

THEME AND STYLE IN ROMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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'His combination of feeling for style with historical knowledge is still a challenge to any editor of an historical text' (Momigliano on Justus Lipsius).¹ It is a far cry from the scholarly humanism of the sixteenth century to the complex specialism of modern scholarship, but the overlapping results of detailed research begin to call for integration or, at least, some attempt to define them in a wider context. This paper, therefore, proposes a combined exercise in the study of Roman historiography, ranging from the historian's choice of theme through its literary composition to the quality of its ultimate effect—to relate (so to speak) *res, ars, ingenium*. The subject is large, but the argument involves mainly precise treatment of evidence at the critical points.²

In general, we need only note by way of introduction that, although the Roman historians differed in historical attitude, they will not have ignored the connected question of style. Since the mid-second century B.C., under Greek influence, a liberal education had included training in 'rhetoric'. This emphasized the art of oratory, with a view to court work or public speaking, but its principles could be applied to literary composition.³ In particular, as we know from Cicero's exposition of rhetorical theory, there was a *genre* of 'rhetorical history', which aimed to give practical guidance. Its scheme was well-defined, but it allowed scope in special features for elaboration at the author's discretion; also, it could prove useful to historians who did not accept its theory as a whole. Thus 'rhetoric' continued to serve historical writing throughout the course of Roman historiography, even when in the first century A.D. it produced refinements of its own which led to Seneca's new style alongside that established by Cicero. In considering the ancient evidence we have to remember that Cicero did not carry in historiography the authority he held in formal rhetoric, and that Quintilian was later to defend his position amidst some controversy. These considerations will be important when we come to discuss Sallust and Tacitus.

The first Roman historians, senators like Fabius Pictor, who had gained experience in the conduct of state affairs, wrote serious political history.⁴ If they described the dim past, that was because they accepted the traditions by which they lived and managed the ceremonies of public life; it established Roman antiquity alongside that of Greece. They treated contemporary history as they knew it at first hand, not only for their own circle but in order to interpret Roman policy to the Hellenistic world. Their style, in Greek, matched their subject matter: if Cicero regarded them as mere *narratores*, their history was none the worse for that. Adopting the same method, in Latin, Cato won fame as a statesman and writer, and his work continued to influence Roman historiography as regards both theme and style. As Cicero said: 'intelleges nihil illius lineamentis nisi eorum pigmentorum quae inventa nondum erant florem et colorem defuisse' (*Brut.* 87, 298). Later senators, with better knowledge of the rhetorical arts, would bend them to their historical purpose; essentially this marks the relationship of Sallust to Cato.

By the Gracchan period general interest in Roman history had encouraged research in the archives, legal and constitutional antiquarianism, and systematic study of Republican chronology. We need not speculate here about the *Annales Maximi*. Although the archives provided the bare form of an annual record of events, the subject-matter must have undergone substantial re-editing, in ceremonial style; the *Annales*, as we know, helped to establish the literary character of 'Annalistic' history.⁵ Two features are relevant to our

¹ A. Momigliano, *JRS* xxxix (1949), 190, reviewing J. Ruysschaert, *Juste Lipse et les Annales de Tacite* (1949). The present paper is based on my Presidential Address to the Society on 12 June, 1973.

² This paper follows on work presented in (i) 'The Roman Historians', *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship* (1968), ch. 13 [*Rom. Hist.*], with full bibliography, and (ii) 'The Style of Livy', *JRS* xlvii (1957), 156 [*Liv. Style*]. I therefore limit references here to what amplifies the particular section.

³ 'La rhétorique était le principe de l'éducation intellectuelle. Cicéron ne pouvait faire autrement que d'aborder l'histoire avec les termes de la rhétorique' (M. Rambaud, *Cicéron et l'histoire romaine* (1953), 18). Cf. M. L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Graeco-Roman Education* (1957), ch. 2 ('The Meaning of Rhetoric').

⁴ cf. E. Badian in *Latin Historians* (ed. T. A. Dorey, 1966), ch. 1 ('The Early Historians').

⁵ McDonald, *o.c.* [*Liv. Style*], 155-9.

argument. For special occasions, such as a major declaration of war or expiation of prodigies, the Annalist might elaborate his formulas with ritual detail that would add dignity to the account and appeal to civic sentiment. Then, within this formal framework, he could give variety and colour to his narrative by the rhetorical composition of special episodes in their appropriate style. As well as literary elaboration of this kind, there was scope for historical elaboration. The clash of political aims in Rome now made use of appeals to historical precedent, and where the tradition was not sufficiently explicit, it could be made to appear so, one way or the other; as is familiar, the process of reinterpretation became thoroughly tendentious. Livy superseded these writers, using their material at his own discretion. We have to note in particular the importance that Cicero attached to the 'characterizing' of personalities and situations in contrived speeches: 'interponuntur etiam contiones et hortationes, sed in his tracta quaedam et fluens expetitur, non haec contorta et acris oratio' (*Or.* 20,66).

