

DIONYSIUS, LUCIAN, AND THE PREJUDICE AGAINST RHETORIC IN HISTORY*

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HISTORY, RHETORIC, AND AESTHETICS

This article will explore the familiar polarity between history and rhetoric by comparing two rather different accounts from the early Empire. The treatment of history in the rhetorical theory of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the curious work of historical theory by Lucian will be contrasted to open up some new areas of debate.¹ Although the relationship between rhetoric and history has been the subject of numerous studies, none have given much weight to one central aspect of the juxtaposition: the dialectic between rhetoric and aesthetics, and the place of that dialectic in ancient historical theory. Since scholars generally agree that ancient historiography exists, like all other forms of ancient writing, within a culture where rhetoric provides all educational resources, and thus acts as a substitute for aesthetic theory, this is not in itself surprising.² A close reading of these particular texts, however, produces a more differentiated view of what rhetoric might mean to those seeking to define historiography. Dionysius and Lucian are both concerned with the relationship between rhetoric and wider issues of moral and social education. But because rhetoric is not philosophy, but rather a system concerned above all with the formal qualities of spoken utterance, these moral issues become closely implicated with aesthetic concerns. More startlingly, they do so in each author in a significantly different way. The interweaving of moral and aesthetic may at first sight seem strange; we are accustomed to think of the aesthetic and the moral as operating in rather different spheres, at least when it comes to literary production. This enquiry will use the distinction between Dionysius and Lucian to draw attention to the historical development of our own distinctions between aesthetic, moral, and historical. In accordance with the principles of hermeneutic criticism, greater understanding of the origins of our own critical tradition will facilitate a more refined understanding of ancient theories. If rhetoric and history are in our minds opposed, how did they come to be so, when a cursory look at ancient historiography suggests that in antiquity they were not?³ A linear genealogy for so complex a process is impossible, but I suggest that, by explicating the differences between two ancient accounts, we can observe the prehistory of a way of thinking by which we are conditioned, and which makes particular demands upon our own responses to ancient ideas of rhetoric's role in historical writing.

* I am extremely grateful to the Editor for encouraging this article, as for the many constructive criticisms of the readers; also to Andrew Barker, Paul Cartledge, and Chris Pelling, who commented on drafts. I would never claim to be free from error, and apologize for those that remain, as for any obscurity.

¹ Dionysius, writing at Rome in the last decades B.C., discusses historiography both in the prologue to his own history, *Roman Antiquities*, and in various essays, most notably *Thucydides* and *Letter to Pompeius*. All are most accessible in Loeb editions. Lucian wrote *How to Write History* in A.D. 166; it too is available from Loeb, and is included in M. D. Macleod, *Lucian: A Selection* (1991).

² So most recently and most explicitly, S. Rebenich, 'Historical prose', in S. E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period* (1997), 265–337, who describes historians as following the trends of the rhetorical schools. R. W. Cape, 'Persuas-

ive history: Roman rhetoric and historiography', in W. J. Dominik (ed.), *Roman Eloquence* (1997), 212–28, discusses relevant issues. A. Michel, *La parole et la beauté* (1982) gives a survey of the aesthetic dimensions of rhetoric from antiquity to modernism, but ancient historians do not feature. Stimulating is E. Mattioli, 'Retorica ed estetica', in G. Fenocchio (ed.), *Le ragioni della retorica* (1986), 151–62.

³ It is a commonplace of the critical literature that the interests of the historian and those of the rhetorician are incompatible. See e.g. A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (1988); E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome* (1991), 74 (who confesses errors in his earlier attitude, but side-steps the problem); J. L. Moles, 'Truth and untruth in Herodotus and Thucydides', in C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman (eds), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (1993), 88–121, 116ff.

To delineate more precisely the area of investigation, it will help to consider a quotation from Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* are a provocative text, helpful because in their insight they strike at the root of many modern conceptions of the nature and purpose of history.

The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 247

These words convey a distinct idea of the relationship between the past and any potential historian. The historian is a viewer, the past a matter of images. Even in the form of an impossible ideal — the true picture — the reality of the past, its essence, is most naturally described in the form of an image.⁴ The impact of the image derives from its immediacy; it flashes out, only to vanish once more. Historical understanding takes the form of a moment of vision, of clairvoyance, in which the historian is able to perceive something that originates in history. Benjamin is writing metaphors, but such metaphors reveal preconceptions about how historians are thought to work. Specifically, the appeal to a quasi-visual moment of historical perception has the effect of diminishing the textual quality of the historian's work, of figuring the historian as something more like a prophet than a writer, and of emphasizing the sublime, as a spontaneous product of history, rather than as a sense of grandeur deliberately formed by argument.⁵ One of Benjamin's aims is the consolidation of historical thinking at the centre of modern identity, against his anxiety that modernism was leading to a politically dangerous form of blindness to historical specificity.⁶ Crucial to that identity is a notion of distinctness from the past, a past which can be seen in the imagination, but which, as an image, retains an integrity and remoteness which leave the historian with capturing and approximation as the most viable metaphors for writing about the past.

Benjamin is also refining the notion of historical objectivity, but in a paradoxical fashion. On the one hand he works against the notion of scientific objectivity by stressing the necessity for imagination in historical understanding, but on the other he reinforces one central component in scientific thinking, the distinctness between the historical object and the observer or historian. Furthermore he draws attention to what is most important about this distinctness: the idea that a visual and aesthetic mode of perception is the most adequate one for describing the encounter with the past. Observation, objectivity, and looking to the past are all habits of mind which crystallize around one central idea: historical writing consists of the reproduction of mental images, images which emerge from the past in a process that is, vitally, inexplicable.

The distinction between ancient historiography, steeped in rhetoric, and modern, non-rhetorical historiography reworks the same issues raised by Benjamin. Rhetorical historiography is the opposite of objective historiography, not through some accident or failure of development, but because the notion of objectivity demands a particular attitude towards the aesthetic qualities of historical writing. It supposes that history possesses an intangible core, a core of truth, and that this truth shines out from the past in a way that is beyond the realm of argument or dispute. In other words, the argumentative or persuasive impulses essential to rhetoric are bound to distort what is essential about history. Rhetorical historiography functions differently. The great legacy of ancient rhetorical theory is the exploration of how the formal qualities of language

⁴ In the German the emphasis upon history's visual quality is noticeably stronger: 'Das wahre Bild der Vergangenheit huscht vorbei. Nur als Bild, das auf Nimmerwiedersehen im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt, ist die Vergangenheit festzuhalten', *Schriften I* (1955), 496. The emphatic placing of the words at the start of the second sentence, and *wiedersehen, aufblitzt, even Augenblick*, all reinforce history's visual quality.

⁵ On the role of the sublime in the evolution of the modern discipline of history, see H. White, 'The politics of historical interpretation: discipline and de-

sublimation', in *The Content of the Form* (1987), 58–82.

⁶ For a masterful summary of Benjamin's position, see A. Schmidt, 'Walter Benjamin und die Frankfurter Schule', in R. Buchholz and J. A. Kruse (eds), *Magnetisches Hingezogensein oder schaudernde Abwehr* (1994), 122–34. See too H. D. Kittsteiner, 'Walter Benjamins Historismus', in N. Bolz and B. Witte (eds), *Passagen: Walter Benjamins Urgeschichte des XIX Jahrhunderts* (1984), 163–97; T. Docherty, *Alterities* (1996), 7–12.

relate to the persuasive or moral demands of the occasion. The aesthetic and the moral constitute, in rhetorical thinking, a unity. With the notion of historical objectivity, that unity is subordinated to a notion that history can, or must, transcend rhetoric, by virtue of the particular mental processes by which the past is perceived. These demand, Benjamin suggests, a different kind of aesthetic, one particular to historical writing.

In what follows, Dionysius of Halicarnassus' views on historical writing will be used to clarify what exactly is at stake in the rhetorician's interpretation of history.⁷ Lucian's *How to Write History* presents a different set of arguments, one closer to modern understanding.⁸ The differences between them will be seen to reflect the concerns articulated by my reference to Benjamin, since they revolve around the relationship between history and aesthetics, as well as that between history and politics or a sense of moral purpose. The juxtaposition of two ancient views will enable us to go beyond the hackneyed opposition between ancient and modern, and to begin to move towards differentiation within ancient views on rhetoric. A further gain will be the awareness of the contingency of our own preconceptions, and of the necessity to think round them if we are to understand ancient historiography better.

