently (tentatively) dated immediately after the end of the Chremonidean War, with its attempt at reconciling political positions that were objectively irreconcilable, bookends this process in a worthy way – a man for all seasons, Phaedrus had been honored by the demos while at the same time being intermittently a friend of the Antigonids and opposing them in “difficult times”. In the retrospective appraisal of his career, the attempt at creating a seamless and coherent narrative of Athenian political history has created endless problems to modern interpreters.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, in many cases Athenian drafters of decrees, especially in the years between the Lamian War and the Chremonidean War, were, among other things, writing (and rewriting)

<sup>74</sup> On this, see especially SHEAR (2012).

<sup>75</sup> See CULASSO GASTALDI (2004) 239-242.

<sup>76</sup> LURAGHI (2019) 119-121.

<sup>77</sup> For these aspects of the decree for Phaedrus, see especially SHEAR (2020).

the history of their times, consciously and intentionally, in the expectation that their version would enjoy a high authority and some diffusion. For all they knew, this was a justified expectation, considering the authority and currency of the medium. Time has at least in part vindicated them. Some of their decrees, surviving on stone, constitute the backbone of modern reconstructions of Athenian history, others have been absorbed in literary works of various sorts and some have come to rub shoulders with forgeries intended to be parasitical with respect to the authority of the original texts. Athenian decrees give modern histories of Hellenistic Athens their characteristic texture, infuriating at times, and their value as evidence for political ideology and political struggles is far from having been exhausted. They give the modern reader the most immediate evidence of how individual Athenians attempted to formulate their version of the history of their times but then, instead of disseminating it in literary form, attempted to turn it into a permanent record of the collective will of the Athenians – and of the arguments and conflicts that surrounded this endeavor.<sup>78</sup>

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## DISCUSSION

*R. Nicolai:* La relazione recupera il ruolo dei decreti nella costruzione di una memoria storica, nella prospettiva della *intentionale Geschichte* di Hans-Joachim Gehrke: parlo di *una* memoria perché in alcuni casi i decreti venivano distrutti da oppositori e nuovamente iscritti. Ai decreti vanno aggiunti i *logoi epitaphioi*: non diversamente da alcune opere di storia gli epitafi prendevano le mosse dagli *erga* più antichi per arrivare al presente e all'occasione dei discorsi, alla storia contemporanea, in altri termini.

Un aspetto molto interessante da te sottolineato mi sembra la contiguità (e le aree di sovrapposizione) tra estensori dei decreti, storici, oratori, categorie per noi separate, ma nella realtà politica ateniese molto difficili da distinguere. Noi viviamo in un mondo iperspecializzato, in cui talvolta è difficile dialogare con il collega di una disciplina contigua; ma nell'Atene del V e del IV secolo il termine *rhetor* indica l'oratore, il politico e anche il maestro di retorica, e non esiste una categoria professionale di storici, come nelle nostre università.

*N. Luraghi:* Indeed, the lack of a meaningful separation between the different categories you mention has always seemed to me a characteristic aspect of the cultural world of Athens in the Early Hellenistic period, even more than was the case before. I would add to your list the comic poets (think of Philippides of Kephale, a *philos* of King Lysimachos) and the antiquarians (think of Phanodemos, Atthidographer and reformer of cults in the Athenian territory). So, thank you for bringing attention to an aspect of Athenian social and cultural life that was implicit in my paper and on which I should have perhaps insisted more.

*G. Schepens*: I very much welcome the special approach you have taken to the exploration of the theme of the present *Entretiens* by looking at what the Athenian decrees can teach us about the ways the ancient Greeks dealt with current events and the recent past. I do not have so much as a question to ask, but I would like to explain why I find your contribution so interesting.

For one thing, you have shown that the inscriptions in question can indeed give us a specific insight into the historical culture of the ancient world. Compared to the literary texts of historians and orators, the Athenian decrees give us the most direct access we can get to the creation, circulation and, in some cases also, destruction of historical memory within the *polis*. As a whole, the decrees constitute, alongside historiography, an important alternative channel for the *polis* community to retain and handle the memory of important events and achievements of leading figures. Particularly with regard to recent and contemporary history, it is fascinating to see how ‘memory politics’ operates through the incision and/or the removal of words on stone so characteristic of Greek public life.

Secondly, and no less importantly for our purposes, is the fact that these inscriptions, by the inclusion of ever more historical detail, gradually come closer to what may be called ‘history writing’. The more they realize their historical potential – a feature manifesting itself plainly towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC – the more they become attractive sources to be consulted and exploited by proper history writing. It is perhaps not a mere accident or just a matter of personal methodological preferences that so many ‘political documents’ could be identified (be it by means of *Quellenforschung*) in Hieronymus of Cardia’s lost history of the Diadochs (see K. Rosen, “Political Documents in Hieronymus of Cardia [323–302 B. C.]”, *Acta Classica* 10, 1967, 41–94). This historian, who on account of his huge range of personal experience and close relationship to the key leading figures of his age was uniquely qualified to record the history of the time he lived

through (a point duly emphasized in the *Anonymous Evaluation of Historians* [P.Oxy. 4808]), did apparently not limit himself, in the manner of Thucydides, to writing his history on the basis of his own presence to the events and the cross-questioning of eyewitnesses. We witness an interesting shift here in the methods employed by writers of contemporary history.

A further noteworthy feature I would like to single out is the approximation of the decrees to some form of proto-biographical writing. The fact that the lives of prominent political and military leaders were so prominently dealt with in inscriptions as well as in historical works may go a long way towards explaining why 'political biographies' were so late to emerge within the history of ancient biographical writing. Cornelius Nepos' *Lives of the Foreign Generals* are known as the first extant example of this specific branch of biographical literature, which came to full development in Plutarch's Greek and Roman Lives.

*N. Luraghi:* Thank you very much for your generous comments. The trends you outline are indeed visible in the evidence I have been presenting, more or less explicitly. The link between honorific decrees and biography may be the closest, as shown by the way texts of decrees were used as starting points for biographical sketches or indeed included in works of a broadly biographical character, such as the *Lives of the Ten Orators*. On the other hand, the inclusion, or perhaps the intrusion of historical narrative and argumentative assembly rhetoric into the texts of decrees show that we are really looking at a two-way process, facilitated by the fact that many of the main actors in the two fields were actually the same individuals.

*J. Marincola:* I think you have made a very persuasive case for the importance of inscriptions when thinking about contemporary history and who gets to tell the story of the events. Some of the examples (those of Herodotus, Thucydides on the Peisistratids, Theopompus on the Peace of Callias, and we could add

Polybius checking treaties between Rome and Carthage) come from writers of non-contemporary history, though of course the documents in Thucydides V are from a contemporary history. My question, then, is whether we need to distinguish the role(s) that inscriptions play for contemporary and non-contemporary historians, and if so, what the differences might be.

*N. Luraghi:* My impression is that the differences were less clear than we would have expected. In principle, Greek historians who dealt with the distant past could recur to inscriptions in order to go beyond the threshold of oral tradition, but the process does not appear to have been straightforward. In Greek historiography, as far as I can tell, inscriptions and documents more in general tend to appear embedded in historical narratives which mostly draw on oral sources – and of course, for narratives of the recent past, also on the author's direct knowledge and experience. It seems to me that Greek historians did not tend to isolate inscriptions as if they were the documentary underpinning of reconstructions of historical events not otherwise documented. This made it less obvious in their eyes that inscriptions could have a different role for the study of the distant past compared to the study of the recent past. Not that they did not realize this, but it does not seem to have been terribly important to them. To give you an example *e contrario*, when Theopompus argued against the authenticity of the Peace of Callias based on the letter forms of the relevant inscription, he was really mounting a much broader attack on the deceitful boastfulness of the Athenians, of which documentary forgeries were an expression. He did not seem to have thought in terms of unmasking the forgeries in order to undermine the factual narratives of early 5<sup>th</sup> century history.

*B. Bleckmann:* Sie stellen fest, dass die Antragsteller der Volksbeschlüsse ihre Version der jüngeren Vergangenheit niederlegen, „in the expectation that their version would enjoy a high authority and some diffusion“. Dass – natürlich in völlig verschiedenen



Kontexten – inschriftlich hochtendenziöse und gelenkte Deutungen der jüngsten Vergangenheit gegeben werden, ist ein in der Alten Welt verbreitetes Phänomen (z. B. Bisutun-Inschrift; *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*). Erlauben die von Ihnen vorgestellten Inschriften konkrete Aussagen hinsichtlich der Adressaten und der zeitlichen Reichweite?

Wie würden Sie die Motive der Zusammenstellung der Psephismata durch Krateros einordnen? Erfolgte diese Sammeltätigkeit etwa im Rahmen der peripatetischen Schule?

*N. Luraghi*: Let me start with your second question. The most recent editor of Craterus' fragments, Donatella Erdas, does tend to see his activity in the intellectual framework of the Peripatetic School (Erdas [2002] 38-42). I agree, even though I also see the danger of attributing every antiquarian initiative in Athens to the influence of the best-known milieu of antiquarian research and knowledge. Diodorus the Periegetes for instance has never been tied to the school, and there is no obvious reason why he ought to. As for the audience of Athenian decrees, Peter Liddel's recent work shows that the Athenians at any rate were persuaded that the rest of the Greeks took notice of what they, the Athenians that is, decreed. And while Greek inscribed decrees tended to gesture towards posterity, it seems to me that their intended political audience was very much contemporary: they seem to have engaged first and foremost in existing arguments on current and recent political developments.

*E.-M. Becker*: Thank you very much for your paper which made me think about the specifics of epigraphical memory as historical memory, and in contrast to literary memory. If we see epigraphical and historiographical/literary sources for a moment both as 'historical memory': Can both types of memory be classified as "public documents" (as you say regarding the decrees) – and if so, in which way? If not: would the difference regarding their 'public status' influence the way in which historical

memory of both types can function as a “touchstone of truth” as you observe? Could we, from this observation, possibly better understand why history-writers (from Thucydides onwards) need and want to make truth-claims on various levels of their writings? In other words: do these truth-claims intend to overcome the ‘individual’ scope of the historian’s task as a literary creator of ‘historical memory’? Even to *zuspitzen* my question: Are truth-claims then a literary compensation for an absence of public authority applied to literary history?

*N. Luraghi:* It is certainly the case that the implied collective consensus underpinning the text of an inscribed decree endowed it with a very strong claim to authority and truthfulness. Historians on the other hand, who tended to present their own version of events, and proudly so most of the time, did need additional ways of supporting persuasively their own accuracy and truthfulness – by claiming access to reports not generally accessible, or even more often, by arguing for their superior interpretive powers, as in the case of Thucydides. Interestingly, these two very different ways of claiming authority could get entangled in practice, since the citizens who drafted the texts of decrees were themselves politically active and often also writers of history in their own right – one thinks of Demochares of Leukonoion, for instance. This is a phenomenon we identify especially in the segment of Athenian history I have been concentrating upon, but there is every reason to assume that, with a more extensive selection of evidence, we would observe it also in other parts of Greece around the same times and later.

*H. Inglebert:* Comme les décrets honorifiques athéniens sont liés à la démocratie, il est logique qu’on retrouve des décrets similaires dans les autres cités avec le développement du régime démocratique à l’époque hellénistique. A-t-on des exemples de l’utilisation de ces décrets par des historiens hors d’Athènes, et dans quel type d’œuvres ?

*N. Luraghi*: Guido Schepens alluded to the use of documents in the historical work of Hieronymus of Cardia, which partly answers your question. Historical narratives with a strong political orientation embedded in decrees are found in Hellenistic Asia Minor, especially around the time of the Mithridatic War. Florian Forster devoted most of his 2018 book to non-Athenian Hellenistic decrees, and has presented a paper specifically on documents from Asia Minor and their relation to the Athenian precedents at a conference some months ago, which is the reason why I decided not to treat them in my own presentation today. I cannot think of evidence for the use of these decrees in the works of Greek historians, but again, this may well be a consequence of the small amount of evidence available.



## VI

EVE-MARIE BECKER

### ZEITGESCHICHTSSCHREIBUNG IM ENTSTEHENDEN CHRISTENTUM (CA. 30-100 N. CHR.)

#### ABSTRACT

The five early Christian prose narratives (Gospels and Acts) are the most important sources of *Zeitgeschichte*, firstly for the historical Jesus, secondly for 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, and thirdly for the self-understanding of early Christian missionary and community history in provincial local and Roman Imperial settings. The following contribution, however, shows that these writings are not exhaustively interpreted when considering their source value only, but are genuine literary conceptions of the “writing of contemporary history” in Flavian times. On the basis of a cosmocratic Christ narrative, the Gospels – borrowing from the historiographical traditions of ancient literature – give their event-historical accounts features of *Zeitgeschichte*, which Luke programmatically continues and further develops in Acts.

#### 1. Die Evangelien und *Acta* als Geschichtswerke im Rahmen frühkaiserzeitlicher Historiographie

Aus der Literatur des entstehenden Christentums sind fünf Bücher in Form von Prosaerzählungen erhalten, die eine personenzentrierte Darstellung von *πράγματα* (vgl. z.B. Josephus, *Ant.* 1, 26; Lk 1,1) mittels einer *sui generis*-Gattung („Evangelium“) präsentieren und sich der antiken Historiographie *in einem weiteren Sinne* zuordnen lassen: das Markus-, Matthäus- und Lukasevangelium, die Apostelgeschichte und das Johannes-

evangelium.<sup>1</sup> Es handelt sich um im Koine-Stil (ἐγγένετο... z.B. Mk 1, 4; Lk 1,5) verfasste Erzählungen mit deutlichen Anklängen an Septuaginta-Motivik und -Sprache, die ereignisgeschichtliche Abläufe (*res gestae*) in thematischer Fokussierung auf die Darstellung der Geschichte der Evangeliumsverkündigung (Mk 1,4-16,8; Lk 1,5-Apg 28,31) am Handeln der Protagonisten illustrieren und sich hierin *konzeptionell* von Biographien unterscheiden.<sup>2</sup> Lassen sich diese Schriften – wie in diesem Beitrag diskutiert werden soll – als „Zeitgeschichtsschreibung“ bezeichnen?

Die Evangelien und die *Acta* sind zunächst wertvolle Quellen zur Zeitgeschichte Palästinas und des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes im 1. Jh. Fergus Millar bezeichnet sie als Testimonien zur Erforschung einer „popular religious consciousness“.<sup>3</sup> Neben ihrem hohen Quellenwert mit teils dokumentarischer Funktion (*titulus crucis* in Mk 15,26 parr.) stellen die Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte zudem punktuell synchronistische Verknüpfungen von Ereignisgeschichte mit der jüdischen und provinziellen Lokalgeschichte (z.B. Lk 1,5; Mk 6,14ff.; Apg 18,12) und mit der römischen Weltgeschichte (bes. Lk 2,1; 3,1; Apg 18,2)

<sup>1</sup> Die fünf Schriften lassen sich einander wie folgt zuordnen: (i) Bei Markus, Matthäus, Lukas sprechen wir von den synoptischen Evangelien im Unterschied zu Johannes. (ii) Bei Markus, Matthäus, Lukas und Johannes sprechen wir von „Evangelien“ im Unterschied zur Apostelgeschichte als *Acta*-Literatur. (iii) Bei Markus, Matthäus und Johannes sprechen wir von Einzelwerken (einzelner Autoren) im Unterschied zum lukanischen Doppelwerk des *auctor ad Theophilum*. (iv) Während die Entstehung des Markusevangeliums in zeitliche Nähe zum ersten jüdisch-römischen Krieg gesetzt wird, werden Matthäus, Lukas und Johannes gemeinhin erst der nächsten, also der dritten frühchristlichen Generation (ca. 90-100 n. Chr.) zugeordnet. (v) Bei Matthäus und Johannes wird überwiegend eine sog. judenchristliche oder auch jüdische (Mt) Provenienz vermutet, während Markus und Lukas auch auf einen ‚heidenchristlichen‘ Entstehungskontext hindeuten könnten. (vi) Von Markus zu Lukas und der Apostelgeschichte lässt sich zudem – und wie ich meine: in einzigem Unterschied zu Matthäus und Johannes – eine konzeptionelle Linie zur Entstehung frühchristlicher Historiographie erkennen, s. BECKER (2017a).

<sup>2</sup> Diese Unterscheidung wird in der Evangelienforschung weiterhin kontrovers diskutiert vgl. zuletzt verschiedene Beiträge in CALHOUN / MOESSNER / NICKLAS (2020). Zur Übersicht über die Forschungstendenzen im Blick auf das Markusevangelium vgl. zuletzt auch FREY (2021).

<sup>3</sup> MILLAR (2001) 342.

her. Darüber hinaus sind die Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte – was u.a. Steve Mason betont<sup>4</sup> – wertvolle, wenn nicht: die wertvollsten oder sogar die einzigen Quellen zur jüdischen Religionsgeschichte des 1. Jhs.: Wo sonst – außer bei Josephus und in den Evangelien – werden z.B. Stellung und Lehre der Pharisäer oder Sadduzäer als jüdischer *haireisis* narrativ greifbar (vgl. auch Apg 28,22)? Welche anderen Texte – außer den Evangelien – tragen Daten und ‚Fakten‘ zum Leben Jesu von Nazareth extensiv zusammen? Welche anderen Texte aus dem 1. Jh. berichten – neben der Apostelgeschichte – über das religiöse, ökonomische und soziale Leben im Umkreis von Synagogen in Kleinasien und Griechenland?<sup>5</sup> Doch auch, wenn gilt: Die fünf frühchristlichen Prosaerzählungen sind wichtige, wenn nicht: die wichtigsten zeitgeschichtlichen Quellen *erstens* für den historischen Jesus, *zweitens* für das Palästina des 1. Jhs. und *drittens* für das Selbstverständnis frühchristlicher Missions- und Gemeindegeschichte im Spannungsfeld von provinzieller Lokal- und römischer Imperialgeschichte, so gilt auch: Die Bedeutung der Evangelien erschöpft sich *nicht* in ihrem Quellenwert.

<sup>4</sup> MASON (2009) bes. 7-43 und 329-373.

<sup>5</sup> Dass *fact* und *fiction* in den Evangelien – wie auch bei Josephus und griechisch-römischen Historiographen – jeweils synergetische Mechanismen der Geschichtsdarstellung sind, beständig korrelieren und erst so im Sinne der Gesamt-erzählung produktiv zusammenwirken (BOWERSOCK [1994]) ist dabei vorausgesetzt. Auch, dass Quellen *immer* tendenzkritisch zu lesen sind, gehört zum propädeutischen Wissen der Evangelien- wie der Historiographieforschung: Vgl. schon HÖLSCHER (1916) 1943: „Die Darstellung ist... Tendenzdarstellung“. Die Interpretation von *fact* und *fiction* und die Anwendung von Tendenzkritik – etwa bei der Rückfrage nach dem historischen Jesus oder dem Quellenwert der *Acta* – sind selbstverständlicher Teil jeder wissenschaftlich vertieften Evangelien- lektüre: So auch KOCH (<sup>2</sup>2014) 28-39. Vgl. als Beispiel die Wahrnehmung Herodes des Großen in Mt 2 und ihre Bewertung durch den kürzlich verstorbenen Althistoriker Klaus Bringmann: BRINGMANN (2005) 196: „Der Bericht des Matthäusevangeliums... entbehrt jeglicher Historizität; er verwendet ein verbreitetes Wandermotiv, aber er ist in Hinblick auf die Einschätzung des Mannes und seiner Herrschaft aufschlußreich genug; als ein König ohne Legitimität und als gewalttätiger Despot stand er in dem Ruf, die größten Grausamkeiten zu begehen, um sich an der Herrschaft zu halten“.

Denn die fünf frühchristlichen Prosaerzählungen sind vielmehr literarisch gestaltete „Bücher“ (Joh 20,30), die den frühchristlichen Memorialprozess (*memoria*) mittels der Überlieferung von teils mündlichen, teils schriftlichen Jesus-Traditionen ereignisgeschichtlich darlegen (*historia*) und dabei auf die eigenständige Deutung und Bewältigung von frühchristlicher Zeit und Zeiterfahrung zielen.<sup>6</sup> Der *metus temporum* (Tacitus *Hist.* 1, 49, 3; 1, 272, 1; Plinius *Ep.* 5, 1, 7; 7, 19, 6; 9, 13, 3) könnte ein solches, allgemein verbreitetes Zeitgefühl sein.<sup>7</sup> Wenn die Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte, wie ich vorschlage, literarisch organisierte *memoria* (*literary memory*) in (prä-)historiographischer Form mit dem Ziel der Zeitbewältigung sind, schließt sich die Frage nach der von ihnen selbst gewählten Perspektive auf die (Zeit-)Geschichte an: Konzipieren die Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte „Zeitgeschichtsschreibung“ im 1. Jh.? Was sind ihre Themen, und wie sind diese mit der politischen Welt- und Zeitgeschichte verknüpft? Welche „Zeitordnung“ schaffen die Evangelien?

Die Evangelien und *Acta* präsentieren sich als historiographische ‚Neuentwürfe‘ in Anknüpfung an die geschichtsschreibende Tradition Israels und des frühen Judentums. Mit der Vorstellung, das Handeln Gottes an seinem Volk und den Völkern in ereignisgeschichtlichen, chronologisch strukturierten Abläufen darzustellen, greifen die Evangelien und *Acta erstens* die theokratischen Grundvorstellungen der Geschichtsschreibung Israels auf. Mit dem Ansatz, Geschichtsverläufe epochal zu deuten und thematisch zu ordnen, stellen sich die frühchristlichen Geschichtsschreiber *zweitens* in bestimmte historiographische Erzähltraditionen Israels (v.a. deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk [Dtn bis 2 Kön]). Mit ihrer Fokussierung auf das Handeln der Person Jesu schließen die Evangelien *drittens* an die für die hellenistische Historiographie typische personenzentrierte Darstellungsweise frühjüdischer Geschichtsschreibung

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. BECKER (2017a).

<sup>7</sup> KNEPPE (1994) 49.



(z.B. Mose-Fragment des Artapanos) an.<sup>8</sup> Mit der Thematisierung von religiösen Konflikten im Machtbereich politischer Fremdherrschaft greifen die fünf frühchristlichen Bücher *viertens* ein zeitgeschichtliches Grundthema hellenistisch-jüdischer Geschichtsschreibung von der Makkabäerzeit (1-2 Makk) bis zum ersten jüdisch-römischen Krieg (Josephus) auf. Anders jedoch als Josephus – dem einzigen erhaltenen jüdischen Historiker der frühen Kaiserzeit – machen die Evangelienschreiber und der Verfasser der *Acta* die politischen Rahmenbedingungen gerade *nicht* zum Ansatz- oder Haftpunkt ihrer Geschichtserzählung und Zeitdeutung. Wie ist dieser Umstand zu erklären?

Die fünf frühchristlichen Prosaerzählungen definieren ein eigenes Thema von Geschichtsschreibung, das zwar nicht außerhalb der politischen Weltgeschichte liegt, aber eschatologische Vorstellungen göttlicher Kosmokratie voraussetzt. Die Evangelien gehen bei ihrer Darstellung von einer urchristlichen *teleologischen* Deutungsprämisse aus, die lautet: Im Auftreten und Wirken Jesu ist die Zeit erfüllt (z.B. Gal 4,4; Mk 1,14-15; Lk 16,16; Mt 5,17-20) bzw. der letztgültige Beginn der Gottesherrschaft und damit gewissermaßen das ‚Ende der Geschichte‘ eingetreten. Von dieser Voraussetzung ausgehend suchen die frühchristlichen Geschichtserzähler nach der ἀρχή als dem ihr eigenen Ausgangspunkt einer ereignisgeschichtlichen Darstellung (Mk 1,1; Lk 1,1-4; Apg 1,1-2; Mt 1,1; Joh 1,1). In ihrer Suche nach dieser ἀρχή führen die frühchristlichen Geschichtserzählungen zahlreiche Protagonisten, Akteure und Konfliktparteien an,<sup>9</sup> um Kausalzusammenhänge zu bieten, die die Ausbreitung und Behinderung der Evangeliumsverkündigung von Anfang an und die Erforschung der Ursachen (*aitia* / *aitiai*) für den Tod Jesu erklären (Mk 3,6; 8,31; Lk 24,26-27; 24,45ff.). So schaffen sie im *aitiologischen*

<sup>8</sup> Vgl. HOLLADAY (1983) 208ff.

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. bes. Johannes der Täufer, Jesus von Nazareth, der Satan, eine himmlische Stimme, Jünger, jüdische (Schrift-)Autoritäten in Galiläa und Jerusalem, Einzelpersonen und Gruppen im jüdischen Volk, Klientelkönige, römische Administratoren.

Sinne eine Gründungsgeschichte<sup>10</sup> des Christus-Glaubens. Sie erklären, wie, wann, wo und warum es zum Wirken Jesu von Nazareth gekommen ist und was dieses Wirken in Verkündigung/Lehre (*dicta*) und Taten (*facta*) bis zu seiner Kreuzigung in Jerusalem und darüber hinaus (Mk 16 parr.; Joh 20-21; Apg 1) umfasste.<sup>11</sup>

Folgen die Evangelien und *Acta* in methodischer, literarischer und erzähltechnischer Hinsicht wesentlichen Prinzipien antiker Geschichtsschreibung,<sup>12</sup> wie an ihrem Umgang mit Quellen, Vorgängerwerken und zeitgenössischen Konkurrenzwerken oder dem Anspruch auf ‚Wahrheitsgemäßheit‘ (z.B. Josephus *BJ* 1, 30; *Ant.* 1, 4) und darstellerische Qualität (Lk 1,1-4) erkennbar wird,<sup>13</sup> so entwerfen sie doch eine *genuine* Geschichtskonzeption, die das abendländische Geschichtsdenken bis weit

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. zuletzt RÖHSER (2021) bes. 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Das ‚christologische Erzählprinzip‘ (vgl. auch SCHNELLE [2019] 97) liegt also den Erzählungen theologisch als Prämisse zugrunde und macht zugleich die proklamatorische Pragmatik der Darstellungen aus (s. z.B. Polyvalenz des ἐὶς-ἕλ-λον-Begriffs in Mk 1,1; 1,14-15).

<sup>12</sup> Vgl. ausführlich: BECKER (2006); (2017a); (2017b). – Immer benötigen, doch nur vereinzelt nennen Historiker ihre Gewährsmänner in Form von Augenzeugen, Quellen oder Vorgängerwerken. Selbst, wenn Einzelpersonen genannt werden, bleiben diese oft anonym (z.B. HDT. 2, 81, 1; 2, 125, 6) – Hinweise bei WILL (2015) 72. Im Falle schriftlicher Quellen inkorporieren spätere Autoren in der Regel die Vorgängerschriften stillschweigend (vgl. z.B. Nikolaos von Damaskus in JOS. *BJ* 1, 31-2, 116) – Hinweise zum Umgang des Josephus mit seinen Quellen bei MICHEL / BAUERNFEIND (<sup>3</sup>1982) XXIVff. Vgl. schon HÖLSCHER (1916) 1944-1949. Oder spätere Autoren bieten – für den informierten Leser – mehr oder weniger anspruchsvolle oder raffinierte Allusionen. Historiker wie Polybios oder Josephus weisen zumeist nur dann auf ihre Quellen und/oder Vorgängerwerke explizit hin, wenn sie sich in (kritischer) Auseinandersetzung mit ihnen verstehen (z.B. Kritik an Timaios bei POLYB. [12, 25d, 1] oder an Nikolaos bei JOS. [*Ant.* 16, 183-186]) – umfangreicher sind die Hinweise bei JOS. in den *Antiquitates*, vgl. HÖLSCHER (1916) 1964-1968.

<sup>13</sup> So spiegelt das Verhältnis der fünf frühchristlichen Prosaerzählungen zu einander Konstellationen wider, die für die antike Historiographie allgemein typisch sind: (a) auf Vorgängerwerke wird explizit hingewiesen (s. Lk 1,1-4); (b) Vorgängerwerke werden stillschweigend als Quellen oder *Vorlagen* verwendet (Markus bei Matthäus und Lukas); (c) vorausliegende Quellen sind nicht mehr erhalten und lassen sich höchstens (fragmentarisch) rekonstruieren (die Logienquelle Q als Vorlage für Matthäus und Lukas), (d) Einzelautoren schaffen intentional mehrere, explizit auf einander bezogene Geschichtswerke (Lukas); (e) Vorgängerwerke (oder zeitgenössische Werke) werden als Wettbewerber verstanden

in das 18. Jh. hinein prägen wird.<sup>14</sup> Denn sie konzipieren ein christologisch begründetes Geschichtsnarrativ, welches die Leser gewissermaßen in eine ‚parallele Welt‘ von (Zeit-)Geschichtsdeutung im Lichte kosmischer (End-)Zeitwahrnehmung führt. Das macht die Evangelien und *Acta* zu eigenständigen Werken der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung mit einer spezifischen Wahrnehmung von „Zeitgeschichte“.

## 2. Was ist „Zeitgeschichtsschreibung“? Merkmale und Definitionen

Zeitgeschichte ist – um mit Reinhart Koselleck zu sprechen – „ein schönes Wort, aber ein schwieriger Begriff“.<sup>15</sup> Denn der Begriff der „Zeitgeschichte“ ist vieldeutig, „changierend zw(ischen) gegenwartsnahen hist(orischen) Prozessen und Erforschung jüngster Vergangenheiten“.<sup>16</sup> Die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft arbeitet mit einer Definition von „Zeitgeschichte“, die sich weitgehend an die Begriffsbestimmung von Hans Rothfels (1953), der oftmals auch als Begründer der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung nach 1945 gilt, anlehnt.<sup>17</sup> Demnach ist Zeitgeschichte derjenige „Teil der Geschichte, der von den noch lebenden Menschen miterlebt und mitgestaltet wird sowie die wissenschaftl(iche) Behandlung dieses Geschichtsabschnitts“.<sup>18</sup> Als *historia sui temporis* verstanden, umfasst Zeitgeschichte also „die Geschichten der zu gleicher Zeit Lebenden und deren Berichterstattung bzw. die Berichterstattung über sie“.<sup>19</sup> Als eine solche

und durch die eigene, revisionistisch motivierte Darstellung korrigiert bzw. möglichst überboten (s. Lk 1,1-4).

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. KOSELLECK (1988) 24-25. „Solange sich die christliche Welt auf das Jüngste Gericht zubewegte, wußte sie sich im letzten Zeitalter, in dem grundsätzlich nichts Neues zu erwarten war“, a.a.O., 24.

<sup>15</sup> KOSELLECK (1988) 17. Der Begriff „Zeitgeschichte“ begegnet wohl erstmals bei Sigismund von Birken im Jahre 1657: KOSELLECK (1988) 20.

<sup>16</sup> GRAF (2005) 1819.

<sup>17</sup> ROTHFELS (1953) bes. 2. Vgl. auch KOSELLECK (1988) 17-31.

<sup>18</sup> FUCHS / RAAB (132002) 886.

<sup>19</sup> KOSELLECK (1988) 20.

„Geschichte der Zeitgenossenschaft“ ist die Zeitgeschichtsschreibung prägend für die Entstehung und Entwicklung der antiken Historiographie. Sie liegt schon in den Werken des Herodot, Thukydides, Polybios und Tacitus sowie bei den *Acta Apostolorum* des Lukas vor.<sup>20</sup> Eine erste Annäherung an den Begriff der Zeitgeschichte und seine mögliche Anwendung auf die frühchristliche Geschichtsschreibung also ergibt: Mit dem Hinweis auf Zeitgenossenschaft, den der Verfasser der *Acta* vor allem durch seine „Wir“-Berichte (Apg 16,10-17; 20,5-21,18; 27,1-28,16) gibt, lässt sich die lukanische Geschichtsdarstellung in der Apostelgeschichte als „Zeitgeschichtsschreibung“ in griechischer Tradition verstehen.

Nun hat Felix Jacoby im zweiten Teil seiner 1923 begonnenen Textsammlung *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (*FGrHist*) griechische Werke der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung von vor-thukydideischer bis in die nach-konstantinische Zeit zusammengestellt<sup>21</sup> und damit den Blick auf das Phänomen der antiken Zeitgeschichte geweitet. Denn Jacoby hat einen Begriff von antiker „Zeitgeschichte“ geprägt, der Universalgeschichte und Hellenika (*FGrHist* 64-105), Spezialgeschichten, Autobiographien und Memoiren (*FGrHist* 106-261) versammelt und so historiographische Gattungsgrenzen sprengt. Diese Einsicht ist auch für die Evangelienforschung bedeutsam: Den vielfältigen Werken eines Stesimbrotos (von Thasos) (*FGrHist* 107) etwa vergleichbar, lassen sich auch die Evangelien der antiken (Zeit-)Geschichtsschreibung zwar in einem weiteren Sinne zuordnen, ohne dass sie aber Geschichtsschreibung im thukydideischen Sinne wären.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> KOSELLECK (1988) 20.

<sup>21</sup> Teil 2, Zeitgeschichte. – A. Universalgeschichte und Hellenika [Nr. 64-105] (1926); Teil 2, Zeitgeschichte. – B. Spezialgeschichten, Autobiographien und Memoiren, Zeittafeln (1926-1930); Teil 2, Zeitgeschichte. – C. Kommentar zu Nr. 64-105 (1926); Teil 2, Zeitgeschichte. – D. Kommentar zu Nr. 106-261 (1930).

<sup>22</sup> In seiner Fragmentensammlung legt Jacoby die Liste der griechischen Zeithistoriker weitestgehend chronologisch an. Er lässt sie mit Kratippos von Athen (*FGrHist* 64) – möglicherweise dem Verfasser der *Hell. Oxy.* einem Zeitgenossen des Thukydides (vgl. MEISTER [1990] 65-68) – und Myron von Priene (*FGrHist*

Jacobys Sammlung legt ein weiteres Prinzip antiker Zeitgeschichtsschreibung offen: Zeithistoriker widmen sich – so wie die Evangelien dies tun – *derselben* ereignisgeschichtlichen Darstellung in mehrfacher Ausfertigung.<sup>23</sup> Während viele „zeitgeschichtliche“ Schriften griechischer Historiker, wie Jacobys Sammlung dokumentiert, jedoch nicht erhalten sind, sondern nur in Fragmenten, also wie Spolien in späteren Autorenwerken greifbar werden, sind die fünf frühchristlichen Prosaschriften als Einzelwerke überliefert. Sie stellen gewissermaßen einen ‚Glücksfall‘ in der antiken Literaturgeschichte dar, weil sie eine multiperspektivische Sicht auf *dieselbe* zeitgeschichtliche Ereignisfolge erlauben, deren Kernzeit um das Jahr 30 liegt.

Nun sind die Evangelien – wie gesehen – von ihrem Anspruch her zwar *mehr* als bloße Quellen zur zeitgeschichtlichen Erforschung des 1. Jhs. Dass sie eine autorenbezogene „Geschichte der Zeitgenossenschaft“ präsentierten, geht aus ihnen gleichwohl höchstens indirekt hervor. Denn die Evangelien sind – im Unterschied zur griechisch-römischen Tradition historiographischer *Autorenliteratur*, in die sich auch Josephus stellt – anonym verfasst. Sie stellen nahezu keine expliziten Bezüge zu ihrer Verfasserschaft her.<sup>24</sup> Mit Ausnahme des lukanischen Doppelwerks (s. Prologe in Lk 1,1-4; Apg 1,1-2) geben sich die frühchristlichen Erzählungen noch nicht einmal ansatzweise als Autorenliteratur zu erkennen. Die jeweiligen Überschriften und Werkbezeichnungen, unter denen diese Prosaerzählungen Eingang in den neutestamentlichen Kanon und damit in die Bibliothek der Alten Kirche fanden und unter denen wir diese Schriften bis heute kennen, sind sekundär: Sie stammen frühestens aus dem

106) beginnen und mit Aristodemos (*FGrHist* 104) und dem ausschließlich bei EUSEB. *Hist. eccl.* 6, 1 genannten Chronographen Judas (*FGrHist* 261), der um das Jahr 202 eine theologische Abhandlung zur Auslegung von Dan 9,24-27 verfasst hat (vgl. dazu z.B. STROBEL [1993] bes. 113-115), enden. Die jüngsten Fragmente reichen bis in die 360er (*FGrHist* 225; 226; 238).

<sup>23</sup> Diese Überlegung verdanke ich Bruno Bleckmann (Düsseldorf).

<sup>24</sup> Joh 21,30-31 ist Teil des vermutlich sekundären Schlusses des Johannes-evangeliums – hier wird das Werk mit dem sog. Lieblingsjünger verknüpft, der aber ebenso anonym bleibt.

2. Jh.<sup>25</sup> Über die Funktion eines Paratextes hinausgehend<sup>26</sup> suchen die Werkbezeichnungen in späterer Zeit, die Einzelschrift anhand einer namentlich genannten Verfassergestalt zu autorisieren und – wie die altkirchliche Diskussion über die Traditionsbildung von Papias von Hierapolis bis Eusebius von Caesarea zeigt – mögliche Identifikationen mit Aposteln (Matthäus? Johannes?) oder Mitarbeitern von Aposteln (Markus als Mitarbeiter des Petrus; Lukas als Reisebegleiter der Paulus) herzustellen. So suggerieren die sekundär hinzugefügten Werkbezeichnungen, die Evangelien – in der Literatur des 2. Jhs. zuweilen auch als *Apomnemeumata* bezeichnet (z.B. Justin, *Apol.* 66, 3)<sup>27</sup> – könnten ihre Leserschaft auktorial an die ἀρχή des Ereignisberichts zurückführen (Lk 1,1-4; Mk 1,1; Joh 1,1; Mt 1,1; vgl. auch Josephus *Ant.* 1, 27). Dieser Eindruck von „Zeitgeschichtsschreibung“ wird von den Schriften selbst indes dadurch vorbereitet, dass sie zum einen exklusives Wissen über das Zusammensein mit Jesus von Nazareth haben und ihren Lesern vorlegen (z.B. Mk 9,2-10 parr.). Zugleich beteiligen Markus und Lukas den historiographischen Erzähler so, dass sie ihn zum Zeugen des Verkündigungsgeschehens Jesu (Mk 9,1 *vs.* Lk 9,27!) und seiner Apostel machen (bes. „Wir-Berichte“ [s.o.]) und ihn dabei – im Sinne der auto-pathetischen Darstellung – sogar teils mitleiden lassen (vgl. bes. Seesturm und Schiffbruch vor Malta Apg 27,13-44).

Doch auch jenseits des Aspektes realer oder imaginierter Zeitgenossenschaft lassen sich die Evangelien als Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte verstehen. Denn der Begriff der „Zeitgeschichte“ kann nicht auf die synchrone Perspektive beschränkt werden. Mit Blick auf die „Begriffsgeschichte“ hat Koselleck vielmehr aufgezeigt, dass Zeitgeschichtsschreibung auch in diachronen Bahnen verläuft – etwa als „Lehre von der Zeitabfolge“.<sup>28</sup> Über das Schreiben bloßer „Gegenwartsgeschichte“ hinaus umfasst

<sup>25</sup> Zu den Evangelienüberschriften vgl. PETERSEN (2006) 267 und 273.

<sup>26</sup> PETERSEN (2006) 274.

<sup>27</sup> Vgl. ABRAMOWSKI (1983).

<sup>28</sup> KOSELLECK (1988) 22.

Zeitgeschichte ein Konzept von Geschichtsbetrachtung und -schreibung, das gleichermaßen die „vergangene Gegenwart, vergangene Vergangenheit und vergangene Zukunft“ betrifft.<sup>29</sup> So haben Begriff und Konzept der Zeitgeschichte verschiedene Aspekte, die sich systematisch wie folgt darstellen lassen: Zeitgeschichtsschreibung ist *erstens* – wie oben erörtert – Geschichte der Zeitgenossenschaft. Als solche hat Zeitgeschichte *zweitens* einen weltpolitischen und universalen Bezugsrahmen: „Wenn Zeitgeschichte... als Epoche der Mitlebenden und ihre wissenschaftliche Behandlung verstanden werden soll, so in dem Sinne, daß es sich... um ein Zeitalter krisenhafter Erschütterung und einer eben darin sehr wesentlich begründeten universalen Konstellation handelt“.<sup>30</sup> Nach Rothfels ist Zeitgeschichtsschreibung also epochal, universal und krisenbestimmt – sie hat einen ‚politischen Wert‘.<sup>31</sup> Zeitgeschichtsschreibung führt *drittens* zu einer eigenständigen Konzeption und Ordnung von Zeit: „Als Geschichte der Mitlebenden entwirft die Zeitgeschichte eine eigene *Zeitordnung*, da sich ihr zeitlicher Gegenstandsbereich verschiebt bzw. einen offenen Zukunftshorizont hat...“.<sup>32</sup> In diachroner Erstreckung ermöglicht „Zeitgeschichte“ *viertens* einen „Rekurs auf die Zeitenfolge, lebensweltlich gesprochen von heute aus zurück in die Vergangenheit, in der Darbietung aber von früher nach heute“.<sup>33</sup> Zu diesem Rekurs auf die vergangene Vergangenheit etwa gehört die synchronistische Verknüpfung von Zeitfolgen oder die genetische Herleitung

<sup>29</sup> KOSELLECK (1988) 23.

<sup>30</sup> ROTHFELS (1953) 2.

<sup>31</sup> ROTHFELS (1953) 8. – Eine persönliche Bemerkung sei an dieser Stelle erlaubt: Der vorliegende Beitrag wurde weitestgehend inmitten der Coronapandemie erarbeitet und geschrieben, am 25. August 2021 in Genf vorgetragen, während der UN-Menschenrechtsrat an demselben Ort tagte und über die Folgen der Machtübernahme der Taliban in Afghanistan beriet, und schließlich in den ersten Tagen nach dem Überfall Russlands auf die Ukraine korrekturgelesen. Die (welt-)politischen Rahmenbedingungen geben der Beschäftigung mit ‚Zeitgeschichte‘ und Zeitgeschichtsschreibung besonders in Hinsicht auf den Aspekt der ‚Krise‘ eine neue, beklemmende Aktualität.

<sup>32</sup> GRAF (2012) 84 (Kursivierung E-MB).

<sup>33</sup> KOSELLECK (1988) 22.

von Ereignisfolgen bzw. die aitiologische Bestimmung der Geschichte der Gegenwart.