Cicero treats historical writing systematically as an *opus oratorium maxime* in two passages which review the state of Roman historiography before his time.⁶ In the *De legibus* i, 2, 5-7 Atticus exhorts him to write Roman history, and in the *De oratore* ii, 12, 51-54 M. Antonius defines the scheme of rhetorical composition. In their view—and they undoubtedly speak for Cicero himself—the Roman historians were as yet only *narratores*, not *exornatores rerum*; history called for presentation more worthy of its dignity:

Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commendatur? (*de or.* ii, 9, 36).

So much in praise of history, and let rhetoric present it without fear, favour or animosity:

Nam quis nescit primam esse historiae legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat? deinde ne quid veri non audeat? ne quae suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo? ne quae simultatis? Haec scilicet fundamenta nota sunt omnibus (*de or.* ii, 15, 62).

But what of the actual content? The function of rhetorical composition, whether in public speaking or in historical writing, is to display given material to its best advantage. But the historical subject-matter will have been drafted in readiness for literary elaboration; and here we have to introduce the *Commentarii*.⁷

The raw material of Roman history lay in the records of legislation and administrative decrees and in the reports of provincial governors and generals, which could be consulted in the archives. The same officials might also publish personal memoirs, enlarging upon their formal reports, and this practice increased with the political rivalries of the Late Republic. Cicero was concerned with the scope which these *Commentarii* provided for rhetorical elaboration. It is interesting to note his reference to the stylistic process in his praise of Caesar's *Commentarii*:

Nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. Sed dum voluit (Caesar) alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui volent illa calamistris inurere; sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit. Nihil est enim in historia pura et illustri brevitate dulcius (*Brut.* 75, 262).

We return to Cicero for the next stage of his rhetorical construction. The narrative must refer to the time and place of action, its planning, execution and result, and the leading personalities. The details are significant:

Ipsa autem exaedificatio posita est in rebus et verbis: rerum ratio ordinem temporum desiderat, regionum descriptionem; vult etiam, quoniam in rebus magnis memoriaeque dignis consilia primum, deinde acta, postea eventus expectentur, et de consiliis significari quid scriptor probet et in rebus gestis declarari non solum quid actum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quo modo, et cum de eventu dicatur, ut causae explicentur omnes vel casus vel sapientiae vel temeritatis hominum-

⁶ The theoretical statement; cf. Rambaud, o.c. (n. 3), 13-18; Elizabeth Rawson, 'Cicero the Historian and Cicero the Antiquarian', *JRS* lxii (1972), 33-45.

⁷ McDonald, o.c. [*Rom Hist.*], 474; on the style c.f. E. Fraenkel, 'Eine Form römischer Kriegsbulletins', *Eranos* liv (1956), 189 = *Kl. Beitr.* ii, 69.

que ipsorum non solum res gestae sed etiam, qui fama ac nomine excellent, de cuiusque vita atque natura (*de or.* ii, 15, 63).

The statement is comprehensive. Indeed, one could think that the authors of *Commentarii* would be the first to benefit from its guidance. The professional writer, if he had sufficient knowledge of the subject, might work up the material suitably, but he would often have to draw implications from inadequate evidence or, at the worst, speculate in conventional terms. As Atticus in the *Brutus* lightly remarks, 'concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis, ut aliquid dicere possint argutius' (11,42). Even where there was available detail, a literary attempt to impose superficial order might falsify the record. In history 'et narratur ornate et regio saepe aut pugna describitur' (*Or.* 20,66): let Livy illustrate the risks, for he followed the rhetorical practice, and we can control his rendering of Polybius. In describing Cynoscephalae he turns what had been a disorderly battle into a regular set-piece. The topographical passages are compressed into a faulty picture; and, most significantly, he insists on explaining in Roman terms technical Hellenistic references which he did not understand.⁸ Cicero recognized the importance of systematic preparation when he drafted his notes on his consulship of 63 B.C. Knowing the rules as a writer he also, as a politician, saw how to stretch them in the course of elaboration; thus he writes privately to Luceius: 'Itaque te plane etiam atque etiam rogo ut et ornes ea vehementius etiam quam fortasse sentis et in eo leges historiae neglegas' (*ad Fam.* v, 12,3).

Finally Cicero indicates the rhetorical style that is, in his view, appropriate to history:

Verborum autem ratio et genus orationis fustum atque tractum et cum lenitate quadam aequabili profluens sine hac iudiciali asperitate et sine sententiarum forensibus aculeis persequendum est (*de or.* ii, 15, 64).