DIONYSIUS AND LUCIAN COMPARED

A convenient way of summarizing Lucian's and Dionysius' views is to focus upon their implicit picture of the ideal historian.⁹ Both are emphatic that the historian's main concern will be truth, and his main purpose the utility of his work.¹⁰ To this end he will be concerned to verify his source material, and treat it in such a way that it appears to its best advantage; clarity is of great importance, so is the balance between different parts of the historical work.¹¹ Stylistic excesses should be avoided; but history can admit an element of the poetic and the mythical so long as both contribute to the reader's edification.¹² Lucian explicitly requires two qualities in his ideal: political understanding (σύνεσις πολιτική) and power of expression (δύναμις ἑρμηνευτική).¹³ This ideal historian is the cornerstone of both authors' criticisms of existing historical writing. Both are explicit about their aims: to educate their readers in the techniques of historical writing; to provide advice as to what should be imitated and what avoided in composing history; and to illustrate this advice with a variety of examples, analysed in varying degrees of detail for what they reveal about the stylistic or formal decisions of their authors.¹⁴

⁷ Titles are abbreviated as in Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*⁹. References to Dionysius are to the Loeb editions (1968 etc.); those to the critical essays (trans. Usher) include page references if necessary. Analysis of the relationship of Dionysius' various works of historical theory can be found in K. S. Sacks, 'Historiography in the rhetorical works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus', *Athenaeum* 61 (1983), 41–67, and on his theories generally see Gabba, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 60–90; M. Fox, *Roman Historical Myths* (1996), esp. ch. 3.

⁸ Unspecified references to Lucian are to Πῶς δεῖ Ἱστορίαν συγγράφειν, in the OCT, ed. M. D. Macleod, vol. 3 (1980), and include line references to that edition where necessary. The standard accounts of the work remain G. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtschreibung* (1958) and H. Homeyer, *Lukian: wie Man Geschichte schreiben soll* (1965). See too B. Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian* (1973), 75–95.

⁹ On the wider context of ancient historians' self-definition, see J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (1997); H. Strasburger, *Die Wesensbestimmung der Geschichte durch die antike Geschichtschreibung* (1966).

¹⁰ See *Ant. Rom.* 1.1; *Th.* 8; *Hist. Conscr.* 9, ll. 16–17; 39, ll. 14ff.

¹¹ See *Th. passim*. At 9 Dionysius shifts from a general discussion of Thucydides' qualities to focus upon his organization of his material. *Hist. Conscr.* 34 and 40–9 is where Lucian is most explicit about his ideal. Lucian is less concerned with style, but see 46–7; 51. One of the central virtues for both authors is ἀκρίβεια which must be understood as the clear expression of correctly selected material; see *Hist. Conscr.* 51; *Ant. Rom.* 1.5.4.

¹² See *Pomp.* 3, p. 384 where Dionysius refuses to apologize for referring to the ποιήσεις (poetic creations) of Herodotus and Thucydides; *Th.* 7 and *Pomp.* 6, pp. 392–4 both express Dionysius' indulgence for historians who include mythical material. *Hist. Conscr.* 8 explicitly rules out poetic elements, defined as τὸ μῦθον καὶ τὸ ἐγκώμιον; but advocates poetic grandeur for battle narrative, 45, and finally allows both for myth and personal praise or blame within very closely defined limits, 59–60.

¹³ 34.

¹⁴ *Th.* 1; *Pomp.* 3, p. 370; 6, p. 398; *Hist. Conscr.* 6. For the mock-serious aim of Lucian's prologue see R. B. Branham, *Unruly Eloquence* (1989), 56–7. Cf. C. P. Robinson, *Lucian and his Influence in Europe* (1979), 32.

There are, however, striking differences in tone, which can best be appreciated by a comparison of the role of polemic. Dionysius' writing maintains a high-minded style, even when he aggressively upholds his right to criticize Thucydides, in particular against the imagined élitism of those who regard him as the perfect historian. Lucian's work is humorous, and employs its polemic for an entertaining effect. The historians criticized by Dionysius are Herodotus and Thucydides; Lucian's main targets are obscure contemporaries writing accounts of Rome's wars in Parthia, while Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon stand in the background as classics. The Parthian historians occupy a curious position.¹⁵ We can no longer verify their failings by referring to their writings, so their foibles seem all the more remarkable; the unnamed historian who expands a chance meeting of an ordinary horseman with a Syrian family taking a picnic, culminating in a visit to the fish market, as part of an account of the Battle of Europus, raises the phantom of a kind of social history which is unknown in surviving historical writing.¹⁶

The triviality of Lucian's polemic can be explained, however, by a difference in one of his main theoretical interests. History should not, he insists, be written with one's eyes on the contemporary audience:¹⁷

καὶ ὅλως πῆχυν εἰς καὶ μέτρον ἀκριβές, ἀποβλέπειν μὴ εἰς τοὺς νῦν ἀκούοντας ἀλλ' εἰς τοὺς μετὰ ταῦτα συνεσομένους τοῖς συγγράμμασιν. εἰ δὲ τὸ παραυτίκα τις θεραπεύοι, τῆς τῶν κολακευόντων μερίδος εἰκότως ἂν νομισθεῖη, οὓς πάλαι ἡ ἱστορία καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εὐθὺς ἀπέστραπτο, οὐ μείον ἢ κομμωτικὴν ἢ γυμναστικὴν. (39–40)

Altogether the one measure and yardstick is to look not at those now listening to the work, but to those who in the future will read your writings. Anyone who cultivates the present will be rightly regarded as a flatterer. History turned her back on them long ago, right from the start, no less than physical training did on make-up.

History should aspire to become the Thucydidean κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί.¹⁸ Lucian has adopted Thucydides' distinction between immediate listeners and future readers, but has expanded Thucydides' unspecific anxiety about competitiveness (he uses the word *agonisma*) into a more concrete account of how flattery works to distort. Lucian's comparison with gymnastics is just one of many examples where history is judged by the standards of a human body.¹⁹ In accordance with his Thucydidean aspirations, Lucian raises a series of points concerning the recording of recent events, and the greater theme of historical bias.²⁰ He devotes considerable space to questions of flattery, and sets up a careful generic distinction between panegyric and history.²¹ The difference is based upon a difference in audience; panegyric is written with the contemporary world in view. It manifests its captivity to political expediency and popular appeal. History should not concern itself with the immediate; Alexander the Great is depicted throwing the obsequious writings of one historian into a river as a punishment for false flattery.²² Ideal readers will not appreciate a work conditioned by anxiety over personal favour and the desire to flatter.²³ In the final paragraph of the work, Lucian sums up his view:

Χρὴ τοίνυν καὶ τὴν ἱστορίαν οὕτω γράφεσθαι σὺν τῷ ἀληθεῖ μάλλον πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐλπίδα ἢ περὶ σὺν κολακείᾳ πρὸς τὸ ἥδὺ τοῖς νῦν ἐπαινουμένοις. (63)

So it is essential for history to be written in truth, with regard for future expectation rather than in flattery with regard to the delight of those being praised today.

The conclusion confirms that flattery is understood as a concern for gratifying contemporary readers, possibly powerful ones, and that truth is to be found in history by thinking of the future rather than the present.

¹⁵ See Baldwin, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 80–1.

¹⁶ 28.

¹⁷ *cf. esp.* 12–13; 63.

¹⁸ Lucian's spelling, 42, l. 19; *cf.* 5, l. 16; 61.

¹⁹ See below, pp. 87–9.

²⁰ On bias, see especially *Hist. Conscr.* 7; 13; 39–41; 61; 63. *Cf.* Dionysius, *Th.* 8.

²¹ 7.

²² 12.

²³ 10.

So, when earlier Lucian makes his clear theoretical distinction between panegyric and history, we can glimpse something of the rhetorical context.²⁴ Like the other generic distinction, between the task of the orator and the task of the historian,²⁵ the distinction between panegyric and history is based upon the envisaged reaction of the audience. It is not a distinction between texts to be read and texts to be heard, but rather between the different expectations of the same audience at a public performance or reading, or even between different reactions between the minority *cognoscenti* and the rest of the audience on the same occasion.²⁶ The ideal audience to a history will anticipate the requirements of eternity. Like Alexander, they will recognize and repudiate what is obviously more than true. They will have in mind that other audience, the readers of a timeless posterity, and will judge history by their standards. Lucian assumes that history's audience will see through transparent attempts to distort events for political ends, and will not accept the same kinds of praise in history as it is accustomed to find in panegyric. It can perceive the different compositional requirements appropriate to different discourses.²⁷ The only course open to the historian is thus to keep his eyes on eternity, and to adopt the critical standard which Lucian himself both presupposes and prescribes: a standard based around the respect for truth above all other concerns, and upon the clear and undistorted reflection of past events in the polished mirror which constitutes the writing of those events by the historian. The orator is different; his interest lies in swaying an audience of unselfconscious contemporaries.