Was in Ansätzen in der Konzeption der Evangelien oben bereits angedeutet wurde (s.o.) und nachher vertieft wird (s.u.), legt der flavische Geschichtsschreiber Josephus – unter erkennbaren Anleihen an Thukydides<sup>34</sup> – in der *praefatio* (*BJ* 1, 1-30) zu seinem *Bellum Judaicum* explizit dar. Er definiert im Ergebnis ein Verständnis von Zeitgeschichtsschreibung, das den geschichtswissenschaftlichen Begriffsbestimmungen in synchroner wie in diachroner Hinsicht nahekommt und zugleich widerspiegelt, wie die Zeitgeschichte zu *dem* Thema flavischer Historiographie geriert. Denn nach Josephus berichtet (1) der Historiograph von dem, was er miterlebt und (2) ‚miterlitten‘ hat (‚auto-pathetisch‘; s. auch *Ant.* 1, 3). (3) Zugleich definiert er für seine Darstellung ein Thema und (4) einen diachron angelegten Zeitrahmen, der die Rückfrage nach der ἀρχή der Ereignisse ermöglicht. (5) Er beschreibt die Ereignisse anhand von Akteuren und Konfliktparteien und (6) legt die *aitia laitiiai* dar, die zur Katastrophe des Jahres 70 n. Chr. führten. (7) Im Interesse der ‚Wahrheitssuche‘ korrigiert der Historiker vorausliegende Darstellungen und (8) bietet mit seinem Werk schließlich eine Form von Geschichtsdeutung und -bewältigung, die (Zukunfts-)Perspektiven aufzeigt.

### 3. Zeitgeschichtsschreibung in flavischer Zeit

#### 3.1. Die flavische Zeit als „Sattelzeit“ der Evangelien-schreibung

So wie die Werke des Josephus entstehen die Evangelien in flavischer Zeit. Nach Mehrheitsmeinung der Forschung setzt

<sup>34</sup> Die Eingangswendung bei Thukydides nimmt wesentliche Motive auf, auf die auch Josephus in *BJ* 1, 1ff. explizit rekurriert: Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων, ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀρξάμενος εὐθὺς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων...



die Evangelien-schreibung im letzten Drittel des 1. Jhs., etwa sechs Jahre nach dem Tod des Paulus, ein. Zwischen 70 und dem Ende des 1. Jhs. wurde erstmals durch Markus der bis dahin vorliegende, überwiegend mündliche, teils bereits verschriftliche (s. vor allem Logienquelle Q) Strom an Jesusüberlieferungen erzählerisch ausgestaltet und in die ereignisgeschichtliche Form der Evangelien-erzählung gebracht. Dabei stellte sich für Markus das „Problem der Zeit, welche die Erinnerung verfälschte“, in ähnlicher Weise wie schon für Herodot, der ebenso in Teilen über Ereignisse, die 40 Jahre zurücklagen, berichtete (z.B. Gastmahl des Attaginos: 9, 16).<sup>35</sup> Lukas wiederum, der mehr als zwanzig Jahre nach Markus schrieb, blickt auf seinen Vorgänger in ähnlich kritischer Distanz zurück (Lk 1,1-4; Apg 1,1-2) wie einst Thukydides auf Herodot.<sup>36</sup>

Mehrere historische Faktoren sind für die Entstehung der Evangelienliteratur ursächlich – externe wie interne: Der flavische Sieg in Judäa, der mit der Tempelzerstörung in Jerusalem verbunden ist und aus dem eine immense Wirkkraft flavischer Ideologie resultiert (s. Titusbogen Rom; Hadriansbogen Tel Shalem; historiographische Schriften des Josephus), die programmatisch an die siegreichen Anfänge des Principats zurück-erinnert,<sup>37</sup> dürfte ein wesentlicher *externer* Faktor für die Entstehung der Evangelienliteratur mit ihrer eigenen Rückfrage nach der ἀρχή ihrer kosmokratischen Weltsicht gewesen sein. Die Christus-Glaubenden bekennen den Gottessohn als *Kyrios* (z.B. Phil 2,6-11), d.h. als endzeitlichen Weltherrscher, und zeichnen dessen Botschaft nach. Doch wie genau wirkt die flavische Zeit auf die Entstehung der Evangelien ein? Ist das Markusevangelium womöglich als „Reaktionsliteratur“<sup>38</sup> auf die römische Weltpolitik, gar als ein ‚Anti-Evangelium‘

<sup>35</sup> Vgl. WILL (2015) 73-74.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. WILL (2015) 75-77.

<sup>37</sup> Vgl. zur Zusammenstellung der Wirkfaktoren: BECKER (2005a) bes. 223-232.

<sup>38</sup> So z.B. GELARDINI (2016) 1-22.

entstanden?<sup>39</sup> Ich komme darauf zurück. Die Ereignisse in Galiläa und Judäa, von denen die Evangelien berichten, sind jedenfalls in einer für die römische Identitätspolitik keineswegs unwichtigen Peripherie gelegen.<sup>40</sup> Darauf weist – neben Josephus – auch Lukas mit seinen Synchronismen hin (Lk 2,1; 3,1). Dass die Flavier ihren Machtanspruch vom Sieg über einen Aufstand in der judäischen Provinz herleiten, entspricht der zeitgenössischen Tendenz einer Inversion von Zentrum und Peripherie.<sup>41</sup> Daneben spielt eine Reihe von *internen* Faktoren für die Abfassung der Evangelien eine Rolle wie das sukzessive Aussterben der (ersten) Zeugengeneration und der daraus entstehende Erinnerungsdruck (vgl. 1 Kor 15,6). Dazu kommen die Erfahrungen von Martyrien (v.a. Stephanus; Jakobus der Zebedaide; Jakobus der Herrenbruder; Petrus; Paulus) und der ausbleibenden Parusie. Die externen und internen Faktoren wirken komplementär auf die frühchristlichen Literarisierungsprozesse ein. Die Erfahrung von (teils gewaltsamen) Todesfällen und die gleichzeitig enttäuschte Parusieerwartung wirken zusätzlich synergetisch, was schon bei Paulus erkennbar ist (s. 1 Thess 4,13-18).

So stellt das Jahr 70 im Blick auf die Geschichte Judäas und der Juden, die römische Welt- und Herrschergeschichte und die Geschichte des entstehenden Christentums eine zeitgeschichtliche Zäsur bzw. ein Schwellenjahr dar. In dieser Zeit wird – aus multiplen Gründen – die schriftliche (s. Mk 13,14) Darlegung, Deutung und Aktualisierung der Jesusbotschaft von ihren *Anfängen* her notwendig. Beginnt die Evangelienschreibung also als „innovative Krisenbewältigung“, wie Udo Schnelle meint?<sup>42</sup> Ist die frühchristliche Zeitgeschichtsschreibung im Sinne Rothfels‘ krisenbestimmt? In jedem Fall wird die Entstehung der frühchristlichen Ereignisgeschichtsschreibung als Ergebnis

<sup>39</sup> BAIER (2020) 319 – mit Hinweis auf EBNER (2003).

<sup>40</sup> Vgl. BRIGHTON (2016).

<sup>41</sup> Vgl. POGORZELSKI (2016) 236-237.

<sup>42</sup> SCHNELLE (?2016) 361. – Diese Frage steht auch im Hintergrund des Bandes und der darin versammelten Einzelbeiträge: BECKER (2005b) und wird darin kontrovers diskutiert.

komplementär und synergetisch wirkender Faktoren in der zweiten und dritten frühchristlichen Generation plausibel.<sup>43</sup> Zu klären bleibt, in welcher Weise die Texte selbst auf das Jahr 70 und die damit eingeleitete ‚Schwellenzeit‘ Bezug nehmen.

### 3.2. Konzeptionsebenen von „Zeitgeschichte“ in den Evangelien und Acta

Die frühchristlichen Prosaerzählungen schaffen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung im Spiegel der *Gemeindegeschichtsschreibung*. Denn sie nehmen die ereignisgeschichtliche Darstellung aus der Perspektive ihrer Leserschaft vor und gehen dabei teils anachronistisch vor. Insbesondere bei rituellen, kultischen (z.B. Mk 7,12), ethischen (z.B. Mt 5,21-48) und missionsstrategischen (z.B. Mt 28,16-20; Apg 1,8) Fragen legen die Evangelien Jesus von Nazareth Worte ‚in den Mund‘, die der Lehre und Verkündigung der historischen Jesus-Gestalt um 30 nicht entsprechen dürften.<sup>44</sup> Die frühchristliche Zeit- als Gemeindegeschichte wird also schon in den Evangelien selbst abgebildet, auch wenn sie nicht deren primäres Thema ist. Zu einem eigenen Thema macht sie erst Lukas in der Apostelgeschichte.<sup>45</sup>

Der Bezug auf die *politische* Zeitgeschichte und ihre römischen und jüdischen Repräsentanten ist bei Markus, Matthäus und Johannes dagegen äußerst marginal (Herodes Antipas; Pontius Pilatus; Herodes der Große [Mt 2, s.o.]) und fällt bei Lukas – in beiden Werken – nur vergleichsweise ausgeprägter aus. Markus, Matthäus und Johannes fokussieren auf die Evangeliums- bzw. Christusbotschaft und arbeiten deren Inhalt als neues Zentrum, ja als Endpunkt der Zeitgeschichte aus. Ihre ereignisgeschichtliche Darstellung zielt darauf, die Geschichte

<sup>43</sup> In diese Richtung weisen tendenziell: CLAUSS (2015); LEPPIN (2019).

<sup>44</sup> Das gilt, auch wenn einzelne dieser Worte dezidiert erst dem Auferstandenen, also dem erhöhten *Kyrios* zugeordnet werden (z.B. Mt 28,16-20; Apg 1,8).

<sup>45</sup> Die Spur zu den *Acta* ist freilich schon durch die paulinischen Ansätze zur Missions- und Gemeindegeschichtsschreibung (s.o.) gelegt.

der Evangeliumsverkündigung von ihren *Anfängen* her und auf ihren universalen und *kosmokratischen* Anspruch im Wirken Jesu hin darzulegen (vgl. Mk 13,24; Mt 28,16-20) und dabei ein Paradoxon zu erläutern: Wie kann der Gekreuzigte zugleich der endzeitliche Weltenherrscher sein? Die Evangelien-schreiber schaffen einen kohärenten Bericht – mit verschiedenen Tendenzen im Detail – darüber, warum und wie die Evangeliumsverkündigung Jesu zwangsläufig zu seiner Kreuzigung führen *musste* (z.B. Mk 3,6; 8,31; Lk 24,26) und wie der gekreuzigte Jesus von Nazareth an der Kosmokratie Gottes partizipiert (Mt 28,16-20). Der (zeit-)politische Raum, in dem sich die Ereignisgeschichte zuträgt, ist dagegen weitgehend Staffage – noch bei Lukas, obgleich dieser ihn in beiden Büchern zum geschichtlichen Ermöglichungsraum für die Verkündigung Jesu (Lk) und die weltweite Christuszeugenschaft (Apg) macht.

Einzig die Thematik der Tempelzerstörung wirkt sich prägend auf den Schlussteil des frühesten Evangeliums aus (Mk 13-15): In Mk 13 sagt Jesus seinem engsten Jüngerkreis die Zerstörung des Tempels (Mk 13,1-2) und dessen Desakralisierung voraus (Mk 13,14). Die Voraussagen Jesu, die als *uaticinia ex euentu* zu verstehen sein dürften, übersteigen jede mögliche Anspielung auf die vorausgegangenen Desakralisierungsereignisse der Jahre 168 v. Chr. unter Antiochus IV und 63 v. Chr. unter Pompejus,<sup>46</sup> da diese nicht zur Tempelzerstörung führten, und sind daher offenbar nicht topisch. Im Verhör vor dem Hohen Rat wird Jesus in Mk 14 u.a. beschuldigt, den Tempel zerstören zu wollen (Mk 14,58). Beim Tod Jesu weist der zerreißen- de Tempelvorhang in Mk 15 wie ein *prodigium* auf die – zur Zeit der Abfassung des Markusevangeliums wohl bereits erfolgte – Tempelzerstörung voraus (Mk 15,38). Die Tempelbezüge in Mk 13-15 wiegen schwer und stützen die Annahme, dass die Abfassung des Markusevangeliums (und der späteren Evangelien) mit den

<sup>46</sup> Vgl. JOS. *Ant.* 12, 248ff.; 1 Makk 1,20ff.; Dan 11,28; JOS. *BJ* 1, 152-153; *Ant.* 14, 72-73; TAC. *Hist.* 5, 9; STRAB. *Geogr.* 762-763. Vgl. ECK (2007) 8; BRINGMANN (2005) 108-109 und 163ff.

Ereignissen des Jahres 70 in Zusammenhang steht.<sup>47</sup> Berichten die Evangelien also vom Tempelfall im Jahr 70 als Geschichte der Gegenwart?

Im Umgang mit dem Jahr 70 bieten die Evangelien eine eigentümliche Perspektive: Sie thematisieren zwar die Tempelzerstörung, lösen sie aber weitgehend von politischen Bezügen ab. Anders Josephus: Für den Priester Flavius Josephus wird der brennende Jerusalemer Tempel zum traurigen Höhepunkt des jüdisch-römischen Krieges (*BJ* 6, 249ff.). Das Schicksal des Tempels steht *pars pro toto* für die Schuld jüdischer Aufständischer und für das Ethos der Flavier. Denn Josephus beschreibt, wie der Brand aus Versehen entstand (*BJ* 6, 251), von Titus bekämpft wurde (*BJ* 6, 254) und doch von Gott längst beschlossen (*BJ* 6, 250) und von den Juden selbst „veranlaßt und verschuldet“ war (*BJ* 6, 251). Während Markus die Tempelzerstörung als erstes Zeichen in dem von Jesus skizzierten Endzeitplan deutet, macht Josephus sie zum Sinnbild flavischer Herrschaftsbegründung.

### 3.3. Pro-flavische Zeitgeschichtsschreibung bei Josephus (*BJ*)?

Josephus ist in Zeitgenossenschaft zu beiden Evangelien-schreibern (Markus und Lukas) als Historiograph tätig – nicht auszuschließen ist, dass Lukas zeitgleich mit Josephus in Rom lebte.<sup>48</sup> Da mit Ausnahme der Geschichtsbücher des Josephus sonst kaum historiographische Werke<sup>49</sup> aus flavischer Zeit (69-96 n. Chr.) erhalten sind (vgl. aber die *Hypomnemata/commentarii*

<sup>47</sup> Noch das lukanische Doppelwerk weist am Ende des 1. Jhs. eine starke Tempelorientierung auf (s. schon Lk 1,5ff. bis Apg 22).

<sup>48</sup> Josephus – wie er schreibt: selbst einstiger Aufständischer gegen die Römer (z.B. *BJ* 1, 3; *CAp.* 1, 48) – wurde im Zuge seiner Kollaboration mit den Römern von Vespasian das römische Bürgerrecht verliehen. Nach dem Krieg erhielt er zudem „eine kaiserliche Residenz in Rom, eine Pension sowie Landbesitz in Judäa“: RAJAK (2001) 586 (vgl. auch *Vit.* 422ff.).

<sup>49</sup> Zu den bevorzugten Gattungen der flavischen Literatur – Rede, Epigramm, Poesie, Epos – vgl. BESSONE / FUCECCHI (2019).

des Vespasian und Titus),<sup>50</sup> gibt uns der Historiker Josephus nicht nur einen unvergleichlichen Einblick in die Geschichtsschreibung jener Epoche. Biographisch und thematisch sind die Werke des Josephus<sup>51</sup> zudem erkennbar eng und – in dieser Hinsicht deutlich anders als die Evangelien – direkt mit der politischen Zeitgeschichte, nämlich dem Aufstieg der Flavier, verknüpft. Ist Josephus als „pro-flavischer Autor“ zu bezeichnen?<sup>52</sup> Die hermeneutische Klammer, die seine Werke verbindet, nennt Josephus bereits in der *praefatio* zu seinem *Bellum* (1, 1-30): Josephus blickt auf die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Anbruch der flavischen Herrschaft. Das historiographische Werk des Josephus ist *zeitpolitisch* und *persönlich* motiviert und stellt sich dezidiert in die Tradition griechisch-römischer Historiographie.<sup>53</sup> Markus dagegen schreibt über den Beginn

<sup>50</sup> *HRR* 2, 108. – Vgl. zu deren Bedeutung auch *Jos. CAp.* 1, 56 und *Vit.* 342 und 358.

<sup>51</sup> Die Bücher 1-6 des *Bellum* (Buch 7 wurde womöglich als Nachtrag erst in domitianischer Zeit ergänzt: RAJAK [2001] 586) erscheinen Mitte bis Ende der 70er Jahre. In seinen *Antiquitates*, für die die *Antiquitates Romanae* des Dionysius von Halikarnass vorbildhaft waren, schreibt Josephus zwar Geschichte über die ferne Vergangenheit seit der Schöpfung (*Ant.* 1, 27), beendet aber seine Darstellung im Jahr 66 n. Chr. (*Ant.* 20) – also genau da, wo er mit dem eigentlichen Bericht über den Kriegsablauf im *Bellum Judaicum*, seinem Erstlingswerk etwa fünfzehn Jahre zuvor (*Ant.* 1, 4), begonnen hatte (*BJ* 2, 284). Auch mit den *Antiquitates* knüpft Josephus bewusst an die *πόλεμος*-Thematik des *Bellum* an (*Ant.* 1, 4, 6). Und noch in seiner *Vita* – als Ergänzung zu den *Antiquitates* geplant (*Vit.* 430; zur Orientierung an Dionysius bis in sprachliche Details hinein vgl. SIEGERT / SCHRECKENBERG / VOGEL [2001] 159) – berichtet Josephus nur kurz über seine Herkunft (1-12) und seine Beteiligung an der Rom-Gesandtschaft (13-16). Denn auch hier liegt das Hauptaugenmerk auf der Darstellung der Kriegsstimmung (17ff.), der Kriegseignisse, der Beteiligung des Josephus an den Aufständen in Galiläa und der Abwehr verfälschender Geschichtsschreibung (Justus von Tiberias, *Vit.* 336-367). Sein geplantes Werk zu den „Sitten und Ursachen“ (*περὶ ἠθῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν*, *Ant.* 1, 25; 4, 198) konnte Josephus offenbar nicht mehr abschließen.

<sup>52</sup> Die Diskussion über „pro-flavische“ Geschichtsschreibung im Rahmen der Darstellung flavischer Geschichte betrifft – neben Josephus (SIEVERS / LEMBI [2005]) – auch die Werke des Tacitus und beschäftigt die Forschung spätestens seit Mitte des 20. Jhs.: SYME (1958).

<sup>53</sup> Schon mit der Themenangabe im *Bellum Judaicum*: „Krieg der Juden gegen die Römer“ (*Ἐπειδὴ τὸν Ἰουδαίων πρὸς Ῥωμαίους πόλεμον...*, *BJ* 1, 1) greift er die thukydidische Idee der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung (*CAp.* 1, 47-58) in

der Evangeliumsverkündigung als prophetisch vorausgesagtem (Mk 1,1-3) Anbruch der Gottesherrschaft (Mk 1,14-15), der zum nahenden Ende der Geschichte führt (Mk 13).

Aufgrund der starken zeitpolitischen und persönlichen Motivierung zur Geschichtsschreibung reflektiert Josephus in seiner *Vita*, in *Contra Apionem* und den *praefationes* zu seinen Geschichtswerken ausführlich seine methodischen Prinzipien beim Schreiben ferner und naher Geschichte und betont seine Verpflichtung zur „Wahrheit“ (z.B. *Vita* 339). Wie arbeitet Josephus sein historiographisches Programm aus? Josephus setzt *erstens* bei der Zeit- und Weltpolitik der Jahre 66ff. an. So beschreibt er den römischen Staat zu Ende der Nero-Zeit als „krank“ (... ἐν Ῥωμαίοις μὲν ἐνόσει τὰ οἰκεῖα, *BJ* 1, 4) und weist auf die politischen Wirren des Vierkaiserjahres (69 n. Chr.) hin (*BJ* 1, 5-6). Vor diesem Hintergrund kann das Bestreben der Flavier, das *Imperium* bis zu seinen Provinzgrenzen befrieden zu wollen (*BJ* 1, 29) und somit die Aufständischen in Judäa niederschlagen und besiegen zu müssen, der Leserschaft plausibel werden. Josephus stellt *zweitens* heraus, dass sein Bericht von seinem persönlichen Mitleiden am Schicksal seines Volkes und seiner Klage geprägt ist (vgl. z.B. ἐπολοφύρομαι – *Hapax legomenon*: *BJ* 1, 9 und 6, 267; vgl. auch 6, 111). Wesentliche Teile seiner Darstellung über den Verlauf des Krieges, mit der er in *BJ* 2, 284 beginnt, verfasst er dementsprechend aufgrund seiner Augenzeugenberichte und spart sein persönliches Geschick dabei nicht aus (z.B. *BJ* 1, 22). So ist es ihm möglich, verfälschenden Darstellungen der Ereignisse, die teils auf Augenzeugenberichten, teils auf Hörensagen basieren, zu korrigieren und sowohl „Schmeichelei gegen die Römer oder... Haß gegen die Juden“ auszuräumen (... ἡ κολακεία τῆ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἢ μίσει τῶ πρὸς Ἰουδαίους... *BJ* 1, 2).<sup>54</sup> Josephus sucht *drittens* nach der ἀρχή der Ereignisse (*BJ* 1, 30) – er macht sie

Form einer *bellum*-Monographie auf. Josephus befürwortet ausdrücklich die Methode des Thukydides für die Zeitgeschichtsschreibung (*CAp.* 1, 47-58).

<sup>54</sup> Hier und an den anderen Stellen gebe ich jeweils die Übersetzung nach MICHEL / BAUERNFEIND (31982) 3-11 wieder.

in der gewaltsamen Einnahme Jerusalems unter Antiochus IV fest (*BJ* 1, 31ff.). Er sucht *viertens* nach den *aitiai*,<sup>55</sup> die die Ursachen für den Kriegsausbruch und die Tempelzerstörung waren, und nach der „Schuld“ (*αἴτιος*: *BJ* 1, 12) am „Unheil“ (*ἀτυχήματα*) der über das jüdische Volk gekommenen Ereignisgeschichte. Josephus deckt tiefere innerjüdische Ursachen – wie „innere Zwietracht“ (*ὅτι γὰρ αὐτὴν στάσις οἰκεία καθεῖλεν...* *BJ* 1, 10) – auf und weist auf verschiedene Gruppierungen hin: Neben den philosophischen Schulen (Pharisäer; Sadduzäer; Essener, z.B. *BJ* 2, 119ff.), denen er selbst sämtlich angehört hat (*Vita* 10-11), nennt er Sikarier, Zeloten, Banditen und Anhänger der sog. „Vierten Philosophie“ (s.o.) als eigentliche Konfliktparteien.<sup>56</sup> Dazu kommen noch weitere, lokal agierende, miteinander konkurrierende Gruppen (*Vita* 32), deren „vornehme“ Vertreter gerade nicht anti-römisch waren (ebd.). Letztlich identifiziert Josephus aber die „Tyrannen“ unter den Juden (z.B. *BJ* 1, 10, 27, s.o.) als eigentliche Brandstifter der Katastrophe. *Fünftens*: Es geht Josephus um die ‚Aufklärung‘ seiner Leserschaft im Sinne der Wahrheitsliebe – nicht möchte er dagegen Lesevergnügen bereiten (... *μὴ πρὸς ἡδονὴν ἀνέγγραψα*, *BJ* 1, 30). Mit seinem Werk in griechischer Sprache sucht er diejenigen zu erreichen, „die unter römischer Herrschaft leben“ (... *προουθέμην ἐγὼ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν...*, *BJ* 1, 3), um ihnen ein sachgerechtes Bild vom Krieg, dessen Ursachen und Folgen und nicht zuletzt der Rolle der Römer darin zu vermitteln. Agiert Josephus als pro-flavischer Zeithistoriker?

Eher wirbt Josephus im *Bellum* für ein gegenseitiges Verständnis römischer Machtpolitik und jüdischer Geschichte (z.B.

<sup>55</sup> Bei der Schilderung des Höhepunktes der Katastrophe – dem Tempelbrand – verknüpft Josephus interessanterweise *ἀρχή* und *aitia* (*BJ* 6, 251).

<sup>56</sup> Die Sikarier könnten eine Nachfolgebewegung zu der sog. „Vierten Philosophie“ sein – ansonsten sind die verschiedenen Gruppen wohl *nicht* miteinander zu identifizieren: Vgl. COHEN (2006) 158. Nach Cohen ist der jüdisch-römische Krieg jedoch nicht primär durch „Jewish sectarianism“ verursacht, sondern als eine „social revolution that is also a native revolt against an imperialist power“ zu verstehen, a.a.O., 159.



*BJ* 1, 17), indem er *einerseits* die „Sache der Juden“ (τὰ Ἰουδαίων: *BJ* 1, 7) angemessen darzustellen und *andererseits* das Ethos der Flavii herauszustellen sucht.<sup>57</sup> So verfolgt Josephus im *Bellum* (und seinen übrigen Werken) gewissermaßen ein vierfaches apologetisches Interesse,<sup>58</sup> das seiner hybriden biographischen Identität als in Rom unter flavischer Patronage tätigen jüdischen Historiographen aus Jerusalemer Priestergeschlecht entspricht.<sup>59</sup> Josephus verteidigt *erstens* die jüdische Geschichte gegen anti-jüdische Ressentiments, *zweitens* das militärische und machtpolitische Handeln der Römer gegenüber den Juden, *drittens* seine persönliche Rolle im Krieg und nach dem Krieg gegenüber Angriffen und Neidern und *viertens* sein Konzept von Zeitgeschichtsschreibung, das sich auf thukydideische Prinzipien beruft,<sup>60</sup> gegenüber verfälschenden Geschichtsdarstellungen (z.B. Justus von Tiberias).

### 3.4. (Anti-)Flavische Geschichtsschreibung im entstehenden Christentum?

Der Fokus der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung des Josephus liegt auf der Bewältigung des jüdisch-römischen Krieges und seiner Folgen – für die Flavii, für das jüdische Volk und für Josephus selbst. Als Historiker sucht Josephus sowohl diejenigen, die nicht in diesem Krieg dabei waren (οἱ μὲν οὐ παρατυχόντες τοῖς πράγμασιν) und seiner Meinung nach planlose Berichte geliefert

<sup>57</sup> In *BJ* 1, 10 weist er auf das „Mitleid“ (... ἐλεήσας) hin, das Titus bei den Kriegshandlungen mit dem jüdischen Volk gehabt habe, und dessen mehrfache Versuche, die „Stadt und den Tempel zu erhalten“ (... καὶ ὁσάκις Τίτος εἴσῃσαι τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὸν ναὸν ἐπιθυμῶν, *BJ* 1, 27). In *BJ* 6 kommt Josephus mehrfach auf das respektvolle Verhalten des Titus – nicht zuletzt gegenüber dem Tempel – zurück (*BJ* 6, 95 und 6, 124ff.; 6, 254ff.; vgl. auch TAC. *Hist.* 5, 4).

<sup>58</sup> Zum apologetischen Charakter der Geschichtsschreibung des Josephus vgl. STERLING (1992).

<sup>59</sup> Vgl. dazu GUSSMANN (2008).

<sup>60</sup> In *Contra Apionem* legt Josephus jedoch in teils polemischer Auseinandersetzung mit der griechischen historiographischen Tradition (*CAp.* 1, 16-38) die Methoden der Geschichtsschreibung dar.

haben, als auch denjenigen, die Augenzeugen waren (οἱ παραγενόμενοι), aber aus unterschiedlichen pro-römischen oder anti-jüdischen Motiven heraus die Darstellung verfälscht haben (BJ 1, 1-2), entgegenzutreten. Auch wenn das Motiv des „Krieges“ als solches in der Literatur der flavischen Zeit überaus präsent ist<sup>61</sup> und mit dem Bild von Vespasian als Friedensbringer korreliert, so macht doch Josephus allein den jüdisch-römischen Krieg und die Tempelzerstörung zu *dem* Thema flavischer Historiographie. In den Evangelien hingegen kommt das Thema „Krieg“ als militärisches Ereignis lediglich in der Endzeitrede Jesu als eschatologischer Topos vor (Mk 13,7 parr.; Mt 24,6; Lk 21,9 – jeweils im Plural):<sup>62</sup> Jesus deutet Kriege als Endzeitphänomene. Gleichzeitig wird ein Teil der Wirksamkeit Jesu (bes. Exorzismen) bereits zu Beginn seines Auftretens (z.B. Mk 1,21-28) als eschatologischer Kampf mit den „unreinen Geistern“ beschrieben. Der jüdisch-römische Krieg als *Gegenstand und Thema* der Zeit- und Weltgeschichte wird von den Evangelien nicht bearbeitet (vgl. höchstens Lk 21,20). Obwohl Markus und Lukas auf das Schwellenjahr 70 Bezug zu nehmen scheinen, entziehen sie sich den politischen Implikationen von Zeitgeschichte und berichten stattdessen über die Anfänge der Ausbreitung der Evangeliumsverkündigung.

Entstehen die Evangelien also außerhalb der flavischen Zeitgeschichte? Oder hat der flavische *Zeitgeist* die historiographische Darlegung der Evangeliumsbotschaft doch unterschwellig beeinflusst – und wenn ja, wie?<sup>63</sup> Sind die Evangelien gar anti-flavische Literatur? Thomas Baier schlägt diese Interpretation zuletzt vor und leistet damit einen Beitrag zum sog. *political reading* der Evangelien.<sup>64</sup> Er versteht die Blindenheilungen in

<sup>61</sup> Vgl. etwa GINSBERG / KRASNE (2018); vgl. auch einzelne Beiträge in BISSONE / FUCECCHI (2019).

<sup>62</sup> Sonst nur in Lk 14,31 im Rahmen eines Gleichnisses.

<sup>63</sup> Vgl. allgemein: PFEIFFER (2009) 126, der allerdings im Zeitalter der Flavier (nur) „einen Spiegel der römischen Kaiserzeit“ insgesamt erkennt.

<sup>64</sup> Eine Übersicht über die entsprechende, umfangliche Forschungsliteratur bietet zuletzt LAU (2021).

Mk 8,22-26 und 10,46-52, die sich als Parallelen zu den vespasianischen Heilungswundern im *Serapeum* in Alexandria lesen lassen (Tacitus *Hist.* 4, 81; Sueton *Vesp.* 7, 2; Dio Cassius 66, 8 – nicht erwähnt bei Josephus, aber vgl. *BJ* 7, 123!), als „parody of an audience scene“.<sup>65</sup> Baier leitet von diesen und anderen Szenen des Markusevangeliums (Mk 1,14; 8,27-30; 15,39) dessen Erzählabsicht wie folgt ab: „Jesus was deliberately designed as an Anti-Vespasian and the gospel as an ‚anti-euangelion“.<sup>66</sup> Doch diese Deutung greift aus vielerlei Gründen zu kurz. Zum einen verkennt sie die hintergründige Funktion der Erzählungen über Vespasian als Thaumaturg in Alexandria bei Tacitus, Sueton und Dio. Diese machen Vespasian nicht primär zum Wundertäter, sondern rekurrieren mit Hilfe der Wundererzählungen auf die Alexander-Zeit, die letztlich für den inner-römischen und hellenistisch-römischen Herrscherdiskurs, in dem die flavische Herrscherideologie mittels Intertextualität und Motivverknüpfungen aufgebaut und konterkariert wird, relevant sind.<sup>67</sup> Zum anderen liegen schon bei Markus zwar Bezüge zur politischen Zeitgeschichte vor, diese aber sind marginal (s.o.) und lassen kein spezifisches Interesse an der römischen Machtpolitik erkennen. Gerade in den Streitgesprächen mit den Jerusalemer Autoritäten geht es dem Evangelienschreiber zudem darum, Jesus von jedem möglichen Verdacht, ein Aufwührer gegen die römische Administration zu sein, zu entlasten (bes. Mk 12,13-17).<sup>68</sup> Ein *political reading* des Markusevangeliums also legt sich kaum nahe.

Gleichwohl hat der flavische *Zeitgeist* – wie ich meine – auf subtile Weise auf die Evangelienschreibung eingewirkt. Ihm mag geschuldet sein, dass die Evangelien *ihre eigenen* Gründungsgeschichten schaffen und so gewissermaßen in den frühkaiserzeitlichen Wettbewerb um das ‚beste Gründungsnarrativ‘ eintreten. Die Evangelien demonstrieren dabei eine

<sup>65</sup> BAIER (2020) 317.

<sup>66</sup> BAIER (2020) 319 – mit Hinweis auf EBNER (2003).

<sup>67</sup> BECKER (2006) 350ff., bes. 352.

<sup>68</sup> Vgl. SCORNAIENCHI (2016) bes. 344ff. und 407ff.

an die Christus-Gestalt gebundene kosmokratische Weltansicht, die sich nicht nur auf die augusteische Zeit berufen (Lk 2,1) oder auf die Alexanderzeit rekurren, sondern bis zur Schöpfung (Mk 13,19; Lk 3,38) zurückverweisen kann. So schafft Markus kein anti-flavisches Christus-Narrativ, sondern arbeitet die schon bei Paulus (z.B. Phil 2,6-11) bekannte Vorstellung aus, dass mit der *Kyriotes* Jesu der endgültige Einbruch der Endzeit, d.h. das Ende aller Geschichte, eingetroffen sei. Diese Vorstellung ist nicht anti-, aber auch nicht pro-flavisch, sondern bleibt autochthon: Für Markus bestimmt und ordnet das eschatologische Zeitempfinden im Horizont des mit Jesus von Nazareth angebrochenen Gottesreiches (Mk 1,14-15) die Gegenwart.

Dass und wie sich die markinische Darstellung letztlich weitgehend der zeit- und weltgeschichtlichen Bindungen entzieht, wird am Zugriff auf die geschichtlichen Akteure erkennbar: Die Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte nennen zwar Protagonisten als politisch und administrativ Verantwortliche für die Verurteilung und Hinrichtung Jesu und später auch der Apostel, und zwar auf Seiten der Römer und der Juden. Die Evangelien-schreiber zeigen damit auf, wie sich der Lauf der Evangeliumsverkündigung von Anfang an im Spannungsfeld von *παρρησία* (z.B. Mk 8,32; Apg 28,31) und *ψευδομαρτυρία, εἰρήνη* (z.B. Apg 9,31) und *στάσις* (z.B. Mk 15,7; Apg 19,40; 24,5) ereignete. Aus ebendieser Perspektive schreibt auch Lukas in der Apostelgeschichte die politischen Aspekte der Zeitgeschichte, wie sie sich in Jerusalem (z.B. Apg 12,1), Thessaloniki (Apg 17,6), Korinth (Apg 18,12ff.) oder Ephesus (Apg 19,23ff.) zugetragen hat, fort. Der Fokus der Evangelien liegt aber – anders als bei Josephus oder griechisch-römischen Historikern – nicht darauf, die politischen und administrativen Akteure der Zeitgeschichte zu charakterisieren, sondern Christus-Glaubende als diversifizierte *Gruppe* von Männern und Frauen in ihrem eigenen *Identitätsprofil* darzustellen. Die Evangelien-schreiber berichten, wie die Christus-Glaubenden – von außen als „Nachfolgende Jesu“ (z.B. Mk 14,67), *Χριστιανοί* (Apg 11,26; 26,28), „Auführer“

(Apg 21,38) oder Anhänger einer *hairesis* der Nazarener (Apg 24,5) wahrgenommen – letztlich zu weltweit (schon Mk 13,10), d.h. auch in der sog. paganen Umwelt tätigen Christus-Zeugen werden. „This sense of mission sets Christians apart from other religious groups, including Jews, in the early Roman empire”.<sup>69</sup> Vermutlich zielt das Profil, das sich die Christus-Glaubenden in den Evangelien selbst geben, auch darauf, gegenüber allen anderen frühjüdischen Gruppierungen (u.a. „Vierte Philosophie“), wie sie bei Josephus erwähnt werden (s.o.), unterscheidbar zu sein – und zwar in einem „innerjüdischen Familienstreit“ (Martin Hengel) und darüber hinaus.<sup>70</sup>

Insgesamt gilt: Alle fünf frühchristlichen Erzählwerke verzichten auf anti-römische Darstellung und tendieren eher dazu, die Ursachen von *ψευδομαρτυρία*, *στάσις* und *στάσις*-Vorwürfen den Juden (jüdisches Volk; aufrührerische Juden; jüdische Eliten) anzulasten (s. schon Paulus aber auch Josephus).<sup>71</sup> Werden die politisch-administrativen und die jüdisch-religiösen Institutionen als für die Christus-Glaubenden gleichermaßen bedrohlich beschrieben (z.B. Mk 13,9), so zeigt Lukas – unter Hinweis auf das römische Bürgerrecht des Paulus (z.B. Apg 16,37; 22,25-28) und dessen Rechtserwartung an das kaiserliche Gericht (Apg 25,9-12) – die Römer als potentielle Garanten weltlicher Gerechtigkeit (schon Mk 15,39 par.; Lk 23,47). Dass mit der flavischen Zeit eine Periode römischer Geschichte beginnt, in der es – wohl bis zu Decius – faktisch nicht mehr zu staatlich verordneten Christenverfolgungen kommt, könnte diese ‚optimistische‘ Perspektive auf die Römer<sup>72</sup> schon in den Evangelien mitbeeinflusst haben und sich dann in der weiteren Entwicklung von Markus zu Lukas niederschlagen.

<sup>69</sup> GOODMAN (2007) 493.

<sup>70</sup> HENGEL (1999/2002) 208 (kursiv).

<sup>71</sup> COHEN (2013) 7ff., sieht die anti-jüdische Tendenz in den frühchristlichen Schriften des 2. Jhs. im Zuge des „Partings of the Ways“ weiter wachsen.

<sup>72</sup> Vgl. GOODMAN (2007) 510.

### 3.5. Von der markinischen Endzeitgeschichte zur lukanischen Zeitgeschichte

Die Zeitgeschichte des Markus ist im wesentlichen Endzeitgeschichte: Mit dem Anbruch der Gottesherrschaft (Mk 1,14-15) ist die Erwartung des nahenden Weltenendes verbunden (Mk 13,24-27). Lukas transformiert mit seinen beiden Büchern die markinische *Vorlage* in eine fortdauernde, d.h. in die Zukunft hin offene Zeitgeschichtsschreibung: Paulus erreicht Rom als *caput mundi* – gleichwohl steht die weiterführende Mission  $\xi\omega\varsigma \epsilon\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\upsilon \tau\tilde{\eta}\varsigma \gamma\tilde{\eta}\varsigma$  (Apg 1,8), also bis nach Spanien, die der ‚Heidenapostel‘ selbst anstrebte (Röm 15,24-28), nach lukanischer Darstellung noch aus. Was für die in die Zukunft hin offene Makrostruktur der lukanischen Geschichtskonzeption gilt, lässt sich auch in der Mikrostruktur der Geschichtserzählung wiederfinden. So werden historiographische Fortentwicklungen vom frühesten Evangelienschreiber Markus zu Lukas als dem Verfasser des Doppelwerks erkennbar, die den Umgang mit der politischen ‚Außenwelt‘ und die Herstellung von Referentialität betreffen: Während Markus seine ereignisgeschichtliche Kausalkette rein intra-textuell (Mk 3,6) und meta-historisch (Mk 8,31:  $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ ) anlegt und seine Darstellung weitgehend selbstreferentiell gestaltet, baut Lukas seine Geschichtsdeutung *erstens* auf reichhaltigen intertextuellen Bezügen zur Septuaginta auf, die – den *Zeitgeist* flavischer Literaturproduktion treffend<sup>73</sup> – das Wirken Jesu als „Erfüllung“<sup>74</sup> der Schrift verstehen. Zugleich zeigt Lukas mittels fortgeschrittener satanologischer (Lk 4,13 und 22,3) und pneumatologischer (bes. Lk 3,21-22; 4,1-13; 4,14-15; 4,16-30) Interpretation, warum und wie Jesus als ‚Geisträger‘

<sup>73</sup> Vgl. MONTANARI / RENGAKOS (2020).

<sup>74</sup> Die lukanische Verwendung von  $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\omicron}\omega$  ist hier zentral (Lk 1,20; 4,21; 9,31; 24,44; Apg 1,16; 3,18; 13,27).  $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\omicron}\omega$  ist ein Lexem, das nur einmal bei Markus vorkommt (14,49 - 15,28 dagegen ist nach dem Zeugnis wichtiger Handschriften [Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus etc.] als spätere Einfügung in den Text, die durch die lukanische Parallele in Lk 22,37 beeinflusst ist, zu verstehen).

(Lk 4,16ff.) seine Mission bis zum Tod als Gerechter (Lk 23,47) erfüllt. Durch die sog. Synchronismen (Lk 1,5; 2,1; 3,1) verbindet Lukas *zweitens* die Evangelienerzählung mit der Lokal- und Weltgeschichte. Von Lk 1 bis zur Ankunft des Paulus in Rom (Apg 28,14), über die der Erzähler als Zeitgenosse berichtet (... εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην ἦλθαμεν), stellt die politische Weltgeschichte den Ermöglichungsraum für die Ausbreitung des Evangeliums dar. Zu dieser tendenziell positiven Sicht auf die römische Administration gehört, dass Lukas sich von jeder möglichen juristischen Interpretation der *causa poenae* Jesu, die er bei Markus vorfindet (Mk 15,26), distanziert (Lk 23,38).<sup>75</sup> Im Unterschied zu Markus schafft Lukas *drittens* genealogisches Denken (Eltern des Täufers und Jesu) mit heilsgeschichtlicher Perspektivierung (Stammbaum in Lk 3,23-38), das die Evangelienerzählung ursprungsgeschichtlich bis zu Adam zurückführt. *Viertens*: Lukas weitet seine zeitgeschichtliche Darstellung so, dass er eine Vielfalt frühchristlicher Netzwerkstrukturen und Topographien aufzeigt, die die umfassende Ausbreitung der Jesus-Zeugenschaft über Jerusalem hinaus im geopolitischen Raum der Kaiserzeit – und letztlich bis zum Kaiser in Rom selbst, d.h. in die Gegenwart des Erzählers hinein – veranschaulicht (Apg 1,8; 23,11). Lukas profiliert *fünftens* die Jesus-Christus-Zeit als fest umrissene ‚Epoche‘.<sup>76</sup> Liegt die ereignisgeschichtliche Darstellung bei Markus (Mk 1,4-16,8) noch in einem Spannungsbogen, der myth-historisch (Mk 1,4) beginnt und apokalyptisch bzw. wunderbar (Mk 16,1-8) endet, so nimmt die Ereignisgeschichte nach Lukas ihren konzisen Weg von „der rechten Seite des Räucheraltars“ im Jerusalemer Tempel (... ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τοῦ θυμιάματος: Lk 1,11) bis zur „Herberge“ des Paulus in Rom (... πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ζενίαν: Apg 28,23). Lukas weitet, präzisiert, historisiert und

<sup>75</sup> καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (Mk 15,26) ändert Lukas zu: ἦν δὲ καὶ ἐπιγραφή ἐπ’ αὐτῷ· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος (Lk 23,38).