Two passages from the same work help to elucidate this statement. Among the earlier Roman historians (Catulus remarks) even the excellent Coelius Antipater falls short in one respect:

Iste ipse Caelius neque distinxit historiam varietate colorum neque verborum collocatione et tractu orationis leni et aequabili perpolivit illud opus (ii, 13, 54).

Then (in Antonius' words) we are reminded of Timaeus:

Rerum copia et sententiarum varietate abundantissimus et ipsa compositione verborum non impolitus, magnam eloquentiam ad scribendum attulit, sed nullum usum forensem (ii, 14, 58).

Cicero is referring to the *dignitas* and *amplitudo* of narration which he has demanded for Roman history. But why did he emphasize a 'smooth and even flow' in the stylistic stream? Surely Roman history, even in the glorified past, often ran like a torrent. His judgment in the context is literary. Just as he excludes legal and public oratory from consideration, so he aimed at refining the untutored roughness of earlier writing, in order to establish a regular historical prose. The scheme of presentation (*exaedificatio*) should achieve clarity, conciseness and credibility: *lux, brevitatis, fides*, the *virtutes narrandi*. The style that produces an artistic effect (*exornatio*) calls for variety in modes of expression, composed in a balanced pattern of verbal arrangement and rhythm (*concinntitas, numerus*).⁹ We need not go further into the figures of speech that were part of the rhetorical equipment. Cicero mentions the memoir he wrote in Greek on his consulship: 'Meus liber totum Isocrati myrothecium atque omnes eius discipulorum arculas ac nonnihil etiam Aristotelia pigmenta consumpsit' (*ad Att.* ii, 1, 1).

Rhetorical training, then, at its educational level or as a subject of advanced study, was destined to exercise a general and continuous influence on Roman historical writing. Though its rules were definite, they left scope for variety of stylistic treatment in episodes, at the writer's personal discretion.

⁸ cf. P. G. Walsh, *Livy* (1961), ch. 6 ('Livy's Historical Methods').

⁹L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (1954), 130 f.

One type of brilliant episode needs to be placed in its historiographical setting. Among the things that stir emotion the sight of despair, suffering and death evokes the deepest response of 'pity and fear'. Historians have always known the effect gained by displaying the scene. The plain details may be enough, or rhetorical technique used to clarify the situation, but the action calls for the direct, personal impact. The subject belongs to the stuff of tragic drama, as the Greeks knew it and as Aristotle had analysed its nature. A historian might well take the reader by vivid depiction into the scene, so to speak, as a spectator. Polybius charges the pro-Spartan Phylarchus with unscrupulous emotionalism for describing cruelty on the part of the Achaean League in this way, and then, in a didactic excursus, goes on to discuss the difference between tragedy and history. Does this point to a Hellenistic *genre* of historiography that based dramatic composition on the Aristotelian theory of tragedy? If so, it was presumably connected with the Peripatetic school, in which Theophrastus and Praxiphanes wrote on the theory of history. But in the *Poetics* Aristotle distinguished firmly between history (as he saw it) and poetry, and we know next to nothing about the content of the Peripatetic works. On the evidence one cannot press the case for a *theory* of tragic history. Equally, however, we may not simply see it as an internal development of the strict scheme of Isocratean rhetoric. This kind of episode was as old as Herodotus, and was bound to recur in historical narratives. It would naturally recall the scenes in Greek drama, and so influence the writer's choice of colourful imagery; and it was easy for the historical theme to be associated with Aristotle's theory of poetic tragedy. The evidence points not to a historiographical *genre* proper, but rather to a particular style of description, appropriate to a 'tragic history' that had become a conventional mode; thus it could be accepted, as a distinct element, into the rhetorical literary scheme.¹⁰

The Romans were familiar with the style of 'tragic history', and Cicero (in a letter advising Lucceius) relates it to his own life from his consulship to his return from exile (63-57 B.C.):

Nihil est enim aptius ad delectationem lectoris quam temporum varietates fortunaque vicissitudines. Quae etsi nobis optabiles in experiendo non fuerunt, in legendo tamen erunt iucundae; habet enim praeteriti doloris secreta recordatio delectationem; ceteris vero nulla perfunctis propria molestia, casus autem alienos sine ullo dolore intuentibus etiam ipsa misericordia est iucunda. Quem enim nostrum ille moriens apud Mantineam Epaminondas non cum quadam miseratione delectat? . . . Etenim ordo ipse annalium mediocriter nos retinet quasi enumeratione fastorum; at viri saepe excellentis ancipites variique casus habent admirationem, expectationem, laetitiam, molestiam, spem, timorem; si vero exitu notabili concluduntur, expletur animus iucundissima lectionis voluptate. Quo mihi acciderit optatius, si in hac sententia fueris ut a continentibus tuis scriptis, in quibus perpetuam rerum gestarum historiam complecteris, secernas hanc quasi fabulam rerum eventorumque nostrorum (*ad Fam.* v, 12, 4-6).