The place granted to historical accuracy in this theory gives a particular interpretation to the role of history in political life, and political education. Political involvement seems to be equated with flattery and distortion, and history, if it is to be good history, must disengage itself from this entire area.²⁸ The κτήμα ἐξ αἰεί requires its readers to detach themselves from the concerns of their own day, and think of those in the future who may need the lessons of history, and will thus require it in a form not marred by the writer's own interests. There persists here an assumption that in appealing to an ideal posterity, Lucian is also appealing to an ideal vision of political activity, even if that ideal is only described negatively, in references to the pettiness of the actual political arena of his own day. Such an ideal cannot be understood exclusively in terms of an idealized future; it is also intended to work on present-day readers, so that taking posterity's view of history will grant them a clearer understanding of history's message, and prevent them wasting themselves on trivialities. You think of posterity when reading history in order to be able to appreciate the magnitude of the subject and its relevance for your own world. In this way the public reading of history functions to highlight the limitations and partiality of rhetorical performance, and in particular the false and restricted politics of panegyric against the standard of eternity which history should evoke.²⁹

The position of rhetoric in regard to history is very different in Dionysius. Rhetoric for Dionysius is the philosophical rhetoric of Isocrates. The public arena is the opportunity for the ideals of a classical education to be put into practice by great men in the pursuit of the highest ideals: political stability, cultural revival, the establishment of Greek participation in Roman political life.³⁰ The audience of Dionysius is concerned

²⁴ 10.

²⁵ 10, and 53 on prologues: an orator's prologue should have three parts, the historian's two.

²⁶ 11. Likewise T. Morgan, 'A good man skilled in politics: Quintilian's political theory', in Y. L. Too and N. Livingstone (eds), *Pedagogy and Power* (1998), 245–62, 258–61, points out that Quintilian was unconcerned about the different effects of reading or listening.

²⁷ But generic boundaries, and the corresponding expectations, vary: the veracity of Homer is used as an example for inappropriate use of mythologizing praise: 40.

²⁸ For the question of bias, and the difference between contemporary and ancient history, see T. J. Luce, 'Ancient views on the cause of bias in historical writing', *Classical Philology* 84 (1989), 16–31.

²⁹ There is a reflection here of Lucian's own ambiguous political position. See S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire* (1996), 312–29, and F. G. B. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31BC to AD337* (1993), 454–56. A similar context is carefully explored for Dio Chrysostom by T. Whitmarsh, 'Reading power in Roman Greece', in Too and Livingstone, op. cit. (n. 26), 192–213.

³⁰ See the preface to *Oratt. Vett.; Isoc., passim; Ant. Rom.* 1.1–5. See T. Hidber, *Das klassizistische Manifest des Dionys von Halicarnass: die praefatio zu "de oratoribus veteribus"* (1996). On the values of Isocrates himself, see Y. L. Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates* (1995), esp. 205–21, and on the basic dualistic quality of Isocrates' values, clearly passed on to Dionysius, N. Livingstone, 'The voice of Isocrates', in Too and Livingstone, op. cit. (n. 26), 263–81, 272.

only with the truth and effectiveness of the speaker's words, and Dionysius' brand of education consists in equipping the potential politician with an appropriately lofty conception of the standards of the best oratory; the reading of history is part of this same political education.³¹ History, then, contributes to a rhetorical training, but its readers are not differentiated. Whether past or present, whether for oratory or history, they remain members of the idealized community of the literate and educated. Knowledge about the past plays a colossal part in the education of the philosopher, orator, or statesman. But this is only one aspect of a wider conception of the purpose of reading and writing: the role of all literature is to edify and educate; and entertainment and the aesthetic effect are bound very closely to this high moral and political agenda. It is not just that political and moral concerns have a place within rhetoric. Rhetoric itself is an inseparable part of any attempt to exercise moral or political judgement. So when Dionysius applies technical criteria of rhetorical provenance equally to philosophical or historical writing, this is a sign not of his misconceptions of rhetoric or history, but of his very comprehensive vision of rhetoric's role in producing useful educative prose.

Dionysius too is concerned with the detrimental effect of private political interest in historical writing; he is convinced that Thucydides' negative portrayal of Athens was a result of his envious grudge against his home city after his banishment, and so he shares with Lucian the notion that partiality leads to falsification.³² Like Lucian, he sees flattery or envy as the forces most inimical to good history.³³ The ideal historian will be immune from such partiality. He has his eye upon eternity because he knows that his history will act as an account of his own soul to posterity.³⁴ Furthermore, this morality will be conveyed by choices which he makes in composing his account, choices concerning the subject itself, then the language and the arrangement of material. When describing the choice of historical subject matter (ὑποθέσις), Dionysius' main concern is the benefit and pleasure which that particular subject will bring to its readers and the sense of the moral worth of the historian which the choice of subject will convey.³⁵ The past does not compel the historian to tell a particular story. Rather, it is the moral and political vision of the historian which will condition his choice of subject matter, and which is the abiding legacy of his history. Subjects which will be of no benefit to their readers Dionysius happily consigns to oblivion; the Peloponnesian War is his example. Lucian takes exactly the opposite view, and exculpates the historian for relating unpleasant or unpatriotic material.³⁶ Dionysius' reasoning is that reading and writing serve to educate by example as well as by informing. Good historical prose, like good oratory, is a repository of fine ideas and noble phrases, which will help future orators or writers express themselves more skilfully, as well as providing a vision of what it means to be involved in the world's great events. Speeches in histories and real speeches in the orators can both act as an inspiration to those contemplating an active part in political life. Oratory and history have the same potential to influence future readers. The historian is involved in this process of education, and must look upon his work primarily in terms of the image of his morality, and the benefit which writing history can produce. For it is this, rather than reading about a particular set of historical events, which will determine his fate in the eyes of posterity.

It is important to realize that the differences between Lucian and Dionysius emerge in part in the way in which they lay emphasis on different aspects of the same question. Regarding posterity, for example, both agree that the truth of history is its most important feature, and that it is this that necessitates attention to the future. But Dionysius stresses the historian's moral legacy and his value for future readers, where Lucian isolates the question of distortion and political bias. The theory is superficially the same, and in many of their utterances the two authors resemble each other; but read as a whole, their arguments produce rather different results. These divergences can be polarized by looking at the two writers' comments concerning rhetoric. Rhetoric in

³¹ On Dionysius' audience, see C. Schultze, 'Dionysius of Halicarnassus and his audience', in I. S. Moxon *et al.* (eds), *Past Perspectives* (1986), 121-41, and Gabba, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 213-16.

³² *Pomp* 3.372; *Th.* 41, p. 590.

³³ *Th.* 8.

³⁴ *Ant. Rom.* 1.1.1.

³⁵ *Ant. Rom.* 1.1.2-3; *Pomp.* 3.372.

³⁶ *Hist. Conscr.* 38, referring *int. al.* to the Sicilian expedition.

Lucian is a sign of captivity to contemporary interests, but for Dionysius it is synonymous with education and participation in political activity. To take this distinction further, I shall examine the difference in attitude towards the aesthetic effect of history, and the consequences of this difference for their interpretation of history's political relevance.

THE RHETORICAL AND THE POLITICAL IN DIONYSIUS

For Dionysius, aesthetic questions are inextricably bound to the realm of the political and the moral, and his theoretical arguments repeatedly demonstrate this unity. He gives one very clear statement of his position when praising, after a substantial citation,³⁷ Thucydides' account of the Battle of Syracuse.

Ἐμοὶ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα καὶ τὰ παραπλήσια τούτοις ἄξια ζήλου τε καὶ μιμήσεως ἐφάνη, τὴν τε μεγαληγορίαν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τὴν καλλιλογίαν καὶ τὴν δεινότητα καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετὰς ἐν τούτοις τοῖς ἔργοις ἐπέισθην τελειοτάτας εἶναι, τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι πᾶσα ψυχὴ τοῦτω τῷ γένει τῆς λέξεως ἄγεται, καὶ οὔτε τὸ ἄλογον τῆς διανοίας κριτήριον, ᾧ πεφύκαμεν ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι τῶν ἡδέων ἢ ἀνιαρῶν, ἀλλοτριούται πρὸς αὐτὸ οὔτε τὸ λογικόν, ἐφ' οὗ διαγιγνώσκεται τὸ ἐν ἐκάστη τέχνῃ καλόν. (Thuc. 27)

This and narratives like it seemed to me admirable and worthy of imitation, and I was convinced that in such passages as these we have perfect examples of the historian's sublime eloquence, the beauty of his language, his rhetorical brilliance and his other virtues. I was led to this conclusion when I observed that this style of writing appeals to all minds alike, since it offends neither our irrational aesthetic faculty, which is our natural instrument for distinguishing the pleasant from the distasteful, nor our reason, which enables us to judge individual technical excellence. (Trans. Usher)

He envisages two mental faculties, one logical, aimed at recognizing the beautiful in its technical aspect, and the other, τὸ ἄλογον τῆς διανοίας κριτήριον ('thought's irrational ability to judge'), perhaps over-interpreted by Usher as 'irrational aesthetic faculty'. The difference between them concerns, however, only their different modes of responding to the aesthetic aspects of Thucydides' writing; you appreciate his technique rationally, and simultaneously you respond to it without reasoning. This response is achieved essentially by the sublimity of his words, by which any soul will be carried away. But the modern terminology of *aesthetic* fundamentally misrepresents Dionysius' intention. The formal qualities which can be recognized rationally are in no sense divorced from what Thucydides is saying. The grandeur and magnificence concern the whole narrative, not just the style. This is the reason for Dionysius' demarcation of faculties. Simply reading Thucydides' words will move you; if you analyse them you can see why. The treatment of the historical material is, as his whole analysis of Thucydides makes clear, as much a part of this effect as the particular words that are employed. So the distinction between two faculties is a distinction between two forms of response, rather than any dichotomy between subject matter and presentation. Rational judgement involves simply seeing how Thucydides achieves his effect. As is frequent in Dionysius' writings, criticism begins with the potential to emulate and imitate (Ἐμοὶ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα . . . ἄξια ζήλου τε καὶ μιμήσεως ἐφάνη), which then leads on to a further degree of rational analysis. But in the initial attraction of the passage, any attempt to demarcate between moral, aesthetic, or historical is futile. The language of praise does not even allow a close distinction between the virtues of Thucydides the man and the technical virtues of his style:

³⁷ Th. 26 = Thucydides 7.69.4-72.1.