<sup>76</sup> Zur lukanischen Darstellung der Evangelienerzählung als ‚Epochengeschichte‘ vgl. schon DIBELIUS (1953) 165 oder z.B. WOLTER (2009) 490.

veranschaulicht Raum und Zeit. Hatte Lukas noch in seinem Evangelium das aitiologische Grundanliegen des Markus geteilt, im Sinne einer Gründungserzählung darzulegen, „how the present came into being through the past“,<sup>77</sup> so verlagert er *sechstens* in der Apostelgeschichte seine Aufmerksamkeit ganz auf das τὰ νῦν (Apg 4,29; 17,30; 20,32; 27,22): Er berichtet nicht mehr nur über die Jesusverkündigung als Gründungsgeschichte – und zwar so, wie sie vor etwa 100 Jahren an der rechten Seite des Räucheraltars ihren Ausgang nahm –, sondern ist nun ganz in der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung als Darstellung der die Gegenwart bestimmenden geistgewirkten *acta apostolorum* angekommen.

#### 4. Die Entstehung frühchristlicher Zeitgeschichtsschreibung: Kurzes Résumé

Der vorliegende Beitrag hat die Evangelien der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung des 1. Jhs. zugeordnet. Dabei zeigt sich: Die Evangelien und *Acta* sind *einerseits* Quellen zur Zeitgeschichte und *andererseits* eigenständige Konzeptionen zur Zeitgeschichtsschreibung in flavischer Zeit. Als solche bieten sie wenig konkrete politische Zeitgeschichte. Sie leisten in erster Linie Missions- und Gemeindegeschichtsschreibung mit genuinem Anspruch. Sie präsentieren einen ereignisgeschichtlichen Zugriff auf die Anfänge der Evangeliumsverkündigung, die sie als Gründungsgeschichte verstehen und zur Profilbildung der Gruppe der Christus-Glaubenden im endzeitlichen Erwartungshorizont nutzen. Lukas stellt diese endzeitliche Erwartung, die das Markusevangelium dominiert, in den geschichtlichen Raum, d.h. er historisiert den markinischen Evangeliumsentwurf in vielfacher Weise und schafft in der Apostelgeschichte eine Zeitgeschichtsschreibung, an der der Autor nunmehr selbst beteiligt ist und

<sup>77</sup> ἕως τοῦ νῦν- und ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν-Wendungen im Markus- bzw. Lukasevangeliums als aitiologische Formen: WALTER (2020) bes. 2.



mitwirkt. Die Evangelien sind weder als pro-flavische noch als anti-flavische historiographische Erzählungen entstanden. Bei aller Wahrnehmung von Tendenzgeschichtsschreibung im *Bellum Judaicum* erweist sich eine solche Klassifizierung schon für Josephus als wenig zutreffend. Im Unterschied zu Josephus lösen die fünf frühchristlichen Geschichtserzählungen ihre Darstellung zudem weitgehend von der politischen Zeitgeschichte ab und realisieren ihr kosmokratisches Christus-Narrativ gewissermaßen in einer historiographischen ‚Parallelwelt‘, die endzeitlich perspektiviert (Markus) und später heilsgeschichtlich grundiert (Lukas) ist.

Im Blick auf die oben (s. unter 2.) systematisch zusammengestellten Aspekte von Zeitgeschichtsschreibung ergibt sich abschließend folgendes Bild: Die fünf frühchristlichen Prosaschriften konstruieren *erstens* einen direkten (Apg), indirekten (Mk) oder sekundär ergänzten Anspruch auf Zeitgenossenschaft. Sie sind *zweitens* epochal und kosmokratisch-universal angelegt, indem sie das Wirken Jesu von Nazareth als Zäsur im kosmischen Geschehen begreifen und nur lose an konkrete zeitpolitische Bezüge binden. Die Tempelzerstörung hat dabei das größte Gewicht. Ohne sich – in Zuspruch oder Widerspruch – an die Zeitpolitik und ihre Repräsentanten zu binden und sich so dem möglichen Verdacht der ‚flattery‘ auszusetzen,<sup>78</sup> lassen die frühchristlichen Geschichtserzählungen gleichwohl flavischen *Zeitgeist* erkennen, den Lukas – über Markus hinaus – produktiv nutzt. Die fünf frühchristlichen Prosaschriften schaffen *drittens* eine eigene Zeitordnung. Dabei transformiert Lukas die markinische Endzeitgeschichte in eine in die Zukunft hin offene Heilsgeschichte. In ihrem aitiologischen Bestreben rekurrieren sie *viertens* auf die Zeitenfolge und konstruieren eine ereignisgeschichtliche

<sup>78</sup> Im antiken historiographischen Diskurs wurde gegenüber der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung immer wieder der Verdacht der „flattery“ gegenüber den Herrschenden erhoben (Cic. *Leg.* 1, 3, 8; Plin. *Ep.* 5, 8, 12ff.; Lucian. *Hist. conscr.* 13). Diesem Verdacht sah sich auch Josephus ausgesetzt – vgl. MASON (2001) 148. Markus und Lukas bleiben sparsam in ihren Bezügen auf die politische Zeitgeschichte und erweisen sich auch darin als weder pro- noch anti-flavisch.

Darbietung, die „von früher nach heute“ reicht. So leisten die fünf frühchristlichen Geschichtserzählungen einen genuinen Beitrag zur Zeitgeschichtsschreibung im 1. Jh. und bleiben als vielgestaltige Sammlung von *Apomnemoneumata* doch autochthon.

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## DISCUSSION

*G. Schepens:* Zu Beginn Ihres sehr interessanten Vortrags charakterisieren Sie die vier Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte als eine Gattung *sui generis*, als Erzählungen, die „ereignisgeschichtliche Abläufe konstruieren“ und in dieser Hinsicht der antiken Geschichtsschreibung in einem weiteren Sinne zuzurechnen sind. Ich möchte die Frage stellen, wie wir diesen Begriff *sui generis* interpretieren sollten und insbesondere, ob diese frühchristlichen Werke im Vergleich zur säkularen griechischen Geschichtsschreibung nicht in erster Linie als Glaubenszeugnisse charakterisiert werden sollten. Ich denke dabei an das, was Paulus in 1. Korinther 15 in aller Offenheit eingesteht, nämlich dass der christliche Glaube mit der Auferstehung Jesu steht oder fällt. In dieser Hinsicht glaube ich, dass der aitiologisch-historische Diskurs der fünf Prosaerzählungen, wenn sie das „Wie, Wann, Wo und Warum“ des Wirkens Jesu darlegen, nur in einem sekundären Sinn eine Gründungsgeschichte des Glaubens an Christus schaffen kann. Auch die lukanische Auffassung von „Zeitgeschichte“ ist *sui generis*. Das erste Kapitel der Apostelgeschichte macht deutlich, dass nur die (kurze) Restzeit bis zur Parusie gemeint ist: Es ist die Zeit der Verkündigung, die Zeit der Kirche, die auf das Ende der Zeit ausgerichtet ist. Auch hier wird ein wesentlicher Unterschied zu dem offenen Zeitbegriff der antiken *historia continua* deutlich. Andererseits ist klar, wie Sie überzeugend dargelegt haben, dass Lukas auf Methoden (Augenzeugen, Wir-Berichte) und Darstellungsformen (Reden) der weltlichen Geschichtsschreibung zurückgreift, um seine Botschaft möglichst überzeugend und wirkungsvoll in die heidnische Welt zu tragen. Hier möchte ich fragen, wie die „Wir-Berichte“ der Apostelgeschichte im Besonderen zu verstehen sind.

*E.-M. Becker:* Die Frage, ob die „Wir-Berichte“ auf den realen Verfasser der Apostelgeschichte Bezug nehmen, ob sie rein fiktionale Beigaben oder „Überbleibsel“ der Quellen sind, die Lukas verwendet hat, ist in der Forschung umstritten. Was wir sehen können, ist: Durch die „Wir-Berichte“ entsteht der Eindruck einer Geschichtserzählung in Zeitgenossenschaft. Erstmals Lukas expliziert den Bezug zur „Zeitgeschichte“ in der Apostelgeschichte und tritt so noch entschiedener, als es ihm im Evangelium konzeptionell möglich war, in die Perspektive einer *historia continua* ein. Gleichzeitig baut die Apostelgeschichte auf der Evangelienschreibung auf: Die Evangelien setzen ein kosmokratisches Christus-Narrativ voraus – und sind insofern, wie Sie sagen, Produkt von „Glaubenszeugnissen“. Allerdings beschränken sich die Evangelien nicht auf kerygmatische Rede, sondern entwickeln im Unterschied zu Paulus in 1 Kor 15 eine prä-historiographische Darstellungsform.

*R. Nicolai:* I would like to ask a question about the possibility of approaching New Testament texts with the tools of literary genre theory, in particular by using the notion of genre strategy developed by Gian Biagio Conte (*Generi e lettori. Lucrezio, l'elegia d'amore, l'enciclopedia di Plinio*, Milano 1991). The idea of strategy goes beyond the mechanicalness of Wilhelm Kroll's approach, the "Kreuzung der Gattungen", and helps to understand precisely those genres in which different functions and strategies organically merge. In particular, it is evident that the new communication needs arising in the context of Christian culture lead to the creation of innovative literary genres. The same may be true of the *Bellum Judaicum*, in which the Thucydidean structure is intertwined with apologetic and self-praise functions, giving space to a typical form of Jewish culture such as prophecy.

*E.-M. Becker:* G. Biagio Contes Beiträge zur Gattungsanalyse, aber auch zur frühkaiserzeitlichen Literaturgeschichte sind enorm bereichernd und genau in der Weise, die Sie angedeutet haben,

weiter zu bedenken. Zugleich ist der (literaturwissenschaftliche) Diskurs über Gattungstheorie(n) so weit gefächert, dass – im Zeitalter verschiedener *turns* – verschiedene Theoriebildungen oder Methoden neben einander zu stehen kommen. Während ich in früheren Publikationen literaturwissenschaftliche Fragen und Klassifizierungsmodelle eigens diskutiert habe (vgl. besonders in: *Der Früheste Evangelist*, Tübingen 2017), habe ich in dem vorliegenden Beitrag beabsichtigt, daraus weitergehende Folgerungen abzuleiten und nun für eine allgemeine Verhältnisbestimmung der frühchristlichen Prosaliteratur zur „Zeitgeschichte“ und Zeitgeschichtsschreibung des 1. Jhs. vorzunehmen.

*B. Bleckmann*: Der Vergleich von fünf (bzw., wenn man die Apostelgeschichte ausklammert) vier zeitgenössischen Berichten über ein- und denselben Zeitraum ist in der Tat im höchsten Maße instruktiv. Die Existenz konkurrierender Darstellungen scheint mir in der Geschichte der Historiographie durchaus der Regelfall zu sein. Für die Zeit ab 411 sind es, je nachdem wie man sich in dieser Frage entscheidet, drei bis vier Autoren, nämlich der Autor der *Hell. Oxy.*, Theopomp und/oder Kratippos, Xenophon. Ähnliches liegt bei den Alexanderhistorikern vor oder gilt selbst für die Geschichte der Reichskrise, die von Dexippos, Philostratos, Nikostratos von Trapezunt, dem Profanhistoriker Eusebios beschrieben worden ist. Wie sich diese Historiker zueinander verhalten, ist nicht immer klar. Es kann sein, dass es sich um unabhängig voneinander entstandene Berichte handelt, es kann aber auch sein, dass sie gegeneinander gerichtet waren, und Gegenversionen in polemischer Auseinandersetzung entstanden bzw. in der Absicht, einen Vorgängerbericht zu korrigieren. Besteht vielleicht eine weitere Vergleichbarkeit mit der Forschung zur antiken Historiographie, in der auch immer die Fragmente zusätzlich zu berücksichtigen sind, wenn man neben den vollständig erhaltenen Autoren auch an rekonstruierte Traditionen (Logienquelle) oder an die apokryphen Evangelien denkt?



*E.-M. Becker:* Diese Forschungsperspektive ist in der Tat lohnend. Sie würde es ermöglichen, die Logienquelle Q oder noch später entstandene, sog. apokryphe Evangelien oder Apostelakten nicht allein auf ihren „Traditionsgehalt“ hin zu lesen, sondern als pluriforme, ggf. miteinander konkurrierende literarische Entwürfe zu einer frühchristlichen Zeitdeutung und Zeitgeschichtsschreibung auszuwerten.

*A.M. Kemezis:* I appreciate especially the light your paper gives for the Flavian context of the Evangelists and Josephus, which has given me a lot to think about. Also, however, I was reminded of the Gospels' place in an internal narrative sequence, which made me think particularly of what Roberto Nicolai has said about a historical cycle. Thus, I am wondering to what extent the Evangelists see themselves, or are seen by later canonizers, as similarly continuing a sequence of narratives going back into the Hebrew Bible, including perhaps Ezra and Nehemiah, but also including prophetic narratives going into the future. Given the different self-positionings of those various texts relative to their subject matter, how is the 'contemporariness' of the Gospels a distinctive or familiar feature within that narrative tradition?

*E.-M. Becker:* Die Evangelien greifen auf verschiedene literarische Traditionen israelitischer bzw. jüdischer Zeit- und Geschichtsdeutung zurück – historiographische, prophetische, apokalyptische. Gleichwohl ist ihre eigene Erzählkonzeption trotz Endzeiterwartung zeitlich-linear und kausal angelegt und setzt eine christologische, d.h. theologische oder kerygmatische Prämisse, die vorhin auch Guido Schepens zu Recht benannt hat, voraus. Die Evangelien *imaginieren* zwar Zeitgenossenschaft zu den von ihnen erzählten Ereignissen, aber entziehen sich jeder möglichen Referenz auf eine *explizite*, in die Ereignisgeschichte involvierte Verfassergestalt – anders als dies etwa in Esr 9,1; Neh 1,1ff. (II Esdr 9,1; 11,1 LXX) der Fall ist.

*J. Marincola:* I very much enjoyed your paper, which helps to set the historical thought of the early Christians in its historical and literary context. My question has to do with Luke-Acts in specific and to what degree you think Luke-Acts offers perhaps something more in terms of *Zeitgeschichte* than Matthew, Mark, and John. As you know, Eusebius speaks of Luke in terms very similar to those we see used by the classical historians themselves: at *Hist. eccl.* 3, 4, 6 he says that Luke's Gospel is the result of having talked with eyewitnesses, while Acts is composed, 'no longer from evidence of hearing but that of his own eyes'. If we are thinking in terms of history and of contemporary history in particular, does Acts provide something unique which is not to be found in the Gospels? Or should we think of it more or less in the same terms as the Gospels?

*E.-M. Becker:* Eusebius interpretiert die Evangelien und die Apostelgeschichte vor allem im Lichte möglicher Bezüge zu Personaltraditionen, die in die apostolische Zeit zurückreichen können. Im Unterschied zu Eusebius lassen wir im Rahmen der modernen Bibelkritik jedoch offen, wer „Lukas“ war oder wer die Apostelgeschichte verfasst hat. Was wir sehen können, ist: Erst in der Apostelgeschichte zeigt sich deren Autor im eigentlichen Sinne als „Zeithistoriker“ – ein wichtiges Element seiner Zeitgeschichtsschreibung sind die schon erwähnten „Wir-Berichte“ mit teils auto-pathetischem Gehalt. Allerdings setzt die Apostelgeschichte ihrerseits das Evangelium bzw. die Evangelienform konzeptionell und narrativ voraus und stellt sich bewusst in Kontinuität dazu (Apg 1,1-2) – ohne die Evangelien ist die Apostelgeschichte *nicht* denkbar. So könnte man das Verhältnis der *Acta* zu den Evangelien wie folgt beschreiben: Der konzeptionelle Neuansatz der Apostelgeschichte liegt darin, dass „Lukas“ die zeitgeschichtliche Perspektive, die das Markusevangelium mit seiner Fokussierung auf das Jahr 30 wählt, nunmehr als zeitbegrenzt ausweist und seinerseits ‚aktualisiert‘. Im Lichte der Fortschreibung der Geschichte, wie „Lukas“ sie in den *Acta* betreibt, verengt sich dann die Evangelienerzählung

– anders, als noch von Markus selbst beabsichtigt – zu einer Art Gründungsnarrativ. Bereits in seiner Adaption des Markusevangeliums im Evangelium vollzieht Lukas diesen Perspektivenwandel. Mit seinem Doppelwerk stellt er dann die Verbindung von aitiologischer Erzählung und Zeitgeschichtsschreibung so her, dass er nunmehr die Gegenwart (τὰ νῦν: vgl. auch Apg 4,29; 17,30; 20,32; 27,22) zum eigentlichen Referenzpunkt der Geschichtsbetrachtung macht.

*N. Luraghi:* Your fascinating reconstruction of the early history of the Gospels made me think of the formation of a narrative corpus based on oral tradition, a framework in which the plurality of the Gospels would not be surprising at all. That made me wonder to what extent the study of the Gospels has been open to methods and insights from the study of orality, of popular narrative and of the folktale. A second point I would ask you to address is your use of the concept of *Zeitgeist*. This is of course a very old concept in the study of history and culture, and I wonder whether it might not be a bit too old. It is a notion that goes back long before the medial culture we inhabit today. In concrete terms, how would such a thing as a Flavian *Zeitgeist* be formed, and how would it circulate? How would it penetrate the story-telling milieu from which the Gospels originate? I am a bit concerned that, using this concept, we may have the false impression that such questions have been answered already. In other words, could it be that thinking in terms of *Zeitgeist* might make us not ask certain questions which would actually improve our understanding of the cultural influences that shaped the Gospels?

*E.-M. Becker:* Die Frage nach der mündlichen Vorgeschichte der Evangelien ist *die* Grundfrage der Evangelienforschung schlechthin – seit dem (ausgehenden) 18. Jh. bis in die Gegenwart: Sie treibt J.G. Herders Frage nach einem mündlichen Urevangelium ebenso an wie die Formgeschichte im frühen 20. Jh. (R. Bultmann; M. Dibelius) und die Memorialforschung

bis in das 21. Jh. hinein (z.B. A. Kirk / T. Thatcher [Hrsg.], *Memory, Tradition and Text*, 2005). Die Leitfrage dabei ist jeweils im Grunde dieselbe: Was ist in der sog. „tunnel period“ (C.R. Holladay), also zwischen ca. 30 und 70 n. Chr., mit der Jesusüberlieferung geschehen? Welche Traditionen wurden wie, wo, von wem und in welcher Weise geformt – welche Tradentenkreise in Galiläa oder Jerusalem haben so „oral history“ (z.B. W.H. Kelber; J.D.G. Dunn; S. Byrskog) produziert? Diese Forschungsdiskussionen haben immer auch dazu geführt, letztlich den Ansatzpunkt der Interpretation ausschließlich bei den literarischen Endprodukten – den Evangelien selbst – zu suchen. Ich versuche gewissermaßen einen ‚Mittelweg‘ aufzuzeigen, indem ich die Evangelien (und *Acta*) als *literary memory* verstehe und der frühkaiserzeitlichen Historiographie in einem weiteren Sinne zuordne. Zu Ihrer zweiten, ebenso wichtigen Frage: ich sehe, dass auch Hervé Inglebert die Frage nach dem *Zeitgeist* aufnimmt?

*H. Inglebert:* On peut sans doute préciser le questionnement sur le *Zeitgeist* flavien. Outre le fait qu'employer le terme *Zeitgeist* suppose de connaître l'historiographie du mot et de ses usages dans ses divers contextes depuis plus de deux siècles, sa valeur totalisante pose problème, car il est difficile de trouver un point commun à la diversité des mentalités d'une époque. Peut-être pourrait-on dire qu'il existait trois relations des chrétiens vivant sous les Flaviens à leur temps. Il y aurait d'abord leur position face au discours officiel du pouvoir de justification de Rome et de la nouvelle dynastie que l'on peut trouver exprimé chez Flavius Josèphe. Ensuite, il y a le contexte historique judéen des évangélistes : comment comprendre la destruction du Temple ? quel impact a-t-elle eu sur la compréhension rétrospective du rôle de Jésus ? Les chrétiens n'ont pas été les seuls à se poser la question de la signification des événements de 70 : les Flaviens y ont vu l'occasion d'un triomphe légitimateur, des auteurs judéens ont tenté de lui donner un sens par une production apocalyptique, Flavius Josèphe a voulu affirmer que la vie du

peuple juif continuait, les rabbis ont fait de même en substituant l'étude de la Torah aux pratiques culturelles. Qu'en est-il pour les chrétiens à la fois dans les Évangiles, où Jésus peut se substituer au Temple, mais aussi dans l'Apocalypse de Jean. Enfin, les rédacteurs des Évangiles ont pu reprendre des éléments narratifs significatifs disponibles à cette époque sans qu'ils soient nécessairement reliés aux Flaviens. Cela permettrait peut-être de distinguer deux types de *Zeitgeist* : un accidentel, lié à la synchronicité, et un plus essentiel, lié à une contemporanéité politique, religieuse ou culturelle partagée.

*E.-M. Becker*: *Zeitgeist* ist in der Tat am besten als eine Art ‚Suchbegriff‘ zu verstehen: Lassen sich – so lautet der Suchauftrag – die mentalen und intellektuellen, psychologischen oder emotionalen Strömungen einer Epoche mittels eines vermuteten Konvergenzpunktes (*point commun*) beschreiben? Oder ist der *Zeitgeist* oder das *Zeitgefühl* jeweils ein Singularetantum, hinter dem sich eine diffuse, möglicherweise widerstreitende Vielfalt an geistigen Bewegungen verbirgt? Die sog. flavische Zeit bildet – und das scheint unbestritten – eine fest umrissene geschichtliche Epoche in der frühen Kaiserzeit (69-96 n. Chr.), die zugleich in komplexer Weise mit der Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes und der Stadt Jerusalem – zugleich Haftpunkt für das sog. Urchristentum (s. Apg 1-8) – verbunden ist. Wie aber erklärt sich der Bezug auf die Zeitgeschichte, den die Evangelien vornehmen, bei gleichzeitigem Eintauchen in die ‚Parallelwelt‘ ihres Christus-Narrativs? Die von Ihnen vorgeschlagene, im Kern aristotelisch geprägte Unterscheidung von einem *Zeitgeist* „accidentel“ und einem *Zeitgeist* „essentiel“ könnte dem Suchbegriff zusätzliche analytische Schärfe verleihen: Sie könnte zu beschreiben helfen, wie die frühchristliche Bewegung in *contemporanéité* zum Aufstieg der Flavier einerseits in die zeitspezifischen Diskurse der ‚Außenwelt‘ eingebunden ist, andererseits aber eingeführte *narratifs significatifs* – etwa in Form von Wunderberichten – aufgreift und nutzt. Vielleicht müssten wir noch eine weitere Unterscheidung treffen. Denn dass die

frühchristliche Bewegung diese *narratifs* im Zuge ihrer eigenen *identity formation* genuin ausgestaltet, zeugt drittens davon, dass sie von einem *Zeitgeist* „distinct“ angetrieben war: dem gruppenspezifisch definierten missionarischen Antrieb globaler „Christus-Zeugenschaft“ (Apg 1,8).

## VII

ADAM M. KEMEZIS

### LIVING RULERS AND THE END DATES OF ROMAN IMPERIAL HISTORIANS

#### ABSTRACT

Historians in the Roman imperial period who narrated events of their own lifetimes encountered a quandary regarding the emperor or dynasty on the throne at the time their histories came out. Authors often claim that it is necessary to end before the current reign, or in some way rationalize their continuing into it. This article examines how authors discuss their own choices of end point, and in particular the political implications of describing or avoiding the current reign. After a brief survey of common practices and tropes from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, I consider three particularly notable examples: Tacitus, Velleius and Cassius Dio. Tacitus in the preface to the *Histories* defers writing about the current dynasty in a way that, while expressing support for Trajan, still rejects his claim to have created open political discourse. Velleius, in devoting considerable space and adulation to Tiberius, appears to be doing the opposite of Tacitus. However, he remains reluctant to give a full narrative of Tiberius' actual reign, preferring to stress his role as heir apparent, and thus by implication the absence of such a figure at the time of writing. Dio's massive work, on the other hand, includes several statements about its ever-changing end point, which can be read as a narrative of the historian's response to the disintegration of the political culture within which he originally conceived his project.

An anecdote is told of how the Marquis de Bièvre, a noted eighteenth-century practitioner and theorist of the pun, was once put on the spot by Louis XV, who called on the courtier to make a spontaneous *calembour* about him. Bièvre supposedly

responded in protest “Sire, vous n’êtes pas un sujet !”<sup>1</sup> The line, which was adapted in the 1996 film *Ridicule*, is apocryphal and perhaps not even a pun, but it does seem to express the situation of Roman historical authors when it came to writing about the current emperor. As T.D. Barnes has put it apropos of Cassius Dio, “history was written about dead emperors: the living deserved panegyric”.<sup>2</sup> Barnes’ dictum is not meant as an absolute rule, and one can immediately think of historians who do in some way deal with living emperors, but it still expresses an important truth. Historians in Antiquity do often claim or imply that history, at least what they consider “proper history”, cannot take as its subject the emperor who is ruling when the work goes into circulation.<sup>3</sup> Authors often bring this up in discussions of the end points of their histories, because they are breaking off at a point just before the current reign begins. For modern scholars, this often serves as an informal principle in estimating the end dates of incomplete historical works or the publication dates of complete ones.

In this piece, however, I want to look less at the practices authors refer to in their statements than at the statements themselves, and in particular at what one could say by explicitly declining to write about the current emperor, or writing about him differently. My thesis, briefly, is that the various ways in which historians approach this question are in themselves forms of political commentary, just as the Bièvre anecdote demonstrates

<sup>1</sup> The anecdote is recounted in the edition of Bièvre-related material by BAECQUE (2000) 7-8, 139.

<sup>2</sup> BARNES (1984) 252. For a full and recent consideration of the issue, see KALDELLIS (2017), who supplies important qualifications to the idea that the current emperor was off-limits.

<sup>3</sup> I have not been able in this essay to properly take into account the complexities of ‘publishing’ in the Roman world and above all the question of partial dissemination through readings, draft-sharing and so on. For a provocative overview of these issues as they apply to Roman historiography, see MASON (2005). My concern here is mainly with authors’ rhetorical self-presentation, and most (though not all) of the relevant authors take a quasi-Thucydidean stance that privileges anonymous readers encountering a fixed text, possibly in remote posterity, over an immediate audience dealing with a dynamic text.



how a *recusatio* can be a way of performing the speech-act one affects to decline. Thus, I will begin with a brief and un-systematic survey of our evidence for writing about living emperors from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, but mainly I will be looking at three key examples of how the “living emperor” question is handled, specifically (in order): Tacitus, Velleius Paterculus and Cassius Dio. Each of these authors turns the literary question of how to write or not write about a living emperor into a comment on current political events.

## 1. Overview

The “living emperor” question is in part only a special case of an issue common to the reportage of contemporary political events in Antiquity. Writing about the contemporary scene gives one the opportunity to please or offend powerful people. This in turn falls under the issues of impartiality and bias that go back through all of ancient historiography to Herodotus and Thucydides.<sup>4</sup> Roman imperial authors often speak of histories as causing inconvenient offense to figures portrayed (or not portrayed) therein, and they speak of other authors inappropriately seeking to flatter and please.<sup>5</sup> Such passages may be read as applying in part to the emperor, even if he is not named or implicitly singled out.

There are aspects of Roman political culture that make emperors unique as subjects for historical narrative. One is the central place that expressions of consensus played in Roman monarchical ideology.<sup>6</sup> A Roman emperor, more than most monarchs, needed all his subjects to affirm, actively and constantly, that

<sup>4</sup> For overviews taking in both Greek and Roman discourses of historiographical bias, see LUCE (1989) and MARINCOLA (1997) 158-174.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., HOR. *Carm.* 2, 1; PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 8, 12; AMM. MARC. 26, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Important explorations of the role of consensus in the Roman monarchy include ANDO (2000) and (with reference to historiography particularly) LOBUR (2008).

he was their desired ruler. This required universal acceptance of the emperor's chosen narrative of himself and made it difficult for a regime to tolerate alternative versions of the recent past, including the current emperor but also dynastic predecessors if he was using them as a major ideological prop. Thus, a tension emerges in literary and political culture: high-status literature was an important resource for emperors to disseminate their preferred narrative, but for many genres, including historiography, the rhetorical authority that made them valuable to those in power came precisely from an author's claim to have access to a truth independent of power.

This is a circle that many authors did not try to square, and thus there is a common pattern in which historical works stop at a point within living memory but before the current reign or dynasty. The paradigmatic cases here are Tacitus and Suetonius, who write under Trajan and Hadrian but end their historical coverage with Domitian's death and seemingly minimal references to the new dynasty.<sup>7</sup> The same pattern is harder to discern in Severan or Constantinian contemporary history, though it perhaps applies to Marius Maximus.<sup>8</sup> The Eusebian *Life of Constantine*, written immediately after that ruler's death, is a very different case given its affinities with encomium. The most explicit examples, however, are found in the late fourth century. The short-form histories of Eutropius and Festus and the preface to Jerome's *Chronici canones* all end with brief notes that the author will not continue into the reign of the current emperor, at any rate in this work.<sup>9</sup> They all indicate, with similar

<sup>7</sup> See SUET. *Dom.* 23, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Maximus ended his emperor-biographies likely with Elagabalus, for which see BIRLEY (1997), though Levick and Cornell (*FRHist* 101) raise the possibility of Caracalla. While we have no solid information for when they were first circulated, the reign of Alexander seems intuitively probable. Herodian, who ends with Gordian III's accession in 238, is more of an open case, and I must accept the arguments of KALDELLIS (2017) 51-52, with n. that I and other scholars have not made an adequate case for excluding circulation during Gordian's reign. See KEMEZIS (2014) 302-304, with further refs.

<sup>9</sup> EUTR. 10, 18, 3; FESTUS *Brev.* 30; HIERONYM. *Chron. can., Praef.* p. 7, 3-9 HELM.

vocabulary, that the current emperor's deeds require a grander style, which is usually taken to mean panegyric. This self-conscious *topos* then finds its way into both Ammianus and the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>10</sup> What is interesting about the latter two authors, however, is that they both use markedly Tacitean language in framing a *recusatio* about a current emperor.<sup>11</sup> Since Ammianus and the *HA* both likely position themselves as continuing from where Tacitus and Suetonius left off, it seems as if the Domitian-Nerva break has become a key *locus* for considering this problem.

Tacitus and Suetonius, however, were continuing a discourse that had gone on in Latin historiography since Augustus' time. This much is clear from Tacitus' own writings, in particular the prefaces to the *Histories* and *Annals*. The former of these will be examined in detail below, but the latter has often been the starting point for discussions of Julio-Claudian historiography (*Ann.* 1, 1, 2). Tacitus posits a pattern of mendacity (*res falsae ... compositae sunt*) in which reigns of living emperors are recounted out of fear (i.e., one assumes, in positive terms, though adulation is only mentioned in a slightly different context), whereas then after their death one gets negative accounts by people who have stored-up grievances (*recentibus odiis*). All contemporary history under emperors has a built-in credibility deficit, because both positive and negative statements about rulers are open to charges of bias.

Naturally, Tacitus makes it sound as if this is a problem his predecessors had failed to solve or even really recognize. However,

<sup>10</sup> In Ammianus' case, as the last words of the *Res gestae* (31, 16, 9), and in the *HA* at *Quadr.* 15, 10, referring to Diocletian and his successors. On these passages, see PASCHOUD (2005) and KELLY (2007).

<sup>11</sup> For Ammianus, see the same passage cited above (31, 16, 9) with KELLY (2007) 223. In the *HA*, the key Tacitean reference is to the phrase *si uita suppeditet* (*Tac. Hist.* 1, 1, 4), which is repeated in different forms four times in the *HA* (*Alex.* 64, 2, *Arlin.* 24, 9 and *Prob.* 1, 5 and 24, 8). All the instances refer to projected literary work and two (*Alex.* 64, 2 and *Prob.* 1, 5) describe works that, depending on ambiguous wording, might include emperors who are current as of the *HA*'s fictive composition period and whom the *HA* does not in fact cover.

we have enough evidence for Julio-Claudian and Flavian historiography to see that earlier authors were conscious of the pattern Tacitus identifies, and in some instances tried to position themselves as exceptions to it. We are somewhat handicapped in this by a lack of data about end points or composition dates for the authors in question, but we can see several lost authors who probably fall into the pattern of publishing after an emperor's death. In the Tiberian era, this applies probably to Aufidius Bassus and Servilius Nonianus, and almost certainly to Seneca the Elder.<sup>12</sup> It seems likely that a similar pattern and similar complications affected the Neronian-to-Flavian-era historians Cluvius Rufus and Fabius Rusticus, who recounted Nero's reign and likely ended their narratives at some point during the subsequent civil wars without covering Vespasian or Titus in any detail.<sup>13</sup> Their coeval Pliny the Elder, by contrast, wrote a history going from Nero (if not earlier) down to some point after the Flavian victory in the civil wars. It was presumably favorable to the new dynasty, but (as he tells Titus and the readers of the *Natural History*) he withheld it from circulation until after his own death "lest it be supposed that in life I made any concession to the desire to ingratiate myself" (*NH praef.* 20 = *FRHist* 80 T5 *ne quid ambitioni dedisse uita iudicaretur*).<sup>14</sup> Pliny is certainly aware of the credibility problems referred to by Tacitus, and we can assume the same was true for the other Julio-Claudian and Flavian authors

<sup>12</sup> For a survey of non-Velleian historiography under Tiberius, see now CORNELL (2020) and other essays in the same volume for Seneca. For specifics on the other two authors, see introductions in *FRHist* (78 and 79, both by Levick), with references, as well as NOË (1984) 78-93 and DEVILLERS (2003) 10-34. The case is weakest for Bassus, who is sometimes seen as finishing with Sejanus's death in 31 and circulating his work not long after (see Levick in *FRHist*, p. 1, 520).

<sup>13</sup> MURISON (1999) 12-20 is a convenient and well-informed survey of bibliography on these authors with some speculation regarding the later Flavian period. See also relevant sections of NOË (1984), Levick's various introductions in *FRHist* and TOWNEND (1964).

<sup>14</sup> For the end date, see Levick's *FRHist* introduction. The *NH* preface, which dates itself to 77 or 78 (*praef.* 3), refers to the history as *iam pridem peracta*.

just cited.<sup>15</sup> The writing and circulation of many historical works would have involved sometimes complicated calculations about the respective ages of the author and the ruler, as well as prospects for the succession.

Having established that Tacitus is part of a larger discourse, however, we also need to define the limits of that discourse, which turn out to be substantial. All of the authors mentioned above write in Latin. All of them write either lives of emperors or political history that covers internal as well as external events in a continuous narrative. Many of them are senators, and even figures like Livy and Seneca identify as full members of a self-consciously “Roman” political community. This combination of factors heavily determines how they approach the “living emperor” question, i.e., how they can maintain their authority as truth-tellers and their role as members of the political community in the face of a massive power imbalance relative to the subject of their narrative. These factors are going to work differently for those less fully implicated in the political community, such as Nicolaus writing about Augustus or Josephus writing about Titus.<sup>16</sup> They will work differently for authors writing more limited monographs about external wars, such as the historians of the 160s that Lucian envisions in the *How to Write History*, or even Pliny the Elder in his *Bella Germaniae* as opposed to the full-scale history. Perhaps the strangest case is that of Aurelius Victor, who, unlike fellow breviarists Eutropius and Festus, ended his work with praise for a living emperor, Constantius II (*Caes.* 42), just as he found himself suddenly having to pay court to Constantius’ rival Julian.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This may well include Livy, if we take as accurate the note on *Per.* 121 that that (and subsequent?) books *editus post excessum Augusti dicitur*. It is also possible, however, that the note represents the inference of later readers.

<sup>16</sup> Josephus, in fact, makes a virtue of having sent drafts of his *Judaeen War* to Titus and to King Agrippa II, and criticizes a rival for only circulating his history after both those men were dead. See *Vit.* 361-366, cf. *CAP.* 1, 50-52.

<sup>17</sup> On the situation of composition, see now ANTIQUEIRA (2021), who questions the extent of Victor’s praise for Constantius.

As this example illustrates, the entire viability of contemporary history not including the reigning emperor depends on the contingencies of succession. Julio-Claudian historians could write as they did because each emperor after Augustus had his memory either repudiated or neglected by his successor. Civil wars, including those of 69, broke dynastic continuity and generated their own kinds of historiography, either propagandistic, as with Aelius Antipater's work on Severus, or dissenting and even dangerous, as with the works of Labienus and Cremutius Cordus in the late Augustan period. Long stretches of dynastic continuity, above all under the Antonines, give no scope for such a model, or indeed seemingly any other. The three studies that will make up the rest of the article were chosen as the most extensive examples in surviving imperial historiography, down to the Severans at least, of someone trying to write about a living emperor from within the Roman political community. All three authors are senators, all three write at least to some degree about internal political events. Dio does write in Greek, but has unusually strong affinities with the Latin historiographical tradition. By the arguments given above, they ought to find it difficult to write about a living emperor, and indeed, as we will see, none of them really succeeds. Their reasons, however, turn out to be interestingly different, as do the statements that their failures succeed in making.

## 2. Tacitus and the Post-Flavian moment

Tacitus is, as noted, the paradigmatic case for not writing about a living emperor, and the previous section has considered in particular the *Annals* preface. In this section I will be looking in detail at the opening to the *Histories*. This preface is critical for the overall picture it presents of emperors and historians, but especially for Tacitus' reference to a future account of the reigns of Nerva and Trajan. The *Histories* preface begins, after its consular date, with a summary history of Roman

historiography.<sup>18</sup> Those who wrote the history of the *populus Romanus* did so “with eloquence and freedom in the same measure” (*pari eloquentia ac libertate*) until Actium. After that, truth (*ueritas*) was weakened principally by “indulgence in flattery, or conversely by hatred of those in power” (*libidine assentandi aut rursus odio aduersus dominantes*). Tacitus explains that both these constitute neglect of future generations (*neutris cura posteritatis*), but that while readers intuitively detect and reject an ingratiating author (*ambitionem scriptoris*), spleen can be mistaken for courageous free speech (*malignitati falsa species libertatis inest*). Unlike in the *Annals*, Tacitus does not explicitly say the flattery will be directed at living emperors or dynasties, and the abuse at recently dead or defunct ones, but the logic does still seem to correspond to the moves we have seen from Pliny, Seneca and others.

As Tacitus then turns to his own work, readers naturally ask how he will position himself as an exception. He first acknowledges (*non abnuerim*) that his career was neither helped nor harmed by Galba, Otho or Vitellius, and advanced by all three Flavians (1, 1, 3). Still, he adds, “one who is committed to unswerving honesty must not speak of anyone with love or from hatred” (*sed incorruptam fidem professis neque amore quisquam et sine odio dicendus est*). If one maps this sequence of thought back on to Tacitus’ earlier logic, the implication is that he is concerned, based on the content of his work, that readers will suspect he is writing from *amor* towards the Flavians especially, and he wants to make clear there are no grounds for such suspicion. Readers who are aware of the situation under Trajan, or of Tacitus’ earlier writings, can guess why *odium* might be expected as well. It is now, however, that Tacitus makes the statement we are most concerned with:

*quod si uita suppeditet, principatum diui Neruae et imperium Traiani, uberiolem securiolemque materiam, senectuti seposui, rara*

<sup>18</sup> Bibliography on this preface is extensive, see LEEMAN (1973); CHRISTES (1995); MARINCOLA (1999); SAILOR (2008) 119-163.

*temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae uelis et quae sentias dicere licet.*

“And then, if life enough be left me, I have laid aside for my old age the reign of the deified Nerva and the rule of Trajan, ampler and safer material, it being a rare blessing of such times that one may hold the views one wishes and express the views one holds.”

Not unnaturally, the major question about this passage has always been “does Tacitus mean what he says?” either about the history or the Trajanic regime in general. The answer has most often been “yes”, that Tacitus sees, or claims to see, the era of Nerva and Trajan as an exception to the logic of monarchical historiography as he has just laid it down.<sup>19</sup> I want to read the passage more ambiguously, as Tacitus introducing the ideology of the new regime only to re-emphasize realities persisting from before.

The first thing to consider about the passage is its immediate function in the *Histories* preface. The first words of the *Histories* declare the work’s starting date, but its end point is not mentioned until the passage just quoted. Immediately before the quote, Tacitus has named all the emperors he will cover, from Galba to Domitian, which leads readers to ask “what about Nerva and Trajan”?<sup>20</sup> Tacitus’ here saying “I will write about them later” is his indirect way of saying “I am not going to write about them now”, and the reasons he gives for writing later also serve as reasons he is not writing now. The reasons he gives in fact raise more questions than they answer. What makes the reigns of Nerva and Trajan *uberior* and *securior* as historical material, and why is that a reason to defer writing about them until one’s

<sup>19</sup> Most recently O’GORMAN (2020) 12-13 sees this passage as announcing a new “truth regime” under Trajan, in which previously impossible forms of political speech will be valid.