This is an illuminating statement. Though it reflects the Aristotelian view of tragedy, and notes the effect of Epaminondas' death-scene, its gentle regard for the reader's *pleasure* is far from any harsh emphasis on 'pity and fear': Cicero quotes the rhetorical principle, but it is adapted to his personal circumstances. He is concerned not with a historical attitude but, stylistically, with an appropriate model for dramatic writing ('quasi fabulam') which should enjoy the freedom normally reserved for a particular episode; and it should appear preferably in a monograph. The historians, for their various reasons, were to follow this same technique when they wished to heighten the description of scenes they had visually in mind. Its influence can be seen in Livy and Tacitus, but is kept well under control.

For both its historical significance and its effect on literary exposition there is one particular feature of Roman historiography that should be illustrated here, viz. the changing content of political vocabulary.¹¹ The Roman political tradition had grown by custom and law, it was sustained by ceremonial practice, and it endured to command respect of Italian

¹⁰ cf. F. W. Walbank, *Polybius* (1972), 34-9, with bibliography; C. O. Brink, 'Tragic history and Aristotle's school', *Proc. Camb. Phil. Soc.* vi (1960), 14-19.

¹¹ See R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939),

ch. 11 ('Political Catchwords'); Ch. Wirszubski *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Principate* (1950); D. C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust* (1961), ch. 4.

opinion—or to be exploited during the later years of civil strife at Rome. Through the centuries its history suffered expedient changes and tendentious reinterpretation. We depend on the historians for our evidence, whether anachronistic or not, and need to study their terminology, viz. the ‘dominant’ words and associated sets of expressions. Under the Republic, for instance, the term *dignitas* signified high office and its holder’s prestige in the state, redounding to his family’s glory; it was a matter of personal honour. Duly limited, the *dignitas* of one leader should not block another’s *dignitas*: the way lay open for rising talent, which is the *libertas* of political advancement. An honourable man was ‘haud minus libertatis alienae quam dignitatis suae memor’ (Livy vii, 33, 3); he would gain *auctoritas*. Improperly exercised, however, *dignitas* might appear to carry a threat of *dominatio*, and this would lead to ‘contentio libertatis dignitatisque’ (Livy iv, 6, 11). Livy uses this terminology for the past, as an aristocratic code of political behaviour; Sallust has Catiline refer to *libertas*—‘quae condicio vitae futura sit, nisi nosmet ipsi vindicamus in libertatem’ (*B. Cat.* 20, 6), but this was for private ends. Caesar illustrates *dignitas* in rivalry with Pompey (*B.C.* i, 1–9): ‘sibi semper primam fuisse dignitatem vitaeque potiore’ (9, 2). The terms are traditional, but the real issue was that of *dominatio* at the price of civil war—and we may add that long *dominatio* could be called *regnum*. When time-honoured words are pressed into the service of propaganda, they lose their credit; Augustus was well advised to cite personal *auctoritas* rather than the *dignitas* of office in masking his control of the Roman state.

In the stark formula of perspective with which he opens the *Annals*, Tacitus plays on ‘dominant’ political words to co-ordinate the sense of his argument:

Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere: libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit. Dictaturae ad tempus sumebantur; neque decemviralis potestas ultra biennium neque tribunorum militum consulare ius diu valuit. Non Cinnae, non Sullae longa dominatio; et Pompei Crassique potentia cito in Caesarem, Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere, qui cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit (*Ann.* i, 1).

This compendious statement has a leading motive. After the initial *regnum*, L. Brutus established the *libertas* and collegiate consulship of the Republic; this allowed recourse to dictatorship in emergencies and to special grants of *potestas*, but the occasions had been brief. Even the *dominatio* of Cinna and of Sulla was short-lived. So, too the *potentia* of Pompey and Crassus (in the First Triumvirate) soon passed to Caesar, and the *arma* of Lepidus and Antony (in the Second Triumvirate) passed to Augustus. The Roman world was war-weary. Augustus, speaking in terms of *auctoritas*, in fact took command of the state: ‘cuncta . . . nomine principis sub imperium accepit’; the last of the warlords, he was exercising *dominatio*. The logic of the argument requires one more step; for Augustus established a dynastic policy by which his *imperium* passed not to a rival claimant but to Tiberius and the Julio-Claudian line: *dominatio perpetua*, fatal to Republican *libertas*. The step was taken: it is the theme of Tacitus in writing the *Annals*.