τὴν τε μεγαληγορίαν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τὴν καλλιλογίαν καὶ τὴν δεινότητα καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετὰς ἐν τούτοις τοῖς ἔργοις ἐπέισθην τελειοτάτας εἶναι.

I was convinced that the man's eloquence, the beauty of his language, his intensity and the other virtues are in such passages at their most perfect.³⁸

Virtues here may be predominantly stylistic, but all the criteria effect a blend of stylistic judgement and what can be thought of as a kind of moral criticism.

It is the overlap between moral and stylistic criteria, and the concurrent failure to draw a clear line between historical subject matter and its expression, which causes modern readers of Dionysius most difficulty. The *locus classicus* for Dionysius' method is his treatment of Thucydides' *Melian Dialogue*.³⁹ In criticizing Thucydides, Dionysius makes clear that no firm line is to be drawn between the ugly language of the dialogue, the historical inaccuracy of Thucydides' version of events, and the morally repugnant vision of Athenian imperialism which the dialogue evokes. Modern scholars need only point to this passage to illustrate the shortcomings of this kind of criticism, but although Dionysius clearly fails to appreciate what we appreciate in Thucydides, his dislike of the *Melian Dialogue* is only one particularly clear example of the otherwise widespread slippage between criticisms of Thucydides' language, of his compositional decisions, and of his moral aim. A further telling illustration can be found in Dionysius' criticisms of Thucydides' arrangement of his material. In choosing to start the war when he did, Dionysius argues, the negative effect of the war was exacerbated; a different starting point, and different endings, can make all the difference to the moral effect of a history.⁴⁰ There is nothing surprising in this overlap between the moral and the aesthetic; one only need think of the key term in much Greek criticism, *to prepon*, and observe the freedom with which it is employed, to understand that standards of critical propriety were defined by their insistence on the moral quality of aesthetic effects.⁴¹ Throughout his criticism, Dionysius is forthright in his unitary view of the moral and the aesthetic, and, as such, he is representative of a tradition which must be said to go back further than Plato.⁴²

Lucian's criticisms demonstrate a clear development, or divergence, from Dionysius' position.⁴³ However, this divergence can be found in the implications of Lucian's images, in particular, his use of illustrative comparisons, rather than in his explicit theories. In other words it is by comparing how the two authors put their theories to work, and how they imagine the function of history, that the differences show up most clearly. We have already seen that the two authors have a different vision of history's relevance for contemporary political life. For Dionysius, politics and aesthetics are aspects of the same process, whereas for Lucian they emerge from different intellectual and moral decisions. It is my concern here to establish the relationship between Lucian's fastidious dissection of politics from rhetoric, and the manner in which he describes the aesthetic processes of historical writing.

³⁸ Note how Usher, by introducing the term *rhetoric*, also introduces a false distinction which is not present in the Greek. His use of the term *aesthetic* earlier in the passage is likewise part of a characteristic misrepresentation of Dionysius' position. See below, p. 91.

³⁹ *Th.* 37–41. For a fuller discussion, see Fox, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 63–74.

⁴⁰ *Th.* 11 and especially *Pomp.* 3.374.

⁴¹ As Dionysius says, *πασῶν ἐν λόγοις ἀρετῶν ἡ κυριωτάτη τὸ πρέπον*, *Pomp.* 3, which should be read in full awareness of the richness of the word *λόγος*. For *to prepon*, see M. Pohlenz, 'τὸ πρέπον: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des griechischen Geistes', *Kleine Schriften* 1 (1965), 100–39; G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (1963), 67; 273ff.; M. Perniola, 'Retorica e decoro', in G. Fenocchio (ed.), *Le ragioni della retorica* (1986), 103–12; A. C. Mitchell, 'The use of *πρέπον* and rhetorical propriety in Hebrews 2:10', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992), 681–701.

⁴² On Pre-Platonic ideas of stylistic morality, see K. J. Dover, *Aristophanes: Frogs* (1991), 14–18, and more generally, G. Nagy, 'Early Greek views of poets and poetry', in G. Kennedy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (1989), 1–78, esp. 29–35 and 66–9; Y. L. Too, *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism* (1998), 18–50.

⁴³ To employ development as a term would suggest a teleological change, possibly reflecting the changing conditions of the Greek intelligentsia under the Empire; to confirm such a view is beyond the scope of this paper, but it should be noted that Hermogenes, *Id.* 404–13, treats historical writing in a way which closely recalls Dionysius. Hermogenes even includes the historians in his discussion of the style appropriate to panegyric.

LUCIAN'S AESTHETICS OF OBJECTIVITY

Lucian anticipates the modern expectation that history should be objective most clearly in a passage where he compares the mind of a historian to a clear mirror, directly reflecting the events of the past. He continues this figurative exhortation in a long analogy, comparing the work of the historian to the work of famous sculptors, Phidias, Praxiteles, or Alcamenes. The passage gives a theoretical basis for other passages where Lucian exploits visual imagery. Before embarking on this analysis, it is worthwhile recalling Benjamin's images from the past. Lucian's interest in the visual, which comes across almost as an incidental feature of his rhetoric, can be read as the revelation of a coherent view of a kind of historical objectivity, which, like Benjamin's, finds easy expression in comparisons based on image and vision. Like Benjamin, Lucian exhorts his readers to see history.

Μάλιστα δὲ κατόπτρῳ ἑοικυῖαν παρασχέσθω τὴν γνώμην ἀθόλῳ καὶ στιλπνῷ καὶ ἀκριβεῖ τὸ κέντρον καὶ ὁποῖας ἂν δέξῃται τὰς μορφὰς τῶν ἔργων ταῦτα καὶ δεικνύτω αὐτά, διάστροφον δὲ ἢ παράχρουν ἢ ἑτερόσχημον μηδέν. οὐ γὰρ ὡσπερ τοῖς ῥήτορσι γράφουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν λεχθησόμενα ἔστιν καὶ εἰρήσεται· πέπρακται γὰρ ἤδη· δεῖ δὲ τάξαι καὶ εἰπεῖν αὐτά. ὥστε οὐ τί εἴπωσι ζητητέον αὐτοῖς ἀλλ' ὅπως εἴπωσιν. ὅλως δέ, νομιστέον τὸν ἱστορίαν συγγράφοντα Φειδίᾳ χρῆσαι ἢ Πραξιτέλει ἑοικέναι ἢ Ἀλκαμένει ἢ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἐκείνων — οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἐκείνοι χρυσὸν ἢ ἄργυρον ἢ ἐλέφαντα ἢ τὴν ἄλλην ὕλην ἐποίουν, ἀλλ' ἢ μὲν ὑπῆρχε καὶ προὑποβέβλητο Ἥλειων ἢ Ἀθηναίων ἢ Ἀργείων πεπορισμένων, οἱ δὲ ἐπλαττον μόνον καὶ ἐπριον τὸν ἐλέφαντα καὶ ἔξεον καὶ ἐκόλλων καὶ ἐρρυθμίζον καὶ ἐπήνθιζον τῷ χρυσῷ, καὶ τοῦτο ἦν ἢ τὴν τέχνην αὐτοῖς ἐξ δέον οἰκονομήσασθαι τὴν ὕλην. (51)

Let him bring above all a mind like a mirror, clear, gleaming, and sharply focused and whatever shapes he receives of events, show them as they are, not distorted or changed in colour or differently arranged. For they do not write like orators; what is to be written exists, and will speak for itself, for it has already happened. They must arrange and say it. So they must not look for what to say, but how to say it. All in all, we must consider the composer of history to be of necessity like Pheidias or Praxiteles or Alcamenes or another of those men. For in no way did they either make the gold, silver, ivory or other material. It was already there, and supplied as a foundation by the Eleans, Athenians, or Argives. They only shaped it, and sawed the ivory, smoothed it, glued it, and arranged and embellished it with gold. And this was their art; to dispose of the material as was necessary.