<sup>20</sup> Readers will be more inclined to ask this if they remember Tacitus’ own words from the *Agricola*, where he promised to compose “a memorial to our former servitude and a witness of our present happiness” (3, 3 *memoriam prioris seruitutis ac testimonium praesentium bonorum*). SAILOR (2008) 153-160 gives an important reading of the future promise in the *Histories* as a *recusatio* relative to the present.



old age? We have plenty of examples, starting with Seneca and Livy and going back through Polybius, of historians who wrote of recent and controversial events in their old age, when one might suppose they had less to gain or to lose. Furthermore, the introduction of *senectus* and Tacitus' earlier qualification *si uita suppeditet* raise the question of longevity, and not just the speaker's. Tacitus' words imply that as of the dramatic date of the preface, *senectus* is not yet upon him, and that he does not mean to begin work on the Nerva-Trajan work immediately. If the prologue is read as being uttered at the time of the *Historiae*' completion around 108-109, then readers may ask "what is Tacitus waiting for", and one possible answer is "Trajan's death". Tacitus is only a few years younger than Trajan, but if he does enjoy an old age after the latter's death, that might then be the time when one "may hold the views one wishes and express the views one holds".<sup>21</sup>

I am not proposing this reading of the passage as the obvious or only possible one. On the contrary: the meanings that O'Gorman and others have seen are certainly there. *Felicitas temporum* is a catch-phrase of the Nerva-to-early-Trajan regime, and we are meant to read it as such.<sup>22</sup> Earlier in the preface, Tacitus has explained why historians typically fail to write truthfully about a living emperor or a recently dead one. He has explained how he can do so about the Flavians, and he is now suggesting that in the new times under Trajan, one can write history about a living ruler because the old restraints on free speech no longer apply. But he's also undercutting that suggestion, in the first instance simply by not including Nerva and Trajan in the current work. At a minimum, Tacitus' logic implies that one cannot write the same sort of history about living emperors that

<sup>21</sup> Assuming a birth date of 53 for Trajan and 56-58 for Tacitus. The idea that Tacitus' statements here about free speech refer to age is broached by PELLING (2009) 150, while SAILOR (2008) 174-176 suggests Tacitus is hinting at publication after his own death.

<sup>22</sup> PENWILL (2015) makes important observations on several authors' changing responses to Nerva and Trajan's declarations of free speech and *felicitas temporum*.

one writes about dead ones. The further inference, picking up on the earlier distinction between *amor* and *odium*, is that the reasons that previously made truthful historiography of living rulers impossible are still there.

It is notable that in explaining untrustworthy positive histories earlier in the preface, Tacitus consistently avoided mentioning fear or compulsion as motives: rather he listed voluntary factors based on self-interest: *libidine assentandi ... obnoxios ... ambitio ... adulatio ... amore*.<sup>23</sup> Here is where the evocation of Trajanic slogans about *felicitas* and freedom of speech comes into question. The rhetoric of this passage takes it for granted that Trajan is a benevolent and beloved ruler. Such a ruler can remove the compulsions to praise that existed under Domitian, but he cannot prevent people from wanting to say good things out of gratitude or other benignly self-interested motives, nor can he prevent readers from inferring those motives when they read those good things.<sup>24</sup> This is basically the problem the Elder Pliny faced relative to Titus. In the current circumstances, with both Tacitus and Trajan alive, the *sentire quae uelis et quae sentias dicere licet* does not properly apply because Tacitus' views (*sentire*) will always be affected by *amor*, and his words (*dicere*) will be interpreted by others through that lens.

Thus, we are seeing here a *recusatio*, but with a political edge. Tacitus has markedly evoked claims the Nerva-Trajan regime had made about how public speech was now going to work differently than it had under the Flavians, and he is then implicitly gainsaying those claims. This is not exactly the model of "figured speech" proposed by Ahl, or the "doublespeak" seen by Bartsch, because it's not about hiding meanings or making them uncertain through ambiguity: the meanings I have suggested are all open to be generated by readers including Trajan himself.<sup>25</sup> This is after all not a critique of the regime: Tacitus

<sup>23</sup> In the *Annals* preface, Tacitus will speak more straightforwardly of accounts *ob metum falsae* (1, 1, 2).

<sup>24</sup> See the analysis of SAILOR (2008) 156-158.

<sup>25</sup> Most influentially in AHL (1984) and BARTSCH (1994).

is not saying “there are bad things about you I can only say after you’re dead”. Rather he is denying that even a good emperor can unilaterally change the realities of power and their effect on political speech. In doing so, he is paradoxically vindicating the autonomy of historiography as written by the status elite against Trajan’s attempt to co-opt key discursive space. Tacitus claims that in the *Histories* he has solved the problem of writing truthfully about recently dead emperors. He has done this through his own devotion to truth (*incorruptam fidem professis*), not because an emperor permitted it.<sup>26</sup> If his integrity as a historian requires him to refrain from writing about Trajan during his lifetime, it is not for the emperor to overrule him. The king cannot declare himself a subject.

### 3. Velleius on the reign of Tiberius

Tacitus was dealt with first as the “classic case” that establishes a quasi-rule about not writing on a living emperor. In a sense, the exception that proves that rule is an earlier author, Velleius Paterculus, author of a mostly extant two-book work that begins as a compendium of universal history and ends as a political-military narrative of the Augustan and Tiberian era down to 30 CE, two-thirds of the way through Tiberius’ reign, which is also its approximate date of publication. From the point where Tiberius enters the narrative in 23 BCE (Vell. 2, 94), he is its principal focus, and he consistently receives a level of praise that is at odds with the rest of the tradition on Tiberius and unusual for historiography in general.<sup>27</sup> Standard historiographical tropes about impartiality and bias are notably absent.

<sup>26</sup> Thus, the *Histories* preface evokes the changed conditions under the new regime in the context of the future work on Nerva and Trajan, but not of the *Histories* itself.

<sup>27</sup> Important studies of Velleius’ Tiberius include WOODMAN (1977) esp. 46-53; KUNTZE (1985); SCHMITZER (2000) 287-306; LOBUR (2008) 99-111; BALMACEDA (2014); GALIMBERTI (2015).

Scholars have traditionally characterized this as a genre deviation into overt panegyric that compromises the author's credibility in precisely the way Pliny or Tacitus were trying to avoid.<sup>28</sup> This is often associated with Velleius' condensed work being outside the grand tradition of full-scale historiography as represented especially by Tacitus' parallel narrative. I want to suggest, however, that Velleius' account of Tiberius, and in particular its last phase after the emperor's actual accession in 14 CE, is not as alien to Tacitus' discourse as the characterization of it as "a panegyric" might suggest.

The first crucial aspect of Velleius' post-14 CE narrative is simply how short it is, relatively speaking. Only about 20 percent of what Woodman refers to as the "Tiberian narrative" is concerned with Tiberius' actual reign.<sup>29</sup> The rest is a selective but often detailed narrative of events from 12 BCE to 14 CE, with generous attention to the northern campaigns of Tiberius. It is a story of military triumphs, but also of crises from which Tiberius and others rescue the *res publica*. The last of these crises is the death of Augustus himself, which removes the focal point for *consensus* that has assured Roman *concordia* since the end of the Civil Wars.<sup>30</sup> Tiberius solves the problem by taking on Augustus' role as *princeps*, but in doing so he ends the detailed narrative of his own actions. The remaining few pages consist of: brief description of the army mutinies of 14 (2, 125); a burst of encomiastic rhetoric on the restoration of order and prosperity after Tiberius' accession (§126); a digression on the virtues of Sejanus (§127-128); a one-page summary of highlights from Tiberius' reign, mostly external (§129-130, 2) and finally a complaint to the gods regarding the conspiracies and family

<sup>28</sup> The most detailed reading of VELL. 2, 126 in terms of panegyric is WOODMAN (1975) 290-296, though he characterizes it as a legitimate literary choice rather than an act of political sycophancy.

<sup>29</sup> In WOODMAN (1977), sections 124-131 take up 6 of a total 30 pages of text.

<sup>30</sup> For general fear at Augustus' death and relief at Tiberius' emergence, see VELL. 2, 124, 1. LOBUR (2008) 107-111 notes the stress Velleius lays on the preservation of *concordia* through Tiberius' succession.

woes Tiberius has endured in the years immediately up to 30, followed by a prayer that they guard the *status*, the *pax* and the *princeps*, and give Tiberius worthy successors at a distant future time (§130, 3-131).

This clearly represents a reduction of scale and narrative coherence even relative to Velleius' previous account. Velleius cannot describe the current emperor's reign in the same way he did the previous reign, even though the current emperor was in fact the main character of that earlier narrative. Given Velleius' obvious willingness to write a pro-Tiberian account and his seeming indifference to questions of bias towards that emperor, this cannot be the same sort of move we have seen from Tacitus or Pliny. Velleius does at one point ask "who would tell one by one the events of the last sixteen years, when all together they linger on the eyes and in the minds of all" (2, 126, 1 *horum XVI annorum opera quis, cum uniuersa inhaereant oculis animisque omnium, partibus eloquatur?*). This, however, reads more as a conventional expression of praise for the *opera* in question than a methodological rationale.<sup>31</sup> Two pages later, Velleius will in fact announce his intention to "go through the individual events" (2, 129, 1 *singula recenseamus*) of Tiberius' reign, albeit all this entails is the one-page summary mentioned above.

The obvious change of scale receives no overt explanation. The previous shape of Velleius' history does, however, point us to an understanding of the "Tiberian non-narrative". Tiberius' very prominence in the account of the previous quarter-century had left Augustus somewhat obscured.<sup>32</sup> In Velleius' version of imperial history, there seems to be little for an emperor to do beyond to be the guarantor of internal peace through his universally recognized virtues, to be the target of threats to that peace

<sup>31</sup> See on this point WOODMAN (1977) *ad loc.* Velleius has already made a similar claim at the start of his much fuller narrative of Augustus' reign (2, 89, 6).

<sup>32</sup> The narrative from 2, 94 to 2, 124 is dominated by military campaigns, mostly by Tiberius. Exceptions include 2, 100, 2-5; 2, 103-104, 2; 2, 111, 1-2; 2, 112, 7; and 2, 123. In only the last of these (his own death scene) can Augustus be said to take a leading role.

and to hand active external duties over to a favored subordinate and presumed successor. Tiberius' stepping into Augustus' role after 14 CE thus actually makes him a very different character.<sup>33</sup> The transition is emphasized by the encomiastic description of restored universal felicity that comes at Tiberius' accession (2, 126), which is meant to recall a similar flourish after Octavian's return from Actium (2, 89). Velleius has earlier anticipated the shift in roles when, in describing Tiberius' campaigns, he calls on his younger dedicatee Vinicius to "behold a general equal in war to the *princeps* that you now see in peace".<sup>34</sup> The virtues he refers to are not only complementary but sequential.<sup>35</sup>

Evidently Velleius' narrative here reflects historical facts: Tiberius never campaigned in person after triumphing in 12 CE, when Vinicius was an adolescent. Still, Velleius' description of Augustus' reign and Tiberius' succession leads us to normalize the pattern of an emperor in a supervisory role, less visible than his subordinates. Tiberius does not, however, retreat as far into the background as Augustus did: a curious pattern emerges in the post-14 CE narrative, whereby Tiberius is the ostensible object of praise, and often the grammatical subject of sentences, but the actions described are mostly someone else's.<sup>36</sup> There is, however, no individual who can replicate the role Tiberius had under Augustus, and thus become the new center of the narrative.

<sup>33</sup> This is not to say, however, that Tiberius simply continues or replicates the Augustan era without distinctive virtues of his own, for which see RAMAGE (1982) and COWAN (2009) 477-479.

<sup>34</sup> VELL. 2, 113, 1 (*Accipe nunc, M. Vinici, tantum in bello ducem quantum in pace uides principem*), cf. 2, 124, 4.

<sup>35</sup> WOODMAN (1977) *ad loc.* notes the panegyric conventions in play, and the way the "military" narrative still anticipates Tiberius' "civil" virtues.

<sup>36</sup> Thus, the Sejanus section (2, 127-128) includes a monstrous sentence (2, 127, 3-4) that begins with Tiberius as subject (of verbs that come several lines later) but consists almost wholly of accusatives agreeing with Sejanus, and the pattern is repeated in several sentences of 2,129. Things Tiberius actually does himself include *congiaria* and subsidies to senators (2, 129, 3), building works in Rome (2, 130, 1) and the trial of Drusus Libo (2, 129, 2), which last is specifically said to be *ut senator et iudex, non ut princeps*.

This is a function of familial and succession politics: by 30, both Drusus and Germanicus are dead, and their sons are either in disgrace or too young for the role.<sup>37</sup> Velleius gives the impression that if he were writing ten years earlier, he could have filled more pages by putting Drusus into his father's former role. As it stands, Velleius' work ends on a very pessimistic note, with a septuagenarian emperor watching his family disintegrate.<sup>38</sup> We are reminded of how Velleius began his narrative of Augustus' death by emphasizing the general apprehension at the time (2, 123, 1 *uenitur ad tempus in quo fuit plurimum metus*). At that time there had been an obvious successor, and the only question was whether he would be willing to take up the burden. Sixteen years later, Velleius can only pray that the gods grant Tiberius *successores quam serissimos*. The vague plural and the wish for delay are demanded by panegyric convention, but readers will recognize the circumstances that give rise to that rhetorical necessity.<sup>39</sup> Velleius cannot explicitly decry the lack of a successor, but he could scarcely do more to draw attention to it.

Velleius is unable to write a full (even by his standards) historical narrative of Tiberius' reign during Tiberius' lifetime, but his reasons appear very different from Tacitus'.<sup>40</sup> In Velleius'

<sup>37</sup> Velleius mentions only Nero, the elder son of Germanicus, who was imprisoned in 29 at the same time as his mother (2, 130, 4). Nothing is said of his soon-to-be disgraced brother Drusus, the future emperor Caligula or the eleven-year-old Tiberius Gemellus. For a reading of the Tiberian narrative in terms of succession politics, see SUMNER (1970) 288-297, who sees Velleius as promoting Vinicius' eventual claims, and PISTELLATO (2013), who tentatively revives the idea of Sejanus in that role.

<sup>38</sup> On the ambivalence of the ending, see DOMAINKO (2018) 125-130. For a more 'optimistic' reading, see BALMACEDA (2014), for whom the description of Tiberius in 2, 126-129 represents a culmination of restored Roman *uirius*.

<sup>39</sup> NOË (1983) points especially to PLIN. *Pan.* 94, 5, addressing Trajan's succession. Pliny, however, is speaking to an emperor in his late forties.

<sup>40</sup> What is true of Velleius' extant work may not be true of his planned more formal history (*opus iustum*). Velleius' many references to that work make clear that it would have discussed Tiberius' earlier career, but given Tiberius' age, Velleius may well have imagined it coming out after his death, and in that sense his generic self-positioning in that work might be closer to that of Pliny or Tacitus.

case, he has developed a way of writing about emperors that emphasizes the role of an active subordinate successor. This method conspicuously fails in the circumstances of 30 CE. Given that the work was likely written only during the previous year, Velleius was presumably aware of those circumstances, and thus the ‘failure’ is deliberate.<sup>41</sup> Velleius devised a historical method ideally suited to praising the man Tiberius was under Augustus, but in doing so he gave himself a way to comment on the absence of such a man on the contemporary scene.

#### 4. Cassius Dio and the unfolding Severan era

Whereas Velleius’ work seems to have been written in a few months and tailored to the needs of a particular political moment, any reader of Cassius Dio’s massive history can guess it was the work of years. As it happens, however, guessing is not our only resource. Dio tells us a great deal about the composition of his work in his later books, and this includes information about the changing end point of his history as the Severan dynasty and his own career progressed. For the rest of this paper, I want to look at how he presents his own decisions about the extent of his narrative, and how he integrates them thematically into his portrait of the Severan dynasty.<sup>42</sup> Dio portrays himself not just as a chronicler of his own times, but as writing progressively different kinds of contemporary history in response to the chaotically unpredictable development of dynastic politics.

Dio’s history, in its final form, was 80 books long and covered events from the foundation of Rome to 229 CE, the year of Dio’s second consulship and forced retirement from public

<sup>41</sup> The idea of Velleius writing over a few months in 29 has been cogently reasserted by RICH (2011).

<sup>42</sup> This question is related to but by no means the same as that of the actual chronology of Dio’s work. A summary of existing views on this can be found at KEMEZIS (2014) 282–293, and important subsequent contributions include LETTA (2019) and LINDHOLMER (2021).



life. Most of the history is lost, including nearly all its preface, but substantial fragments, epitomes and a partial manuscript tell us much about the later books (73-80) in which Dio often talks about himself both as eyewitness and as author.<sup>43</sup> There are three places in particular where he mentions projected end points for his work, progressively later ones as the work advances. I propose to read them here as a developing narrative. This narrative does not necessarily correspond to the work practices of the historical Dio, but it is key to his presentation of himself and his writings. Dio is composing these passages seemingly at different times, but always with some degree of hindsight about how Fortune has caused him to change the plan of his work. Fortune, in Dio's telling, communicates through dreams (73 [72], 23, 3) but these dreams are connected with events, rulers and dynastic change, all of which we can see as concrete motivations for Dio to change the kind of story he writes.

The first relevant passage is the most commented-on of all Dio's self-references. In Book 73, after narrating Commodus' final actions, he stops to explain the genesis of his current work (73 [72], 23, from Xiphilinus). This includes the startling information that during the wars of the 190s, Dio, after being commanded in a dream by a divine power (τὸ δαιμόνιον), wrote an account of Severus' wars that was much approved of by that emperor, for whom Dio had by then already written one propaganda work.<sup>44</sup> Remarkably, Dio not only acknowledges this highly partisan aspect of his writing, but claims that the praise inspired him to begin a larger-scale history, the work we have now. His first characterization of that larger work's scope is that it will include "all events from the beginning, right up to whenever Fortune decides" (§23, 3 ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα, μέχρις ἀν καὶ τῆ Τύχῃ δόξῃ). A few lines later, however, he is a bit more

<sup>43</sup> For Dio's self-reflection, see esp. SCOTT (2017).

<sup>44</sup> DIO CASS. 73[72], 23, 2. On the "first historical work" of Dio see particularly SLAVICH (2001), with references to earlier works.

precise, saying that in twenty-two years, he researched and wrote all events “from the origins of the Romans down to the death of Severus” (§23, 5 ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις μέχρι τῆς Σεουήρου μεταλλαγῆς) and that “the rest will also be written, to whatever point it may reach” (τὰ γὰρ λοιπά, ὅπου ἂν καὶ προχωρήσῃ, γεγράφεται).

Dio appears to mean that the twenty-two years constituted a discrete project, at the end of which he had what he then saw as a completed history ending with Severus’ death.<sup>45</sup> No precise dates are given, but the most straightforward reading of the context is that Dio began the project in the mid-190s and so completed it in the late 210s.<sup>46</sup> Thus when he began, Dio did not know when Severus would die, but given their various ages, the most likely scenario was that Dio would outlive Severus and complete his history under Caracalla or Geta: thus Severus’ death seemed the natural end point.<sup>47</sup> Given how Dio has linked his earlier historical projects to the Severan dynasty, readers may infer that he originally anticipated giving Severus favorable coverage and possibly making Caracalla’s accession a sort of culmination. His contemporary narrative would have centered on civil war, restored peace and external triumphs, perhaps not unlike Livy’s.

Already in this passage, though, Dio makes it clear that is not how Fortune subsequently decided it, and here we have a

<sup>45</sup> I do not, however, follow SCHMIDT (1997) 2621-2622 or SWAN (2004) 34-36 in supposing that Dio, after the 22-year period, thus in the late 210s, actually put out for wide circulation a complete edition of Books 1-77, and that his words at 73 [72], 23, 5 about continuation come unrevised from that work and refer to a promised “continued edition” which we have now. This model does not adequately explain why the “second dream” is needed to explain how Dio learned he would continue. None of this is to say Dio did not circulate or perform excerpts and drafts according to standard literary practices. I am grateful to Valérie Fromentin for her insightful discussions of this question with me in the course of the *Entretiens*.

<sup>46</sup> For an entirely different reading of the chronology relative to the various dreams, see BARNES (1984) and LETTA (2019), who see Severus’ death and the “second dream” as marking the start of the 22-year composition period.

<sup>47</sup> Severus was born in 145, Dio in the early 160s and Caracalla in 188.

complicated question about what is the moment of utterance for these words. The narrator already knows that he will go beyond his originally projected end at Severus' death, but he is not writing with full hindsight about the end point we now have. For reasons that will become clear, I think the narrator in Book 73 is speaking from a point after Caracalla's death, and assumes readers are aware of that event. As those readers then move on into the account of Severus in Books 74-77, they will receive confirmation that the narrative they are reading was never meant to be public during Caracalla's reign, since it is often critical of Severus and uniformly hostile to Caracalla as heir apparent, including Dio's claim that he tried to murder his father (77 [76], 14).<sup>48</sup>

The full explanation of the situation then comes in the second of the passages dealing with the work's end-point, which comes after Dio's description of Caracalla's death in 217. Dio says that "even before [Caracalla] became sole ruler, it was made clear to me by his father in a dream that I would write these events too" (79 [78], 10, 1, fully transmitted in manuscript: ἐμοὶ δὲ δὴ, καὶ πρὶν ἐς τὴν μοναρχίαν καταστῆναι, προεδηλώθη τρόπον τινὰ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ὅτι καὶ ταῦτα γράψοιμι). In context, "these events" evidently means Caracalla's death and the reign leading up to it, and Dio goes on to describe the dream in which Severus calls on him to learn and write of further events. This "second dream" is mentioned in the narrative of 217, but it appears to have come to Dio in 211, in the ten-month interval between Severus' death and Caracalla's assumption of sole rule after his murder of Geta. Concretely, Severus is telling Dio that Caracalla will predecease him, allowing his reign to appear in Dio's history.<sup>49</sup> But as we have seen,

<sup>48</sup> For detailed analysis of Dio's version of Severus, see MILLAR (1964) 138-150.

<sup>49</sup> A further consideration is that Dio describes early in his Severan narrative (76 [75], 7, 4) how he and his peers took a sharply more negative view of Severus after 197 CE, due to his vindictive behavior following the defeat of Albinus. We are perhaps meant to read this as Dio rejecting his initial "pro-Severan" plan without having a clear alternative until the "second dream".

it is not simply a question of adding extra “Caracalla” books on to the end of an otherwise unchanged narrative, but also of revising the account of Severus. This actually seems to be what the content of the dream indicates: Severus tells Dio to “come here, close up so that you can learn properly everything that is said and done, and can write of it” (ἐνταῦθα πλησίον πρόσελθε, ἵνα πάντα καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα καὶ μάθῃς ἀκριβῶς καὶ συγγράψῃς). Severus is not just talking about Caracalla’s reign, but about his own, which Dio will one day be able to learn and write about in a way that is impossible under Severus’ son.

How then do we square this with the idea from earlier of a history down to the reign of Severus, researched and composed over 22 years starting in the mid-190s? Dio seems to say that from 211 on, he had a premonition he would write a history right up to Caracalla’s death, even though he was still within the twenty-two-year period.<sup>50</sup> The earliest possible end point for that period is in fact right around Caracalla’s death in 217. Dio apparently portrays himself as completing his history down to Severus’ death very shortly before Caracalla’s death, and that event confirms to him that he really will have the chance to write further. If we read the “second dream” from Book 79 in the way I suggest, then readers can now understand the Dio of Book 73 as rejecting the plan of writing a narrative tailored to what the Severan regime, or any other, will find acceptable. Dio claims in Book 73 to be placing himself in the hands of Fortune: this may mean writing a narrative that rejects the foundation story of the Severan dynasty, and circulating it whenever circumstances permit. Dio’s open-ended “whatever point it may reach” refers not only to his own longevity but to the fortunes of the ruling dynasty.

<sup>50</sup> On any interpretation of 73[72], 23, the 22 years cannot begin until Dio has written a history of some part of Severus’ civil and foreign wars, which in turn cannot happen until 195 at the earliest.

The last reference to the end of Dio is in fact at the end, where he brings his work to a close after the death of Elagabalus and accession of Alexander Severus in 222. As the text is preserved by Xiphilinus, Dio begins this coda by explaining that, due to his being almost continuously absent from Rome ever since 218, “I will thus not be able to set down the remaining events in the same fashion as those before, still I will narrate in brief what went on up to my second consulship [i.e. 229]” (80 [80], 2, 1 διὰ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα οὐκ ἠδυνήθην ὁμοίως τοῖς πρόσθεν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ συνθεῖναι, κεφαλαιώσας μέντοι ταῦτα, ὅσα γε καὶ μέχρι τῆς δευτέρας μου ὑπατείας ἐπράχθη, διηγήσομαι). His description of the first half of Alexander’s reign is indeed briefer in scope (even allowing for Xiphilinus’ compression) than those of previous emperors, and ends by describing the historian’s second consulship followed by his “retiring” to his home town of Nicaea in the face of threats of violence from the Praetorian Guard and equivocal support from Alexander (80 [80], 4-5). He concludes by relating a last dream in which he was told that he would never again leave Nicaea, and should conclude his history with a Homeric quotation that he proceeds to set down as his final seal.

At this point Dio’s narrator has full hindsight about what his final product will look like. We can tell from a few proleptic references in much earlier books of Dio that he has continued to do at least some level of revision through the late 220s and probably after 229.<sup>51</sup> Alexander Severus is on the throne, and thus Dio is at last confronting the issue that is at the center of this paper. On the one hand, he gives the disclaimer I quoted earlier about being absent from Rome. That rationale, however, makes little sense, because Dio’s absence dates back to 218 and would thus take in the reign of Elagabalus, which he has nonetheless managed to describe in detail. One might read the *recusatio* as a polite excuse, with the real reason being the traditional reluctance to write about a still reigning emperor. However, the

<sup>51</sup> For details, see BARNES (1984) and KEMEZIS (2014) 288-293.

narrative Dio does append tells against this, since it in fact describes the events of 222-229, but with scarcely any reference to the emperor. The character summary that Dio typically gives for emperors is nowhere to be found, and all Alexander does is fail to prevent the praetorians from murdering Ulpian (80 [80], 2, 2) and humiliating Dio (80 [80], 5, 1), whom he has tried to honor with a consulship.<sup>52</sup>

This lack of coverage can be explained by Alexander's age (13 at the start of his reign in 222) but this is perhaps the point. When Dio began his history, what one could write depended on who the reigning emperor was, as it had for Tacitus and even Livy. By the time he finishes it, the emperor is a non-factor. It is significant that Dio marks a formal ending not relative to the emperor, but to his own career, and its abrupt end in the face of military insubordination. Instead of describing Alexander, the final pages tell of Roman armies mutinying against their commanders and refusing to fight the enemy (80 [80], 4). Alexander's coming to the throne as an adolescent and still not being an effective adult ruler at age 20 are symptoms of this disorder, and it has disrupted the traditional calculus of contemporary imperial history as Dio himself knew it under Septimius Severus. Back then historiography was a delicate and potentially dangerous business. In his last phase, Dio never makes clear whether he believes his account of Alexander's reign can circulate while both Alexander and Dio are alive. He may well intend posthumous publication, but even if we do not want to be that explicit, the impression he gives is that his age and his distance from the centers of power and literary exchange make him less worried about immediate audiences than he was when he began his project.

<sup>52</sup> It is highly unlikely that the lack of emphasis on Alexander is due to Xiphilinus' excerpting, given that elsewhere the epitomator consistently does the opposite, disproportionately preserving details about an emperor's behavior (see BERBESSOU-BROUSTET [2016] 88), and the same is true for the Constantinian *Excerpta*.

## 5. Conclusion

As I hope to have demonstrated, the possibilities for contemporary history in imperial Rome cannot be fully explained by constant political factors or generic rules. Certain parameters apply: invective against the current regime was never safe, while the line between encomium and historiography never wholly lost its salience. For the most part, however, including a living emperor in a history remained a situational decision, and the three authors I have been looking at faced very different situations. One can, however posit in closing a significant, albeit superficially banal, commonality. All these authors believe contemporary historiography exists and should exist in imperial Rome. It is easy to take this for granted, but in a political culture as authoritarian and ideologically unitary as imperial Rome, it might easily have been otherwise. All these authors take it as a cultural norm that literate elites have the privilege of writing narratives of recent political events that are spoken in their own voice and claim to be factual. They express different views on how truthfulness and free speech work in such narratives, but none of them posits the act of writing as in itself transgressive or counter-cultural. Furthermore, they all assume their rulers subscribe to this norm, and in fact want historiography to exist.

It is only this premise that allows the “living emperor” question to emerge: contemporary historiography is an accepted part of political discourse, and thus the emperor’s role in it is up for discussion in a way that most aspects of his office are not. Even when, as in all these examples, authors are at best ambivalent about the answer, simply having raised the topic gives them space to engage with their ruler’s claims about current politics. Tacitus is most attentive to the traditional truth-and-credibility claims of history, and is asserting his and his readers’ right to evaluate those claims independently of even a benevolent monarch. Velleius is less concerned with truth than narrative continuity: he sets down as normative a certain kind of story

about crisis and triumph, and he challenges the current regime's claim to be acting out that story. Dio is the most self-conscious of all about norms, and by repeatedly changing his own authorial expectations relative to his monarch, he questions the Severan dynasty's claim to be a proper form of monarchy. These were not things that imperial political culture allowed authors to say explicitly through the narrative of their works. In this case it is precisely the self-consciously literary nature of historiography, the fact it has norms that exist independent of Roman monarchical ideology, and are historically prior to it, that makes it a distinctive instrument of political commentary.

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## DISCUSSION

*E.-M. Becker:* Thank you for a thoughtful and a thought-provoking paper. I have two (smaller) comments and one follow-up question. Your presentation made me think about the problem of flattery regarding the Gospel narratives in a new way. Normally when thinking about flattery and the Gospel writers as historiographical writers, I would discuss how the authors relate their stories to the contemporary politics (Flavian times). However, since the Gospel writers actually consider Christ as their *kyrios* the situation might be different. The Gospel writers relate to a *kyrios* who has died, but they are presupposing at the same time that he – as the cosmocrator – is alive. What would you make of this idea? Second, how would you see the role of dreams (in Dio) as a time-transcending tool of merging diverse temporal periods? Finally, and related to the latter: your comparison of Velleius, Tacitus and Dio and your findings about how differently these historians related to their Emperors: would you trace those differences back to their personal style of writing (literary individuality) and to literary techniques (such as dreams) they applied, and literary conventions of their time, and/or to the political time conditions under which they are writing, and/or do such differences simply derive from historical contingencies?

*A.M. Kemezis:* Thank you, the point about flattery in the Gospels is a very intriguing one, and I would be curious to know whether this is a line of attack that anti-Christian apologists pursue. As to dreams and merging temporal periods, it does seem that dreams are, at least in our surviving text, restricted to Dio's contemporary narrative, and they're actually a distinctive feature of that narrative. Any sequential reader getting to Book 73

and seeing the dream passage would have been I think a bit shocked and realized they were in a different, much more unpredictable, sort of story. I think readers are meant to notice the difference and consider how one is to make the link between a somewhat fixed distant past that one knows through tradition and a more fluid recent past whose boundaries and trajectory are contingent on *tychê*, who communicates through the dreams.

To the last question, my own approach has started from immediate political circumstances, to which I then position authors' literary techniques as a response. That's not by any means the whole picture or the only viable explanation, in particular because I rely for my interpretation on only the contemporary portions of larger narratives. One could certainly imagine productively reading the same passages of Velleius in relation to his non-contemporary narrative and the overall literary objectives that displays. Where have similar ideas of narrating parts of military leaders' careers come up before and so forth? Inevitably Velleius is responding both to internal rhetorical imperatives and to immediate political circumstances.

*G. Schepens*: I would like to pick up on Dio Cassius' dreams about which E.-M. Becker just asked a question. The "dreams" appear several times, in combination with "Fortune", when Dio discusses the changes he made or had to make to his plans while writing the history of his own time. For writers of contemporary history, it is not unusual to make changes to their original plans, since they report about events the end and the importance of which are often not yet known at the moment when they conceive their plans. Thucydides made so to say a new start – introduced by a second preface (Thuc. 5, 26) – when he realised that the war he was "writing down" continued after the peace of Nicias in 421 BC. Polybius deferred his *telos* from 168 BC to 145 BC and added ten more books to the "organic whole" covered in books 1-30. These are perfect illustrations of what John Dewey (*Logic. The Theory of Inquiry* [New York, 1938])

calls the indeterminate situation which constitutes the antecedent conditions of inquiry. What for Dewey is part of the “logic” of inquiry, is explained by Dio by motives such as “dreams” and “Fortune”. Why did he think along such irrational lines?

*A.M. Kemezis:* Both your question and Eve-Marie’s place an important emphasis on just how strange Dio’s use of dreams is for the historiographical genre. He surely is aware of this strangeness, and means it to emphasize something distinctive about his narrative content and the role of *tychê* in contemporary events. One thing dreams allow him to do is move his knowledge a bit outside of linear time more than a Thucydides- or Polybius-style response to public events. So perhaps he’s signalling that “advance warning” of Caracalla’s death influences the way he writes about Severus (which he’s by implication doing during Caracalla’s lifetime). Another factor that I’m not yet sure what to make of is that lots of other people in Dio have dreams as well. He talks about writing a book about Severus’ prophetic dreams about his own becoming emperor, and he has a lot about Caesar and Octavian’s dreams as well. Marie-Laure Freyburger-Galland pointed out a few years ago (“Les rêves chez Dion Cassius”, *REA* 101 [1999], 533-545) that these dreams are often associated with civil war and changes of regime, which are always the realm of *tychê*. By having *tychê* send him dreams, Dio is I think consciously putting himself in an unusual position for a historian relative to the actors in his story. The implications of that are certainly something to be explored further.

*R. Nicolai:* I would like to return briefly to a key passage: the proem of Tacitus’ *Histories*. I agree with your doubts about the hypotheses regarding Tacitus’s use of ‘figured speech’ or ‘doublespeak’, which clash with the rarity of *amphibolia* in ancient literary practice: ambiguity is practiced by Plato and the most Platonic of Isocrates’s writings, the *Panathenaicus*, in dialogic-paideutic contexts, but in general it is considered a serious defect. Only in the dialogical context, and in a particular kind

of dialogue between a master and his interlocutors and pupils, can ambiguity be admitted. The proposed solution is the following: “the meanings I have suggested are all meant to be generated by readers including Trajan himself”. What I wonder is whether it is possible not only to detect the author’s intentions, but also to ascribe such a complex interpretation to the audience. It is a problem of audience response.

*A.M. Kemezis:* Yes, probably I was a bit imprecise on this point, thank you for bringing that up. I am not trying to reconstruct actual audience response from Trajan or anyone else, but only to highlight the rhetorical possibilities of the text. Ahl’s and Bartsch’s approaches, in different ways, posit that there are meanings that the ruler either cannot generate or (more often) cannot for ideological reasons publicly acknowledge or respond to, and readers are supposed to be aware of that. That’s what I think isn’t going on in the *Histories* preface, though I am more receptive to it in reading Statius or Lucan. As far as Tacitus’ *Histories* goes, the idea that one can’t write about even a good emperor during his lifetime is something that can be included in the public transcript, at least by an unambiguous implication. I do think we can be sure Roman imperial audiences thought a lot about what one could and couldn’t say about a living emperor, so that one can assume texts contain the possibilities for quite complex responses, whether or not particular audiences follow through on those possibilities.

*B. Bleckmann:* Sie weisen darauf hin, dass die Zeitgeschichte des Velleius Paterculus größtenteils gar nicht die Regierung des Tiberius als Augustus behandelt, sondern vor allem dessen militärischen Erfolge in der Regierung des Augustus. Einen analogen Fall bietet die Geschichte des Menandros Protektor, der unter dem Kaiser Maurikios schreibt, aber nicht dessen Zeit als Kaiser behandelt, sondern ausschließlich diejenige, in der dieser unter Tiberios Konstantinos als General im Osten tätig war. Die Überhöhung des Maurikios war bei Menandros

verbunden mit der heftigen Kritik an Justin II., dem die Schuld für die missliche Situation im Osten zugewiesen wurde. Dieser Aspekt der Kritik unmittelbarer Vorgänger, die mit dem regierenden Kaiser durchaus in einen dynastischen Zusammenhang gebracht werden können, findet man auch bei Cassius Dio, der ja Severus deutlich, die anderen Kaiser (Caracalla und Elagabal) der gleichen Dynastie sogar in extremer Form kritisiert. Einen ähnlichen Fall kann für die theodosianische Dynastie beobachtet werden, wo das relativ schonungslose Bild, das Olympiodor zur Regierung des Honorius bietet, sich damit erklärt, dass er im Interesse Theodosius II. agiert. Vielleicht regen also gerade die innerdynastischen Verwerfungen, die nicht mit einem kompletten Austausch der Eliten verbunden sind, in hohem Maße die Schaffung einerseits informierter, andererseits kritischer Zeitgeschichtsschreibung an.

*A.M. Kemezis:* Yes, I certainly agree that some amount of ideological discontinuity is a precondition, or at any rate a major contributing factor, to critical contemporary history throughout the imperial period, and I am grateful for the examples of Olympiodorus and Menander. But your comment does make me think more about the important complementary factor of continuity of personnel. All of the authors I'm looking at rely heavily on their audience's shared experience or second-hand knowledge of key transitional events, whether it's the death of Augustus, the overthrow of Domitian or the various regime changes from 193 on. There's a sense of collective memory-processing that is perhaps different from how Thucydides or Polybius position themselves relative to audiences who also know a lot of the facts.

*J. Marincola:* Thank you for a very stimulating paper. I find your interpretation of Tacitus' preface to the *Historiae* very persuasive, and in this regard I wonder if you think it's worthwhile to bring in the preface to the *Agricola*, not as a way of 'explaining' the *Historiae* preface but perhaps of contextualizing

it? Does the portrait in the *Agricola*, where an entire generation which has been traumatized and is slow to mend (for the latter, esp. 3, 1: *tardiora sunt remedia quam mala*), perhaps bolster your interpretation by suggesting that the ability to return to a functioning state does not come about merely by the presence of a ‘good’ emperor?

*A.M. Kemezis:* Absolutely, I didn’t have time to go into the *Agricola*, but they both speak to Tacitus’ wanting to problematize simple narratives of dynastic change as flipping a switch and making everything the opposite. This is where the question I mentioned of the “moment of utterance” comes up, though. It makes a lot of difference whether the *Histories* preface is spoken three years after the *Agricola* or thirteen years. Are we still in a post-Domitianic moment waiting to see what difference Trajan will make, or is it 109 and we are just as likely to be thinking of Trajan’s unclear successor as his predecessor? Basically I am inclined to the latter view, so that there’s a thought progression (that I think readers of the *Histories* are meant to pick up on) from slow-healing trauma to insurmountable systemic problems, but then one starts to get into the larger issue of Tacitean optimism or pessimism.

*H. Inglebert:* Dans le cas de la transition des Antonins et des Sévères, ces derniers vont idéologiquement se définir comme des Antonins, par la fiction de l’adoption de Septime Sévère par Marc Aurèle, la divinisation de son “frère” Commode, et l’adoption des noms de Marcus Antoninus Aurelius par Caracalla et Elagabal, ou de Marcus Aurelius par Sévère Alexandre. Septime Sévère et Caracalla sont de plus ensevelis dans le mausolée d’Hadrien. On a donc en théorie une seule dynastie antonine de Nerva à Sévère Alexandre. Néanmoins, certains historiens comme Hérodien ont pu considérer que la mort de Marc Aurèle marquait la fin d’une époque (ce qui inspira Gibbon) ou que l’assassinat de Commode ouvrait une nouvelle ère. Comment Cassius Dion se situe-t-il dans ce champ des possibles chronologiques,



et avec quels arguments biographiques et méthodologiques, alors qu'il écrit une histoire continue ?

*A.M. Kemezis:* On one hand, Dio certainly rejects the dynastic fiction about Severus being adopted, he's quite explicit about that and he seems to think his audience feels the same way. He also does posit a key transition in his own narrative at some point in the 180s/190s, but he's self-consciously vague about exactly when it happens, in part because of Commodus' ambiguous status as the bad member of a good dynasty. Dio has the famous line about the "Age of Iron and Rust" after Marcus' death (72 [71], 36, 4) but then also goes out of his way to say at Commodus' death that with him the rule of the "true Aurelii" ended (73 [72], 22, 6). And in between, near the end of Commodus' reign, he marks a watershed when he becomes an adult eyewitness of events (73 [72], 18, 3-4). This is again part of the memory processing I mentioned in response to Bruno's question, but it can be paralleled in Dio's various remarks throughout the Caesarean and Augustan narratives about when the Republic-Monarchy transition occurs. All of these are a deliberate technique rather than just confusion: Dio likes to start debates about periodization and the relationship of internal narrative flow to actual events. But he doesn't seem to feel a need to resolve those debates.



## VIII

BRUNO BLECKMANN

### AMMIAN UND DAS PROBLEM DER SPÄTANTIKEN ZEITGESCHICHTE

#### ABSTRACT

Although Ammianus witnessed some of the contemporary events he describes, his historical writing is not the result of primary research. Information obtained from autopsy and interviews is inserted into a mosaic, the lion's share of which is based on the rich textual production of late antique bureaucracy and propagandistic pamphlets. Given the wide chronological gap between Ammianus' favorable composition of Julian and the latter's reign, Ammianus also engaged with the historiographical output that emerged from the 360s onwards. Intending to outperform historiographical antecedents, a complex historical work is created that aims to offer a concluding authoritative account of the history of Julian, while the period leading up to Julian and also the years after Julian come to represent the subject matter of a longer prologue (books 1-14) and a shorter epilogue (books 26-31). Ammianus' history of his own time is in no way clearly defined as contemporary history detached from the historical continuum.