Let us now turn to prose style, taking up Cicero’s rhetorical formula of a ‘genus orationis fusum atque tractum et cum lenitate quadam aequabili profluens’, and go on to confront Cicero with Sallust. The flowing style has been loosely called ‘periodic’. One may define the ‘period’ itself as a rounded sentence which has a beginning, inner structure and an end, coordinated by the syntactical and rhythmical arrangement of its parts; but it also belongs organically in the larger context of the narrative which it helps to carry through the successive stretches of action, and the sentences will be connected by the sweep of the account.¹² But there are two difficulties: first, the writer may press his narration too hard and overburden the sentences; secondly, within a sentence he may have to combine supporting evidence that is complex or even incompatible, and even the best antithetical contrivance will not avoid obscurity. A long Annalistic history, with its yearly divisions and variety of formal entries, needs to be fast-moving in individual episodes of its narrative. What of the ‘smooth and even’ flow? Cicero, as we have noted, was applying

¹² cf. Klaus Lindemann, *Beobachtungen zur livianischen Periodenkunst* (1964; Marburg diss.,

privately printed): see McDonald, *CR* (N.S.) xvii (1967), 57–8.

rhetorical rules, designed to make a literary *appeal* to the reader; but in any event the intricacy of 'periodic' construction called for deft stylistic craftsmanship. Of course, it would be natural for a writer who 'discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern'—as Livy saw the destiny of Rome in his earlier books—to reflect these 'harmonies' in his style; yet a historian who could 'see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave' might, equally well, set out his evidence in a balanced, anti-theoretical prose style.¹³ In his later books, even though he found the subject-matter increasingly painful, Livy could still—as an Annalist—have continued to write in his old rhetorical manner.

A historian, however, who had learnt politics in the harsh school of the Late Republic would scarcely propose to interpret the period unless he renounced the superficial standards of 'rhetorical history'. Asinius Pollio's critical history in the *Civil Wars* lost nothing in effectiveness by its plain narration, advisedly bare and as severe as the man himself. If a writer were temperamentally disposed to blunt or forceful expression, he could nevertheless employ the devices of rhetoric perversely to achieve his purpose: not to indulge the reader's pleasure, but to shock the reader into fascinated concern by the impact of political analysis and sheer verbal aggression. Where rhetoric prescribed smooth composition and flowing rhythm (*concininitas*), Sallust therefore aimed at producing *inconcininitas*, of sense and sound. This suited his theme and his personal temper: it also demanded a *tour de force* in fashioning a new style.¹⁴ What, then, were his resources? His standards of historical judgment were traditional, as far as Cato represented tradition in the second century B.C. Cato's political terminology had been debased in later usage; it was appropriate to restore the authority of the 'dominant' words by touching their context with archaic colour. As for historical analysis, since human behaviour does tend to repeat itself in civil war, he could find a model for the statement of his own thoughts in the work of Thucydides. Cicero refers to Thucydides and his contemporaries: 'grandes erant verbis, crebri sententiis, compressione rerum breves et ob eam ipsam causam interdum subobscuri' (*Brut.* 7, 29); yet even if this influence took Sallust's *brevitas* to the point of *obscuritas*, it would still only be emphasizing his own tendency. One has to understand how his theme was dominated by political terms; for instance, despite their 'moralizing' tone, *avaritia* and *ambitio* were realistic words in the Late Republican setting.

We have now gone far enough to sketch the historiographical situation in which Sallust attacked the fashionable conventions of 'rhetorical history': 'sane manifestus est etiam ex opere ipso labor' (*Quint.* x, 3, 8). His facile opponents would not only search out examples of verbal obscurity; they had also to defend *numerus*, the rhythm of *concininitas*. To destroy the regular rhythm was to throw a reader off his balance: 'Sallustio vigente amputatae sententiae et verba ante expectatum cadentia et obscura brevitatis fuere pro cultu' (*Seneca, Ep.* 114, 17). Thus 'verba ante expectatum cadentia' is well said, for it explains how Sallust proposed to shock the reader into attention. His artistic form of serious history stood in its own right alongside 'rhetorical history'. When Quintilian discusses historical style from the viewpoint of forensic oratory he accepts the validity of both:

Neque illa Sallustiana brevitatis, qua nihil apud aures vacuas atque eruditas potest esse perfectius, apud occupatum variis cogitationibus iudicem et saepius ineruditum captanda nobis est, neque illa Liui lactea ubertas satis docebit eum qui non speciem expositionis, sed fidem quaerit (x, 1, 32).

At this point, before moving into the Empire, we have to clarify the relation of poetry and history. A cultivated historian, certainly from Coelius Antipater on, would know his Ennius and, later, his Virgil, and stylistic reminiscence was fostered through the study of *Topoi*. Rhetorical theory did not forbid verbal 'poetic' usage in historical episodes that

¹³ Following H. A. L. Fisher's classic formula; on the complex 'period' cf. H. L. Bond, *The Literary Art of Edward Gibbon* (1960), ch. 7.