The logic seems faulty; the argument should run: the sculptor sticks as closely as possible to the model that is before him. But Lucian has become entangled in his own imagery, and instead of representing sculpture as a mimetic art, in which the model is reproduced in the same way that the historian reworks the past, he confines himself to discussing the actual physical material from which the sculpture is fashioned. Whether gold or ivory, the central point of the argument is that this material was always something provided for him, ready to finish off, by whichever city had commissioned him. The analogy rests upon the idea that the sculptor has his material ready-made, and likewise the historian need only polish up the past. In comparing the past to the fabric of the sculpture, and in failing to take account of its subject matter, Lucian is guilty of an incomplete analogy. The sculpture could be the representation of anything at all, but Lucian does not concern himself with its subject, he simply envisages the finished work as an end in itself.⁴⁴ It is a strange use of a comparison with art; one might expect some kind of ecphrasis, the detailed description of a particular specimen. But the real mystery is why the final appearance which Lucian envisages as the aim of the sculptor's art is wholly limited to the evocation of the formal qualities of arrangement and polish. We anticipate, especially given the image of the historian as a mirror, that these qualities

⁴⁴ As the analogy progresses, it becomes clear that Lucian is envisaging a chryselephantine sculpture; perhaps a sculpture of a divinity did not require a

model, and as such had no external point of reference, although, given ubiquitous divine anthropomorphism, Lucian's lack of interest in a model is striking.

will be applied with reference to some other external object, the figure which the sculpture represents, and which will be clearly and successfully rendered by his efforts. The gold does not come ready-made in the form of a person. Only two stages are envisaged: the raw material and the polished final product. We would expect three: the model, or the idea for the sculpture; the raw material; and the technical rendition of one into the other.

The sloppiness of Lucian's logic is a manifestation of the tension inherent in trying to keep orators separate from historians. The distinction lies in the area of *inventio*, *heuresis*. Historians are demarcated from orators because their material already exists, it does not need to be invented. This point is clear enough, but in extending it Lucian's argument raises more questions than it answers. His statement: τὰ μὲν λεχθησόμενα ἔστιν καὶ εἰρήσεται. πέπρακται γὰρ ἤδη (what is to be written exists, and will speak for itself, for it has already happened) reinforces the difference between rhetoric and history, but provides no clue what this 'speaking for itself' really means. The result is a confusion, since, as the argument progresses, Lucian starts again to employ the standard rhetorical vocabulary: δεῖ δὲ τάξι καὶ εἰπεῖν αὐτά (it is necessary to arrange and say it). We are dealing here with *taxis*, *dispositio*, the rhetorical arrangement of arguments in a persuasive or logical sequence; and *lexis*, *elocutio*, or style, the use of appropriate and effective language. Even *oikonomeisthai* is a synonym for *taxis* in rhetorical theory.⁴⁵ These rhetorical techniques seem to be inescapable. In spite of his exhortatory tone, his contention that history is different from oratory, and his baffling suggestion that history should operate without *mimesis*, the technical language is that of the rhetoricians, and it is impossible to unravel the image of a process of historical reproduction which is supposed to go beyond rhetoric.

In the modern repudiation of rhetoric in history, it is the historian's research into his sources that extricates him from rhetorical processes.⁴⁶ Briefly, just before the sculptural analogy, Lucian does discuss the investigation into events which the historian must carry out. He will investigate eye-witnesses, gain as full as possible a view of what actually occurred, and then make a written account of it:

καὶ ἐπειδὴν ἀθροίσῃ ἅπαντα ἢ τὰ πλείστα, πρῶτα μὲν ὑπόμνημά τι συνοφαινέτω αὐτῶν καὶ σῶμα ποιεῖτω ἀκαλλές ἔτι καὶ ἀδιάρθρωτον. (48)

And when he has gathered all the material, or most of it, first let him weave together a memoir of them and make a body still without beauty and articulation.

Like the sculptor's lump of metal, an image which seems to be foreshadowed here, the vague *hypomnema* (really an *aide memoire*) lacks any aesthetic qualities. These are added as the historian works up his material. Central to the way in which Lucian's thinking functions, we are not given any clear idea about the provenance of these aesthetic features as they are entirely subordinate to the hard core of fact which the historian has put together, dressing on the body of history. It is possible that he envisages them emerging organically from the events themselves. After allowing the historian to have recourse to the standard rhetorical techniques,⁴⁷ Lucian distracts us with a simile, comparing the historian to Homer's Zeus, an omniscient omnipresent observer. He can see everything that happened, and changes of scene or pace in his history will be responses to the actual events on the ground. He need only do the right kind of looking for the material to present itself in the best possible arrangement. It is an analogy that once again stresses the clairvoyance of the historian as purveyor of truth, untroubled by the exact theoretical basis upon which his aesthetic decisions are to be made. Both this

⁴⁵ So Dionysius, *Th.* 9. See B. Cardauns, 'Zum Begriff der "oeconomia" in der lateinischen Rhetorik und Dichtungskritik', in T. Stemmler (ed.), *Ökonomie: sprachliche und literarische Aspekte eines 2000 Jahre alten Begriffs* (1985), 10 (cited by W. Wuellner in Porter, op. cit. (n. 2), 51-2).

⁴⁶ See H. White, 'The value of narrativity in the representation of reality', in *The Content of the Form*

(1987), 1-25, for an examination of the notion that there is a minimal pre-narrative element in chronicle. For Lucian on chronicle, see 16.

⁴⁷ These techniques are emphatically expressed as additions: ἐπιθεῖς τὴν τάξιν ἐπαγέτω τὸ κάλλος καὶ χροῦνόν τω καὶ σχηματίζετω καὶ ῥυθμιζέτω (48) (adding arrangement, let him introduce beauty and add colour and shape it and give it rhythm).

analogy and that of the sculptor reinforce the notion that the aesthetic realm is a kind of supplement to the process of historical understanding, and that the rendition of history into writing, while being amenable to description in terms of rhetorical techniques, presupposes an absolute demarcation between history and its dressing, the rhetorical techniques which make it attractive.⁴⁸

So unlike Dionysius, Lucian draws clear limits to the realm of literary technique.⁴⁹ He is explicit about the technical considerations which a good historian should observe. These include careful selection of material and, above all, the stylistic and structural lucidity which enable the truth to shine forth most clearly. But *inventio* is forbidden territory. For the orator, *inventio* means finding the best arguments to suit the case in hand. Lucian concedes that the historian needs *zetesis* in the initial choice of subject matter, but, once he has made his choice, he has no further freedom to select his method of elaboration. He is restricted solely to making his words sound good.⁵⁰ This is essentially a limitation upon the formal nature of historical writing. Such writing will always have a transcendental point of reference, the historian's knowledge of the past, which comes from within and which is beyond any technical definition. It is also, crucially, beyond what Lucian understands as the motivations of the orator: persuasion,⁵¹ partiality, the need to put across a particular argument in order to make a case, the whole science of *inventio* which was so important in rhetorical theory. The expression of this inner truth is different from the compositional process of oratory or poetry, which, in Lucian's account, assumes that free invention is possible. Of course, for most ancient orators, including Dionysius, and for poets working in a rhetorical tradition *inventio* did not mean inventing, but rather, explicating the potential for elaboration inherent in their choice of subject.⁵² But Lucian here sets himself against such a definition of *inventio*, and insists that historians differ from orators and poets precisely because there is no room for this kind of flexibility. For Lucian, the writer of history is constrained simply to mediate what he knows.

The absence of a properly imitative theory of historical writing has two main ramifications for the way in which the aesthetics of historical writing are represented in the essay. Many of Lucian's cavils against contemporary writers suggest that what he is criticizing is the failure of vision of the particular historian. There is a congruency between the criticisms of particular historians and the picture of the ideal historian in chapters 33ff. Most importantly, this congruency is found in those historians who are too tied up in their own desire for personal glory or favour.⁵³ The failings of their histories are directly connected to a personal short-sightedness, to a misconception of the appropriate status and significance of historical writing itself. Compositional faults mostly mean inclusion of the wrong kind of material, treated on an inappropriate scale.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ An interesting point of comparison is R. Barthes' essay from 1967, 'Le discours de l'histoire', reprinted in *Le Bruissement de la langue: essais critiques IV* (1993), 163–77 (translated as *The Rustle of Language* (1986)). His account of how historiography produces a version of the past is remarkably reminiscent of Lucian's. Historical texts work by disavowing their linguistic basis, by claiming to reproduce the past directly, although with certain markers which signify the labour of the historian and his sources, so that 'l'histoire semble se raconter toute seule' (168). Interestingly, in his related essay 'L'effet de réel', *ibid.*, 179–87, he sustains the conventional view that this was a modern rather than an ancient phenomenon, antiquity characterized as generally content with *vraisemblance* (186). I suggest below that we can take Lucian as a significant exception to this trend, and a pre-echo of the modern way of thinking.