#### 1. Ammian als Modellfall zeitgeschichtlicher Darstellung?

Die *res gestae* Ammians sind das einzige erhaltene Geschichtswerk der lateinischen Geschichtsschreibung, das in umfangreicher Weise und kleinteilig die Geschichte der eigenen Zeit behandelt und damit den zahlreicheren Fällen aus der griechischen Geschichtsschreibung gegenübergestellt werden kann. Denn selbst beim landläufig als zeitgeschichtliche Darstellung betrachteten

taciteischen Geschichtswerk fehlen gerade die Bücher über den Zeitraum, den Tacitus im Erwachsenenalter miterlebt hat. Ammian dagegen war für die von ihm beschriebene Zeit von 354 bis 378 anfangs in herausgehobener Stellung als *protector domesticus* tätig. Er hat seine Zeit an Brennpunkten des Geschehens miterlebt und teilweise – wenn auch an untergeordneter Stelle – mitgestaltet. Eine gewisse Vergleichbarkeit besteht allenfalls mit Velleius Paterculus, der wie Ammian als aktiver (und im Unterschied zu Ammian auch selbständig befehlender) Offizier an den von ihm beschriebenen Aktionen teilgenommen hat.<sup>1</sup> Dessen den Tiberius lobpreisende Erzählung kann aber schon wegen ihrer fehlenden Bandbreite nicht zu den Vollformen der Historiographie im thukydeischen Sinne gerechnet werden.

Ammianus Marcellinus scheint dagegen sogar geradezu einem Modellfall der Leistungsfähigkeit einer aus unmittelbarem Erleben geschöpften Zeitgeschichte zu entsprechen<sup>2</sup> und auch das Ethos des unabhängigen und ehrlich berichtenden Zeithistorikers zu verkörpern.<sup>3</sup> Selbst seine auffälligen bis zur Karikatur reichenden extremen Übertreibungen schmälern diesen Eindruck der Professionalität nicht, wenn sie mit dem ausgeprägten Stilwillen des Autors erklärt werden, der möglicherweise auch durch die griechische Herkunft und die erst sekundäre Aneignung der lateinischen Sprache besonders prononciert war.<sup>4</sup> Es überwiegt der Anschein einer qualitätsvollen Darstellung, die zwar ganz offenkundig die meisten Ereignisse aus dem Fokus der diversen Kaiserhöfe und im geringen Maße aus stadtrömischer Perspektive

<sup>1</sup> Vgl. SZIDAT (1992) 114 zur gegenüber Velleius Paterculus untergeordneten Stellung Ammians. Für Szidat ist Ammian kein Akteur, sondern jemand, der „die von ihm erlebte Geschichte“ erleidet. Aber auf jeden Fall war er „better qualified than many ancient historians“, um „the experience of war“ zu schildern: MATTHEWS (1989) 288.

<sup>2</sup> THOMPSON (1948); DILLEMANN (1961).

<sup>3</sup> Dem Autor wird ohne weiteres bescheinigt, einer „of the most honest of Roman historians“ zu sein (BLOCKLEY (1975) 100). In diesem Sinne MATTHEWS (1989).

<sup>4</sup> Zum Problem DEN BOEFT (1992).

beschreibt, aber hierbei einen weiten Blick auf den Horizont der Provinzen und der Reichsperipherie bietet und damit eine Augenhöhe demonstriert, die im Kategoriengefüge von F. Jacoby zwingendes Merkmal der Zeitgeschichte ist.<sup>5</sup>

Vor allem aber bietet Ammian den Eindruck, seinen Bericht in thukydideisch-herodoteischer Tradition aufgrund von Autopsie und Hörensagen verfasst zu haben. Er betont (15, 1, 1), Dinge durch sein eigenes Miterleben *per aetatem* in Erfahrung gebracht zu haben. Und Episoden (als "Wir-Berichte"), in denen er selbst als Akteur auftaucht, nehmen einen durchaus hohen, vielleicht nur noch mit Xenophon (in der *Anabasis*) vergleichbaren Anteil ein.<sup>6</sup> Sie enthalten freilich eine Reihe problematischer, mitunter romanhaft erscheinender Details und behandeln keineswegs, wie man annehmen könnte, die politisch und militärisch relevanten Zusammenhänge, die er durch seine eigene Position als *protector domesticus* in Erfahrung hätte bringen können. Vielmehr geht es eher darum, diese Berichte so einzustreuen, dass sie durch ihre Einfügung in die Gesamtdarstellung die Autorität des Historikers insgesamt erhöhen. Eine gewisse, offenkundig intendierte Unschärfe bei der Verwendung der ersten Person Plural bieten Passagen, die weniger einen zwingenden Hinweis auf eigenes Miterleben geben, sondern eher demonstrieren, dass sich Ammian mit der kampfführenden römischen Seite identifiziert.<sup>7</sup>

Ammian behauptet ferner ausdrücklich, dass ein Großteil seines Berichtes durch intensives Befragen von Zeitzeugen zustande gekommen ist.<sup>8</sup> Die auffällig günstige Charakterisierung einzelner hochgestellter Persönlichkeiten bietet vage Hinweise,

<sup>5</sup> JACOBY (1909/1956) 36.

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. MARINCOLA (1997) 201. Liste der autobiographischen Passagen s. KELLY (2008) 38-40. Zur Verteilung der Wir-Berichte s. auch SAMBERGER (1969) 360-362. Zur Kritik der autobiographischen Passagen s. PASCHOUD (2005); KELLY (2008) 83: Autopsie genutzt „to describe the incredible“. Einige der von Paschoud kritisierten Passagen (wie AMM. MARC. 18, 6, 21) sind vermutlich weniger problematisch: KELLY (2008) 81.

<sup>7</sup> Ivić (2004), 325 f.; ROSS (2016) 173.

<sup>8</sup> AMM. MARC. 15, 1, 1: *perplexo interrogando*.

wer befragt worden sein kann. So hat man im "guten" Eunuchen Eutherius, der über Julian eine väterliche Autorität ausgeübt haben soll (16, 7, 6), den Gewährsmann für viele Informationen über die Ereignisse der 350er Jahre gesehen. Weitere im Bericht positiv gezeichnete Personen oder besonders herausgehobene Akteure lassen sich als mutmaßliche Zeitzeugen anführen, ohne dass sich je Gewissheit einstellt.<sup>9</sup>

Die von Ammian so betonten Methoden der *historia*, nämlich Autopsie und Befragung von Zeitgenossen, können – unabhängig, ob ihre Anwendung selbst in den von Ammian betonten Fällen als gesichert betrachtet werden kann – freilich nur die Informationsgrundlage für einzelne Passagen des Riesenwerks Ammians gewesen sein. Die meisten Details, etwa das Gros der im Werk bezeugenden 485 Personennamen,<sup>10</sup> stammen offenkundig aus anderen Zusammenhängen. Ammian hat die Tatsache genutzt, dass die bürokratisierte Welt der Spätantike zahlreiche schriftliche Dokumente in hoher Dichte produzierte.<sup>11</sup> Fast alle von militärischen und zivilen Autoritäten vorgenommenen Aktionen hinterließen Spuren, und selbst der relativ unbedeutende *praefectus alae* Flavius Abinnaeus hatte so viel Schriftverkehr, dass er ein eigenes privates Archiv einrichtete. Während für Thukydides die Benutzung von dokumentarischem Material selten (wie im Fall von Vertragstexten) als gesichert und oft – etwa die Benutzung von Briefen, mit denen Strategen die athenische Volksversammlung informierten – nur vage vermutet werden kann, ist die Situation bei Ammian völlig anders. Gerade, wenn es um lokal eingegrenzte, kleinteilig geschilderte Episoden geht, kann der Entstehungskontext der schriftlichen Vorlagen vor dem Hintergrund des allgegenwärtigen Berichtswesens im

<sup>9</sup> Rühmende Passagen zum Widerstand des Eupraxius gegen die Wutatta-cken Valentinians I.: *RE* I, 299 (Flavius Eupraxius). Zu Praetextatus: *RE* I 722-724 (Praetextatus 1). Zu Eusebius und Hypatius vgl. KELLY (2008) 116. Zum *notarius* und späteren *comes Orientis* Philagrius s. KELLY (2008) 145; MATTHEWS (1989) 376. Zu Teutomeres, Laniogaisus, Abdigildus, Discenes, Sophronius und Syagrius: KELLY (2008) 146; MATTHEWS (1989) 195.

<sup>10</sup> FRAKES (2000); KELLY (2008) 142.

<sup>11</sup> Vgl. auch zum folgenden die Pionierarbeit von SABBAAH (1978).

spätantiken Staat und Militär und des regen schriftlichen Austausches innerhalb der spätantiken Eliten meist deutlich angegeben werden. Als Zeithistoriker nutzte Ammian vor allem Berichte, die Beamte oder Spitzenmilitärs an die jeweils höhere Stelle oder an den Kaiser abgaben. Explizit nennt Ammian die Berichte des Ruricius an den Augustus Valentinian (28, 6, 22) oder des Casticius an den Caesar Gallus (14, 2, 20). Die berühmte detaillierte Darstellung der Erpressung und Unterschlagungen in der Provinz Tripolitana (28, 6) lässt in ihrer Struktur noch die Benutzung verschiedener Berichte erkennen, neben dem explizit erwähnten des Statthalters Ruricius derjenigen des *magister officiorum* Remigius und der Gesandten von Leptis Magna. Die autobiographischen Erzählungen des Ammian zu seiner Kundschaftertätigkeit in der Gordyene und seine Rolle bei der Belagerung von Amida durch die Perser gehen in ihren Grundzügen wohl ebenfalls auf einen solchen Bericht zurück, den Ammian an seinen Vorgesetzten, den *magister militum* Ursicinus, schickte. Die Erzählung über die Kämpfe, die sich die Papstprätendenden Damasus und Ursinus lieferten (27, 3, 11-12), reflektiert anscheinend den Bericht des Stadtpräfekten, der sich um die öffentliche Ordnung sorgte.<sup>12</sup> Neben den *relationes* gehören zu dem von Ammian verwendeten Material auch die schriftlich niedergelegten kaiserlichen Verlautbarungen.<sup>13</sup> Bulletins (oder auch ihre Ausarbeitung durch zeitgenössische Panegyriker) liegen den Erzählungen über die Taten des Constantius II. am Bodensee<sup>14</sup> bzw. im Kampf gegen die Sarmaten<sup>15</sup> zugrunde sowie der Darstellung der Aktionen Valentinians I. bei

<sup>12</sup> Vgl. auch das Communiqué nach Adrianopel: AMM. MARC. 31, 13, 16 mit MATTHEWS (1989) 379.

<sup>13</sup> Ähnlichkeiten zwischen der lateinischen Inschrift einerseits, die auf dem nach Rom verbrachten großen Obelisken die Leistungen des Constantius II. hervorhebt, und der Erzählung Ammians andererseits weisen z. B. auf die gemeinsame Benutzung des Berichts des Constantius II. hin: AMM. MARC. 16, 10, 17 und 17, 4, 2-17; *CIL* VI 1163 = *ILS* 736. Vgl. dazu SABBAAH (1978), 191.

<sup>14</sup> ROLLINGER (1998).

<sup>15</sup> SZIDAT (1972); BARCELÓ (1992)

Solicinium.<sup>16</sup> Auch bei einigen der kaiserlichen Reden, die Ammian in sein Geschichtswerk einlegt, scheint das zweifelsohne durch staatliche Kanäle auf breiter Basis bekannt gemachte Original durch.<sup>17</sup>

Zur reichen unmittelbar zeitgenössischen schriftlichen Produktion, die von Ammian benutzt wurde, gehörte neben dem dokumentarischen Material auch tagesaktuelle Rhetorik, von Libanios über Julian bis Themistios.<sup>18</sup> Die Zweideutigkeiten Ammians erlauben es aber nicht immer zu erkennen, in welchem Umfang sie benutzt worden ist. Das gilt etwa für die Erhebung des Säuglings Varronian zum Konsulkollegen seines Vaters Jovian. Während Themistios von der stoischen, geradezu unkindlichen Ruhe des schon frühzeitig gereiften Kaisersprosses bei der Zeremonie zu berichten weiß (*Or.* 5, 71), berichtet Ammian, er habe alterstypisch geschrien und auf diese Weise die Abläufe gestört (25, 10, 11). Zwar könnte die Erzählung Ammians hier eine authentische Beobachtung kleinkindlicher Reaktionen belegen, wahrscheinlicher ist aber, dass es sich um eine Gegenerfindung zu Themistios handelt, die ein schlechtes Omen für die Regierungszeit Jovians bieten sollte, und die einen Beleg dafür bietet, wie kreativ Ammian mit seinem Material umging.

Die Berücksichtigung dieses schriftlichen zeitnah angefertigten dokumentarischen und sonstigen Materials kann man als Ausdruck des Bemühens eines im Geiste des Polybios wirkenden Zeithistorikers verstehen, der seiner Darstellung durch den Reichtum an Belegen besondere Überzeugungskraft verleihen möchte.<sup>19</sup> Und die Benutzung des reichen Aktenmaterials zum

<sup>16</sup> AMM. MARC. 27, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Die Rede, in der Valentinian I. seinen Bruder Valens erhebt, findet sich nicht nur bei Ammian, sondern auch bei den Kirchenhistorikern, vgl. PHILOSTORG. 8, 8, 5 (*KFHist* E 7) mit meinem Kommentar. Abweichend von seiner Tendenz legt Ammian (15, 8, 5-8) auch dem Constantius II. eine vernünftige und staatspolitisch verantwortliche Rede bei der Erhebung des Julian in den Mund.

<sup>18</sup> SABBAAH (1978) 241-374.

<sup>19</sup> SABBAAH (1978) 596 zu Ammian als „nouveau Polybe“. Die Anhäufung von Materialien belegt auch den für die Selbstdarstellung der Historiker nötigen „effort“, vgl. die Parallelen bei MARINCOLA (1997) 149-157.



Aufbau einer mit diesem Material spielenden historiographischen Erzählung hat ihr Gegenstück vielleicht in der Art und Weise, in der Tacitus (oder seine Vorlage?) mit den Senatsakten umging, auch wenn bei Ammian diese Umformung nicht genügte, um größere historische Deutungslinien zu entwickeln.

## 2. Ammians Auseinandersetzung mit Zeithistorikern des vierten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts

Gerade der Blick auf Tacitus legt aber eine weitere Facette bei der Charakterisierung Ammians frei. Tacitus ist für die erhaltenen Teile seines Oeuvres nicht oder jedenfalls nur zum Teil ein Historiker, der zum ersten Mal einen Bericht aus zeitgenössischem Material neu komponiert, sondern vielmehr ein Historiker, der sich mit der bereits vorliegenden Zeitgeschichtsschreibung auseinandersetzt, nämlich mit der Zeitgeschichte zur frühkaiserzeitlichen Epoche und – besonders kritisch – mit der flavischen Geschichtsschreibung.<sup>20</sup> Dass auch das Geschichtswerk des Ammianus Marcellinus im Dialog mit einer bereits existierenden reichhaltigen Historiographie entstanden ist, ist eine wenig vertraute Vorstellung. Man muss sich aber den Umstand vergegenwärtigen, dass der zeitliche Abstand zwischen Constantius II. und Julian einerseits und der Abfassungszeit des Werks in den 390er Jahren andererseits ungefähr dreißig bis vierzig Jahre beträgt. Es ist naheliegend und teilweise auch nachweisbar, dass vor Ammian historiographische Darstellungen entstanden sind, die die Regierungen der Kaiser von Constantius II. bis Valens zum Gegenstand hatten.

Die Existenz einer solchen früheren Quellenschicht lässt sich aufgrund der Übereinstimmungen zwischen Ammian und spätgriechischen Quellen für die Usurpation Prokops<sup>21</sup> oder für die Orakel mit der Ankündigung des Endes des Valens vermuten.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> FLACH (1973).

<sup>21</sup> BLECKMANN (2011).

<sup>22</sup> BLECKMANN (2007) 25; DEN BOEFT *et al.* (2018) 6-10.

Ähnlichkeiten zwischen der Erzählung Ammians und des Zonaras für die Zeit zwischen 353 und 364 könnten ebenfalls einen Hinweis auf eine gemeinsame historiographische Grundlage erlauben.<sup>23</sup> Besonders signifikant sind die Übereinstimmungen zwischen Ammian und dem ungefähr im gleichen Zeithorizont schreibenden Autor der *Epitome de Caesaribus*. Beide scheinen bisweilen die gleiche Quelle zu benutzen, auch wenn Ammian durch „größeren Wortreichtum“ auffällt.<sup>24</sup>

Im Zentrum steht aber bei der Frage möglicher historiographischer Vorlagen Ammians die Darstellung der kurzen Kampagne Julians gegen die Perser, die von Ammian besonders ausführlich dargestellt wird. Offenkundig lag Ammian gerade hier eine Fülle von Erzählungen vor, in denen es nicht um die bloße Dokumentation des Geschehens, sondern um eine Deutung des Scheiterns Julians und um eine ideologische Positionierung diesem Kaiser gegenüber ging. Man kann vor dem Hintergrund dieser Debatten annehmen, dass die vielen Ähnlichkeiten, aber auch die Kontraste, die zwischen der ‚protohistorischen‘ Erzählung in der 18. Rede des Libanios und der Erzählung Ammians auffallen,<sup>25</sup> sich nicht einfach dadurch erklären lassen, dass Zeitzeugenberichte die gleichen Dinge notwendigerweise bald ähnlich, bald verschieden beschreiben mussten, sondern dass man es mit aus literarischer Beziehung geborenen Übereinstimmungen und Varianten zu tun hat. Ein Stellenvergleich unter vielen muss für die Begründung genügen: Ammian (24, 5, 1) und Libanios (18, 243) berichten darüber, wie die Armee zu einem Jagdpalast des persischen Königs gelangt, wobei die Armee bei Ammian den Palast schon, bei

<sup>23</sup> In jüngster Zeit sind diese Anklänge wieder einmal damit erklärt worden, der byzantinische Chronist habe über Johannes von Antiocheia letztlich Ammian selbst benutzt: TREADGOLD (2020). Anders BLECKMANN (1992).

<sup>24</sup> SCHLUMBERGER (1974) 214 zur Episode über Varronianus (AMM. MARC. 25, 20, 16-17 und *Epit. de Caes.* 44, 2): „Die Epitome scheint originärer. Ammian aber macht den Eindruck, als wolle er durch größeren Wortreichtum und zusätzliche Informationen die frühere Quelle bewußt übertrumpfen.“

<sup>25</sup> BENEDETTI MARTIG (1990). Vgl. zum gemeinsamen Fundus bei Ammian und Libanios BENEDETTI MARTIG (1990) 61.

Libanios ihn dagegen zerstört. Ähnliche Details zur Aufenthaltsdauer und zu dem mit dem Palast zusammenhängenden Jagdпарк lassen keinen Zweifel daran, dass offenkundig das gleiche Gebäude gemeint ist, dass aber die unterschiedlich beschriebene Bauweise und das gegensätzliche Schicksal des Palastes miteinander zu korrespondieren scheinen: „Pour Libanios, c'est parce que le palais était construit à la mode perse qu'il fut brûlé; pour Ammien, c'est parce que le palais était construit à la mode romaine qu'il fut préservé intact.“<sup>26</sup> Sabbah erklärt die zu konstatierenden Unterschiede damit, dass der Panegyriker noch ganz unter dem emotionalen Eindruck des kriegerischen Geschehens schreibt, während der Historiker einen deutlich objektiveren Standpunkt einnimmt, mehr als zwanzig Jahre später der *vérité générale* näher ist und die Ereignisse in größerer Ruhe und Distanz betrachtet. Ammian unterstreiche deutlicher die römische Gesinnung Julians, der nicht blindwütig zerstörend vorging und Zeugnisse des römischen Ingeniums im Persergebiet respektiere. Genau dieser Versuch, die staatsmännisch-römischen Aspekte des Handelns Julians hervorzuheben, ist aber offenkundig kein Beweis für eine besonders tatsächennahe Berichterstattung, sondern zeigt, dass Ammian einen zeitnäheren Bericht wie denjenigen des Libanios durch eine passendere Variante ausgetauscht und sich damit von der Ebene der reinen Zeitzeugenschaft entfernt hat.

Besonders signifikant ist das Verhältnis zwischen der Darstellung Ammians und dem zweiten ausführlichen Bericht über die Expedition Julians, nämlich dem (bei Zosimos erhaltenen) Bericht Eunaps. Die ältere Quellenforschung erklärte die Gemeinsamkeit damit, dass beide Autoren eine gemeinsame Quelle, nämlich das von Oreibasios angefertigte Hypomnema oder die Darstellung des Magnus von Karrhai benutzt hätten.<sup>27</sup> Louis Dillemann ging dagegen davon aus, dass Ammian als mitmarschierender Zeitgenosse aus unmittelbarer Anschauung berichten

<sup>26</sup> SABBAH (1978) 264.

<sup>27</sup> SUDHAUS (1870); KLEIN (1914).

konnte.<sup>28</sup> Übereinstimmungen zwischen Ammian und Zosimos ergeben sich für ihn lediglich daraus, dass den Erzählungen die gleichen Fakten zugrunde lagen. Zeitzeugen, die die gleichen Ereignisse beobachten und die gleiche Kampagne erleben, müssten notwendig auch das Gleiche berichten. Diesen Standpunkt hat C. Fornara untermauert, indem er etwa zu zeigen versuchte, dass die Verschiedenheit der Namen in den Erzählungen Ammians und des Zosimos die Benutzung einer gemeinsamen Quelle nachgerade ausschliesse.<sup>29</sup> Matthews konzediert dagegen, dass Ammian in Details, in denen Übereinstimmungen mit Zosimos auffallen, eventuell Eunapios oder dessen Quelle benutzt haben könnte, aber allenfalls als Nebenquelle oder zusätzliche Information, ohne Auswirkungen im Detail oder der Disposition seiner Erzählung.<sup>30</sup>

Die Frage, ob die zeitgenössische Historiographie, wenn Ammian auf sie eingegangen ist, ihn nur anregte oder ob sie seine Erzählung in substantieller Weise prägte, wird man nur durch eine Fülle von Proben des Vergleichs beantworten können. Enge Parallelen lassen sich auffälligerweise nicht allein in der Darstellung des Itinerars und der wichtigsten militärischen Entscheidungen nachweisen. Vielmehr sind identische Details selbst bei unbedeutenden Episoden zu berücksichtigen. Aus der Fülle verräterischer Parallelen sei der Hinweis auf die Station Dura herausgegriffen, die die am Euphratufer entlang marschierende Invasionsarmee nach dem Verlassen von Kirkesion erreicht haben soll. Diese Nachricht ist schon deshalb erstaunlich, weil bei beiden Quellen anscheinend nicht klar ist, wie das am gegenüberliegenden römischen Ufer liegende Dura überhaupt

<sup>28</sup> In welcher Eigenschaft allerdings Ammian am Perserfeldzug teilnahm, ist nicht zu bestimmen, vgl. KELLY (2008) 125-127. Der *honoratior miles aliquis*, in dem man eine Parallele zu XEN. An. 2, 4, 19 erkannt hat, muss nicht mit Ammian identisch sein.

<sup>29</sup> FORNARA (1991); zum Argument vgl. bereits MATTHEWS (1989) 165. Dazu BLECKMANN (2017) 119-124.

<sup>30</sup> MATTHEWS (1989) 167: "If Ammianus here knew Eunapius' account, or any other from which it derived, he was clearly not dependent upon it either in points of detail or in his disposition of the material." S. auch 173.

im Itinerar der Armee vorkommen konnten.<sup>31</sup> Verräterisch ist vor allem, dass beide Quellen in ähnlicher Form darüber berichten, wie bei Dura Herden von „Hirschen“ – gemeint sind eigentlich Gazellen, die gewöhnlich im Griechischen durchaus von Hirschen unterschieden werden<sup>32</sup> – geschossen wurden. Mit dieser Episode sollte wie in anderen Passagen das anfängliche Gelingen des Perserfeldzugs Julians illustriert werden, in dem die Armee Gelegenheiten immer wieder zur ausreichenden Versorgung fand.<sup>33</sup> Dementsprechend betonen sowohl Zosimos wie auch Ammian im Zusammenhang mit dem Jagderfolg, dass alle gesättigt wurden. Zosimos schreibt: „Sie sahen auch eine Menge Hirsche, die sie mit Pfeilschüssen erledigten und von denen sie sich im Überfluss versorgen konnte.“<sup>34</sup> Bei Ammian ist zu lesen:

„Hier wurden viele Rudel von Hirschen (Gazellen) angetroffen. Einige von ihnen wurden durch Pfeilschüsse erledigt, andere mit den schweren Rudern erschlagen. So lieferten sie genügend Nahrung für alle. Der größte Teil von ihnen durchschwamm den Strom, da sie ja schnelle Schwimmer sind, und sie entkamen in unbehinderter Flucht in die ihnen bekannten Wüsten.“<sup>35</sup>

Ammian ist ausführlicher, aber es könnte sein, dass er in keiner Weise umfangreichere sachliche Informationen hatte als

<sup>31</sup> Denkbar ist, dass die parallel zum Heereszug vorrückende Flotte den Ort erreichte oder aber, dass die Ruinen Duras vom persischen Ufer aus erblickt wurden. Eine andere Lösung bei GAWLIKOWSKI (1988) 89. Er geht davon aus, dass die Armee Julians tatsächlich am westlichen (ehemals römischen Ufer) des Euphrat gezogen und diesen erst bei Hit überquert hat. Er verweist dabei auch auf Übereinstimmungen zwischen Ammian und Zosimos, aus denen hervorgeht, dass sich der Fluss links von der Marschkolonne befand. Möglicherweise ist auch hier wieder die gemeinsame Quelle durch einen gemeinsamen Irrtum identifizierbar. Von einer erneuten Euphratüberquerung erfährt man allerdings nirgends.

<sup>32</sup> GAWLIKOWSKI (1988) 89: „Ammien et Zosime se retrouvent dans la même erreur zoologique.“

<sup>33</sup> Vgl. z. B. AMM. MARC. 24, 1, 13-15; 24, 3, 14; 24, 5, 3; 24, 5, 12.

<sup>34</sup> ZOS. 3, 14, 2.

<sup>35</sup> AMM. MARC. 24, 1, 5: *in quo loco greges ceruorum plures inuenti sunt, quorum alii confixi missilibus, alii ponderibus illi remorum ad satietatem omnes pauerunt; pars maxima natatu assueta ueloci alueo penetrato, incobibili cursu euasit ad solitudines notas.* Deutsche Übersetzung von SEYFARTH.

Eunap-Zosimos, sondern nur zusätzliche Varianten hinzufügte, die sich aus der Situation der Gazellenjagd am Euphrat ergab. Die Gazellen werden bei ihm nicht nur mit Pfeilen erlegt, sondern auch mit den schweren Rudern der Schiffe der Euphratflotte erschlagen – eine Jagdmethode, die man sich allenfalls vorstellen kann, wenn die Gazellen von Landheer und Flussflotte eingekreist waren.<sup>36</sup> Das Entkommen der verschonten Gazellen in den ihnen bekannten Wüste ist ein Detail, das man ohne weiteres aus der Situation heraus spinnen konnte und für das es keines authentischen Zeugenberichts bedurfte.

Einen weiteren Fall dieser Art, der in evidenter Weise literarische Beziehungen zwischen Ammian und Eunapios-Zosimos verrät, bietet die Darstellung des Todes des hochgestellten Persers Dakes/Adaces. Im Zusammenhang mit seinem Tod in einem Kampf zwischen persischen und römischen Truppen verweist Ammian (25, 1, 6) in auffälliger Art und Weise auf dessen frühere Gesandtschaft beim Kaiser Constantius II.: *in hac cecidit pugna Adaces, nobilis satrapa, legatus quondam ad Constantium principem missus ac benigne susceptus*. Genau der gleiche Rückverweis findet sich bei Zosimos (3, 27, 4):

ἀνηρέθη γὰρ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ μάχῃ σατράπης τις τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ὄνομα Δάκης, ὃς ἔτυχε πρότερον ἐπὶ πρεσβείαν πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Κωνσταντίου ἀπεσταλμένος, εἰρήνης περὶ καὶ καταλύσεως τοῦ πολέμου διαλεζόμενος.

Engste wörtliche Parallelen fallen auf: *in hac cecidit pugna* entspricht ἀνηρέθη γὰρ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ μάχῃ; *nobilis satrapa* entspricht σατράπης τις τῶν ἐπιφανῶν; *legatus quondam ad*

<sup>36</sup> Wie Ammian eine ihm mit Sicherheit vorliegende Vorlage durch Details konkretisiert hat, lässt sich an einem Beispiel deutlich machen. AMM. MARC. 27, 4, 4 schreibt über die Skordisker: *hostiis captiuorum Bellonae litantes et Marti humanumque sanguinem in ossibus capitum cauis bibentes avidius*. Die Vorlage FESTUS 9, 1 hat: *hostiis captiuorum diis suis aliquando litauerint quod humanum sanguinem in ossibus capitum potare sint soliti*. Ammian fügt also hinzu, dass die Schädelknochen hohl sind, dass gierig getrunken wird, und er präzisiert vor allem, offenkundig frei erfindend, Details um Mars und Bellona. Ammian hat im Übrigen nachweislich Festus nicht nur für die geographischen Exkurse, sondern auch für ein Detail seines Berichts über den Perserfeldzug Julians als Quelle benutzt, vgl. ROSS (2016) 189-196.

*Constantium principem missus* entspricht πρότερον ἐπὶ πρεσβείαν πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Κωνστάντιον ἀπεσταλμένος. Es ist kaum anzunehmen, dass Zeitzeugen anlässlich des Todes des Adaces unabhängig voneinander darauf kamen, in einem rückgreifenden Exkurs und in identischen Formulierungen auf die frühere Gesandtschaft des Satrapen hinzuweisen. Vielmehr sind auch hier beide Berichte von einer bereits detailliert erzählenden Quelle geprägt.

Ammian ist allerdings nicht sklavisch von dieser erzählenden Quelle abhängig, auch deshalb nicht, weil er ein additives Patchwork von Stücken bietet und keiner konsequent durchgehaltenen erzählerischen Hauptlinie folgt.<sup>37</sup> Von einer nur punktuellen Anregung durch seine Quellenvorlage kann aber umgekehrt auch nicht die Rede sein. Große Teile seines Berichts über die Geschichte des von ihm selbst erlebten Perserfeldzugs sind vielmehr offenkundig in der Auseinandersetzung mit einer bereits existierenden historiographischen Produktion gestaltet worden.

Welcher Art diese Produktion allerdings war, muss offen bleiben. Ross begreift Ammian vor dem Hintergrund der Auseinandersetzung mit unmittelbar zeitgenössischen griechischen Berichten wie diejenigen des Seleukos, Philagrios oder Oreibasios.<sup>38</sup> Er vermutet, Ammian habe sich gegenüber diesen griechischen Berichten durch die Abfassung eines großformatigen lateinischen Geschichtswerks abheben wollen. Durch die Wiederbelebung des längst vergessenen Genres umfangreicher Zeitgeschichte habe er der lateinischen Welt den dort vergessenen Julian bekannt machen wollen.<sup>39</sup> Diese Erklärung ist aber keineswegs zwingend. Das Wirken Julians, der immerhin sechs Jahre in Gallien tätig war, kann durchaus schon vor Ammian auch in der lateinischen

<sup>37</sup> Die zusammenhängend erzählenden Quellen, die Ammian vorlagen, hat er immer wieder in Einzelemente zerlegt und diese mit anderen Informationsfragmenten kombiniert. SZIDAT (1992) 116 sieht in dieser Technik des Zerlegens und der Neukombination einen Vorzug der Erzählung Ammians, weil es auf diese Weise „nicht zu einer gezielten Deformierung der historischen Realität“ komme.

<sup>38</sup> ROSS (2016). Vgl. auch BLECKMANN (2017).

<sup>39</sup> Bereits MATTHEWS (1989) 457 postuliert, dass Beschäftigung mit Zeitgeschichte eher ein griechisches als ein römisches Phänomen war.

Reichshälfte diskutiert worden sein.<sup>40</sup> Angesichts der Tatsache, dass schwer vorstellbar ist, dass Ammian seit Jahrhunderten der erste Vertreter umfangreicherer lateinischer Historiographie gewesen sein soll,<sup>41</sup> ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass sich Ammian in seiner reichhaltigen Darstellung des Wirkens Julians auch mit verlorenen lateinischen zeitgeschichtlichen Autoren maß.

Wie dem auch immer sei, deutlich ist jedenfalls, dass die Ausführlichkeit der Erzählung Ammians sich aus einem Überbietungswettbewerb erklärt und nicht etwa damit, dass Ammian als gut informierter Zeitgenosse das Geschehen besser abbilden konnte, als seine bisweilen durchaus knapperen Vorlagen. Sehr oft liegt im Übrigen nur die rein rhetorische Methode des Ausmalens vermeintlich konkreter Details vor. Der Einbau zusätzlicher Informationssplinter aus dokumentarischem Material oder aus der zeitgenössischen Literatur erhöht, um Ammian besser informiert erscheinen zu lassen, die Komplexität der erzählerischen Struktur, ohne dass deshalb mit einem insgesamt wirklichkeitsnäheren Bericht zu rechnen ist. Weitere Motive für den Ausbau einer ausführlichen Erzählung lassen sich vermuten, etwa der zeittypische ästhetische Reiz, dem ein solcher polychromer Flickenteppich entsprach.<sup>42</sup> Ferner gelingt Ammian, sich durch Nuancenreichtum und Vieldeutigkeit einer klaren Positionierung zu entziehen und damit sein Ethos historiographischer Unabhängigkeit zu illustrieren. Das zeigt sich etwa

<sup>40</sup> An die Verteidigungsleistungen Julians an der Rheingrenze wurde noch während der Usurpation Constantins III. erinnert, vgl. ZOS. 6, 3, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Zur (sozialen und intellektuellen) Isolierung Ammians vgl. MOMIGLIANO (1974). Besonders prononciert jetzt wieder ROSS (2016), demzufolge Ammian in einer Welt der Breviarienliteratur der einzige Vertreter der historiographischen Großform gewesen sei, die er als Grieche, an Tacitus anknüpfend, wiederentdeckt habe. Unbeschadet von der Diskussion um die *Annales* des Nicomachus Flavianus gibt es erratische Hinweise für die Existenz einer ausführlicheren lateinischen Geschichtsschreibung, z. B. die *Origo Constantini* und die Fragmente des Sulpicius Alexander und des Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus.

<sup>42</sup> Für den Stil FONTAINE (1992) 36: „Le style d’Ammien reflète avec une sorte de polychromie extrême, mais ordonnée, la bigarrure de l’esthétique théodosienne.“ Vgl. PHILOSTORG. *Test.* 1 (*Anthologia Palatina* 9, 193): παράγματ’ ἀληθείης ποικίλ’ ὑφηνάμενος.



bei der Beurteilung der Aussichten des Perserfeldzugs Julians. Neben Äußerungen in der Art des Epitaphios des Libanios, in der der Feldzug als ein rational geplantes, zunächst erfolgreiches und nur durch die Ungunst des Schicksals unterbrochenes Unterfangen erscheint,<sup>43</sup> treten andere hinzu, in denen das Unternehmen von Anfang an unter einem ungünstigen Stern erscheint und in denen aus einer paganen, römisch-patriotischen Perspektive Kritik vernehmbar wird.<sup>44</sup> Auch in der Frage, ob der katastrophale Zusammenbruch der Versorgung der Armee erst auf die Fehlentscheidungen Jovians zurückzuführen ist oder bereits Julian verantwortlich gemacht werden muss, verhält sich Ammian mehrdeutig.<sup>45</sup> Solche Schwankungen in der Bewertung lassen sich im Übrigen auch für die Darstellung der Gegenspieler und Nachfolger Julians beobachten. In der Erzählung über den Einzug des Constantius II. in Rom wird einerseits die Begegnung des leutseligen Kaisers mit Akzeptanzgruppen in der Ewigen Stadt in panegyrischer Form beschrieben, andererseits aber dann die Manifestationen der abgehobenen spätantiken Repräsentation kaiserlicher Erhabenheit teils mit Bewunderung, teils mit Kritik geschildert, so dass insgesamt ein Ganzes von scheinbarer Uneindeutigkeit entsteht.<sup>46</sup> Diese Techniken entsprechen letztlich einer taciteischen Methode. Durch die Einbindung gegenläufiger Bewegungen und Perspektiven entsteht insgesamt ein komplexer, vielfach gebrochener Bericht, der länger und differenzierter erscheint, in Wirklichkeit aber gerade durch diesen diskursiven Prozess den eigenen bald verborgenen, bald offen dargelegten tendenziösen Standpunkt als objektiv und gut begründet erscheinen lässt.

<sup>43</sup> Zu dieser Perspektive des Epitaphios vgl. BENEDETTI MARTIG (1990).

<sup>44</sup> Zu den Omina LIEBESCHUETZ (1988); BRODKA (2009) 76-105; ROSS (2016) 180-188.

<sup>45</sup> Vgl. AMM. MARC. 25, 7, 4 versus AMM. MARC. 25, 2, 1. Zur Frage s. AMM. MARC. 24, 7, 6; LIB. 18, 277-278; MAL. 13, 22 p. 255, 89-256, 10 THURN; PHILOSTORG. 7, 15a, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Die Behauptung, dass Constantius II. niemanden freigesprochen hat (AMM. MARC. 14, 5, 9) wird dadurch relativiert, dass die Freisprüche für Ursicinus und Julian dargestellt werden: BLOCKLEY (1975) 46.

### 3. Geschichtsschreibung im Dienste der Überhöhung Julians

Aus den vorangehenden Bemerkungen dürfte also deutlich geworden sein, dass Ammian in Auseinandersetzung mit einer bereits existierenden und florierenden Zeitgeschichtsschreibung schreibt, die er durch einen komplexeren Bericht zu übertreffen sucht, deren Material er aber gleichwohl durchaus verwendet. Passagen der Autopsie und der Zeitzeugenbefragung sind als Mosaiksteine eingelegt, die dem Bericht insgesamt die Aura des gut informierten, aus erster Hand berichtenden Zeithistorikers verleihen, der unabhängig und im Sinne des von Lukian entworfenen Ideals in autonomer Weise urteilt.<sup>47</sup> Das dabei von Ammian gebotene Bild der einzelnen kaiserlichen Regierungen, insbesondere die Kontrastierung zwischen Julian und den übrigen Kaisern seiner Zeit, ist ebenso wenig neutral, wie seine Haltung in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Christen und Altgläubigen.<sup>48</sup> Dieser tendenziöse Charakter ist für das Genre der Zeitgeschichte keineswegs untypisch, das entgegen der in der Theorie formulierten normativen Forderungen „Unparteilichkeit“, „Ehrlichkeit“ und „Objektivität“ keineswegs zwingend voraussetzt. Bereits Jacoby hat deutlich gemacht, dass Zeitgeschichte zwar eine über das rein Lokale reichende allgemeine Perspektive einnehmen muss, dies aber einen parteiischen Standpunkt – in der griechischen Geschichte eine „athenische, spartanische, böotische, makedonische Tendenz des Schriftstellers“ – nicht ausschließt.<sup>49</sup> Tendenz und historische Erkundung sind oft schon deshalb keine Gegensätze, weil das Bestreben, die Richtigkeit des eigenen Standpunkts zu illustrieren, ein wesentliches Motiv für die Sammlung von Material und Informationen war, die nicht neutral unterbreitet wurden, sondern Überzeugungskraft entfalten sollten. Dies gilt im Grunde schon für Thukydides, dessen Geschichte durchaus die Parteinahme des Politikers verrät, ob es um die Beurteilung Kleons oder um die

<sup>47</sup> FREE (2015).

<sup>48</sup> BARNES (1998) mit einigen Übertreibungen.

<sup>49</sup> JACOBY (1909/1956) 36.

Zuweisung der Verantwortung für die athenische Niederlage von 404 geht.

Trotzdem gibt es aber Unterschiede: Während Thukydides eine rationale Erklärung für die Dysfunktionalität der attischen Demokratie und ihr Versagen im Krieg entwirft und Polybios bei aller Voreingenommenheit für die Scipionen militärische und politische Gründe für die Erfolge Roms in den Punischen Kriegen untersucht, kann von einer solchen Einbindung in die Sphäre des Politischen bei Ammian nur eingeschränkt die Rede sein. Die Überhöhung Julians in der Gesamterzählung Ammians ist nur vordergründig mit derjenigen des Perikles durch Thukydides zu vergleichen. Ammian betreibt vielmehr, wie er durchaus selbst deutlich macht, Heldenverehrung im Sinne des Epos<sup>50</sup> und Geschichtsschreibung mutiert bei ihm zum posthumen Panegyrikos.<sup>51</sup> Die Überhöhung Julians hat bei ihm sogar deutlich theologische Dimensionen. Darauf verweist die Art und Weise, in der er das Oeuvre Julians benutzt. Er verwendet es nicht dort, wo für einen an der Klärung historischer Sachverhalte interessierten Historiker die Konsultation aktuell-politischer Werke des kaiserlichen Akteurs als Primärquelle nahelegen würde, sondern in erläuternden Passagen philosophisch-theologischer Natur.<sup>52</sup> Die von Julian selbst betonte Funktion des Kaisers als Mittler zwischen Göttlichem und Irdischem und als Verkünder überirdischer Weisheiten bringt Ammian nicht explizit zur Sprache, sondern charakterisiert Julian vordergründig eher nach römischen Konventionen als Virtuosen militärischer Praxis und effizienten Heerführer.<sup>53</sup> Die

<sup>50</sup> Mit dem Beginn der Darstellung der Regierung Julians schreibt AMM. MARC. 15, 9, 1: *maius opus moueo*. Vgl. dazu BLOCKLEY (1975) 77.

<sup>51</sup> AMM. MARC. 16, 1, 3 grenzt sich zwar von der Panegyrik ab, seine Darlegungen stehen aber in Kontinuität zur posthumen Panegyrik des Epitaphios des Libanios (*Or.* 18). S. auch die Diskussion zum vorliegenden Beitrag.

<sup>52</sup> CÉLÉRIER (2013) 105-204.

<sup>53</sup> BLOCKLEY (1975) 81 verweist auf das vermeintliche Fehlen der religiösen Aspekte der Rolle des Kaisers, wie sie von Julian selbst beschrieben worden sind (*IUL. Or.* 2, 90 c: *προφήτης* und *ὑπηρέτης*; „Nachahmer Gottes“. *Caes.* 333 a). MATTHEWS (1989) 446 findet die religiösen Einstellungen der Kaiser bei Ammian nicht ausreichend gewichtet. Diese Beobachtungen treffen nicht im vollen Umfang zu.