¹⁴ At this point, with special reference to style and rhythm, note E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa* (3rd ed. with 'Nachträge', 1915-18) i, 175 f. (on

Sallust, pp. 200-4), and *Die römische Literatur* (5th ed., 1954), 39 f. (on Sallust, pp. 43-7). Cf. E. Löfstedt, *Syntactica* ii (1933), 290-4; K. Latte, *Sallust* (Neue Wege zur Antike ii, 4; 1935), 47 f. ('Persönlichkeit und Zeit'); R. Syme, *Sallust* (1964), ch. 14 ('History and Style').

called for warmth of tone and colour.¹⁵ But Cicero has Antonius state that poetry as such lay far from rhetoric, while history could benefit from rhetorical composition: 'poetas omnino quasi alia quadam lingua locutos non conor attingere . . . Videtisne quantum munus sit oratoris historia?' (*de or.* ii, 14/15, 61-62); he then expounds the scheme of presentation we have discussed above. We get closer to the question in two important passages. First, in *Or.* 20, 66-68 after referring to historical *contiones*, Cicero takes the orator's viewpoint: 'ab his non multo secus quam a poetis haec eloquentia quam quaerimus sevocanda est'. How did the poets differ from the orators?

Numero maxime videbantur antea et versu, nunc apud oratores iam ipse numerus increbruit; quicquid est enim quod sub aurium mensuram aliquam cadat, etiamsi abest a versu—nam id quidem orationis est vitium—numerus vocatur, qui Graece ῥυθμός dicitur.

Some (Cicero adds) have considered Plato's prose, with its 'clarissima verborum lumina', as more of a 'poema' than the 'versiculi' of Comic poets in 'cotidianus sermo'. Thus it was rhythm, regardless of metrical form, and the quality of verbal expression that gave the terms of rhetorical judgment; and Cicero therefore states his view of poetry:

Ego autem, etiamsi quorundam grandis et ornata vox est poetarum, tamen in ea cum licentiam statuo maiorem esse quam in nobis faciendorum iungendorumque verborum, tum etiam nonnullorum voluntate vocibus magis quam rebus inserviunt (68).

Secondly, in *Inst. or.* x, 1, 27-31 Quintilian restates the case. The poets offer *in rebus spiritus, in verbis sublimitas, in affectibus motus* and *in personis decor*; but the orator should not follow them in their *libertas verborum* and *licentia figurarum* (27-28). History, too, invigorates the orator; 'verum (historia) et ipsa sic est legenda ut sciamus plerasque eius virtutes oratori esse vitandas':

Est enim proxima poetis et quodam modo carmen solutum, et scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum, totumque opus non ad actum rei pugnamque praesentem sed ad memoriam posteritatis et ingenii famam componitur; ideoque et verbis remotioribus et liberioribus figuris narrandi taedium evitat (31).

In its opening this passage is abrupt and—if read out of context—obscure. But Quintilian follows Cicero's basic statement of rhetorical theory; both poetry and history should be kept separate from oratory, owing to their *licentia* of verbal expression and imagery: in this association 'historia' is 'proxima poetis'. What of 'carmen solutum'? Cicero had explained the rhetorical view of *numerus* as rhythm applying to verse and prose in common: Quintilian, in effect, repeats this view, working from poetry as the point of reference. One may not infer anything from the phrase beyond the matter of rhythm. The main issue turns on the relative requirements of narrative style.

We have now returned to rhetoric at a point where it was itself tending to open up new developments in literary practice. Its principles did not change, and Quintilian was able to confirm the rules laid down by Cicero; but these had notably, as we have seen, left scope for choice and variation of style at personal discretion: 'is erit ergo eloquens qui ad id quodcumque decebit poterit accommodare orationem' (Cicero, *Or.* 36, 123). That is a matter of literary taste, which is subject to changing fashions; it involves not only verbal usage and colour but composition and rhythm. For instance, although Cicero preferred the 'periodic' sentence (*ambitus*), he respected Crassus' style, which covered the same ground by a sequence of 'cola' (*membra, versus*):

His igitur singulis versibus quasi nodi apparent continuationis, quos in ambitu coniungimus . . . Sed nihil tam debet esse numerosum quam hoc, quod minime apparet et valet plurimum (*Or.* 66, 222).¹⁶

¹⁵ McDonald, o.c. [*Liv. Style*], 170-1; cf. W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (1924), ch. 11 ('Die Dichtersprache').

¹⁶ cf. Cicero, *de or.* iii, 49/50, 190-4 (in Crassus' words).