⁴⁹ At 35 Lucian asks 'Ἀλλὰ πῶς τὸ τῆς τέχνης καὶ τὸ τῆς συμβουλῆς χρῆσιμον (but what is the role of technique and advice?)', suggesting indeed that his

version of the ideal historian depends upon personal qualities much more than upon technique.

⁵⁰ Woodman, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 83–9 (cf. 203–4) examines the *res/verba* distinction in Cicero and Quintilian, while B. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (1989), 38, points out that the division of Quintilian's work into *inventio* and *elocutio* enacts that same distinction. Lucian's view approximates Woodman's claim that *inventio* is not what we expect from a historian. Clearly for Cicero and Quintilian, as for Dionysius, there was no theoretical contradiction between historical research and *inventio*.

⁵¹ Plutarch's appeal to *Peitho* at the opening of *malign. Herod.* (855A) implies, albeit extremely briefly, a similar relationship between rhetorical interests and personal bias.

⁵² See Vickers, *op. cit.* (n. 50), 26–7, 62–3; M. Heath, 'Invention', in Porter, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 89–119.

⁵³ See 12; 13; 17; 40.

⁵⁴ 20–3.

These historians are guilty of the wrong kind of vision of the past.⁵⁵ Dionysius, by contrast, derives Thucydides' failings, like his virtues, from a synthesis of formal, stylistic, and moral qualities.

A second corollary of the absence of a theory of *mimesis* is the idiosyncratic status of the formal qualities which historical writing possesses. I mean by this the way in which the external attributes are evaluated in Lucian's criticism, what standards he applies to make criticisms of form, and what his critical vocabulary reveals about the nature of historical writing. For Dionysius formal attributes are always closely connected with the kinds of arguments which the historian is putting across. The propriety or suitability of arguments to the occasion is the recurrent standard. In Lucian, however, the aesthetic quality of historical writing is envisaged as something distinct from any of its other qualities; there is an external aesthetic dimension which you can either apply or not, affecting not the rendition of the past as such, only its appearance. Unlike Dionysius, Lucian develops a way of evaluating historical writing that focuses primarily upon its formal shortcomings. In the process, a new kind of critical language emerges, consisting to a large extent of images which appeal to his readers' erotic or bodily sensibilities.

In tackling the question of the conflict between utility and pleasure in history, Lucian states clearly that history exists only for utility; pleasure is an incidental embellishment, just like good looks in an athlete:

ἐν γὰρ ἔργον ἱστορίας καὶ τέλος, τὸ χρήσιμον, ὅπερ ἐκ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς μόνου συνάγεται. τὸ τερπνὸν δὲ ἄμεινον μὲν εἰ καὶ αὐτὸ παρακολουθήσειεν, ὥσπερ καὶ κάλλος ἀθλητῆ· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐδὲν κωλύσει ἄφ' Ἡρακλέους γενέσθαι Νικόστρατον τὸν Ἰσιδότου, γεννάδαν ὄντα καὶ τῶν ἀνταγωνιστῶν ἑκατέρων ἀλκιμώτερον, εἰ αὐτὸς μὲν αἰσχιστος ὀφθῆναι εἴη τὴν ὄψιν, Ἀλκαῖος δὲ ὁ καλὸς ὁ Μιλήσοις ἀνταγωνίζοιτο αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐρώμενος, ὡς φασι, τοῦ Νικοστράτου ὄν. καὶ τοίνυν ἡ ἱστορία, εἰ μὲν ἄλλως τὸ τερπνὸν παρεμπορεύσαιο, πολλοὺς ἂν τοὺς ἐραστὰς ἐπισπάσαιτο, ἄχρι δ' ἂν καὶ μόνον ἔχη τὸ ἴδιον ἐντελέξ — λέγω δὲ τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας δῆλωσιν — ὀλίγον τοῦ κάλλους φροντιεῖ. (9)

History has one task and aim, what is useful, which comes only from the truth. Pleasure is better if it comes of its own accord, like beauty in an athlete. If it isn't there, there is nothing to stop Nicostratus, Isidotos' son, from becoming a champion (lit. a descendant of Heracles), a man of good birth and braver than either of his rivals, just because he is ugly to look at, even if his opponent is the beautiful Alcaeus of Miletus (the object, it is said, of Nicostratus' love). History is the same; if she takes up a second trade in pleasure, she can attract many lovers, but as long as she is devoted to her own, I mean the demonstration of truth, she will pay little heed to beauty.

Again appealing to the far-sightedness of history's ideal audience, he concludes by comparing the attempt to curry pleasure in the audience to the feminization of Heracles:

ἦν δὲ ἀμελήσας ἐκείνων ἠδύνης πέρα τοῦ μετρίου τὴν ἱστορίαν μύθοις καὶ ἐπαίνοις καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ θωπεῖα, τάχιστ' ἂν ὁμοίαν αὐτὴν ἐξεργάσαιτο τῷ ἐν Λυδίᾳ Ἡρακλεῖ. ἑωρακέναι γὰρ σέ που εἰκὸς γεγραμμένον, τῇ Ὀμφάλῃ δουλεύοντα, πάνυ ἀλλόκοτον σκευὴν ἐσκευασμένον, ἐκείνην μὲν τὸν λέοντα αὐτοῦ περιβεβλημένην καὶ τὸ ξύλον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ ἔχουσαν, ὡς Ἡρακλέα δῆθεν οὐσαν. αὐτὸν δὲ ἐν κροκωτῷ καὶ πορφυρίδι ἔρια ξαίνοντα καὶ παιόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς Ὀμφάλῃς τῷ σανδαλίῳ. καὶ τὸ θέαμα αἰσχιστον, ἀφεστῶσα ἢ ἐσθῆς τοῦ σώματος καὶ μὴ προσιζάνουσα καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ ἀνδρῶδες ἀσχημόνως καταθελυόμενον. (10)

But if you are careless of these people (i.e. the good historical audience), and sweeten history beyond the right measure with stories and praise and other flattery, you would very quickly work it up to be like Heracles in Lydia. It's likely you have seen a picture of him, enslaved to Omphale, and dressed up quite absurdly. She is draped in his lion-skin and holds his club like some kind of Heraclette; he, in yellow and purple, is carding wool and being spanked by Omphale with a little sandal. It is a disgusting sight, the clothes hanging off his body and not fitting properly, and the manhood of the god disgracefully feminized.

⁵⁵ 24 presents the transition from stylistic to factual errors; and in 25 Lucian applies the standard of probability to accounts which he believes are exaggerations and distortions. 27 and 32 are clear state-

ments of criticism for erroneous vision resulting from ignorance and lack of reading. The ideal historian is experienced: 37.

This whole section depends for its effect upon the paradoxical appeal of gender distortion. Lucian develops an image used slightly earlier of a rugged and powerful athlete covered in make-up and wearing a dress.⁵⁶ Here the good-looking athlete is unobtrusively transformed into the allegory of history, personified as an alluring woman. Her attractiveness leads to an indiscriminating horde of lovers; the next stage in the argument, that one must not cultivate the rabble, is implicitly anticipated in the image of History cultivating her beauty instead of concentrating on truth. Heracles enslaved to Omphale is a further extension; his feminization is distasteful; and Lucian moves in the next section to an argument concerning proper proportion and structure. The appeal to the visual representation of Heracles and Omphale is clear evidence for the ambiguity which was central to the popularity of these images.⁵⁷ Lucian's wider argument clarifies something essential to them: Heracles never loses the physical attribute of muscularity; his body remains archetypally male. It is the external attributes, the clothing or spinning accessories, which signal his feminization. Lucian's complaint is that the clothes themselves demean by their peculiar relation to the body beneath; they stand off the body, are not close-fitting, thus drawing attention to their own inappropriateness and absurdity. The conventional vision of Heracles is of the god naked in his masculinity, and masculine in his nakedness.⁵⁸ He is feminized by situation rather than in identity.⁵⁹ The double meaning of ἀσχημόνως is revealing; Heracles' feminization is at once disgraceful and ill-shaped.

So at a deeper level, the superficial feminization of Heracles shows us how great is the independence of the aesthetic from the real being of history, here allegorized as the physical body, first that of the athlete, then that of Heracles. And there are other echoes of the physical integrity of proper history in other images; in the comparison of Lucian's theoretical endeavours to the work of the athletic trainers;⁶⁰ in the image of a body with a head that does not match it, like the head of the colossus of Rhodes on the body of a dwarf, or the golden helmet combined with pigskin shield;⁶¹ those who admire the footstool of the statue of Olympian Zeus rather than the sculpture itself;⁶² the ill-shaped men, and particularly women, who ask a painter to make them better looking.⁶³ The first, and strangest, of these examples is that of history compared to the trachea: history can no more tolerate incidental or occasional falsehood than the trachea can tolerate anything swallowed down it.⁶⁴ The revulsion of choking is a potent symbol of the physical integrity of ideal history, and its incapacity to incorporate any alien element.