Verbindungen des Philosophenkaisers und neuplatonischen Weisen mit dem Jenseits bringt Ammian freilich dann – nach hinreichender Vorbereitung durch die Verwendung julianischer Philosopheme – wirkungsvoll am Schluss seiner Darstellung des irdischen Wirkens Julians zur Sprache, nämlich in der sokratischen Unterredung mit den Philosophen Maximus und Priscus auf dem Sterbebett.<sup>54</sup> In der Todesstunde erklärt Julian den Trauernden, dass die Stunde seines Todes vorherbestimmt ist und er auf der Höhe seines Wirkens von der Gottheit abberufen worden ist, die ihn zuvor hienieden herabgesandt hatte.<sup>55</sup>

Hatte Ammian zuvor die negativen Omina, die den Weg Julians in die Katastrophe begleiten, bald erwähnt,<sup>56</sup> bald umgedeutet,<sup>57</sup> steuert seine Erzählung letztlich darauf zu, gegenüber den älteren paganen Darstellungen, die Julian durchaus wegen seiner Ignorierung der Omina für das Scheitern des Feldzugs mitverantwortlich machten, eine abweichende Position zu beziehen. Ammian erklärt das irdische Scheitern Julians für gegenstandslos und hebt ihn vor dem Hintergrund der finsternen Verhältnisse der valentinianisch-theodosianischen Zeit<sup>58</sup> als neuen Mark Aurel, als Philosophenherrscher und als heroisch-kosmische

<sup>54</sup> SCHEDA (1966).

<sup>55</sup> AMM. MARC. 25, 3, 19: *ideoque sempiternum ueneror numen, quod (...) in medio cursu florentium gloriarum hunc merui clarum ex mundo digressum*. Zur Entsendung durch die Gottheit s. zuvor 25, 3, 17: *animum tamquam a cognatione caelitum defluentem*. S. hierzu CÉLÉRIER (2013) 78. Ähnliche Ausführungen bei IUL. Or. 7 (c. Heracl.).

<sup>56</sup> Der Tenor dieser älteren Tradition scheint in der *Epit. de Caes.* 43, 8 durch: *ita illum cupido gloriae flagrantior peruicerat ut neque terrae motu neque plerisque praesagiis quibus uetabatur petere Persidem, adductus sit finem ponere ardore*. Vgl. z. B. AMM. MARC. 24, 3, 3; 24, 3, 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Epit. de Caes.* 43, 8 erwähnt, Julian habe sich nicht durch ein Vorzeichen, nämlich durch die Vision eines vom Himmel fallenden ungeheuren Globus, am Vorabend seines Todes beeinflussen lassen: *ac ne noctu quidem uisus ingens globus caelo labi ante diem belli cautum praestiterit*. Vgl. AMM. MARC. 25, 2, 5-8, wo die gleiche Erscheinung in komplexerer Form beschrieben wird und sich Julian dem Rat der *haruspices* widersetzt, allerdings aufgrund seiner eigenen höheren Einsicht in sein Schicksal.

<sup>58</sup> In julianischer Diktion wird die Anwendung der Philosophie in der lichtvollen Regierung Julians der Finsternis unter Valens gegenübergestellt: AMM. MARC. 29, 2, 18 mit CÉLÉRIER (2013) 143-144.

Lichtgestalt ab, die nur für einen kurzen Augenblick aus den himmlischen Sphären herabgestiegen ist, der Menschheit durch herausragende Taten zu helfen. Er bietet damit eine Erzählung, die im Tenor derjenigen des Eunapios gleicht, bei dem Julian am Ende seines Lebens der Aufstieg in einer Art Himmelfahrt zum Sonnengott als dem Ursprung seiner Existenz verkündet wird und der aufgrund dieses Orakels „mit Freuden das sterbliche und gebrechliche Leben verlässt“. <sup>59</sup> Auch wenn das irdische Wirken Julians also in Auseinandersetzung mit der zeitgenössischen Historiographie und unter Nutzung aller dokumentarischer Ressourcen illustriert wird, hat Ammian, was sein Darstellungsziel betrifft, vielleicht mehr mit einem Hagiographen oder Evangelisten als mit einem Historiker gemein. <sup>60</sup>

#### 4. Äußerungen Ammians zur konzeptionellen Abgrenzung der Zeitgeschichte

Die Eigentümlichkeiten seines in den 390er Jahren mit großem zeitlichen Abstand von den Ereignissen verfassten Geschichtswerks, seine Kontextualisierung in eine bereits existierende historiographische Debatte und seine apologetische Grundausrichtung zugunsten Julians erklären, dass Ammian keine scharfe Abgrenzung der Zeitgeschichte vornimmt, und zwar weder in methodischer Hinsicht (Zeitgeschichte als Geschichte, die durch Autopsie und Zeitzeugenbefragung erschlossen wird) noch, was den Zeithorizont betrifft (Zeitgeschichte als die Geschichte der letzten zwei oder drei Generationen).

Dadurch, dass Ammian aus welchen Gründen auch immer bereits mit dem Jahre 98 einsetzte und insgesamt 270 Jahre

<sup>59</sup> EUNAP. *fr.* 26.

<sup>60</sup> Zur hagiographischen Darstellung Julians bei Libanios STENGER (2009), 165-191. Zur Charakterisierung Julians als Übermensch und Halbgott s. dens., 174-175. Eunap und Ammian gehen allerdings über Libanios hinaus, weil sie aus dem Rückblick den besonderen Platz Julians und den Ausnahmecharakter seines irdischen Wirkens noch deutlicher beschreiben.

behandelte,<sup>61</sup> fällt bei ihm die Grenze zwischen der weiter zurückliegenden Geschichte und der Zeitgeschichte nicht mit der Grenze zwischen Vorgängergeschichtswerk und eigenem Geschichtswerk im Rahmen der *Historia Perpetua*-Konzeption zusammen. Sein Geschichtswerk ist daher – abweichend von dem Muster, das man etwa in der Abfolge der Geschichtswerke des Prokop, des Agathias und des Menander Protektor konstatieren kann – nicht einfach der letzte Abschnitt einer stets fortzusetzenden und zu aktualisierenden generationsübergreifend zu erstellenden Gesamtgeschichte. Da die ersten dreizehn Bücher Ammians verloren gegangen sind, sind keine Hinweise zu entdecken, ob Ammian in irgendeiner Form die von ihm behandelte ältere, nicht selbst erlebte Kaisergeschichte von der Geschichte der letzten zwei, drei Generationen abgrenzte, etwa im Zusammenhang mit der offenkundig bereits ausführlich dargestellten Geschichte Konstantins des Großen.<sup>62</sup>

Auch seine vieldiskutierten expliziten methodischen Äußerungen geben zur Frage der methodischen und inhaltlichen Abgrenzung der Zeitgeschichte keinen Aufschluss. In 15, 1, 1 geht es in einer Äußerung, die sich wie ein Proömium zu einem neuen Werkteil liest, darum, dass Ammian, nachdem er bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt (dem Jahre 355) eine wahrheitsgemäße Erzählung vorgelegt hat, nunmehr vom bisher leitenden Prinzip der *Brevitas* abweichen und eine der *cognitio gestorum* dienliche, ausführlichere Darstellung vorlegen möchte.<sup>63</sup> In 26, 1, 1 hält

<sup>61</sup> Regelmäßig wird behauptet, dass durch die Anknüpfung an das taciteische Geschichtswerk Ammian sich immerhin durch das Bekenntnis zur historiographischen Großform (und damit zu einem für die Zeitgeschichte typischen Rahmen) methodisch positioniert. Das ist aber keineswegs gesichert. Die Zäsur ist in einer weitgehend an der Abfolge von Kaiserbiographien orientierten erzählerischen Struktur (SAMBERGER (1969) möglicherweise durch Sueton vorgegeben).

<sup>62</sup> Vgl. die Rückverweise bei AMM. MARC. 15, 5, 33 und 25, 4, 23.

<sup>63</sup> AMM. MARC. 15, 1, 1: *utcumque potui ueritatem scrutari, ea, quae uidere licuit per aetatem uel perplexae interrogando uersatos in medio scire, narrauimus ordine casuum exposito diuersorum; residua, quae secuturus aperiet textus, pro uirium captu limatius absoluemus nihil obtrectatores longi (ut putant) operis formidantes. Tunc enim laudanda est breuitas, cum moras rumpens intempestiuas nihil subtrahit cognitioni gestorum.* Zu den „Proömien“ FORNARA (1990).

Ammian, der „bis zu den Grenzen einer näheren Erinnerung“<sup>64</sup> gelangt ist, erneut ein und formuliert Überlegungen zum weiteren Vorgehen: Die Gefahren, zu zeitnahe Gegenstände zu behandeln, deutet er nur allgemein an, konkreter wird er nur darin, dass die lebenden Zeitgenossen sich am Fehlen von Details stoßen könnten, deren Vermittlung allerdings nicht Gegenstand echter Geschichtsschreibung sei. Diese eile vielmehr „nur über die Höhepunkte der Geschäfte“ dahin, „erforsche“ dagegen „nicht die Kleinigkeiten niedriger Dinge.“<sup>65</sup>

In beiden programmatischen Erklärungen wehrt sich Ammian gegen imaginäre Kritiker, die in der Tradition leidenschaftlicher Debatten um die richtige historiographische Methode stehen. Das eine Mal sind es die *obtrectatores longi (ut putant) operis*, die die *brevitas* als herausragende Qualität historischen Erzählens begreifen.<sup>66</sup> Das andere Mal geht es um die Verteidiger des Prinzips, dass eine zeitnahe historiographische Darstellung auch besonders detailliert sein muss, denen er das vermeintliche Prinzip entgegenhält, große Geschichtsschreibung müsse nur *discurrere per negotiorum celsitudines*.<sup>67</sup> Ammian verteidigt also

<sup>64</sup> AMM. MARC. 26, 1, 1: *ad usque memoriae confinia propioris*. SAMBERGER (1969) 371-373 entscheidet sich für *propioris*, was dann ein Hinweis auf die Reichweite der eigenen persönlichen Erinnerung Ammians wäre. Vgl. dagegen PASCHOUD (2005) 112-113.

<sup>65</sup> AMM. MARC. 26, 1, 1: *Dictis impensiore cura rerum ordinibus ad usque memoriae confinia propioris conuenerat iam referre a notioribus pedem, ut et pericula declinentur ueritati saepe contigua et examinatores contexendi operis deinde non perferamus intempestiuos strepentes ut laesos, si praeteritum sit, quod locutus est imperator in cena, uel omissum, quam ob causam gregarii milites coerciti sunt apud signa, et quod non decuerat in descriptione multiplici regionum super exiguis silere castellis quodque cunctorum nomina, qui ad urbani praetoris officium conuenere, non sunt expressa, et similia plurima praeceptis historiae dissonantia discurrere per negotiorum celsitudines assuetae, non humilium minutias indagare causarum.*

<sup>66</sup> Aus dieser Diskussion um die *brevitas* wird geschlossen, Ammian habe sich als einsamer Vertreter der historiographischen Großform hier gegen die Breviarien seiner Zeit, insbesondere gegen Eutrop gestellt, s. vor allem ROSS (2016). Dem ist nachdrücklich zu widersprechen. Es geht um die *brevitas* (συντομία) als Forderung für den historiographischen Diskurs, vgl. zu den entsprechenden Äußerungen Ciceros oder des Dionysios von Halikarnass NICOLAI (1992) 137-139.

<sup>67</sup> Gegen eine zu detaillierte Geschichtsschreibung wendet sich auch EUNAP. fr. 26: τὸ γὰρ καθ' ἕκαστα <γράφειν> οὐκ ἔν ἀλήθειαν τιμῶντος.

offenkundig in beiden Äußerungen divergierende Prinzipien der Geschichtsschreibung.

Diese Verteidigung verschiedener Prinzipien steht in evidenter Weise mit der Disposition des ammianischen Geschichtswerks in Verbindung. Von den insgesamt erhaltenen achtzehn Büchern behandeln in der Tat elf (Buch 15-25) neun Jahre zwischen 355 und 364, während die folgenden vierzehn Jahre nur in sechs Büchern (Buch 26-31) dargestellt werden. Konstatiert werden kann also eine Abweichung zum landläufig angenommenen Muster der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung, die immer ausführlicher wird, je mehr sie sich dem Endpunkt der Darstellung zuwendet. Diese Abweichung ist mit Gegebenheiten der Biographie Ammians erklärt worden: Nach seinem Rückzug aus dem aktiven Militärdienst waren die Recherchemöglichkeiten eingeschränkt und flossen die Informationen spärlicher.<sup>68</sup> Ammian habe ursprünglich mit der Regierung Julians und dem kurzen Nachspiel Jovians schließen wollen,<sup>69</sup> dann aber nach dem Ende Valentinians II. (392) einen knapperen Epilog angefügt, der die Herrschaft des Valentinian I. und des Valens behandelte, einschließlich der Erhebung der jüngeren Kaiser Valentinian II. und Gratian. Eine solche aktualisierende Einfügung eines gegebenenfalls knapperen Epilogs ist in der Tat nicht ohne Parallelen in der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung, von Polybios bis zu Theophanes von Byzanz.

Die genaue Betrachtung der diskutierten programmatischen Äußerungen am Anfang der neuen Abschnitte legt freilich nahe, dass der Wechsel im Darstellungsmodus von Ammian im Sinne seiner durchaus partiischen Gesamtintention verwendet wird. Dass die mit dem 15. Buch gesetzte Zäsur mit verbesserten Möglichkeiten der Materialbeschaffung und der *Historia* zu tun hat, sagt Ammian explizit jedenfalls nicht aus. Ammian selbst betont vielmehr gerade, dass er schon seinen bisherigen Bericht

<sup>68</sup> Vgl. zur Veränderung der Informationsgrundlagen (z. B. infolge der Aufteilung in zwei Höfe in valentinianischer Zeit) MATTHEWS (1989) 228.

<sup>69</sup> So z. B. BLOCKLEY (1975) 103.



(d. h. die ersten 14 Bücher) aufgrund der Prinzipien der *historia*-Primärforschung hergestellt hat, also der Autopsie und der Befragung unmittelbar beteiligter Akteure (*uersatos in medio*). In der Tat fällt zwischen dem 14. Buch, mit seiner Behandlung der Geschichte des Gallus, und den folgenden Büchern kein Unterschied auf, weder was die Recherchearbeit noch was den Detailreichtum der Darlegungen betrifft. Ähnliches gilt umgekehrt auch für die ab dem 26. Buch behandelte Zeit, also die Regierung des Valentinian I. und des Valens. Auch für diese Epoche verdankt sich der Bericht größtenteils zeitnah erstelltem Material, insbesondere den *relationes*. Dass, wie von Ammian selbst behauptet, nur die *summae celsitudines* behandelt werden, ist, wenn man die kleinteilige Erzählung über die Erhebung Prokops, die topographisch ausführlichen Angaben über den Feldzug des Theodosius des Älteren in Africa oder die Details der von Maximinus geführten Maiestätsprozesse betrachtet, kaum zutreffend. Buch 26 bis 31 unterscheiden sich von den vorangehenden Büchern nur darin, dass sie insgesamt wesentlich weniger Episoden und dadurch größere Lücken bieten sowie vom Jahresschema abrücken. Die wenigen Episoden werden aber dann nach genau den gleichen Kriterien gestaltet wie zuvor und bieten eine Fülle von Details, die für die Darstellungskunst Ammians charakteristisch sind.

Die Berufung auf verschiedene Prinzipien erklärt sich daher ausschließlich aus dem in 15, 9, 1 offen eingestandenen und in der Gesamtdisposition deutlich erkennbaren Motiv: Die Bücher 15 bis 25 gelten der Darstellung des Helden Julian von seiner Erhebung zum Caesar bis zu seinem Ende und zur Liquidierung seiner Erfolge durch seinen Nachfolger Jovian. In dieser Disposition sind die dem Valentinian und Valens gewidmeten letzten sechs Bücher lediglich als ein Nachspiel aufgefasst, indem Julian durch die Kontrastierung mit diesen letztlich ungeeigneten Kaisern sich deutlicher als Lichtgestalt abheben soll. Bei der durch die angemessen breite Darstellung angestrebte *cognitio gestorum*, geht es nicht abstrakt um die die Erkundung der Wirklichkeit, sondern um die umfängliche Kenntnis von den Großtaten

Julians.<sup>70</sup> Für die Darlegung der weniger rühmenswerten oder sogar katastrophalen Ereignisse in der Zeit des Valentinian und Valens genügt dagegen die rasche Behandlung einiger Punkte.

Diese Verquickung methodologischer Überlegungen zur Zeitgeschichte mit dem eigenen parteiischen Zeitpunkt lässt sich auch in der Art und Weise nachweisen, in der Ammian sich zur Möglichkeit der historiographischen Darstellung der unmittelbaren Gegenwart bzw. der nicht mehr in seinem 378 endenden Geschichtswerk erfassten Jahre äußert. Für diese Zeit beschwört Ammian in seiner letzten, das Geschichtswerk beendenden programmatischen Bemerkung, der sogenannten *sphragis*, zwar das Prinzip der generationsübergreifenden gemeinsamen Arbeit an der Darstellung des historischen Kontinuums. Indem freilich entgegen der üblichen Konventionen panegyrische Töne für die regierenden Kaiser fehlen, wird deutlich, dass die Herrschaft des Theodosius und seiner Söhne keineswegs auf der Höhe derjenigen Julians ist. Vielmehr wird die jüngste Zeit nur als der nach 378 übrig gebliebene Zeitraum charakterisiert: *scribant reliqua potiores aetate et doctrinis florentes*. Diese historiographischen Nachfolger sollen sich stilistisch bemühen und das bereits von Ammian erreichte Niveau erreichen: *quos id, si libuerit, aggressuros procudere linguas ad maiores moneo stilos*.<sup>71</sup>

## 5. Überlegungen zur Abgrenzung der Zeitgeschichte bei spätantiken Historikern

Deutlich dürfte aus der Gesamtbetrachtung sein, dass Ammian trotz vielfach geäußerter Anknüpfungen an bekannte methodische Reflexionen in der griechisch-römischen Geschichtsschreibung kein

<sup>70</sup> Die Wahrheit wird von Ammian permanent beschworen (s. die Sammlung der Stellen bei BLOCKLEY [1975] 96-97). BLOCKLEY 99 weist auf die beiden bekannten Deutungsmöglichkeiten hin, nämlich auf „Wahrheit“ im Sinne von „objektiver Darstellung“ und von *parrhesia* hin. Es geht aber in der Debatte um das Heilswirken Julians teilweise auch um die Wahrheit im Sinne der Glaubenswahrheit.

<sup>71</sup> KELLY (2007) (dessen Interpretation ich folge); DEN BOEFT *et al.* (2018) 301-303.

Interesse daran hat, Zeitgeschichte konzeptionell zu umreißen. Eine solche Konzeption findet sich freilich auch sonst in der Spätantike nicht, weder in dem Sinne, dass der zeitgeschichtliche Bericht durch eine besondere Methode der Primärforschung entsteht, noch in der deutlichen Abgrenzung eines selbst erlebten Zeitraums.<sup>72</sup> Eine beträchtliche Bandbreite besteht auch für die Entscheidung, welcher Zeitraum überhaupt im Rahmen einer zeitgeschichtlichen Darstellung detailliert dargestellt wird, ob es sich etwa um die Regierung gegenwärtiger Kaiser handelt (wie bei Prokop) oder um die – bald kritisch, bald lobend beschriebene – Regierung vor kurzem oder auch schon vor längerer Zeit verstorbener Kaiser. Schließlich bestehen auch große Unterschiede in der Darstellung des Verhältnisses der ausführlich beschriebenen zeitgeschichtlichen Epoche (etwa der Regierung Julians) zur weiter zurückliegenden Vergangenheit.

Zur Illustration dieser Sachverhalte müssen wenige verstreute Hinweise genügen: Eunap hat zwar – in einem Fragment, dessen Kontext unklar ist – über den Einschnitt zwischen der weiter zurückliegenden, aus schriftlichen Quellen rekonstruierten Geschichte und der selbst erlebten Geschichte reflektiert,<sup>73</sup> nimmt aber im gleichen Atemzug dann auch für die entfernteren Zeiten die Existenz von mündlichen Traditionen an und verwässert damit das Konzept der völlig verschiedenen Qualität der Informationsbeschaffung. In anderen Äußerungen geht es um die Begründung, warum die jüngste Vergangenheit gerade nicht zum Gegenstand historischer Darstellung werden kann. Die unmittelbare Zeitgeschichte ist in diesen Äußerungen entweder Aufgabe des Panegyrikers oder kann erst in einer fernen Zukunft geschrieben werden, in der aus Zeitgeschichte wieder eine weiter zurückliegende Geschichte geworden ist.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Die angebliche *historia sui temporis* (*SHA, Opil.* 9, 2) des Lollius Urbicus ist natürlich nur als Autobiographie, nicht als genuin zeitgeschichtlicher Entwurf zu verstehen.

<sup>73</sup> EUNAP. fr. 28. Weiter zurückliegende Epochen werden aus schriftlichen Quellen eruiert: *παλαιότερων καὶ ὅσα πρὸ ἡμῶν ἀνάγκη συγχωρεῖν τοῖς γράψασιν.*

<sup>74</sup> Vgl. PASCHOUD (2005).

Einen anderen Grund, sich der Darstellung der Zeitgeschichte zu entziehen, nennt Hieronymus. Er diskutiert zwar die Möglichkeit, im Gestus der *parrhesia* eine ausführlichere Geschichte der unmittelbar eigenen Zeit zu schreiben. Allerdings verhindern nach seiner Erklärung die chaotischen Verhältnisse der Völkerwanderung die Realisierung dieses Projekts:

„Vom oben genannten Jahr Konstantins (Vicennialien) bis zum sechsten Konsulat bzw. dem zweiten Konsulat der Augusti Valens und Valentinian ist alles von mir. Mit diesem Ende zufrieden habe ich den Rest der Zeit Gratians und des Theodosius dem Stil einer breiteren Geschichte (*latioris historiae stilo*) vorbehalten, nicht, weil ich befürchtet hätte über lebende Kaiser frei und wahr zu schreiben – die Furcht vor Gott vertreibt nämlich die Furcht vor den Menschen – sondern weil bis jetzt auf unserer Erde die Barbaren wüten und alles unsicher ist.“<sup>75</sup>

Während die Unsicherheit der eigenen Zeit bei Hieronymus letztlich das Projekt einer Zeitgeschichte verhindert, bezieht der syrische Kirchenhistoriker Johannes von Ephesos (6. Jh.) in der Einleitung seines sechsten Buchs einen abweichenden Standpunkt. Seiner Kirchengeschichte will er nämlich eine Abhandlung „von den Kriegen und Treffen, der Verwüstung und dem Blutvergießen, das in unseren Zeiten stattfand“ anfügen „zur Kunde der Nachwelt, wenn wohl die Welt noch besteht.“ Aufgezeichnet werde dies „wie wir es durch Hörensagen erhalten haben.“<sup>76</sup> Der potentiellen Nachwelt werden also die katastrophalen Ereignisse der eigenen Zeit überliefert, die angeblich durch Methoden der zeitgeschichtlichen Recherche in Erfahrung gebracht worden sind. Trotz der programmatischen Anknüpfung an Themen thukydeischer Tradition führt aber eine solche Darstellung zeitnaher Ereignisse, in der es darum ging, die vermeintlich katastrophalen Folgen der Religionspolitik des aktuell

<sup>75</sup> HIERONYM. *Chron. can., Praef.* p. 7 HELM.

<sup>76</sup> JOH. EPHESES. 6, 1 übers. SCHÖNBERGER. Vgl. die lateinische Übersetzung BROOKS: *de bellis et proeliis etiam, et uastatione et caede, quae nostris diebus facta est, memoriam breuem adiciamus, ut ad scientiam posterorum, si igitur mundus amplius stabit, quoad inuenimus et deprehendimus et auditu accipimus, ea exscribamus et nota faciamus.*

herrschenden Kaisers zu kritisieren, in evidenter Weise nicht zu einer nachhaltigen Renaissance thukydideischer Zeitgeschichtsschreibung. Denn die Distanz zum kaiserlichen Herrschaftssystem und die Abkehr von einer panegyrischen Engführung der Geschichte der eigenen Zeit ist bei Johannes von Ephesos anders als vielleicht noch bei Prokop nicht Ergebnis eines Willens zur realitätsnahen Analyse, sondern einer exklusiven Weltdeutung im Lichte ideologisch-theologischer Themen: Die apokalyptisch anmutenden Katastrophen der Gegenwart fallen für Johannes so aus, als ob das Ende der Zeiten im Sinne der von Matth. 24, 33 angekündigten Zeichen gekommen sei.

Die Diffusität Ammians hinsichtlich eines historiographischen Konzepts der Zeitgeschichte ist also kein überraschendes Phänomen. Die spätantike Geschichtsschreibung hat vielmehr die Geschichte der eigenen Zeit nicht in klar definierter Art und Weise als Gegenwartsgeschichte aus dem historischen Kontinuum herausgelöst. Was aus der Zeitgeschichte überhaupt als einer Darstellung wert betrachtet wurde, hängt eng mit Konzepten der Zeitkritik und dem jeweiligen Verhältnis zum aktuell herrschenden Kaiser zusammen. Die kritische Distanz zum gegenwärtigen Regime konnte dazu führen, dass ein Akzent auf die idealisiert gezeichnete Herrschaft vorangehender Kaiser gelegt wurde. Umgekehrt konnte die Identifizierung mit der gegenwärtigen Kaiserregierung auch dazu beitragen, dass eine nahe Vergangenheit im Sinne des Kontrastes besonders kritisch und durchaus ausführlich dargestellt wurde, wie das etwa für die Darstellung der Herrschaft Justins II. durch Menandros Protektor gilt. Die Beschäftigung mit der Herrschaft gegenwärtig regierender Kaiser konnte im Geist panegyrischer Überhöhung oder demjenigen oppositioneller Distanz unternommen werden – beides ist bei Prokop in eigenartiger Weise vermischt –, sie konnte – wie bei Johannes Ephesos – mit einer apokalyptischen Konnotation versehen werden, sie konnte aber auch bewusst als noch nicht historisches Geschäft unterlassen werden. Wenn schließlich selbst erlebte Epochen nicht in deutlicher Form von früheren Zeiträumen abgegrenzt wurden, war dies jedenfalls bei Ammian auch eine Strategie, um einem noch

zeitnahen Gegenstand durch einen Historisierungsprozess den Hauch der Althehrwürdigkeit zu verleihen. Der bereits ferne und zu einem Mythos gewordene und mit historischer Patina versehene Julian konnte so idealisierten Kaisern der Vergangenheit angeglichen werden.

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## DISCUSSION

*E.-M. Becker:* Vielen Dank für den interessanten Vortrag! Ich würde gerne eine gewissermaßen historiographietechnische Frage stellen: Du sprichst von verschiedenen Typen von Materialien oder Vorlagen, die auf den Historiker Ammian gekommen sind: einerseits Berichte, Akten, *relationes*, Dokumente als mögliche Vorlagen, andererseits mögliche vorliegende historiographische Darstellungen, zu denen er sich in kritischer Auseinandersetzung verhalten haben könnte wie etwa Tacitus zu seinen Vorgängerwerken. Ammian steht hier – wie für Historiker typisch – in einem ‚Überbietungswettbewerb‘. Könnte zugleich zwischen diesen beiden Typen von Materialien weiter unterschieden werden, und könnten von da aus Rückschlüssen für jene Dimension von Zeitgeschichtsschreibung gezogen werden, die neben Autopsie und Selbsterleben auch die kritische Sichtung vorausliegender historiographischer Darstellungen zu den Merkmalen von Zeitgeschichte rechnet (s. Definition von Zeitgeschichtsschreibung in der modernen geschichtswissenschaftlichen Theorie, auf die ich kurz selbst verwiesen hatte)?

Eine Beobachtung zu den sog. Wir-Passagen: Ähnliches lässt sich auch bei Lukas in der Apostelgeschichte beobachten. Die Wir-Passagen finden sich nicht (immer) da, wo sie für die Autorisierung lukanischen Schreibens besonders eindrücklich wären, z. B. verzichtet der Autor darauf, als Zeuge der Areopagrede zu erscheinen, sondern in Zusammenhängen, die eher nebensächlich wirken (der implizite Autor als Reisebegleiter in den „Wir-Passagen“ der Apg [Apg 16,10-17; 20,5-15; 21,1-18; 27,1 - 28,16]).

*B. Bleckmann:* Das Studium schriftlicher Quellen, darunter dann wohl auch bereits existierender historischer Berichte, gehört zwar nach der Methodenlehre des Polybios (12, 25e) durchaus

zu den Aufgaben der „pragmatischen Geschichtsschreibung“, auch wenn er im Folgenden dann gegen Autoren wie Timaios polemisiert, die einen historischen Bericht nur aufgrund der Konsultation von Bibliotheken anfertigten. Ein Verfahren, wie mit bereits angefertigten historischen Berichten umzugehen ist, ist in der Antike aber nicht entwickelt worden. Vorgänger werden in der Regel stillschweigend benutzt. Auch Polybios, der für den zweiten makedonischen Krieg wohl in umfassenderer Form, als er zugibt, die rhodische Zeitgeschichtsschreibung (Zenon, Antisthenes) benutzt hat, ist hier keine Ausnahme. Benutzte Historiker werden allenfalls dann erwähnt, wenn man gegen ein Detail polemisiert. Ammianus selbst weist so gut wie nicht auf die von ihm benutzten Vorlagen hin. Gerade im Falle der Expedition Julians ist aber durch den Abgleich mit Parallelmaterialien deutlich zu erkennen, dass er aus einer Fülle von Informationen und Aufzeichnungen schöpfen konnte. Dabei reicht die Bandbreite möglicher Vorlagen von unmittelbaren Augenzeugenberichten (vgl. *Lib. Ep.* 1220, 8 und *Ep.* 1402) zu umfangreicheren Darstellungen wie dem *Hypomnema* des Oreibasios. Dein Hinweis auf die Wir-Berichte in der Apostelgeschichte ist sehr instruktiv und belegt, dass dieses Instrument nicht nach den Prioritäten eingesetzt wurde, die wir erwarten würden.

*N. Luraghi:* Many thanks for this truly eye-opening presentation. The Xenophon-like gesture that you, in the footsteps of Kelly I seem to understand, recognize in Ammianus' *sphragis* might cast some light on his calling himself miles and Graecus – Xenophon was indeed both, and perhaps this parallel, if it really is one, might help towards an interpretation of Ammianus' self-definition. On the other hand, your very persuasive depiction of the textual and institutional environment in which Ammianus operated made me wonder. To some extent, our discussions have presupposed that, in a meaningful way, historians as far apart as Thucydides and Ammianus may be regarded as practitioners of the same trade. From your remarks, I have the strong impression that in fact the difference, in the

concrete terms of how they put together their historical narratives, between Thucydides, or any historian operating in the context of a polis for that matter, and Ammianus is of an order of magnitude comparable to the difference between Ammianus and you or me. I wonder to what extent we have been captured by the rhetoric of the self-representation of ancient historians, and have perhaps not given enough attention to the important differences between their several textual, cultural and institutional environments. Not a criticism, really, but a suggestion for further thought.

*B. Bleckmann:* Beim *miles et Graecus* liegt der Vergleich mit Xenophon nahe, vielleicht nicht nur zum Autor der *Anabasis*, sondern auch zu dem der *Hellenika*. In letzteren nennt Xenophon sich zwar selbst nur mit dem Pseudonym Themistogenes von Syrakus, aber es ist deutlich, dass schon die Auswahl des Materials und Fokus der Darstellung – etwa die aus der Perspektive des Agesilaos gebotene Darstellung der Kampagne von 395/394 – sich aus der Eigenschaft des an den Ereignissen beteiligten Zeitzeugen erklärt, ferner, dass Xenophon gerade in der Darstellung taktischer Details seine fachmilitärische Expertise als Truppenführer einfließen lässt. Der Hinweis auf den großen zeitlichen Abstand berührt eine für die Geschichte der Geschichtsschreibung in der Tat zentrale Frage, nämlich die nach der Einheit dieser kulturellen Praxis über die Jahrhunderte hinweg. Ammian ist ein Autor, der ohne die bürokratische Verdichtung des spätantiken Staats nicht denkbar ist. Gleichwohl stellt er nur das Extrem am Endpunkt einer schon jahrhundertalten Entwicklung dar, die bereits in klassischer Zeit mit der Integration dokumentarischen Materials in die historische Erzählung einsetzt. Ein Zwischenglied stellt etwa Hieronymus von Kardia dar, der in hohem Umfang seinen Bericht aus Dokumenten zusammengesetzt hat.

*J. Marincola:* I agree very much with Nino's remarks that Ammianus, though writing contemporary history, is working in a completely different world from the one in which Thucydides

worked. The abundance of official reports and other contemporary accounts provides Ammianus with different kinds of opportunities and enormous advantages. I agree too that we might well question whether we should even include all of these works within the single rubric of *Zeitgeschichte* or contemporary history. What seems to me to justify it, however, is that Ammianus, despite the abundance of material official and otherwise, writes his narrative making the same claims as Thucydides, namely that his history is the result of autopsy and inquiry of eyewitnesses. There is no mention of documents or other written accounts. Ammianus is consciously writing in a particular tradition. My question is this: is it worthwhile to compare Ammianus' history with the *Kirchengeschichte* of Eusebius, which is very self-conscious in its use of documents and had at least shown that one could write a history in such a manner, or are there too many differences to make the comparison useful?

*B. Bleckmann:* Ich stimme Ihnen völlig zu, dass Ammian in der Verschleierung seiner dokumentarischen Vorlagen den Vorgaben des Genres folgt. Thukydides selbst erwähnt in seinem Methodenkapitel die Nutzung von Dokumenten und Aktenstücken als zusätzliche Informationsmöglichkeit des Zeithistorikers nicht. Dass er sie nutzte, steht aber außer Frage, wie etwa die (nie als Inschriften publizierten) eingelegten persisch-spartanischen Vertragsentwürfe zeigen. Landläufig wird angenommen, dass Thukydides, hätte er sein Werk vollendet, das fünfte und achte Buch so überarbeitet hätte, dass die Spuren dieser Dokumentenbenutzung nicht mehr erkennbar gewesen wären. Die spätere Geschichtsschreibung ist von diesem Modell nicht mehr abgewichen: Das Material wird benutzt, aber sprachlich und gedanklich angepasst und vereinheitlicht. Auf die Provenienz wird kaum hingewiesen, sondern es bleibt bei der Fiktion, nur mit den Methoden der Zeitzeugenbefragung und Autopsie gearbeitet zu haben. Die *Kirchengeschichte* Eusebs lässt sich, wie Sie zu Recht betonen, als das Resultat eines entgegengesetzten Prinzips verstehen, indem dort ein Dossier sprachlich

nicht mehr redigierter Texte lediglich durch Überleitungen verbunden wird, worin man einen völligen Bruch mit der Tradition der antiken Geschichtsschreibung gesehen hat. Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung des fünften Jahrhunderts ist, obgleich sie ausdrücklich an Euseb anknüpft, durch den Versuch geprägt, genau hier diesen Bruch zu überwinden. Autoren wie Sozomenos und Philostorgios haben das ihnen vorliegende Material wie Konzilsentscheidungen, Briefe, Listen, kaiserliche Erklärungen zu einem Ganzen zusammenfügt und stilistisch angeglichen. Philostorgios, der die Profangeschichtsschreibung auch durch die Einfügung von Exkursen nachahmt, nennt seine Quellen nicht.

*R. Nicolai:* Vielen Dank für Ihren einleuchtenden Vortrag. Ich möchte auf eine sehr wirkungsvolle Formulierung hinweisen, die den Weg zu mehreren Überlegungen eröffnet, dass nämlich bei Ammianus „Geschichtsschreibung mutiert zum posthumen Panegyrikos“. Die Beziehung zwischen Lobrede und Geschichtsschreibung ist komplex, und man muss an Xenophons *Agesilaus* denken, in dem die *erga* in einer Weise erzählt werden, die derjenigen der *Hellenika* sehr nahe kommt. Lob und Tadel sind in der Geschichtsschreibung zumindest ab dem 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr. nicht ausgeschlossen: Das Hauptproblem liegt in der gerechten und begründeten Verteilung der Urteile. So wurde beispielsweise Theopompus wegen seiner harten Urteile der *pikria* beschuldigt. Auf der anderen Seite kann man sehen, dass Polybios sehr positive Urteile über Figuren wie Philopoimen und Scipio Aemilianus abgibt. Und Polybios selbst bekräftigt die Notwendigkeit, den Charakter und die Erziehung der berühmten Männer zu beschreiben, um die Leser zur Nachahmung anzuregen (10, 21, 4). Allein die Tatsache, dass Lukian in *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit* (7) auf den tiefgreifenden Unterschied zwischen Geschichtsschreibung und Lobrede hinweist, zeigt, dass die Grenze bei weitem nicht festgelegt war. Unparteilichkeit ist nicht als Abwesenheit von Wertungen oder Standpunkten zu verstehen, sondern

vielmehr als Abwesenheit von bewusster und absichtlicher Verfälschung von Tatsachen, dem *sine ira ac studio* von Tacitus. Was beurteilen Sie diese umstrittene Grenze zwischen Geschichtsschreibung und Lobrede?

*B. Bleckmann:* In der Tat wäre es gerade für die Kaisergeschichte hoffnungslos, einen scharfen Schnitt zwischen Panegyrik und Geschichtsschreibung vorzunehmen. Viele panegyrische Werke enthalten zeithistorische Passagen (etwa die beiden Lobreden Julians auf Constantius II. mit ihren Darstellungen insbesondere des Feldzugs des Constantius gegen Maxentius). Und umgekehrt werden zu Lebzeiten von Kaisern historiographische Darstellungen geschrieben, die panegyrisch sind (z. B. Praxagoras) oder panegyrische Elemente enthalten (wobei dies für Prokops Kriege durchaus nicht mehr so klar erscheint, wie man früher einmal angenommen hat). Die Theorien Lukians, der ja gerade die zeitgenössische Geschichtsschreibung angreift, beweisen, worin ich Ihnen völlig zustimme, dass diese Abgrenzung ganz theoretisch ist und einen Gegensatz zwischen dem wahrheitssuchenden und unabhängigen Historiker einerseits und dem notwendig lügenden und der politischen Macht dienenden Panegyriker andererseits konstruiert. Das Problem besteht darin, dass Ammian in dem von ihm imaginierten Bild des idealen Historikers diese lukianische Auffassung teilt und einen fundamentalen Gegensatz zwischen Panegyriker und Historiker annimmt. Ammian selbst setzt sich sehr deutlich von der Panegyrik ab, indem er behauptet, dass seine Darstellung der Großtaten Julians in Gallien zwar panegyrisch anmute, aber wegen der Beweise (im Unterschied zu den Erfindungen der Panegyriker) historische Wahrheit darstelle (Amm. Marc. 16, 1, 3): *quidquid autem narrabitur, quod non falsitas arguta concinnat, sed fides integra rerum absoluit, documentis eudentibus fulva, ad laudatium paene materiam pertinebit*. Im Sinne der von Ihnen erwähnten historischen Tradition von Theopomp bis zu Polybios hält Ammian sein lobendes Urteil über Julian für das Urteil eines gerecht wertenden Historikers.

*G. Schepens*: Mein erster Punkt ist mehr eine ‚Bemerkung‘ als eine Frage. Wenn Du den großen Anteil des eigenen Miterlebens Ammians mit dem anderen Historiker vergleicht, könnte man das Beispiel von Xenophons *Anabasis* – gewissermaßen doch ein Sonderfall (cf. Plutarch, *De gloria Atheniensium*) – vielleicht mit einem Verweis auf Polybius’ letzte zehn Bücher ergänzen. Leider kennen wir diese nur durch einige *Excerpta Constantini*, aber wir können wohl mit relativ hoher Sicherheit sagen, dass auch hier die Dinge die der Historiker durch eigenes Miterleben in Erfahrung gebracht hat, einen großen Anteil gehabt haben. Als Gründe für die Verlängerung seiner *Historiai* um zehn weitere Bücher nennt Polybius (in Buch III) nicht nur die *tarachê* und *kinêsis*, sondern vor allem (*megiston de*), dass er selbst eine so hervorragende Rolle in den Geschehnissen gespielt hat: nicht nur als *autoptês* und *synergos*, sondern sogar als *cheiristês*. Dass er häufig über sich selber als Zeuge und handelnder Person gesprochen hat, können wir auch der Passage entnehmen, wo er sich glücklich preist, einen eher seltenen Namen zu haben, so dass er abwechselnd die Erzählung der Begebenheiten mal in der dritten und in der ersten Person bringen kann.

Mein zweiter Punkt – und eigentliche Frage – betrifft die Sphragis – *ut miles et Graecus*. Könnte das letztere nicht auch bedeuten, dass er sich in der griechischen Tradition als der bessere Zeitgeschichtsschreiber behaupten möchte, zum Beispiel gegenüber seinem ‚Vorgänger‘ Tacitus.

Auf diese griechische Tradition der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung wird, interessanterweise beim Beginn der römischen Geschichtsschreibung, am Beispiel von Fabius Pictor und L. Cincius referiert in folgenden Text, Fabius Pictor T 4a (Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 6, 2):

ὁμοίᾳ δὲ τούτοις καὶ οὐδὲν διαφόρους ἐξέδωκαν ἱστορίας καὶ Ῥωμαίων ὅσοι τὰ παλαιὰ ἔργα τῆς πόλεως Ἑλληνικῆι διαλέκτῳ συνέγραψαν, ὧν εἰσι πρεσβύτατοι Κόιντος τε Φάβιος καὶ Λεύκιος Κίγκιος, ἀμφοτέρωι κατὰ τοὺς Φοινικικοὺς ἀκμάσαντες πολέμου. τούτων δὲ τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκάτερος οἷς μὲν αὐτὸς ἔργοις

παρεγένετο, διὰ τὴν ἐμπειρίαν ἀκριβῶς ἀνέγραψε, τὰ δὲ ἀρχαῖα τὰ μετὰ τὴν κτίσιν τῆς πόλεως γενόμενα κεφαλαιωδῶς ἐπέδραμεν.