In effect, rhetoric itself had opened the way for literary extravagance in its name. An author might exploit the short sentence by pointed wordplay that broke up the fluency of his writing; in elaborating the features of his style, he might exceed the bounds of rhetorical 'propriety'; what he was granted as *libertas elocutionis* he might turn into *licentia* or *lascivia* and so on—at least in the opinion of conservative rhetoricians like Quintilian. On a serious theme he was limited by the need to instruct as well as please his readers—but what was now their taste? Where he practised his rhetorical art for its own sake, he was free to experiment in stylistic refinement. This is the new setting of *declamatio*. Exercises in oratorical composition and delivery had become an established part of rhetorical training by the time of Cicero: they were highly regarded as a preparation for political life. During the Augustan period oratory lost its scope. We may attribute this in part to the character of Imperial administration, but we must not ignore the literary trend itself. Literary rhetoric went on to encourage technical innovation in style, and 'declamation' offered a testing-ground for various methods in which themes might be treated. The Elder Seneca illustrates the actual exercises of the Early Principate: we have to show how they influenced contemporary prose style through features which a historian might adopt.¹⁷

The surviving evidence for this period is slight.¹⁸ The major historians followed previous practice: they kept the Annalistic form in continuous history, the monograph for special subjects, e.g. the German wars. But they also applied suitable rhetorical techniques to their narrative. The influence of biography, as Cornelius Nepos had represented it, was extended to history, giving depth to the traditional rhetorical emphasis on 'characterization'. Ethnography was to be further explored by the Elder Pliny. With reference to style, it is Velleius Paterculus who calls for closer attention. No great historian, but a man whose interests were wider than the period of his military service under Tiberius, he had a working knowledge of rhetoric, and of the stylistic features needed to enliven the variety of his short work; thus he serves as an admirably straightforward witness for such matters as biographical treatment, formal 'characterization', literary reminiscence, and the rhetorical devices, all chosen to aid his reasonable purpose.¹⁹ We have to proceed to Seneca for the high point of stylistic development before Tacitus entered the field of historiography.

Despite the inevitable conceits of declamatory exercise there had been important refinements in rhetorical expression that combined to establish a new literary style. It broke down the balanced composition of 'periodic' *concininitas* to revive the effect of brief sentences, set in abrupt sequence and not as 'cola' of a larger rhythmic statement: each sentence appears as a pointed statement, with its own verbal emphasis. It is marked by epigrammatic *sententiae*, and its own rhythm using *clausulae*. Continuity of sense was ensured not by formal fluency, but through the force of association in rapid narrative, assisted by parallelism, antithesis, and the interplay of words and imagery—all combining to produce a tense movement. Special features, such as we have noted above, which had developed their conventional form, would be suitably polished to take their proper place. The freedom of colourful expression was increased, and the distinction of verbal usage in poetry and prose lost significance: Lucan's epic could rank as rhetoric, historians would include Virgilian reminiscences in their prose. The new style required literary skill and taste, by the contemporary standards.²⁰ Quintilian criticised it in the light of the old rhetorical principles, and feared its popularity in Seneca's work:

Multae in eo claraeque sententiae, multa etiam morum gratia legenda, sed in eloquendo corrupta pleraque atque eo perniciosissima quod abundant dulcibus vitiis. Velles eum suo ingenio dixisse, alieno iudicio, nam . . . si non omnia sua amasset, si rerum pondera minutissimis sententiis non fregisset, consensu potius eruditorum quam puerorum amore comprobaretur (*Inst. or.* i, 1, 129-30).

¹⁷ See S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (1949), chs. 2-4, 7 (for the Elder Seneca), ch. 8 (literary influence of 'declamation'); and 'Roman Oratory', *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship* (1968), ch. 12.

¹⁸ McDonald, o.c. [*Rom. Hist.*] 479-80.

¹⁹ E. Norden, *Ant. Kunstpr.* i, 302-3; Velleius

Paterculus has long called for a fitting commentary, which A. J. Woodman now has in preparation.

²⁰ cf. E. Norden, *Ant. Kunstpr.* i, 295 f., 306-13 (Seneca), and *Röm. Lit.*, 87-9; E. Löfstedt, o.c. ii, ch. 12 ('Stilarten und Sprachschichten'); S. F. Bonner, o.c. (n. 17) 74-5; A. D. Leeman, *Orationis Ratio* (1963) i, ch. 11.

As Tacitus remarked of Seneca: 'fuit illi viro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum' (*Ann.* xiii, 3, 2).