All of these passages evoke a physical presence for history which transcends any superficial formal or aesthetic qualities. History acquires from such images the character of the hard core; it has an existence which the historian must do his best to put across, but his competence does not extend beyond the clear rendition of this hard core. Although related, this is clearly something different from the insistence in rhetorical theory that discourse should display *enargeia*, vividness.⁶⁵ Rather than being simply a question of describing events so that they convey what is essential to them most effectively, Lucian here is attributing to historical events themselves a quality which will determine the nature of their expression. This is made clear if we remember the

⁵⁶ 8.

⁵⁷ See F. Brommer, *Herakles II: Die unkanonischen Taten des Helden* (1984) and *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, s.v. 'Omphale'.

⁵⁸ We must distinguish here between the lion-skin and other clothes. See M. Fox, 'Transvestite Hercules at Rome', in R. Cleminson and M. Allison (eds), *In/visibility: Gender and Representation in a European Context. Interface 3* (1998), 1–22, esp. 10–11.

⁵⁹ The same polarity between physical essence and external attribute can be found in earlier literary representations of Heracles. See N. Loraux, 'Herakles: the super-male and the feminine', in D. M. Halperin et al. (eds), *Before Sexuality* (1990), 21–52.

⁶⁰ 35.

⁶¹ 23. Such images of incongruity recall the opening of Horace, *Ars Poetica*. C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The Ars Poetica* (1971), 246, points out the resemb-

lance between Horace's grandiose prologue producing a mouse, and the hyperbolic prologue of *Hist. Conscr.* 23. Perhaps Lucian knew his Horace, or perhaps the resemblance is no more than a manifestation of an established comic trope. On Lucian's Latin, see Swain, op. cit. (n. 29), 319 n. 75.

⁶² 27.

⁶³ 13.

⁶⁴ 7, ll. 5–7.

⁶⁵ On *enargeia* see Brink, op. cit. (n. 61), 246; D. P. Fowler, 'Narrate and describe: the problem of ekphrasis', *JRS* 81 (1991), 25–35, esp. 26–7; J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (1995), 25–8; R. Webb, 'Poetry and rhetoric', in Porter, op. cit. (n. 2), 339–69, 344–5. This material is rhetorical and poetic. Compare the absence of explicit discussion of *enargeia* where one might expect it (*re* the Polybian tradition of autopsy) in Marincola, op. cit. (n. 9), 79–81.

moment where Lucian discusses the historian's gathering of evidence.⁶⁶ The facts themselves are there, and they do need careful treatment to become a narrative, but already in the rough draft they form a distinct body, σῶμα, still malleable, but bearing the essentials of its final version in itself. Lucian's reference to the addition of polish repeatedly shies away from the conclusion that we can detect in Dionysius, that style and content operate together, and insists that πράγματα must first be arranged, then subjected to beautification. Lucian even has praise for the bare chronicle of the army surgeon turned historian, who can be criticized for pomposity, but whose wholly bare narrative at least provides the necessary facts.⁶⁷ Examples of incompetent practice are demonstrations of what to avoid; essentially the inappropriate indulgence in stylistic pretension, occluding the true value of history.

The distinction between style and content reinforces the dominance of the latter over the former, a dominance which is central to the work of a good historian. Furthermore, in choosing images that depend for their appeal upon his reader's sense of their own bodily integrity, and the stability of their preconceptions about appropriate gender positions, Lucian provides for his sense of the aesthetic a kind of moral basis which in Dionysius is provided by a more direct connection between rhetorical and moral intention. With the attempt to wrest history from the clutches of rhetoric comes the threat of a gap between moral decisions and aesthetic ones. To close this gap, Lucian has recourse to a different range of moral values, derived from images of personal identity, which can imbue his newly liberated focus on the aesthetic with the same kind of moral dimension that it possessed in Dionysius' more integrated vision of rhetoric and aesthetics. Instead of a sense of moral purpose derived from the expectation of political consensus, Lucian combines cynicism about politics with a new source for moral indignation by appealing to his readers' personal erotic or gender identity, rather than their political identity. Sexual preconceptions have taken the place of political ones in the desire to enforce a sense of order for aesthetic qualities that have been divorced from their central place in the production of knowledge.

LUCIAN OR DIONYSIUS? THE HERMENEUTICS OF RHETORICAL HISTORY

The differences between Lucian and Dionysius point to two interesting generalities: (i) The writers differ on what history itself consists of. For Lucian, it is a transcendental object, something external to the worlds of writing and of political activity. It will live in the works of particularly clear-minded historians, who exist to perpetuate it, and in the minds of the few *cognoscenti* who can achieve the appropriate balance between idealism, detachment, and political participation. To Dionysius, history is made by those who write it. Its effect is dependent upon the historian finding the appropriate means to make it work. The past clearly can be distorted, it can clearly be falsified. But falsification will be the result of a moral as much as a factual error, a failure of moral vision rather than of the idealized physical vision of Lucian's Zeus-like historian. The good historian will know, because of his right sense of the meaning of his work and of the significance of the past, how an event should be conveyed. But there is no sense in Dionysius that a ready-organized piece of the past is simply waiting for the historian to transmit it to his readers. In Dionysius, the effect of bad historical writing is not just to distort the past; it is to be morally detrimental in the process. Bad history for Lucian involves looking in the wrong way at what has occurred. (ii) Between Dionysius and Lucian, the aesthetic has become divorced from an integrated position in the centre of cultural life, and history too has gone the same way. The writing of history is assumed by Lucian to be interchangeable with the reporting of recent events; although no

⁶⁶ 47 cf. § 6.

⁶⁷ 16. Compare Brutus' praise of Caesar's naked style in Cicero, *Brutus* 75.262. It is noteworthy that Brutus is the speaker here, but the notion of the unadorned

style as a hallmark of the good historian was familiar. See references collected by Marincola, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 10, n. 42.

emphasis is laid upon it, the whole work is concerned with contemporary history. Dionysius assumes a continuity between all kinds of historical writing. For Dionysius history is a source of political and moral inspiration, and its aesthetic effect empowers its utility. The utility of history is not really defined by Lucian, and benefit for readers is not explored.

To clarify these differences, it is useful to reflect on the development in the conception of the status and function of history in the modern period. In his account of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (Humanities), Gadamer described how the social and moral worth ascribed to the study of the past in the wake of the Renaissance gradually diminished in the face of the development of science. Whereas history was an integral part of understanding man's social and political function in, say, the writings of Vico and Shaftesbury, it came later on to be limited in social relevance through a changed evaluation of the aesthetic, in its application to art, but also to literature and its academic study. History, mediated as it was doomed to be by writing, became increasingly marginal as a form of knowledge as the natural sciences gained ground. The apparent immunity of scientific experiment from any kind of political, rhetorical, or literary context resulted in the creation of a different ideal of knowledge. It was one in which social realities started to seem transient and contingent. This transience generated a corresponding vision of how meaning and truth could be demarcated from questions of beauty and perception. Crassly put, the latter were characteristic of human phenomena, the former of scientific. Aesthetic experience became isolated from the social world, becoming a subjective sensation lacking significance for the wider realm of human affairs. The subjectification of the aesthetic defined literary or artistic experience in terms of the individual, rather than in terms of politics or morality, and likewise if aesthetic experience conveyed a truth, it was truth of a different category to the truths which constituted knowledge.⁶⁸ The theory was given its most exhaustive elaboration by Kant, and it is clear that the effects of this subjectification, and its enshrinement in Romanticism, are very much a part of enduring beliefs in the practical uselessness of aesthetic experience, of the anti-social individualism associated with creative genius, and, most crucially, the irrelevance of the academic study of literature or history for participation in public life. A corollary was the emergence, from the nineteenth century onwards, of new academic disciplines that re-appropriated the prestige of natural science for the study of human processes: sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and of course history.

It is the last of these that concerns us most, for it is in the aspiration of history to approximate scientific methods that the polarity between history and rhetoric became instantiated. This polarity rests on the notion that the literary qualities of historical writing are less important than the research methods practised by historians. By the establishment of this simple hierarchy, rhetoric requires special defence if it is to be accepted as integral to historiography.⁶⁹ With the development of history as an academic discipline, rhetoric became something like the Freudian 'repressed'. Rhetoric excites resistance among practising historians, but repression pays off if the organism can function, and within the academy successful function is measured by the aspiration within the humanities to a model of method and social relevance which characterize science. Only by acquiring some of science's prestige can the study of literature or the past be relevant to social or political issues. Aesthetic experience, literary response, rhetorical performance all belong to a different realm both from scientific truths, and from political or academic power, even if, in the late twentieth century, these paradigms were subject to pressure and modification.