“The Romans also published histories like to those and in no way different, as many as wrote the ancient deeds of their city in the Greek dialect, of whom the oldest are Quintus Fabius and Lucius Cincius [BNJ 810], both flourishing during the Punic Wars. Each of these men wrote accurately through experience deeds in which he himself took part, but ran in summary fashion through the ancient events which happened after the founding of the city.”

“like to those and in no way different” verweist auf die zuvor genannten griechischen Historiker.

*B. Bleckmann:* Das Thema der persönlichen Teilnahme und Gestaltung der Ereignisse, das Du mit dem Hinweis auf Fabius Pictor hervorhebst, wird in der Tat in der spätantiken lateinischen Historiographie durchaus zur Sprache gebracht. Eutrop verweist (3, 5) auf die Beteiligung des Fabius Pictor im Gallierkrieg von 225 (*Fabio historico, qui eo bello interfuit*), um dann mit ähnlichen Formulierungen auch die eigene Beteiligung an der Expedition Julians zu erwähnen (10, 16, 1: *cui expeditioni interfui*). Angesichts der späteren Karriere Eutrops, der (allerdings nach der Abfassung seiner Schrift) bis zum Konsulat und zur Prätorianerpräfektur gelangte und 363 wohl zu den hochgestellten *comites* Julians gehörte, ist der Vergleich mit Fabius Pictor vielleicht weniger deplaziert, als man zunächst annehmen könnte. Ammian ist freilich nicht auf der gleichen Höhe wie Eutrop zu verorten. Zwar hat man Beziehungen zwischen der Äußerung Eutrops über die Teilnahme am Perserkrieg und dem Bericht Ammians über die eigene Beteiligung in der Silvanusaffäre erkennen wollen, aber Ammian gibt in der entscheidenden Passage über seine Mitwirkung (15, 5, 22) nur ganz *en passant* nur seine Abkommandierung in subalterner Funktion (*inter quos ego quoque eram cum Veriniano collega*) bekannt. In dieser betonten Nichtprominenz seiner Zeitzeugenschaft – nirgends wird Ammian zum gestaltenden Akteur relevanter



Ereignisse – würde ich einen deutlichen Unterschied zu Polybios oder Fabius Pictor sehen. Deshalb würde ich auch skeptisch bleiben, ob sich die Selbstcharakterisierung als griechischer Historiker in der Sphragis auf seine Qualität als an den Geschehnissen aktiv beteiligter Zeithistoriker bezieht. Ich denke weiterhin, dass es ihm hier vor allem um die größere „wissenschaftliche“ Qualität der griechischen Geschichtsschreibung geht, die ihn auch veranlasst, Timagenes als Modell hervorzuheben. Was die Beobachtung zum letzten Werkteil des Polybios betrifft, kann man vielleicht anfügen, dass Ammian (24, 2, 16), in dem Sabbah den „nouveau Polybe“ sieht, den Polybios tatsächlich erwähnt, nämlich unter den Lektüren, aus denen Julian Instruktionen für seine Taten schöpft: *legerat enim Aemilianum Scipionem, cum historiarum conditore Polybio, Megalopolitano Arcade, et triginta militibus portam Carthaginis impetu simili suffodisse*. Die Episode stammt gerade aus der Zeit, die Polybios in der von 168 bis 146 reichenden Verlängerung seines ursprünglichen Werks behandelte und in der er nach eigenem Bekunden sich gestaltend an den Geschehnissen beteiligte.

V. *Fromentin*: Il existe une idée reçue chez les modernes selon laquelle dans les histoires au long cours (universelles ou ab *Urbe condita*), la partie consacrée à la période contemporaine de l'auteur, nécessairement marquée du sceau de l'*akribeia* thucydéenne, serait proportionnellement plus détaillée, plus développée que le récit des périodes anciennes, en raison de l'abondance et de la disponibilité des sources. Cependant, cette théorie, fondée sur de rares témoignages antiques, qui plus est très discutés, est impossible à vérifier, la quasi-totalité des livres contemporains (chez Éphore, Diodore, Nicolas de Damas dans ses *Histoires*, Tite-Live, Cassius Dion...) ne subsistant qu'à l'état fragmentaire. Le cas d'Ammien Marcellin semble même la démentir puisque, comme vous le démontrez, il n'y a pas chez lui de séparation claire entre l'histoire de son temps et celle des siècles précédents, et que les variations qui affectent sa narration (extension, rythme) ne peuvent pas s'expliquer par la quantité ou la qualité

des sources à sa disposition. Pensez-vous que l'historiographie tardo-antique se distingue à cet égard de celle des siècles précédents ?

*B. Bleckmann:* Die Vorstellung, dass ein antiker Historiker dort ausführlicher schreibt, wo er von einer größeren Dichte an Informationen ausgehen kann, ist zunächst naheliegend. Gerade dort, wo Geschichtswerke ein starkes persönliches Gepräge haben, kann das aber oft bedeuten, dass zeitlich entferntere Jahre gegenüber zeitlich näheren in der Erzählung privilegiert werden. Das kann man etwa für Velleius Paterculus konstatieren, der die Jahre des Tiberius unter Augustus eingehend berücksichtigt, die Zeit ab 14 n. Chr. aber summarisch behandelt (s. den Vortrag von Adam Kemezis). Insofern kann das Bild, dass die Geschichte immer ausführlicher dargestellt wird, je näher man der eigenen Zeit kommt, allenfalls einem ganz groben Schema entsprechen. Eine Besonderheit der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung kann man allenfalls darin erkennen, dass Werke mit einer großen Zahl an Büchern (wie Livius oder Nikolaos), die dann auch genauere Messungen erlaubt, ob sich aus der zeitlichen Disposition der Bücher Veränderungen im Erzählmaßstab ergeben, eher selten sind. Ammian mit seinen 31 Büchern ist hier vielleicht eine Ausnahme, aber immerhin könnte auch Frigeridus (dem mindestens 12 Bücher zuzuweisen sind) 15 bis 20 Bücher geschrieben haben. Das Material genügt aber nicht, um einen Maßstabswechsel zu erkennen. In Prokops *Kriegen* bietet das achte Buch eine Art aktualisierender Appendix an, die im Maßstab keineswegs ausführlicher ausfällt, als die zuvor behandelten Geschichten der einzelnen Kriegsschauplätze.

*A.M. Kemezis:* This paper has shed a lot of light for me on the really fascinating structural questions about Ammianus, but I am actually going to stay with the same passage right at the end that Nino and Guido discussed. This is a bit parochial, since it figured in my paper as well, but I wanted to ask about how Ammianus defines his work in terms of its prose style, and

the necessary grandeur or however you prefer to characterize *stilo maiore*. As you point out, he is drawing on similar closing formulae that we find in Jerome, also Eutropius and Festus, who are then positioning themselves relative to panegyric, but then of course Ammianus is writing on a very different scale and style from any of these authors. So how does his stylistic self-positioning work here, relative to panegyric and to the various other 4<sup>th</sup>-century historians, particularly in view of the structural centrality of Julian that you have identified?

*B. Bleckmann:* Was die Äußerungen zu den *maiores stilos* in der Sphragis betrifft, so ähneln sie nur äußerlich den Darlegungen Eutrops und anderer Autoren, die unmittelbare Zeitgeschichte müsse im *genus grande*, nämlich auf der höheren, sprich panegyrischen, Ebene geschrieben werden. Eutrop (9, 18, 3) nimmt sich vor, selbst diese Beschreibung der Taten der herrschenden Kaiser Valentinian und Valens in diesem huldigenden Stil anzufertigen: *nam reliqua stilo maiore dicenda sunt, quae nunc non tam praetermittimus quam ad maiorem scribendi diligentiam reseruamus*. Ammian verabschiedet sich dagegen in seiner Sphragis bewusst von dieser Aufgabe und überlässt seinen Nachfolgern, über die (Entwicklungen nach 378 zu schreiben. Da sein eigener Stil mitnichten dem für die Historiographie zu wählenden *genus medium* entspricht, sondern Ammian für die Darstellung des tragischen Scheiterns Julians offenkundig einen erhabenen Stil benutzt, verweist die Aufforderung an die Nachfolger, sich eines höheren Stiles zu befleißigen, wohl auf die Modellhaftigkeit der eigenen Darstellungsweise. Gibbon hat angenommen, dass Ammian hier sarkastisch wird und den Nachfolgern empfiehlt, in glorifizierender Weise über eine Epoche zu berichten, die alles andere als erhebend war.



## IX

HERVÉ INGLEBERT

### LA RELATION ENTRE LE TEMPS PRÉSENT ET “L’HISTOIRE UNIVERSELLE” DANS L’ANTIQUITÉ GRÉCO-ROMAINE ET EN OCCIDENT (XIX<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLES)

#### ABSTRACT

It is not necessary to relate a story of the present time to a story of the totality of the past. Nevertheless, this temptation has existed at various times. The wars of the end of the Republic and the establishment of the Principate were the occasion for a new reflection on the meaning of the Roman Empire (Diodorus of Sicily, Nicolas of Damascus, Pompeius Trogus) in connection with the previous empires or the development of ancient civilization. From 1770, the unifying concept of History has structured European philosophical universal histories (Herder, Hegel, Marx) since the origins of humanity. After 1870, the development of academic universal history and historiographical studies were the context in which Felix Jacoby created the hybrid notion of *Universal- und Zeitgeschichte*. Finally, global history now claims to go beyond the Eurocentric horizon of progressive universal history. By calling into question the continuity between the present time of globalization and the totality of the past, she rediscovers a Polybian intuition. But unlike the ancient historian, this distinction is made while preserving the unitary concept of History, which is problematic.

Pour comparer les descriptions du temps présent dans l’Antiquité et de nos jours, on doit mettre en relation plusieurs aspects : les différentes définitions des temporalités historiennes (passé ancien, passé récent, temps présent, histoire immédiate) ; les diverses méthodes d’enquête (autopsie, témoignages, utilisation

de documents, reprise de la tradition, enquête critique sur les sources, déconstruction des présupposés des historiens actuels) ; les conceptions de la nature de l'écoulement du temps (succession d'âges partiellement unifiée par un thème – dans l'Antiquité : histoire d'un peuple, d'un pouvoir, de l'Église ; après 1750, devenir général unifié = Histoire) ; les types de récit selon le mode temporel (discontinu et descriptif : annales, chronique ; continu et explicatif : histoire) ; les structures de récit selon le traitement des thématiques (histoire monographique, locale ou générale (nationale ou impériale) ; annales-biographies chinoises ; histoire universelle) ; les régimes d'historicité des historiens. On pourrait y ajouter les aspects contextuels, principalement sociologiques et idéologiques, et ceux relevant des techniques littéraires de la présentation du passé.

On privilégiera ici la question du lien entre le passé proche ou des événements contemporains et le passé ancien. Toutefois, pour comparer les problématiques antiques et actuelles sur ce sujet, on doit également prendre en compte la conception dominante des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, celle de l'histoire universelle, qui a amené à déformer les approches gréco-romaines et contre laquelle s'est développée l'histoire globale.

### **1. Les questionnements sur les liens entre histoire du passé et histoire du présent**

L'histoire contemporaine peut désigner d'abord l'histoire qui fonde notre monde actuel et intégrer alors le passé récent : pour nous, celle qui commencerait en 1789, 1848, 1914 ou 1945 ; pour Diodore, celle qui va d'Alexandre à César ; pour Tacite ou Cassius Dion, celle qui débute avec Auguste ; pour Eusèbe de Césarée, celle qui commence avec la Pentecôte qui fonde l'Église. Mais le terme peut également renvoyer à la seule histoire péri-contemporaine qui regroupe le passé proche (aujourd'hui l'histoire du temps présent définie par l'existence de témoins vivants) et l'histoire immédiate.

### 1.1. *Les aspects méthodologiques de la connaissance du passé et du présent*

Que cela soit dans l'Antiquité ou aujourd'hui, les deux problèmes méthodologiques principaux de l'enquête sur le péri-contemporain sont celui des sources, qui incluent nécessairement des témoignages contemporains écrits ou oraux, et celui de la distance critique, même si celle-ci n'implique pas nécessairement un recul historique temporel. Dans l'Antiquité classique, le genre littéraire de la description du passé récent ou du temps péri-contemporain était généralement appelé *historia* (chez Hérodote) ou *syngraphê* (chez Thucydide) et reposait sur une enquête fondée principalement sur l'expérience personnelle de l'historien (autopsie) et sur les témoignages oraux,<sup>1</sup> mais aussi parfois à partir d'archives (Tacite). L'historien pouvait également intégrer l'usage ponctuel d'archives à propos d'un passé plus ancien, comme dans le cas des traités entre Rome et Carthage rapportés par Polybe (3, 22 et 24). À côté de cette "histoire", dont la définition associait les critères méthodologiques et temporels, il existait une autre forme de récit, sur un passé plus lointain (ou à partir d'un passé lointain, car les *Antiquités judéennes* de Flavius Josèphe vont jusqu'à une époque récente), que l'on appelait en grec "archéologie" et en latin "antiquités". Cette connaissance du passé ancien s'appuyait principalement sur les récits antérieurs, mais intégrait aussi des traditions locales orales en lien avec des documents, des monuments, des vestiges ou des rituels. Toutefois, *historia* ou *syngraphê* purent désigner dès l'époque hellénistique des récits portant sur un arc chronologique très large.

La professionnalisation de l'histoire à partir de 1750 à Göttingen et la mise en place de la critique systématique des sources à partir de 1810 à Berlin ont transformé le métier des historiens au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, en intégrant l'érudition antiquaire de la Renaissance dans la pratique

<sup>1</sup> SCHEPENS (1980) ; MARINCOLA (1997) 63-85.

historienne. Désormais, l'avoir-lu (les sources datant de l'époque étudiée) pouvait jouer le rôle de l'avoir-vu et de l'ouï-dire, et la critique des sources permettait de reprendre le modèle antique de l'enquête autoptique et de le projeter sur le passé au détriment de l'acceptation de la tradition. Aussi, le problème de la relation entre la description du passé et celle du présent se pose-t-il de manière fort différente dans l'Antiquité et à partir du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle du point de vue des méthodes. Pour les historiens anciens, mais cela est encore vrai au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle avec *An universal history* et en fait jusque vers 1850 en Europe, on écrivait une "histoire universelle" en combinant une histoire du passé qui reprenait surtout la tradition écrite antérieure (soit une addition des histoires successives des divers présents formant ce que l'on appelle aujourd'hui l'*historia perpetua*,<sup>2</sup> soit le plus souvent une synthèse déjà existante), et une histoire du présent originale, car fondée sur l'enquête personnelle de l'historien. Cette distinction entre réception de la tradition et enquête personnelle, qui reposait sur un rapport méthodologique différent aux sources, explique que parfois (c'est le cas pour Ammien Marcellin) la tradition manuscrite ne nous ait conservé que la partie contemporaine de l'historien, le résumé antérieur étant jugé moins important puisque déjà connu par des textes plus complets contemporains des événements décrits.<sup>3</sup> En revanche, après 1850, il n'y eut plus en principe pour les historiens modernes de différence de nature entre le récit sur le passé ancien, le passé proche et le présent, car tous pouvaient reposer sur des enquêtes fondées à partir des sources contemporaines des événements. Les seules différences résidaient dans l'abondance et la nature des sources (peu d'archives pour l'Antiquité classique, mais bien plus en Mésopotamie antique ; pas de sources audio-visuelles

<sup>2</sup> Ce sens moderne est différent de la notion ancienne d'*historia perpetua* (histoire annalistique générale et continue) présente chez Cicéron, *Lettre* 112, 2, à Lucceius où il l'oppose aux monographies consacrées à des événements spécifiques extérieurs (une guerre) ou intérieurs (la conjuration de Catilina).

<sup>3</sup> Ceci est différent dans les abrégés d'histoire romaine (comme chez Eutrope) où la totalité des temps est résumée.



avant le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle...). L'extension du modèle de l'enquête au passé lointain eut comme conséquence de valoriser les sources écrites et la distance critique fut désormais comprise de manière temporelle (le "recul historique") et non plus en termes d'exigence de neutralité (le "recul historien" comme c'était le cas théoriquement pour Thucydide, Polybe ou Tacite). Après 1850, malgré quelques exceptions,<sup>4</sup> les historiens ont majoritairement délaissé l'étude du temps présent, sauf dans le champ de l'histoire nationale, où les historiens affirmèrent l'existence de continuités millénaires et n'hésitèrent pas à participer aux débats politiques contemporains (Guizot, Droysen, Fustel de Coulanges, Mommsen).

### 1.2. *Le concept d'Histoire*

Un autre aspect essentiel à prendre en compte, depuis 1750 environ,<sup>5</sup> est l'existence du concept d'Histoire, qui relie le présent au passé, voire à l'avenir, sous la forme d'une histoire unifiée de l'humanité (sauf dans le cas de l'hypothèse des civilisations parallèles). L'apparition de l'idée d'un devenir historique unitaire et compréhensible par les humains a eu trois conséquences fondamentales.

D'abord, grâce au concept unificateur d'Histoire, on pouvait dépasser la description accumulative du passé, l'*Universalhistorie* du *Brodgelehrte* de Schiller,<sup>6</sup> pour écrire une *Universalgeschichte* ou une *Weltgeschichte*, en mettant en évidence son unité garantie par un *nexus rerum*, un *Zusammenhang* ou une providence immanente. Mais de 1770 à 1870, les modèles unitaires vinrent des philosophes et des théoriciens de l'histoire, qui privilégiaient un aspect particulier – politique, religieux, économique ou culturel – et non des historiens, qui prenaient en compte toutes les

<sup>4</sup> RENOUVIN (1925) ; BLOCH (1946).

<sup>5</sup> KOSELLECK (1975).

<sup>6</sup> *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede* (24 mai 1789).

données. Néanmoins, à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, à cause des révolutions politiques, du développement scientifique et industriel, des nationalismes et de l'impérialisme colonial, les historiens européens acceptèrent le modèle d'un progrès de l'humanité qui s'achevait avec la civilisation occidentale contemporaine conçue comme la fin de l'Histoire. Ce schéma européocentrique permettait de combiner toute l'érudition historique sur le passé et l'unité de l'histoire universelle : la diversité spatiale des cultures connues au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle fut projetée sur un axe chronologique qui allait de la Préhistoire à l'Occident contemporain.

L'impact de la Révolution française, qui créa par contrecoup l'Ancien Régime, amena Hegel<sup>7</sup> à développer sa réflexion sur l'historicité (*Geschichtlichkeit*). Or, l'affirmation de l'unité du devenir historique (l'Histoire) et de sa continuité (depuis 1750) n'était pas compatible de manière évidente avec l'affirmation de l'historicité (depuis 1800) qui supposait qu'il existait des périodes différentes, et non seulement des âges divers. Cette tension entre la continuité et la discontinuité de l'Histoire a fondé les débats sur la périodisation, du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à aujourd'hui.

Enfin, le concept d'Histoire et les révolutions américaine et française ont profondément modifié la nature du lien entre passé, présent et futur, en créant de nouveaux régimes d'historicité, définis par leur jugement sur le devenir :<sup>8</sup> le passé a pu continuer à être un modèle pour certains, mais cette position traditionnelle est devenue réactionnaire ; la pensée que le présent était meilleur que le passé, mais que l'Histoire était désormais achevée, a fondé la position conservatrice ; l'idée que l'avenir serait encore meilleur que le présent justifiait une position futuriste qui pouvait être soit réformiste soit révolutionnaire.

<sup>7</sup> AUTHIER (2019).

<sup>8</sup> KOSELLECK (1979) ; HARTOG (2002). Il est en réalité difficile de définir des régimes d'historicité collectifs propres à des époques données. En revanche, cette approche se révèle pertinente dans des cas individuels, soit dans le cadre d'études littéraires de l'écriture de l'histoire : GRETHLEIN (2013) ; soit pour l'étude des relations au temps dans des circonstances précises : INGLEBERT (2020).

Ainsi, l'apparition du concept d'Histoire vers 1750, celle de la notion d'historicité vers 1800 et l'extension du modèle de l'enquête contemporaine au passé lointain après 1810 sont autant de différences essentielles entre les historiens d'autrefois et ceux d'aujourd'hui. Cela a des conséquences fondamentales sur l'articulation entre passé et présent dans les récits historiques, que nous étudierons dans trois contextes différents : celui de l'Antiquité gréco-romaine, où le concept d'Histoire n'existait pas ; celui des années 1870-1970, qui a vu l'apogée de l'histoire universelle eurocentrique ; celui du début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, marqué par le développement de l'histoire globale.

## 2. Les liens entre histoire du présent et histoire du passé dans l'Antiquité

Comme de nombreux aspects de l'histoire du présent dans l'Antiquité ont été étudiés lors de ces *Entretiens*, on n'analysera ici que quelques aspects complémentaires.

### 2.1. *Les temps et les méthodes pour les connaître*

L'existence chez les Grecs et les Romains de temps différents et leurs liens avec les méthodes permettant de les connaître peuvent être résumés dans le tableau suivant.

### 2.2. *La question de "l'histoire universelle antique"*

"L'histoire universelle antique" est une construction historiographique du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>9</sup> Cette notion recouvre en réalité divers types de récits (synchroniques ou diachroniques), dont la liste et la chronologie varient d'un historien moderne à l'autre,

<sup>9</sup> DESIDERI (2001).

**Tableau 1**  
**Les relations entre les temps (en abscisses) et les méthodes**  
**(en ordonnées) dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine**

| Temps   | I- Passé  |  | II-Temps péri-contemporain                        |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
|   | 1-Passé lointain  | 2-Passé récent (un à trois siècles)  | 3-Passé proche (= temps présent des Modernes)     | 4-Histoire immédiate  |
| Méthodes et récits  |   |  |   |   |
| Expérience et autopsie  | Impossible  | Impossible   | Possible et préférable                            | Possible et préférable  |
| Recours aux témoignages oraux   | Impossible  | Impossible   | Possible et conseillé                             | Possible et conseillé   |
| Recours aux archives, aux monuments et aux vestiges (autopsie partielle du passé)                             | Possible mais assez rare (plus courant en Mésopotamie, en Égypte et chez les Juifs) | Possible   | Possible (courant dans l'histoire ecclésiastique) | Possible (procédé d'avocat, courant dans l'histoire ecclésiastique) |
| Recours aux traditions locales, généralement orales   | Courant   | Possible   | Possible  | Possible  |
| Recours à des textes révélés  | Confiance envers la Bible (Tanakh) chez les Juifs et les chrétiens                  | Confiance envers la Bible (Nouveau Testament) chez les chrétiens           | Non, car révélation close                         | Non, car révélation close   |
| Reprise de la tradition historique ou érudite antérieure  | Oui, parfois avec réserve   | Oui, mais avec réserve chez les historiens (classiques ou ecclésiastiques) | Possible mais avec une volonté de dépassement     | Possible mais avec une volonté de dépassement                       |
| Types de récits par période   | <i>Archaïologia Antiquitates</i>  | <i>Historia Syngraphê Annales</i> (Tacite)                                 | <i>Historia Syngraphê</i>                         | <i>Historia Syngraphê</i> + rhétorique de l'éloge ou du blâme       |
| Titres courants (à l'époque impériale) des récits depuis les origines des empires ou de Rome jusqu'au présent | <i>Historia Syngraphê Annales</i><br>Chronographies/Chroniques                      |  |   |   |

certains commençant à Hérodote,<sup>10</sup> d'autres à Éphore<sup>11</sup> ou Polybe,<sup>12</sup> voire Diodore.<sup>13</sup> Ceci pose quatre problèmes.

Le premier est que, puisque la notion d'Histoire n'existait pas encore, il n'y avait pas de réelle périodisation (les âges antiques ne sont pas des périodes au sens moderne<sup>14</sup>), d'où, par exemple, l'intérêt constant pour Alexandre sous l'Empire romain. En revanche, un historien "universel" pouvait donner du sens à son récit par le choix de son point de départ, soit en s'insérant dans une tradition dont il reprenait les présupposés (*Hellenika*,<sup>15</sup> histoire de Rome, chronique chrétienne), soit en privilégiant un commencement propre.

Le deuxième point est celui des totalités de l'"histoire universelle" antique. Malgré Zoile d'Amphipolis et Anaximène de Lampsaque, une totalité chronologique "historique" n'exista qu'à partir du I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C.<sup>16</sup> (avec Castor de Rhodes et Diodore) et la totalité géographique supposait d'accepter une équivalence idéologique entre *Hellenika* et *oikoumenê* à partir d'Alexandre, ou entre l'*imperium Romanum* et l'*orbis terrarum* à partir de la fin de la République. Enfin, depuis Thucydide, la question de la totalité de l'information (pour les thèmes politiques, militaires, et secondairement culturels) amenait à privilégier l'histoire contemporaine qui seule, grâce à l'expérience personnelle et à l'enquête de l'historien, pouvait en théorie relater la plupart des hauts-faits et des discours.<sup>17</sup> Si la narration embrassait aussi le passé, il fallait combiner un abrégé des temps antérieurs et la description détaillée des temps contemporains. L'unité chronologique du récit se dissociait selon les temps et les méthodes, entre deux totalités différentes, celle de la tradition disponible mais résumée et celle de l'information sur le présent. On écrivit ainsi des

<sup>10</sup> ENGELS (2008).

<sup>11</sup> VATTUONE (1998) ; BREGLIA (2001) ; MARINCOLA (2007).

<sup>12</sup> INGLEBERT (2014) 218-236.

<sup>13</sup> SULIMANI (2011) 53-54.

<sup>14</sup> Voir la discussion.

<sup>15</sup> TUPLIN (2007).

<sup>16</sup> MAZZARINO (1966).

<sup>17</sup> CANFORA (1972).

“histoires universelles” continues à partir d’une documentation discontinue, ce qui explique que la durée décrite par chaque livre était variable et décroissait généralement au fil du récit (sauf exception comme chez Ammien Marcellin<sup>18</sup>).

Un troisième aspect est celui de la relation particulière entre un passé divers et un présent devenu immuable. On a pu en effet avoir par deux fois l’impression idéologique que l’histoire de Rome s’était figée dans une éternité perpétuelle. Avec Auguste d’abord, ce qui a pu entraîner, après Tacite, un abandon de l’histoire latine traditionnelle ; sous Constantin ensuite, en lien avec l’idéologie eusébiennne d’un Empire romain chrétien qui durerait jusqu’à la fin des temps. On peut alors interpréter l’œuvre d’Ammien comme une réaction critique, les événements du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle venant démentir le rêve de Constantin et de ses fils.<sup>19</sup>

Le dernier point est celui de la réflexion de certains historiens antiques sur les prédécesseurs à qui ils reconnaissent un statut de précurseur : Éphore pour Polybe (pour l’histoire “oikouménique”), Hérodote et Éphore pour Diodore (pour l’histoire “commune” ou “générale”). Cela a pu influencer la pensée de certains modernes.

### 3. Le lien entre présent et histoire universelle aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles

#### 3.1. *Un nouveau contexte*

Le contexte de l’écriture de l’histoire fut différent au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, pour des raisons méthodologiques (l’extension de la méthode de l’enquête au passé lointain), conceptuelles (l’existence de la notion d’Histoire) et sociologiques (la spécialisation académique et l’apparition des récits d’histoire universelle universitaires). Une histoire universelle personnelle (comme celles de Cesare Cantù,

<sup>18</sup> BLECKMANN dans ce volume.

<sup>19</sup> RODA (2006).

Leopold von Ranke ou Theodor Lindner avant 1914) n'était possible qu'en privilégiant une perspective particulière et en travaillant de seconde main pour les périodes dont on n'était pas spécialiste. Le résultat était insatisfaisant en termes de totalité ou de pertinence des connaissances, mais pouvait apporter une signification globale par une cohérence synecdotique, celle de la partie pour le tout, en choisissant un thème et en lui donnant une valeur générale. Il en fut de même pour de nombreux théoriciens de l'histoire au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Hans Freyer et Alfred Weber après 1945).

### 3.2. *Les réalisations avant 1914*

La question principale des histoires universelles universitaires de 1870 à 1950 fut de savoir comment lier un présent jugé méthodologiquement obscur (car lié à des sources souvent inaccessibles, en partie orales, et pour lequel le recul historique temporel fait défaut) à un passé universel de mieux en mieux connu. L'idéologie libérale du progrès permit de concevoir après 1870 l'histoire universelle comme la juxtaposition d'un présent (et d'un avenir) occidental à un passé pluriel, la situation européenne étant généralement jugée à toutes les époques comme supérieure à celle des autres.<sup>20</sup>

Les premières histoires universelles académiques furent entreprises sous la direction de Wilhelm Oncken<sup>21</sup> et de Heinrich Theodor Flathe.<sup>22</sup> Elles allaient jusqu'au temps présent et développaient un récit concernant la civilisation occidentale héritière de l'Orient ancien. Le projet de Hans Ferdinand Helmolt<sup>23</sup> fut très différent, car il adopta un plan géographique<sup>24</sup> sous l'influence

<sup>20</sup> GOODY (2006).

<sup>21</sup> ONCKEN (1876-1891).

<sup>22</sup> FLATHE (1884-1892).

<sup>23</sup> HELMOLT (1899-1907).

<sup>24</sup> 1. Préhistoire et histoire des Amériques des Précolombiens au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle ; 2. Histoire du Pacifique et de l'océan Indien ; 3. Asie occidentale et Afrique ;

des travaux de Friedrich Ratzel. En rejetant le plan chronologique quadripartite européen (Antiquité, Moyen Âge, Époque moderne, Époque contemporaine), en intégrant les peuples “sans histoire” jusque-là étudiés par l’ethnographie, en privilégiant l’échelle planétaire, et en commençant avec l’Amérique et non avec l’Orient, Helmolt s’opposait résolument à l’héritage hégélien. Seul le dernier volume, consacré au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, présentait un monde unifié autour de l’Europe grâce aux relations maritimes. Jugé proche du modèle d’Éphore et trop statique, car privilégiant les espaces régionaux au détriment des migrations et des contacts océaniques, ce modèle ne s’imposa pas.<sup>25</sup> Ensuite, Julius von Pflugk-Harttung,<sup>26</sup> influencé par Lamprecht, tenta de combiner la chronologie et la géographie,<sup>27</sup> l’unité de l’œuvre résidant dans l’insistance sur le développement du commerce européen et l’expansion coloniale depuis la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Le modèle de Helmolt supposait dans son dernier volume une “globalisation” à partir de différents foyers culturels ; celui de Pflugk-Harttung décrivait une “occidentalisation”, une homogénéisation liée à l’expansion européenne depuis les Grandes découvertes, ce qui fut ensuite le modèle le plus fréquent d’associer le présent au passé. Ces *Weltgeschichten* universitaires décrivaient une histoire optimiste et téléologisée de l’humanité qui culminait avec les États de l’Occident contemporain.<sup>28</sup> On retrouve la même chose en France.<sup>29</sup>

4. Méditerranée ; 5. Europe du sud-est et de l’est ; 6. Peuples germaniques ; 7. Peuples latins ; 8. Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

<sup>25</sup> MIDDHELL (2004). Il fut cependant repris dans le projet resté inachevé de la *Blackwell History of the World* de 1998 à 2008.

<sup>26</sup> PFLUGK-HARTTUNG (1908-1910).

<sup>27</sup> 1. Antiquité ; 2. Moyen Âge ; 3. Orient ; 4. Temps modernes 1500-1650 : époque (*Zeitalter*) religieuse ; 5. Temps modernes 1650-1815 : époque (*Zeitalter*) politique ; 6. Temps modernes depuis 1815 : époque (*Zeitalter*) nationale et sociale (États-Unis, Amérique centrale et du sud, unités nationales européennes, mise en place du système des puissances mondiales, expansion coloniale européenne).

<sup>28</sup> BERGENTHUM (2011).

<sup>29</sup> LAVISSE (1894-1905).



### 3.3. *Jacoby en son temps*

Si la catégorie de *Zeitgeschichte* était absente de l'historiographie antique, on y trouvait cependant une pratique gréco-romaine d'écriture de l'histoire péri-contemporaine ou d'un passé récent qui incluait toutefois trois projets différents avec chacun leurs méthodes : celui d'une histoire immédiate dont l'historien a été témoin voire acteur (Thucydide, Ammien Marcellin) ; celui d'une histoire d'un passé proche fondée sur l'ouï-dire des témoignages ou des archives (Hérodote, Tacite) ; celui d'un passé récent, où il fallait également s'appuyer sur des auteurs antérieurs (Diodore pour l'histoire d'Alexandre à César). L'utilisation de la catégorie d'*Universalgeschichte* pour l'Antiquité est également discutable. Les divers récits sur la totalité du passé décrivaient une série de *praxeis* ou de *res gestae* en relation avec une personne, une cité, un peuple ou la succession des empires. Si ceci structurait la chronologie et les récits, il n'existait cependant pas une catégorie englobant ces diverses traditions (histoires "oikouménique", "commune", "de tous les peuples", "des empires"). On peut donc penser que la catégorie *Universal- und Zeitgeschichte* est composée de deux termes équivoques et anachroniques et que leur réunion pose problème.<sup>30</sup> Dans ce volume, Guido Schepens a analysé la notion de *Zeitgeschichte* dans son contexte immédiat ; on propose ici une approche complémentaire, qui insiste sur l'*Universalgeschichte*.

Le développement de la pensée de Jacoby a déjà été bien étudié.<sup>31</sup> En 1908-1909, après avoir rejeté les plans alphabétique, chronologique et géographique, il opta pour un plan thématique par genres littéraires en neuf sections, qui insistait sur l'évolution de ces genres et intégrait en partie leur ordre chronologique d'apparition ; l'histoire universelle apparaissait dans deux

<sup>30</sup> La typologie de Jacoby a toutefois été reprise et adaptée à l'Antiquité tardive par Pawel JANISZEWSKI (2006), p. 17 : les *Universal Histories* sont insérées avec les *Contemporary Histories* et les *Histories of Early Periods Only* dans la rubrique générale de la *Political Historiography*.

<sup>31</sup> SCHEPENS (2006).

rubriques de la *Griechische Zeitgeschichte*. Puis en 1915-1917, il proposa d'autres plans. Pour finir, en 1922, il décida de classer les fragments des historiens grecs en six groupes. Seuls les trois premiers groupes furent ensuite publiés, avec des commentaires, sous des titres parfois un peu différents : *Erster Teil : Genealogie und Mythographie* (n° 1-63, 2 volumes, 1923-1926) ; *Zweiter Teil : Zeitgeschichte* (n° 64-261, 4 volumes, 1926-1930) ; *Dritter Teil : Geschichte von Städten und Völkern (Horographie und Ethnographie)* (n° 266-856, 1923-1958). La partie 4, *Biography and Antiquarian Literature*, a été partiellement publiée sous la direction de Guido Schepens,<sup>32</sup> et la partie 5, *Geography*, confiée à Hans-Joachim Gehrke. Ces deux dernières parties ont été intégrées dans le projet *Jacoby on line* sous la direction de Ian Worthington.

Tableau 2

Les divers plans de Felix Jacoby pour *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*

| 1908-1909                    | 1915   | 1917                            | 1922-1957   |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| I-Testimonia-Hecataios       | I-Mythographie   | I-Genealogie                    | I-Geschichte der Sagenzeit (Genealogie und Mythographie) = <i>Erster Teil: Genealogie und Mythographie</i>  |
| II-Genealogie (Mythographie) | II-Zeitgeschichte des griechischen Volkes ( <i>koinai historiai, Hellenika, Chronica</i> ) | II-Ethnographen und Horographen | II-Universal- und Zeitgeschichte. Chronographie = <i>Zweiter Teil: Zeitgeschichte</i><br>A-Universal- und Zeitgeschichte ( <i>Koinai historiai, Hellenika</i> );<br>B-Spezialgeschichte und Monographien ( <i>Kata meros syntaxeis</i> );<br>C-Autobiographien, Memoiren und Memoirenhaftes ( <i>Hypomnemata</i> );<br>D-Zeittaffeln ( <i>Chronika</i> ). |

<sup>32</sup> JACOBY (1998-1999).

|   |  |                        |   |
|---|--|------------------------|---|
| III-Ethnographie  | III-Geschichte<br><i>kata ethnè kai poleis</i> | III-Zeitgeschichte     | III-Geschichte von Völkern und Städten (Ethnographie und Horographie)<br>= <i>Dritter Teil: Geschichte von Städten und Völkern (Horographie und Ethnographie)</i> |
| IV-Griechische Zeitgeschichte<br><i>2-Ephoros und die Universalhistoriker saec. IV</i><br><i>8-Die kompilierende Universalhistorie saec I ff.</i> | IV-Antiquarische Literatur und Biographie      | IV-Chronographen       | IV-Antiquarische Geschichte und Biographie  |
| V-Chronographie   | V-Geographie                                   | V-Alle übrigen Autoren | V-Geographie  |
| VI-Horographie (Lokalgeschichte)  |  |                        | VI-Unbestimmbare Autoren. Theorie der Geschichtsschreibung  |
| VII-Biographie und Literaturgeschichte  |  |                        |   |
| VIII-Geographische Literatur  |  |                        |   |
| IX-Adeloi   |  |                        |   |

Il faut y ajouter le plan alternatif du 7 novembre 1915 : I-Fragments des historiens par ordre alphabétique ; II-Textes sur la théorie et la méthode de l'écriture de l'histoire ; III-Description de la tradition historiographique selon les perspectives grecques.<sup>33</sup>

La deuxième partie de *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* s'est donc finalement intitulée *Zeitgeschichte* ; il ne faut pas en déduire un déclassement de l'*Universalgeschichte* dans la pensée de Jacoby après 1922. D'abord, elle était déjà incluse dans la *Zeitgeschichte* en 1909. Ensuite, la deuxième partie (*Zeitgeschichte*) de 1922 se subdivise en quatre chapitres aux titres

<sup>33</sup> SCHEPENS dans ce volume.

allemands et grecs. S'il a bien existé des ouvrages intitulés *Syntaxis*, la rubrique *Kata meros syntaxeis* regroupe des ouvrages consacrés à de grands personnages ou à des guerres particulières, dont aucun n'a *syntaxis* dans son titre ; en revanche, on trouve bien dans les *Chronika* des œuvres appelées *Chronikê syntaxis*. Ensuite, le titre générique *Zeitgeschichte* n'est guère adapté aux "histoires communes" et à la plupart des chroniques, même si ces deux genres vont généralement jusqu'au temps présent. Enfin, *Zeitgeschichte* a deux significations différentes : une générique (englobant l'*Universal- und Zeitgeschichte*) et une spécifique lorsqu'il traduit *Hellenika*. Jacoby n'a pas voulu ou n'a pas réussi à choisir entre les termes antiques et contemporains ; de même, il n'a pas tranché entre une approche par genre littéraire et par contenu. Il y a là au moins une ambiguïté, même si on suppose que le sens générique de *Zeitgeschichte* est celui d'une "histoire jusqu'au présent".

En fait, la différence entre "l'histoire universelle antique (sans concept d'Histoire)" et "l'histoire universelle du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (qui suppose le concept d'Histoire)" rendait impossible les équivalences lexicales entre l'allemand et le grec. Au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la prise de conscience de l'historicité amena à constater que "l'histoire universelle" telle qu'on l'entendait désormais n'avait pas existé dans l'Antiquité.<sup>34</sup> Le terme *Weltgeschichte* s'était imposé en allemand à Göttingen à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle contre celui d'*Universalhistorie*, et au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, on distinguait la description moderne de la totalité historique (*Weltgeschichte*) et les conceptions que l'on s'en faisait jadis (*Universalhistorie*). On estima qu'il était possible d'écrire une histoire progressiste de l'*Universalhistorie* des Grecs à 1900<sup>35</sup> et cet héritage de Max Büdinger<sup>36</sup> et de Ernst Bernheim<sup>37</sup> dominait encore la réflexion vers 1920. Jacoby,

<sup>34</sup> ULRICI (1833) ; voir DESIDERI (2001) 204-206.

<sup>35</sup> INGLEBERT (2014) 101-133.

<sup>36</sup> BÜDINGER (1895) ; BÜDINGER (1900).

<sup>37</sup> BERNHEIM (1889) distinguait un progrès de l'écriture de l'histoire occidentale en trois phases : après la narration des mythes et de la mémoire (les logographes et Hérodote), on écrivit de l'histoire pragmatique politique et civique (Thucydide,

pour parler des Anciens, y compris dans ses commentaires,<sup>38</sup> a préféré *Universalgeschichte*, également attesté depuis la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et l'utilise pour désigner ce que la tradition antique a appelé les *koinai historiai*. Le fait que Jacoby n'ait pas utilisé *Weltgeschichte* peut être un indice du fait qu'il avait conscience que les Anciens ne pouvaient écrire une histoire universelle au sens du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais cela ne résout pas tous les problèmes. D'abord, Jacoby lie l'apparition de l'*Universalgeschichte* à Hérodote,<sup>39</sup> mais aussi à Éphore.<sup>40</sup> Ensuite, son choix de traduction en grec, qui s'appuie sur "l'histoire commune (ou générale)" de Diodore de Sicile, englobe dans cette catégorie les histoires "oikouméniques" de la tradition polybienne, qui sont d'une nature différente. Enfin, on constate que dans la quarantaine d'œuvres retenues dans la catégorie *Universal- und Zeitgeschichte*, la très grande majorité s'intitule *Hellenika*, *Historia* ou portent sur les rois (*basileis* ou *tyrannoi*) de l'Europe et de l'Asie ou grecs et barbares. Mais, à la différence des *Hellenika* strictement contemporaines (*Zeitgeschichte*), une quinzaine de ces récits intégraient un passé lointain, depuis l'origine du monde (Zoile et Anaximène), les premiers rois orientaux, le retour des Héraclides (en 1069/68 chez Éphore) ou la fondation de Rome. Même si on admet que la succession des *Hellenika* (et ensuite des *Romaïka*) puisse former une *historia perpetua*, le problème de la relation entre le passé et le présent est différent dans les deux cas.

Ainsi, la *Zeit- und Universalgeschichte* additionne trois manières différentes d'écrire l'histoire et de relier le présent et le passé. On a d'abord une histoire contemporaine universelle géographiquement, que l'on peut appeler histoire mondiale (en français

Polybe, Tacite) avant de parvenir à l'histoire génétique du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, fondée sur l'étude des sources, et structurée par la périodisation et la conception d'un devenir organique.