Historiographically one is tempted, with Cicero and Quintilian in the background, to plot a triangle involving Sallust and Seneca, for the styles they represented, and Tacitus, in view of the style he was later to create. Ciceronian rhetoric, later defended by Quintilian, had prescribed *oratio tracta et fluens*: Seneca held that it produced *compositio* 'in exitu lenta, qualis Ciceronis est, devexa et molliter detinens nec aliter quam solet, ad morem suum pedemque respondens'. Sallust broke the smooth flow of sense and sound with *brevitas et abruptum sermonis genus*, rejecting rhythm in order to stress the historical harshness of his theme; in criticizing his imitators, Seneca refers to his 'amputatae sententiae et verba ante expectatum cadentia'. As for Seneca himself, we should rather speak of *brevitas*, *abruptae sententiae* with *clausulae*, and a rhythmical *velocitas*; for Quintilian's comment on Seneca's 'minutissimae sententiae' reflects his Ciceronian attitude, and Seneca's judgement of Sallust's 'amputatae sententiae' and 'verba ante expectatum cadentia' can hardly describe his own type of rhythmical prose. Indeed, Seneca would have disliked our present clumsy attempt to label his style: 'adice nunc quod oratio certam regulam non habet: consuetudo illam civitatis, quae nunquam in eodem diu stetit, versat' (*Ep.* 114, 13-16).

What then of Tacitus' position as we approach his style? For Tacitus' development, the *Dialogus* has no chronological significance: he followed a convention of 'Ciceronianism' in discussing rhetoric. He knows and can employ the special *genres*: biography in the *Agricola*, ethnography in the *Germania*; just as he gives a certain historical tone to these works, so he uses their conventions, as relevant, in his history. In his episodes he applies the colours of special types of descriptions, whether these derive from rhetorical techniques or form the dramatic art of 'tragic history'.²¹ Tacitus, of course, dominates his general composition. As for his stylistic expression, so for his historiographical thought, Sallust provided a model which he honoured; but surely, too, he gained from the influence of contemporary writing in creating his own powerful and polished style? There is more work to be done, by applying the modern techniques of linguistic and literary study.²²

The aim of this paper has been to define and bring into relation the critical points of development in Roman historiography, as far as Tacitus' mastery of all its forms. I have attempted to indicate where, in any particular case, one may direct special research towards the problem of the historian's originality. The specialist is the better for knowing, more systematically, how his work and that of others will fit into the general picture. To this extent, at least, we may prepare to meet the challenge of Justus Lipsius. It is worth stressing the wide adaptability and pervading influence of rhetoric in historical style, and especially the ways in which it served the varied purposes of the great writers. We have also to appreciate the freedom which rhetorical composition allowed, both in the elaboration of distinct episodes and in their literary expression, so as to give appropriate character and colour; this is notable in the Annalistic *genre* in the exercise of *variatio*, at the points where Livy and Tacitus write their brilliant set pieces. Such versatility (it is suggested) should be examined in its context, for patterns of verbal usage and rhythm related to its stylistic effect.

In conclusion we may return to our initial question of combined historical and literary study. The student of history has to allow for the conditions of presentation we have discussed when he is making his own reconstruction of events; the literary critic is helped in analytical understanding of the writer; and there is much in common. But we should

²¹ McDonald, o.c. [*Rom. Hist.*] 480-4, 494 (for bibliography); cf. E. Norden, *Röm. Lit.*, 91-6 (especially for 'tragic history').

²² Once again note E. Norden, *Ant. Kunstpr.* i, 321-43 (on Tacitus) and E. Löfstedt, o.c. (n. 14) ii, 275-90 (on Tacitus); cf. *JRS* xxxviii (1948), 1-8); R. Syme, *Tacitus* (1958) i, chs. 26-7 (on the style of the *Annales*), ii, 711 f. ('Style and Words'), and *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (1970), ch. i ('The Senator as Historian'); F. R. D. Goodyear, 'Development of language and style in the *Annals* of Tacitus', *JRS*

lviii (1968), 22-31, and *The Annals of Tacitus*, Books 1-6, edited with comm., Vol. i (1972), i, 1-54 (p. 46: 'In T.'s writings style and historical interpretation are inseparable one from the other. The style is part of the interpretation or a result of T.'s attempts to reconcile interpretation with the evidence'). Finally cf. J. Cousin, *Bibliographie de la langue latine*, 1880-1948 (1951), 298-308 ('Langues spéciales, Langue des genres'); Donald C. Freeman (ed.), *Linguistics and Literary Style* (1970), chs. 1-6 (on theory of 'linguistic stylistics').

not stay, like the latter-day rhetors, simply with the technique of composition and style. We are dealing with writers of history. What of the theme, and the author's commitment to it, both historically and personally? He will, in effect, reveal his historical attitude in his treatment of the subject; but we must be capable of following his thought. Further, if he has the gift of style, he may convey his mood directly; yet, to be more than an impression, it needs proving in the joint terms of history and literature that constitute Roman historiography.

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