We can detect a prelude to the eighteenth-century shift in the difference between Dionysius and Lucian. The aesthetic in Lucian is clearly demarcated. Although explored through images rather than theories, the contribution of aesthetics to the moral or political value of history is negligible. By contrast, in Dionysius aesthetic judgement

⁶⁸ H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*⁶ (1990), 47–87. See also T. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990), 70–101.

⁶⁹ That defence is conventionally seen as beginning with H. White, *Metahistory* (1973), a work whose reception and influence have been very varied.

merges seamlessly with moral judgement, and the moral value of the historical account can only be distinguished from the historical value by the most careful distortions of Dionysius' writing. In Lucian we find a convoluted relationship between the past, politics, and an aesthetic sense. The offence that bad history causes Lucian's reader is not offence to his political or social conscience, but rather to his feeling of aesthetic propriety, allowing judgement to be passed on historians, but leaving the value of the past itself undamaged. A unitary response to history is replaced by a literary response to an account of the past and political response to history itself. In insisting on the past as an object of transcendence, something with a true and objective nature, Lucian limits its social function. He defines history as the transformation of the present into something which future generations may in some nebulous way find useful, but neglects the past as an educational and moral resource. He privileges contemporary history, and methods of historical production, over the processes of reading and evaluation, and resorts to images rather than arguments to secure an anchorage for his aesthetic evaluations. Thereby he provides an interpretation of history, and essentially too a reading of Thucydides, which foreshadows the drive for objectivity in historical study in our own times. It is an objectivity predicated upon minimizing the role of the historian.⁷⁰ This drive is accompanied, then as now, by the separation of knowledge and aesthetics, of saying what you know from how you say it, and by a moderation and containment of history's capacity to explore political and moral dilemmas. Lucian's claim that history speaks for itself produces a defining interpretation of its aesthetic potential; as Benjamin suggests, history can appeal to mental vision, but this is a matter of momentary illumination which elides the notion of artifice, and leaves the relationship between history and the historian opaque.⁷¹ Venturing a perilous generalization, I suggest that a similar opacity characterizes the workings of modern historians. Dionysius does not draw the distinctions between readers, writers, historians, and political-doers which are necessary for either Lucian's analysis or modern conceptions of historical study. All have the potential to participate in the world of politics, rhetoric, and education.

Is Lucian's greater emphasis on the response of the individual part of a larger historical process? There is a strong similarity between his insistence on history's core lying beyond rhetoric and the theory of sublimity in [Longinus], a figure whose prefiguration of Romantic theory is more widely recognized.⁷² Both writers appeal to a form of literary expression that, so far as it is able, seeks to transcend the terminology of rhetoric. Both install an aesthetic sense of literary propriety as a supplement to the scope of rhetoric, and both then appeal to the dedication of the individual reader to guarantee the effectiveness of their discourses.⁷³ It is arguable that both share a view of *mimesis* which constitutes a significant limitation of its earlier meaning, suggesting that the

⁷⁰ As well as foreshadowing, Lucian also draws out a thread in both Thucydides and Polybius. J. Davidson, 'The gaze in Polybius' *Histories*', *JRS* 81 (1991), 10–24, characterizes Polybius as a historian who exploits the idea of immediate vision to organize his own disappearance. There is a close resemblance here to Lucian's ideal, particularly if Davidson is right about Polybius' visualizing technique.

⁷¹ So Davidson, *op. cit.* (n. 70), 24: 'Polybius is invisible; he had long ago arranged for himself to disappear.' Jameson names this minimized historian *the vanishing mediator* in his account of Weber's ambitions for sociology: F. Jameson, 'The vanishing mediator', *The Ideologies of Theory. Vol 2, Essays 1971–1986* (1988), 3–34.

⁷² See D. A. Russell, 'Longinus' *On the Sublime* (1964), xlii–xlvi; G. Martano, 'Il saggio del sublime', *ANRW* 32.1 (1984), 364–403. Others bring the legacy up to date: G. Lombardo, *Hypsegoria: studi sulla retorica del sublime* (1988), 13–34, describes [Longinus] as 'tardo moderno', while N. Hertz, in similar vein, sees Walter Benjamin as a modern [Longinus], 'Lecture de Longin', *Poétique* 15 (1973), 292–306, at 301–2, his *Aura* recalling *hypsos*.

⁷³ Lombardo suggests that for [Longinus] the sublime is a *modus vivendi* rather than a *modus scribendi* (*op. cit.* (n. 72), 18–19). Lucian's comments on the need for historians to display the right attitude suggest he may be thinking on similar lines.

result of a different sense of rhetoric's role was a shift in rhetorical theory.⁷⁴ If Kant's aesthetics coincide with a growth in individualism, and an increased demarcation of different faculties to different spheres of action, then the difference in political context between the birth of the empire and its adulthood may account for the limitation of rhetoric's sphere, and a focus on individual sensibility as the measure of historical involvement. The preponderance in Lucian of images drawn from the body, and the lurid insistence with which he invites the reader to identify his body with those images, is a different world from the exhortatory political optimism of Dionysius. Lucian's attempt to elaborate a theory based on those images, where history's dressing is like the dressing of the body, contrasts strongly with the processes of reading, imitation, and political activity, which characterize Dionysius' vision of historical writing. The fact that, as a theory, it remains imagistic and illogical is a manifestation of the intrinsic impossibility of denying the textual basis of historiography, or put another way, of the inescapability of rhetorical terms of reference in ancient theoretical writing.⁷⁵

Lucian does have a sense of what ideal political participation consists of; that can be seen in his belief that the audience to a history is capable of detaching itself from the politics of the day and attending to the nobler standards of posterity. The details of this vision are not defined, but one can imagine that Dionysius' ideal orator would fit the bill. However, the remoteness of that ideal produces a version of historical writing which takes its aesthetic effects out of the realm of politics. The purpose of the historical account leaves no trace on its actual processes of composition. The historian becomes an impossibly idealized, and in a sense impossibly impotent, craftsman, whose literary labours are an incidental, and if they fail, humiliating side-effect of the unfortunate fact that history can only be recorded by writing. Dionysius, on the other hand, sees that historical writing is, after all, just another kind of writing, and views all writing as subject to the universal values of moral utility, within which he integrates aesthetic effect. The historian is motivated by his own sense of moral and political responsibility; for Lucian, the idea of the historian's political involvement is too close to that of distorting partisanship. Too's interpretation of [Longinus] has him establishing the ideal state within the individual reader.⁷⁶ Lucian is less explicit, but his combination of political detachment and political idealization, and his focus on the individual responses and constitution of the ideal historian, are a similar move towards greater subjectification in the response to political realities. Dionysius maintains a more traditional unity between rhetoric and aesthetics, as between political protagonists, historians, and readers, and has a more straight-forward sense of the collective enterprise to which historical writing can contribute. In Dionysius, individual response is deduced from the values of the community. In Lucian, readers measure their sensations against a more hesitant version of communal experience.

An obvious conclusion is that Lucian's view of historical writing resembles our own more closely than Dionysius'. However, the particular terms of this resemblance, the demarcation of the aesthetic from the rhetorical, and the attempt to extricate history's hard core from rhetoric in turn provide an explanation of our difficulties with Dionysius. Points of identification between our own preconceptions and Lucian's views make Lucian seem more plausible than Dionysius, and reinforce an easy prejudice against rhetorical historiography. But a comparison of the two authors points to the

⁷⁴ Certainly both Lucian and [Longinus] reinterpret *mimesis*; see above, pp. 86–7 and cf. Too, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 210. A. Battistini suggests that Tacitus *Dialogus* is pointing in the direction of a shift in the meaning of *inventio*, parallel to a move towards greater literality. He depicts *inventio* as 'non più investita di finalità argomentative e persuasive ma ristretta a nuclei tematici riproducibili da testo a testo', 'Ornamenta e scrittura', in G. Fenocchio (ed.), *Le ragioni della retorica* (1986), 71–90, at 72, cf. above, p. 86. See too W. J. Dominik, 'The style is the man', in *Roman Eloquence* (1997), 50–68, at 62–6. Possibly relevant is Webb's observation that [Longinus] is the only ancient theorist to distinguish between vividness

in poetry and rhetoric; in the former it produces *ekplexis*, in the latter, persuasion, *art. cit.* (n. 65), 345.

⁷⁵ cf. Too's reinstatement of the conventional rhetorical element in [Longinus'] thought; *op. cit.* (n. 42), 188–94. cf. Michel, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 112.

⁷⁶ Too, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 215–17. One could read these signs of greater individualism as part of the much larger phenomenon described by Veyne, Foucault, *et al.* That would over-reach the scope of this paper, and is in itself problematic; see the detailed discussion of S. Swain, 'Biography and biographic', in M. J. Edwards and S. Swain (eds), *Portraits* (1997), 1–37, esp. 5–22.

internal features of their thought which are liable to misunderstanding, and which may be susceptible to more detailed analysis once our preconceptions have been better understood. Through such a procedure, more light can be shed on the complex relationship between rhetoric and history in antiquity, and upon our own problematic involvement in that relationship.

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