<sup>38</sup> JACOBY (21957-), Zweiter Teil C Kommentar, p. 149 à propos de Demetrios de Kallatis ou p. 233, à propos de Nicolas de Damas.

<sup>39</sup> ID., p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> ID., p. 25.

seulement depuis 1918) si elle est descriptive (les *Hellenika*, les *Romaïka*, et beaucoup plus tard Agrippa d'Aubigné ou l'histoire mondiale au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle). Celle-ci peut être qualifiée de mondialisée si on insiste sur un processus historique en cours de réalisation (la tradition polybienne et certaines histoires actuelles de la globalisation). Enfin, on trouve l'histoire de certains peuples humains depuis les origines, structurée par un thème commun, l'unité de la civilisation matérielle et religieuse par les communications et les hégémonies (Diodore), la succession des empires (Nicolas de Damas, Trogue Pompée) ou l'histoire du salut (chroniques chrétiennes). Rassembler ces trois types d'histoire, mondiale, mondialisée et commune, dans une même rubrique est problématique, et découle de la création de la catégorie d'"histoire universelle antique" au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Or, celle-ci naquit de la conjonction d'une croyance vraie (celle en l'historicité des représentations du passé) et d'une croyance fautive (celle que ces représentations du passé renvoyaient à une même réalité, celle du *Welt als Geschichte*, qui n'est en fait qu'une représentation occidentale récente et non une évidence humaine partagée, comme l'avait remarqué Oswald Spengler en 1919,<sup>41</sup> avant que Koselleck ne le démontre<sup>42</sup>).

### 3.4. *Le lien entre présent et histoire universelle au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*

Comme le modèle européocentrique domina le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, on peut mentionner rapidement sans les développer les principales réalisations postérieures à 1918.<sup>43</sup> Si les histoires universelles allemandes d'avant 1933 s'arrêtaient parfois avant le temps présent,<sup>44</sup> ce ne fut pas le cas de la plus importante entreprise de l'époque, dirigée par Walter Goetz<sup>45</sup> et dont la dixième et

<sup>41</sup> SPENGLER (1919-1922).

<sup>42</sup> KOSELLECK (1975).

<sup>43</sup> Pour le détail des références, INGLEBERT (2014) 833-925.

<sup>44</sup> HARTMANN (1921-1923) cesse avec Napoléon.

<sup>45</sup> GOETZ (1929-1933).

dernière partie s'intitulait "Le temps de l'impérialisme 1890-1933". On retrouve des histoires universelles académiques similaires en France,<sup>46</sup> en Espagne<sup>47</sup> et en Italie.<sup>48</sup> Cette tradition continua après 1945, où on publia des histoires universelles additives plus ou moins européocentriques dans la plupart des grandes langues de culture occidentales (allemand, anglais, français, italien), mais aussi en japonais.

Ce modèle dominant européen et libéral, et son lien entre passé et présent, fut critiqué de trois manières,<sup>49</sup> pour des raisons idéologiques qui avaient parfois des conséquences méthodologiques. D'abord, certains ont refusé de 1850 à aujourd'hui le schéma d'une histoire universelle de l'humanité au profit d'histoires parallèles des civilisations ou des nations. On a pu insister sur les différences entre les cultures, malgré des correspondances morphologiques (Lamprecht, Breysig, Eduard Meyer, Spengler, Deulofeu Torres) ou penser que les civilisations se combinaient dans un devenir universel (Toynbee après 1945). Du point de vue national, l'idée romantique d'un *Sonderweg* allemand face à la civilisation française et britannique fut reprise par les Russes slavophiles (Nikolaï Danilevski, 1871) et par certains Japonais (Yukichi Fukuzawa, 1875), qui estimaient que leurs nations se trouvaient en dehors d'un "monde" défini comme sphère d'influence occidentale, et donc en marge de l'histoire mondiale.

Le second courant critique voulut dans l'entre-deux-guerres dépasser l'eurocentrisme libéral au nom d'une histoire universelle mondiale. Ces précurseurs d'une histoire globale étaient des outsiders académiques : H.G. Wells<sup>50</sup> privilégia les acteurs

<sup>46</sup> CAVAINAC (1922-1948).

<sup>47</sup> AA. VV. (1932-1937).

<sup>48</sup> BARBAGALLO (1931-1938),

<sup>49</sup> On peut négliger deux perspectives marginales, dont l'impact historiographique n'a guère touché la production savante malgré quelques débats. La première est celle des nazis qui insistaient sur la *Nordrasse* ; la seconde est celle de l'afrocentrisme faisant de l'Égypte la civilisation matricielle des autres, et en particulier des Grecs.

<sup>50</sup> WELLS (1919 et 1922).

de l'unité mondiale (comme Alexandre), Sokolsky<sup>51</sup> insista sur l'importance de l'Extrême-Orient, et Nehru<sup>52</sup> mit en valeur toutes les périodes de grandeur de l'humanité, prisant Ashoka autant qu'Alexandre et l'empire mongol autant que l'empire britannique.

La troisième perspective, la plus importante au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, fut la contre-histoire universelle marxiste. Si les grandes lignes de l'histoire des modes de production et de la lutte des classes avaient été développées par Marx et Engels, une histoire universelle soviétique ne fut réalisée qu'après 1945.<sup>53</sup> L'historiographie est-allemande de la RDA fut plus originale,<sup>54</sup> mais ces histoires marxistes restaient fondamentalement européocentriques, ce qui ne fut pas le cas dans l'historiographie communiste chinoise, après 1960 et jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

#### 4. Les liens entre passé et présent au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle

##### 4.1. *Les nouvelles relations entre le passé et le présent*

Elles se sont modifiées après 1945 pour trois raisons principales.

La première fut que le traumatisme de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, lié autant aux destructions et à leurs conséquences qu'à l'extermination des Juifs et des Tziganes et à l'avènement de l'ère atomique, a entraîné une prise de conscience et un sens de l'urgence à comprendre ce qui s'était passé. Ceci a amené des historiens à s'intéresser aux sources du présent, témoignages oraux et documents audio-visuels et à investir ce qu'on appela désormais *Zeitgeschichte* (en 1953, désignant le temps à partir

<sup>51</sup> SOKOLSKI (1928).

<sup>52</sup> NEHRU (1934).

<sup>53</sup> ZHUKOV (1955-1965).

<sup>54</sup> KOSSOK (1984) distinguait à partir d'une exégèse de Marx, la *Ganzheit* (essentielle) et la *Totalität* (additive). La première fondait une *Menschheitsgeschichte* (une *Universalgeschichte* marxiste) et la seconde une *Weltgeschichte* marquée par la globalisation capitaliste. Sur l'importance de l'Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte de Leipzig à cette époque, voir MIDDELL (2005).



de 1945, puis ensuite depuis 1917), *Contemporary History* (la période après 1945), ou "histoire du temps présent" (à propos du temps depuis 1939 à après 1970, avant d'être étendu à celui des témoins survivants).<sup>55</sup> Ces historiens durent affronter ceux dont le présent était le domaine de recherche depuis longtemps – sociologues, économistes, géographes, anthropologues, démographes, spécialistes de la science politique – mais aussi les critiques des spécialistes des époques antérieures qui estimaient que le manque de recul historique était rédhibitoire, ou que, 2400 ans après Thucydide, cela n'avait rien de nouveau.

Comme le temps présent est défini par l'existence de témoins vivants, les historiens qui l'étudient fondent la légitimité de leur approche soit par l'existence d'un recul historique de quelques décennies, soit sur leur capacité à comprendre l'histoire immédiate par le passé proche. Mais cela n'est pas suffisant pour que leur savoir sur ce passé s'impose socialement, à cause de problèmes méthodologiques (l'accès aux archives n'étant pas toujours possible) mais aussi parce que les usages sociaux actuels du passé répondent à d'autres critères, économiques (dans le cas du patrimoine) ou politiques<sup>56</sup> (cas des conflits de mémoire, de la valorisation de projets locaux, de la promotion des nationalismes...). Dans ces derniers cas, le présent est généralement projeté sur le passé afin que ce dernier le justifie, promouvant l'anachronisme comme méthode de compréhension du monde et illustrant de manière circulaire l'idée selon laquelle "toute histoire digne de ce nom est histoire contemporaine".<sup>57</sup>

La deuxième raison est l'apparition de l'histoire globale.<sup>58</sup> Cette expression désigne en réalité trois traditions historiennes fort différentes (de ce point de vue, la catégorie d'histoire globale est aussi confuse que celle d'*Universal- und Zeitgeschichte* vers 1920). La première renvoie à un aspect méthodologique : théorisée vers 1980, l'histoire globale étudie des phénomènes

<sup>55</sup> SOULET (2012).

<sup>56</sup> HARTOG / REVEL (2001).

<sup>57</sup> CROCE (1917).

<sup>58</sup> CONRAD (2015).

qu'il est impossible de traiter à l'échelle régionale ou de manière territoriale à cause de l'existence de réseaux : évolutions climatiques, transformations écologiques, circulations de maladies, d'idées ou de biens économiques, migrations, diasporas, aspects transnationaux ou multinationaux. La deuxième approche renvoie à un aspect contextuel : elle vise la compréhension des phénomènes "glocaux", des réalités locales intégrées dans une perspective globale nécessaire à la compréhension plus complète des phénomènes. On peut en rapprocher l'histoire connectée, mais aussi l'histoire croisée et les transferts culturels. La troisième approche est celle de la *World History*, née dans les années 1960, qui décrit l'histoire du *world-system*, du "monde commun" structuré par une relation entre centre, semi-périphéries et périphéries. Le passage d'un modèle européocentrique (le *world-system* commencerait en Europe à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle) à d'autres modèles où le *world-system* se développerait d'abord ailleurs et antérieurement a permis son intégration (discutable) dans le conglomérat de "l'histoire globale" en la présentant comme une histoire de la globalisation. Il s'agit en fait d'une histoire de la mondialisation dont la phase globale n'est alors que la dernière étape chronologique.

La dernière raison est la transformation des régimes d'historicité. Aux deux modèles de valorisation du passé (réactionnaire, dont la pensée djihadiste est un exemple) ou du futur (progressisme) hérités de la création du concept d'Histoire et de la Révolution française, on a pu en ajouter un troisième, plus actuel, le présentisme qui estime que si le passé était pire que le présent, l'avenir ne sera pas meilleur.<sup>59</sup> Cet état d'esprit, présent surtout en Occident, est lié à l'évolution socio-économique au profit du capital depuis une génération, à la dégradation écologique (réchauffement climatique, pollution, disparition des espèces) et à la croissance des puissances asiatiques. En revanche, dans les classes moyennes de l'Asie, principales bénéficiaires de la globalisation, le futurisme reste dominant.

<sup>59</sup> HARTOG (2002).

#### 4.2. *Les liens entre passé et présent hors du domaine académique*

L'affirmation d'un lien entre passé et présent, le premier expliquant le second, reste plus le fait d'essayistes politiques, d'historiens militants ou de théoriciens de l'histoire que des historiens qui insistent surtout sur les différences. Le passé, proche ou lointain, est alors convoqué pour comprendre le présent dans les domaines économique,<sup>60</sup> écologique,<sup>61</sup> et politique à un niveau national<sup>62</sup> ou mondial – avec, à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les deux modèles de l'histoire universelle hégélienne s'achevant par le triomphe du libéralisme<sup>63</sup> et de la contre-histoire universelle de l'affrontement des civilisations.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.3. *Les rapports entre passé et présent dans le cadre de la globalisation chez les historiens*

Aujourd'hui, tous n'acceptent pas le modèle libéral de l'histoire de la globalisation au nom de singularités culturelles qui seraient oubliées par une méthode fondée sur une approche économique strictement quantitative. Ceci explique les positions des historiens russes et chinois, mais aussi japonais, qui tout en acceptant la mondialisation économique, estiment soit qu'ils sont en dehors du monde globalisé politique et culturel occidental (Chine, Russie), soit que la globalisation culturelle ne sera pas la généralisation de valeurs occidentales mais la création de nouvelles valeurs communes et qu'elle relève donc plus de l'avenir que du présent ou du passé (Japon).<sup>65</sup> Ces positions peuvent être jugées nationalistes en Occident ; inversement, l'histoire globale peut apparaître comme un avatar de la théorie occidentale, jugée impérialiste, de la modernisation.

<sup>60</sup> PICKETTI (2013).

<sup>61</sup> TOYNBEE (1976) ; DIAMOND (2005).

<sup>62</sup> Voir par exemple BOUCHERON (2018).

<sup>63</sup> FUKUYAMA (1992).

<sup>64</sup> HUNTINGTON (1996).

<sup>65</sup> INGLEBERT (2018) 73-81.

Ensuite, il faut rappeler que les deux traditions de la *World History* et de la *Global History* ont développé des modèles et des chronologies différentes. Le modèle originel du *world-system* (Braudel, Wallerstein) supposait un centre européen qui structurait un développement mondial commun à partir de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. D'autres modèles ont proposé de commencer ailleurs et antérieurement : les hypothèses les plus intéressantes sont en lien avec l'empire mongol<sup>66</sup> (XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle), la croissance démographique et économique chinoise sous les Song (XI<sup>e</sup> siècle), le rôle de l'Océan Indien au temps de l'empire abbasside<sup>67</sup> et la connexion commerciale eurasiatique aux temps des empires romain et han.<sup>68</sup> Il s'agit là d'une variante principalement économique, mais aussi culturelle, du modèle polybien d'unification du monde. Cette histoire de la mondialisation se présente comme une histoire universelle non eurocentrique, mais toutes les connaissances sur le passé ne sont pas mobilisées puisque toutes les régions ne sont pas connectées dès l'origine. Pour proposer une histoire de l'humanité, il faut additionner dans un même récit le "monde commun" et les régions non encore connectées.<sup>69</sup>

Le modèle de la globalisation est très différent, puisque d'une part, il ne suppose pas de centre aux phénomènes globaux, et que d'autre part la globalisation est considérée comme un phénomène récent, datant selon les historiens de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle grâce au chemin de fer, au bateau à vapeur et au télégraphe (qui permettent alors la prise de conscience de l'unité nouvelle du monde), de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (qui vit la naissance du terme global lié au fait que les États-Unis étaient engagés dans l'Atlantique et le Pacifique) ou des années ultérieures (avec la fin des empires coloniaux), voire de 1989 (avec la fin de l'URSS, le développement d'Internet et la croissance chinoise). Dans tous les cas, la globalisation n'est alors que la dernière phase de la mondialisation, ce qui s'inscrit dans un schéma de pensée polybien, plus bref

<sup>66</sup> ABU-LUGHOD (1989).

<sup>67</sup> CHAUDHURI (1990).

<sup>68</sup> BEAUJARD (2012).

<sup>69</sup> TIGNOR (2008).

chronologiquement que dans le cas de la *World History*. Mais comme des contacts importants existèrent bien antérieurement, certains historiens ont développé la notion de protoglobalisation, et divers modèles ont été proposés pour le début de cette phase, qui recoupe en partie des schémas de la *World History* : les principaux sont le milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>70</sup> (hypothèse préférable), le début du II<sup>e</sup> millénaire<sup>71</sup> et le VII<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>72</sup>

Enfin, la question du rapport entre le passé et le présent dépend de la perspective retenue. Si on insiste sur la création d'un espace commun de circulation des personnes, des biens, des capitaux, des savoirs et des informations, liée à une histoire protoglobale commençant vers 1750, alors le processus de création de notre monde contemporain est récent et l'unification de ce dernier reste incomplète. Cette perspective oppose nettement le présent global et le passé ancien, d'un point de vue quantitatif et qualitatif. Au contraire, si on privilégie les conceptions du monde et les identifications personnelles ou collectives, l'unification actuelle du globe peut sembler moins évidente, malgré la disparition de langues et d'héritages culturels, et la diffusion des modes de vie urbains, des modèles consuméristes et de certaines valeurs occidentales. C'est la position défendue par certains discours idéologiques – politiques, nationalistes, civilisationnels ou religieux – exaltant des continuités avec des passés lointains originaux, mais souvent fantasmés ou reconstruits.

## Conclusions

Dans l'Antiquité comme aux XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles ou aujourd'hui, la description du temps présent a pu être faite pour elle-même ou comme dernière partie d'une histoire générale. Mais cette similitude narrative ne doit pas cacher de profondes divergences dans deux domaines.

<sup>70</sup> IRIYE / OSTERHAMMEL (2012-2018).

<sup>71</sup> FELDBAUER / HAUSBERGER / LEHNERS (2008-2011).

<sup>72</sup> OLSTEIN (2015).

D'abord, les relations entre temps présent et passé furent très différentes selon les contextes. Dans l'Antiquité classique, malgré la conscience des transformations politiques et religieuses, la succession des *tempora* ou des *aetates* ne modifiaient pas la nature humaine : l'existence d'un temps chronologiquement ancien n'impliquait pas celle d'un passé historiquement dépassé. Sous le Haut-Empire ou durant l'Antiquité tardive, on pouvait opposer le présent des *moderni* et le passé des *maiores*, ou la République sénatoriale et la monarchie impériale, mais une *renouatio* politique était toujours possible et les *exempla* moraux de jadis toujours pertinents ; on affirmait donc une permanence de certains aspects au cours des diverses époques, car la temporalité humaine restait la même. De 1800 à 2000, le concept d'Histoire comme devenir fonda celui d'une histoire universelle unifiée, et celui d'historicité permit d'affirmer l'existence de diverses périodes historiques avec chacune leurs aspects propres ; le postulat de l'existence transhistorique de certains thèmes (nation, civilisation, art, science) permettait de trouver de l'identique dans des temps différents. Au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le présent est défini par un passé global récent différent du passé plus ancien : l'existence de diverses périodes historiques est associée à l'existence de thèmes propres, et en Occident, le passé lointain, qu'il soit grec, romain ou biblique, apparaît de plus en plus étranger.

Ensuite, écrire l'histoire de son temps pose à chaque fois la question de l'accès à l'information et celle de la distance critique. Ce n'est cependant pas un problème dans trois cas particuliers de la relation entre le passé et le présent. Le premier est celui de Thucydide où l'analyse du présent visait à découvrir une vérité atemporelle, celle de la nature des êtres vivants (et non seulement de l'humain), l'histoire immédiate n'étant que la meilleure méthode d'accès à cette vérité ; mais personne ne reprit cette finalité philosophique. Le deuxième est celui de la répétition de phénomènes historiques : chez Diodore, l'histoire des empires et de la civilisation commune était pensée comme un cadre stable depuis deux millénaires, les grands hommes

étant divinisés de Dionysos et Héraclès à César, et les empires, des Assyriens aux Romains, se succédant tout en dominant toujours la plus grande partie de l'*oikoumenê* ; chez Ibn Khaldûn, la théorie de l'alternance des cycles du pouvoir entre civilisation urbaine et bédouinité structurait le temps<sup>73</sup> et Tamerlan était la preuve contemporaine de la validité de son modèle. Mais ces schémas, en partie valables pour certains aspects politiques et culturels de l'Antiquité ou du Moyen Âge, ne sont pas adaptés aux époques ultérieures. Gibbon savait en 1776 que le retour des invasions barbares n'était plus possible et que l'Europe ne connaîtrait pas le sort de l'Empire romain ;<sup>74</sup> et aucune tentative de morphologie des civilisations proposée aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles ne fut convaincante. Le troisième cas est celui où la prévision est possible, qui, vraie ou fausse, permet de donner du sens à la description du passé proche et du temps présent, lequel s'inscrit dans un phénomène supposé en train de s'achever et de l'emporter : on peut citer Polybe (la domination de l'*oikoumenê* par Rome) ou Tocqueville (la diffusion des idéaux démocratiques). Mais ces *Zusammenhänge* étaient récents et ne concernaient pas la totalité du passé ; il en est de même aujourd'hui pour l'histoire globale.

Ainsi, on peut au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle expliquer le présent selon trois formes d'histoire universelle : en lien avec le passé récent et révolutionnaire (sur lequel on peut porter un jugement futuriste ou présentiste) de l'histoire globale (en y incluant du "protoglobal" variable selon les historiens) ; en lien avec le temps long du *world-system* (mais aussi des peuples, des religions et des civilisations) ; en lien avec le temps très long de l'histoire de l'humanité (certains aspects anthropologiques). Mais on n'expliquera pas les mêmes choses dans chaque cas ; à la différence de l'Antiquité et des années 1900, pour décrire et comprendre notre temps présent, il nous faut plusieurs passés et plusieurs échelles temporelles.

<sup>73</sup> MARTINEZ-GROS (2006).

<sup>74</sup> GIBBON (1776).

**Tableau 3**  
**Les relations entre passé et présent dans le cadre**  
**de “l’histoire universelle”**

|                                | Conception antique classique (Empire romain)   | Conception antique monothéiste (Empire romain)  | Conception des XIX <sup>e</sup> -XX <sup>e</sup> siècles  | Conception du XXI <sup>e</sup> siècle  |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Événements passés</b>       | -ceux des récits mythiques<br>-ceux des récits étiologiques<br>-ceux des récits épiques<br>-les grands faits politiques ou militaires<br>En plus, pour les lettrés<br>-les données culturelles | -ceux des récits bibliques<br>-ceux des récits épiques<br>-les grands faits politiques ou militaires<br>En plus, pour les lettrés<br>-les données culturelles | -tous les aspects du passé  | -tous les aspects du passé et toutes les perspectives sur le passé   |
| <b>Nature du temps passé</b>   | Le passé n’est pas essentiellement différent du présent malgré les changements politiques  | Le passé n’est pas essentiellement différent du présent malgré les changements politiques ou religieux  | Le passé est composé de diverses périodes fondamentalement différentes du présent (historicité) | Le passé est composé de diverses périodes fondamentalement différentes du présent (historicité)                                |
| <b>Nature du temps présent</b> | Apogée impériale de la domination romaine protégée par les dieux : progrès de la prospérité et déclin des mœurs mais <i>renouatio</i> possible   | Apogée impériale romain (diabolique ou divin)<br>Depuis Jésus-Christ, temps eschatologique pour les chrétiens   | Apogée de la civilisation et des nations occidentales   | L’histoire globale comme nouvelle phase de l’histoire humaine<br>L’anthropocène comme nouvelle phase de l’histoire de la Terre |
| <b>Régime d’historicité</b>    | Traditionnel : respect de la tradition, dont les <i>exempla</i> et le <i>mos maiorum</i> sont toujours actuels   | Traditionnel : respect de la tradition, dont les <i>exempla</i> et le <i>mos maiorum</i> sont toujours actuels  | Futuriste : le présent est meilleur que le passé et l’avenir sera une perpétuation du           | Présentisme (en Occident) : le présent est meilleur que le passé mais l’avenir sera pire                                       |



|   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|   |   | Mais contradiction possible entre <i>exempla</i> bibliques et classiques  | présent ou sera meilleur que lui<br>Le passé ne sert pas forcément à comprendre le présent car il est souvent différent de lui   | que le présent (mais futurisme en Asie et traditionnisme de l'islam radical)  |
| <b>Relation entre présent et passé</b>        | Le temps présent prolonge le temps passé<br>La <i>renouatio</i> permet de perpétuer l'Empire romain   | Après 70, étude rabbinique atemporelle de la Torah<br>Le présent de l'Église accomplit le passé biblique et prépare la fin des temps  | Le présent est l'entéléchie du passé (nation, civilisation, libération) et peut être pensé comme le fondement d'un futur meilleur  | Le présent global est radicalement autre et rompt avec le passé qui ne permet pas de comprendre le présent car il est trop différent de lui |
| <b>Relation entre futur et présent</b>        | <i>Roma aeterna</i> possible  | Eschatologie monothéiste et fin des temps<br>Apocalyptique pour certains  | Fin de l'Histoire atteinte (libéralisme) ou à atteindre (marxisme)   | Pas de fin évidente de l'Histoire et futur incertain  |
| <b>Relation entre passé, présent et futur</b> | Succession des empires et développement de la civilisation culminant dans l'Empire romain ou<br>Unification du monde par Rome (Polybe ou <i>ab Urbe condita</i> ) | Le plan divin (envers Israël ou du salut de l'humanité) unifie les temps. Il est partiellement connu des humains grâce à la révélation divine du Tanakh et du Nouveau Testament | Histoire universelle :<br>-unité du devenir<br>-progrès des origines de l'humanité jusqu'au présent<br>occidental<br>-existence d'invariants nationaux ou civilisationnels | L'histoire de l'humanité s'achève non dans une histoire universelle occidentalisée, mais dans une histoire globale récente originale        |
| <b>Conception du temps</b>                    | -les mêmes thèmes<br>-une seule temporalité<br>-divers âges politiques  | -les mêmes thèmes<br>-une seule temporalité<br>-divers âges religieux et/ou politiques  | -des thèmes souvent différents dans des périodes différentes<br>-mais quelques invariants transhistoriques possibles   | -des thèmes différents dans<br>-des périodes différentes  |

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## DISCUSSION<sup>1</sup>

*A.M. Kemezis:* I've got a somewhat general question that may already have been answered in the course of your very full and wide-ranging presentation, but I was struck by your reference to contemporary Chinese and Russian historians for whom global history seems like a manifestation of western imperialism. One can certainly see in hindsight that, in their very different ways, both Fukuyama and Huntington took as their *telos* a present in the 1990s that they saw as post-Cold-War, post-nationalist, post-lots-of-things, whereas in Russia or China the state of things at the present could not function as a *telos*, they were more likely to locate a historical *telos* in a future of national renewal. So, a viewpoint that presented itself as global could still not be universally shared.

It seems as if the universal historians we're talking about in Antiquity, from Polybius on through Trogus and Diodorus and so forth, are all working from a certain premise about Roman domination of the Mediterranean as a key *telos* although, as John points out, they locate it at the end of different stories and see different futures, just as Huntington and Fukuyama did with the end of the Cold War. We know there are lots of peoples in the greater Roman world that have narratives of their own in which Roman domination doesn't necessarily function as a *telos*: the best attested such narratives are Judean, but we can also consider Iranian, Egyptian, Celtic, Germanic traditions and so forth. My question then is, how can we see the intersection of these traditions with the Greco-Roman narratives we

<sup>1</sup> Eve-Marie Becker, Valérie Fromentin, Roberto Nicolai et Guido Schepens ont proposé plusieurs remarques concernant certaines formulations ou certains points à préciser, ce dont je les remercie. J'ai intégré leurs réflexions dans ma communication, ce pourquoi on ne les trouve pas ici dans la rubrique des questions.

have, and what are the possibilities for constructing a cultural history of how multiple universal narratives functioned side-by-side in Antiquity?

*H. Inglebert:* Dans le cas de la Chine et de la Russie, on doit prendre en compte deux choses. D'abord, d'un point de vue politique, après la fin de l'URSS en 1989-91, ces deux grandes puissances ne désiraient pas nécessairement se définir comme faisant partie d'un monde dominé par l'Occident ; c'était évident pour la Chine qui restait communiste, et cela l'est devenu ensuite pour la Russie, en partie à cause du mépris occidental au début de l'ère Poutine. D'un point de vue historiographique, il faut rappeler que l'enseignement de l'histoire n'est pas unifié dans ces deux pays, où les étudiant.e.s choisissent entre histoire nationale ou histoire extérieure. Cette distinction institutionnelle n'aide pas à concevoir une histoire globale et permet même de la rejeter comme ne prenant pas en compte les singularités culturelles. On peut ajouter qu'en Russie le courant slavophile du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Danilevski), prolongé par l'historiographie soviétique du bloc communiste et relayé aujourd'hui par les idées néo-eurasistes de Lev Gumilev a fondé une conception multipolaire de l'histoire où celle de la Russie ne se confond pas avec celle du "Monde" soumis à l'Occident. Quant aux Chinois, ils ont développé après 1960 une histoire marxiste non eurocentrique qui place la Chine à la pointe du développement socio-économique depuis l'Antiquité, hormis la parenthèse d'hégémonie occidentale entre 1492 et 1949, la direction du pays sous l'égide du Parti communiste chinois devant lui permettre de retrouver le premier rang. De leur point de vue, une économie globale n'implique pas une histoire globale universelle.

Effectivement, dans l'Antiquité, à partir de Polybe, toutes les "histoires universelles" gréco-romaines posent Rome comme *telos* (quitte à critiquer la prétention romaine d'une hégémonie éternelle) et cela est également vrai pour les conceptions chrétiennes après 220 (Julius Africanus, Origène, Eusèbe de Césarée), qui

laissent perdurer l'empire de Rome (compris comme le quatrième empire du livre de Daniel) jusqu'à la fin des temps. Il y a certes eu des conceptions différentes, mais je ne suis pas certain qu'elles pouvaient fonder des contre-histoires universelles. Bérose et Manéthon n'offraient que des histoires orientales locales (comme la tradition juive) et leur totalité chronologique ne créait pas pour autant une possibilité de récit d'histoire universelle. On peut douter de l'existence de conceptions historiennes chez les Celtes et les Germains ; pour ces derniers, la question fut celle, politique, de justifier l'existence des royaumes successeurs de l'Empire en Occident, ce que firent après 500 des lettrés latinophones (Cassiodore, Jordanès, Isidore) à grand renfort d'érudition classique et biblique mais non germanique.<sup>2</sup> Dans le cas des Juifs, il y a une absence pluriséculaire d'écriture de l'histoire après 150 et dans les textes rabbiniques, on ne trouve que des spéculations eschatologiques sur le royaume messianique qui succédera à l'Empire romain, seul *telos* historique possible. Ainsi, la seule autre tradition historique à prétention universelle serait celle des Sassanides, qui imaginait un équilibre durable entre "les deux yeux du monde" ; mais elle a autant, voire plus, un fondement politique qu'historiographique. En effet, la gestion du passé et la reconstruction de la mémoire perse étaient fort différentes des modèles gréco-romains, comme le montre la création de la dynastie kayanide et la reconstitution d'une histoire ancienne irano-romano-turaniennne relativement fantaisiste. En tout cas, dans ce récit sassanide, Rome n'était pas le *telos* d'une histoire commune.

*R. Nicolai*: L'esemplarità, nelle varie forme che assume negli storici antichi, non impedisce le periodizzazioni: per esempio l'unificazione della storia dell'*oikoumene* in Polibio e l'inizio del principato in Tacito; ma già in Tucidide è presente chiaramente una periodizzazione in tre fasi: πρόγονοι, πατέρες ἡμῶν, ἡμεῖς. Dionigi d'Alicarnasso nel *De antiquis oratoribus* distingue

<sup>2</sup> COUMERT (2007).



la storia dell'oratoria in tre periodi legati alle vicende storiche: prima di Alessandro, dopo Alessandro, e dopo la conquista romana del mondo abitato.

*H. Inglebert:* On peut y ajouter les exemples d'Isocrate qui oppose le passé et le récent (*Panegyrique*, 8), d'Éphore qui distingue le passé et le contemporain (*FGrHist* 70 F 9), de Diodore (1, 4, 6) qui divise son récit en trois parties, avant la guerre de Troie, de la prise de Troie à la mort d'Alexandre et des Diadoques jusqu'au début de la guerre des Gaules. C'est là une question essentielle et l'on peut y répondre en distinguant trois manières de découper les temps en diverses phases.

La première sert à se repérer en posant des bornes chronologiques pour définir des durées, un peu comme les siècles aujourd'hui ; c'est le cas des parties (fondées sur des dates bibliques ou profanes) de la *Chronographie* de Jules Africain et des *aetates* (définis par des dates uniquement bibliques) d'Augustin. Ces intervalles temporels ainsi créés ne renvoient pas à des temps de nature différente, et restent pour la plupart sans signification particulière (une exception serait pour les chrétiens la durée depuis l'Incarnation ou la Passion, qui renvoie à un temps sotériologique différent).

La deuxième manière vise à établir l'existence de ce que l'on peut appeler des époques, ici définies comme des durées exprimant des natures différentes de la temporalité pour un thème précis. Les exemples cités plus haut peuvent être ainsi considérés comme des époques : d'un point de vue politique, les historiens anciens distinguent à Rome la monarchie, la République et le Principat (mais les éventuels parallèles entre les âges de Rome et ceux de la vie humaine sont rhétoriques), ou considèrent la série des empires universels successifs ; d'un point de vue religieux, Paul de Tarse oppose un temps avant la Loi, un temps sous la Loi et un temps sous la Grâce ; Denys d'Halicarnasse, mais aussi Tacite, *Dialogue des orateurs*, proposent diverses époques de l'art oratoire ; plus tard, d'un point de vue culturel puis religieux chrétien, on distingua une Antiquité, un

Moyen Âge et des temps modernes (Renaissance ou Réforme). Un autre thème important est celui de l'accès à l'information qui, du point de vue de l'historien, pouvait varier selon les époques. Ainsi, Varron distingue un temps "inconnu", un temps "mythique" et un temps "historique" (ce dernier étant défini par une chronologie précise). Tacite, *Histoires* 1, 1, 2, et *Annales*, 1, 6, 3, estime que pour la République, on connaît par leurs discours ou écrits les points de vue des acteurs politiques ; en revanche, l'instauration du principat, en rendant nombre de prises de décisions secrètes, sans débat public devant le Sénat, amène l'historien à supputer les raisons des actions ou à relater des rumeurs invérifiables. Chez Cassius Dion, cet aspect est aussi important que la distinction entre temps passé décrit par des écrits antérieurs et temps présent connu par l'expérience de l'historien, ce qui l'amène à distinguer trois époques : la République où l'information sur les causes des actions est accessible ; le principat, d'Actium à la mort de Marc Aurèle, où l'information est secrète et reste méconnue ; et les années 180-229 où Dion a eu accès à l'information en étant dans les cercles du pouvoir.<sup>3</sup> Toutes ces époques n'ont cependant de valeur que pour une thématique donnée ; si elles coïncident, c'est par dérivation (c'est le cas de l'art oratoire ou de l'accès à l'information qui suivent les transformations politiques) ou parce que cette coïncidence manifeste une relation essentielle (la naissance de Jésus-Christ sous Auguste chez Eusèbe de Césarée et Orose, qui lie les destins du monothéisme et de la monarchie impériale romaine).

La troisième manière est bien plus récente. Elle est présente chez Vico avec les âges des dieux, des héros et des humains qui renvoient cette fois à trois manières distinctes et discontinues de penser le monde et de vivre en société. Il s'agit là d'une périodisation, avec une succession de systèmes synchroniques cohérents, ce qui n'a rien à voir avec la diachronie thématique des époques. La Révolution française, en créant l'Ancien Régime, a manifesté

<sup>3</sup> FREYBURGER-GALLAND (2003).

cette discontinuité temporelle radicale. Celle-ci fut ensuite théorisée par Hegel avec le concept de *Geschichtlichkeit* (historicité d'un moment) et ensuite par Ranke avec la notion de *eigentlich* (qui renvoie au propre de chaque durée étudiée). La conception de ces périodes fut liée vers 1800 au concept d'Histoire comme devenir unifié et compréhensible de l'humanité. Mais avant 1700, sans concept d'Histoire (car *praxeis, ta erga, ta genomena ex anthrôpôn, ta pragmata* renvoient aux actes et aux événements, non au devenir qui les contient<sup>4</sup>), et sans notion de période synchronique, les distinctions temporelles étaient plus chronologiques qu'historiques au sens actuel. Cette divergence dans la conception de la structure temporelle fait que le rapport entre le temps présent et le passé universel est nécessairement différent entre les Anciens et nous, car les premiers pouvaient penser des âges ou des époques, mais non des périodes.

*N. Luraghi*: I have much sympathy for your attempt at bringing order into chaos, in the footsteps of scholars like Momigliano and Koselleck. Of course, pursuits like yours will always be exposed to philological objections – passages from ancient authors that at least appear to contradict your general statements. As an example, the notion that the present of culturally different peoples might coincide with the past of the observer, which you connect to a general model of human progress elaborated towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is present in Thucydides' *archaiologia*, where he indicates that current customs of the non-Greeks provide evidence on earlier customs of the Greeks themselves. This does not mean, I think, that generalizations like yours are futile, only that their application has its limits. As for the categories of universal and global history, I wonder whether there we might not be creating problems to ourselves by using general concepts and then looking in the evidence for their instantiations – and realizing that in

<sup>4</sup> FORNARA (1983).

some cases they do not exist. Rather than acting as if a trans-historical notion of universal history has existed, reaching the predictable conclusion that it has not, I wonder whether we might not compare works of historiography along a simplified and structural model, one that looks at the spatial extension that is necessary in order to explain what any given historian is trying to explain. John very aptly brought in Polybius. For him, a certain kind of history, namely the ascent of one single *polis*, Rome, to hegemony, required a certain kind of historiography, one that looked at different areas of the Mediterranean and peri-Mediterranean world, because events in each of these areas had an explanatory power with regards to events in another area (the Polybian *symplokê*). His history, says Polybius, is like a body, *somatoeidês*, because it explained the functional connections between all the parts. Incidentally, a similar relation obtained also between time and explanation, hence Polybius' claim that the pursuit backwards in time of the chain of causes needed to stop at some point, or else the events that one actually wanted to explain would not receive the necessary attention. Finally, is it possible that your comparison of past and present methodologies and concepts of history and historicity assumes too high a level of coherence for current concepts of history and historicity?

*H. Inglebert:* Il eût en effet été plus simple de traiter un sujet comme “La description du temps présent chez les auteurs chrétiens (Eusèbe de Césarée, Jérôme de Stridon, Rufin d’Aquilée, Orose)”, qui aurait complété la présentation de Bruno Bleckmann. Mais comme Valérie Fromentin m’avait demandé de faire une comparaison entre l’Antiquité et aujourd’hui, j’ai accepté de faire une telle présentation synthétique au risque de certains raccourcis ou omissions.

Que les ethnologues du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle aient repris Thucydide prouve qu’ils lisaient leurs classiques, mais la question est de savoir si, à deux périodes différentes, une même formule peut avoir le même sens. La remarque de Thucydide était ponctuelle,

et aurait pu être la même s'il avait parlé non des Grecs de son temps, mais des Carthaginois contemporains ; elle renvoie à un raisonnement selon le *logos* (comme chez Hérodote) et aux considérations des sophistes d'Athènes sur un certain progrès technique et social (généralement associé à un déclin des mœurs, association que l'on retrouve ensuite chez Agatharchide) ; mais on n'a pas écrit une histoire ancienne à partir de ce schéma théorique. En revanche, la même phrase après 1850 était structurée car elle s'insérait dans un schéma évolutif global, celui d'une *Kulturgeschichte* associant progrès scientifique et développement social et moral, qui posait des équivalences entre les cultures contemporaines découvertes par la colonisation européenne et une ligne temporelle d'un devenir structuré par des périodes historiques allant de la Préhistoire à l'Europe. On ne parle donc pas de la même chose et la distinction des contextes permet justement d'éviter les généralisations.

Il n'existe évidemment pas de catégorie transhistorique d'"histoire universelle", car l'historiographie de l'"histoire universelle" montre qu'il est contradictoire de tenter d'écrire une "histoire de l'histoire universelle".<sup>5</sup> En revanche, on trouve bien dans certaines cultures des écrits historiques (définis formellement par la volonté de véridicité et la capacité technique de datation) ayant l'ambition d'exprimer la signification essentielle du passé. Aussi, la notion (et non le concept) de "récit de la totalité significative du passé" est-elle opératoire pour permettre de comparer certains textes historiques présents en Mésopotamie, en Grèce (et cela concerne aussi bien Polybe que Diodore) et en Chine, et ensuite chez les chrétiens et les musulmans, avec les histoires universelles rédigées depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Mais il faut bien entendu analyser chacune des traditions de manière concrète, et les rapporter à leurs contextes historiques, cause première de l'existence des textes. Pour l'Antiquité, on peut distinguer trois contextes. Le premier serait hellénistique si l'on pense qu'Éphore, Théopompe, Hiéronimos de Cardie ou Douris relèvent de

<sup>5</sup> INGLEBERT (2014).

l'“histoire universelle” ; certains historiens y ajoutent des spéculations philosophiques.<sup>6</sup> Le deuxième est gréco-romain, avec trois traditions : celle de “l'histoire *oikouménique*” de Polybe et de ses successeurs (Poséidonios et Strabon) qui décrit une histoire relativement récente et mondialisée par Rome ; celle de “l'histoire commune” de Diodore de Sicile qui remonte aux origines de la civilisation et des royaumes et qui peut inclure les œuvres de Castor de Rhodes, de Nicolas de Damas et de Trogue Pompée ; et l'histoire de Rome de Tite Live et de ses successeurs jusqu'à Cassius Dion et Ammien Marcellin, l'*urbs* ayant soumis l'*orbis*. Le troisième est juif et chrétien, avec plusieurs variantes : l'œuvre de Flavius Josèphe ; la chronique universelle chrétienne (Julius Africanus, Hippolyte de Rome, Eusèbe de Césarée et leurs successeurs), qui mêle histoire sacrée et histoire des empires ; la tradition de l'histoire ecclésiastique depuis Eusèbe de Césarée ; l'histoire chrétienne de Babylone et de Rome d'Orose et Augustin.

Enfin, j'admets que ces idées sur l'histoire, l'Histoire et l'historicité (ainsi que celles exprimées dans la réponse à Roberto Nicolai) ne sont pas nécessairement partagées par tous. Mais j'assume pleinement une position foucaldienne<sup>7</sup> qui renforce l'héritage historiciste rankéen en insistant sur la singularité et la discontinuité des expériences historiques car cela me semble méthodologiquement prudent.

<sup>6</sup> MORTLEY (1996).

<sup>7</sup> VEYNE (2010).

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# Écrire l'histoire de son temps, de Thucydide à Ammien Marcellin

*Neuf exposés suivis de discussions*

*Guido Schepens, Roberto Nicolai, John Marincola,  
Valérie Fromentin, Nino Luraghi, Eve-Marie Becker,  
Adam M. Kemezis, Bruno Bleckmann, Hervé Inglebert.*

*Entretiens préparés par Valérie Fromentin  
et présidés par Pierre Ducrey, 23-27 août 2021*

Comment l'historien de l'Antiquité relate-t-il les événements dont il a été témoin ou acteur ? Marque-t-il une différence entre l'histoire de son temps et celle d'un passé plus lointain ? Les auteurs de ce volume répondent à ces questions en étudiant les récits historiques sous toutes leurs formes : poèmes épiques, monographies, inscriptions, biographies, Évangiles.

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