

# Thucydides' Ancient Reputation

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All attempts at describing the reception of Thucydides in the ancient world and assessing his influence come up against two major difficulties.

The first lies in the documentation that is available to us. The destruction of the greater part of ancient literature, and the too often fragmentary state of those works that do survive, lead us to run the risk, which is often met with in this kind of investigation, of overinterpreting the sparse data which we have, and hence overvaluing what has survived of the Thucydidean heritage. This risk is all the greater as witnesses from antiquity are not overly communicative: most of the time authors of antiquity do not cite their sources or refer back to their models; they do not necessarily see themselves as part of an intellectual tradition, and so explicit references to Thucydides are less common than one might have expected. Studying the historian's reception often comes down to flushing out a "hidden presence." The second major difficulty lies in the unique position which Thucydides has occupied for more than two centuries in the landscape of classical studies as a "monument" of Western thought and as constituting part of the famous "Greek miracle." The reconstructed picture which we have of ancient literature and of its development and its genres, constitutes an inhibiting framework from which it is difficult to escape, especially in the case of Thucydides to whom the dominant tradition has attributed the merit of having "invented" rational, scientific, and objective history, or – to borrow the phrasing of title of a famous work by Arnaldo Momigliano – of having laid "the classical foundations of modern historiography."

It is nonetheless the case that the presence of Thucydides, which at some times is diffuse, at others explicit, is apparent throughout antiquity. While we cannot pretend to give here an exhaustive inventory of borrowings from his work, nor a complete assessment of the influence which he exercised on Greco-Roman historiography and on other literary genres, the following presentation is deliberately organized around a

number of key moments and focused on certain writers, who represent, for us, the main forms taken by Thucydides' survival in the ancient world.

For the purposes of this presentation, it is convenient from the outset to distinguish two points in Thucydides' reception which are not necessarily either successive or independent of one another. The moment which appears to come first chronologically is when posterity's interest in Thucydides focused chiefly on the historical content of *The Peloponnesian War* and on what we can already refer to as its "documentary value." This interest is manifested by two kinds of historians.

There are first of all those who present themselves – or who were considered from the outset – as his followers. Xenophon has a unique position in this tradition, which he inaugurated. Thucydides having died (around 395 BCE?) before he was able to bring his narrative of the Peloponnesian War to its conclusion, Xenophon, whose *Hellenica* begins exactly where Thucydides stops (411 BCE), was seen in antiquity as *having completed* the work of Thucydides (perhaps using notes which he had left), before writing a *sequel* (up until 362 BCE). It seems moreover that the first two books of the *Hellenica* (covering the years 411–403) circulated under the names of both historians, and, in the era of Cicero at least, we have proof of the existence of supposedly "complete" editions of the work of Thucydides (i.e., including the beginning of the *Hellenica*), with a division into books different from that which has come down to us (Canfora 2006: 731–5). However, even if one may reasonably suppose that Xenophon (whose opinion on the matter is nowhere recorded) had in effect intended to finish and continue the work of Thucydides, he has never been considered by either ancients or moderns as an imitator of the historian, in that his historiographical choices, his methods and his style are clearly different. The same goes for all the historians of the fourth century BC whose works – regrettably preserved only in a fragmentary state – pass for or present themselves as sequels to *The Peloponnesian War*: Theopompus of Chios, for example, whose *Hellenics* "completed" Thucydides' history (Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca Historica* 14.84.7; Marcellinus, *Vita Thucydidis* 45), telling "the end of the Peloponnesian War" from the battle of Cynossema in 411 BCE up to the fall of Cnidus in 394 BCE (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Epistula Ad Pompeium Geminum* c. 6.2), had a marked taste for fabulous anecdotes and digressions (Theon, *Progymnasmata* 4; Photios, *Bibliotheca* 176), making him less like Thucydides than like Herodotus, whose work he had taken over (perhaps at the beginning of his *Philippica*) and which he aspired to excel (Nicolai 2006: 706–7). These authors from the beginning of the Hellenistic era belong above all in the tradition of *historia continua*: each continues the work of another, avoiding overlapping, but *continuation* does not imply *imitation*. These successors are often very critical of their predecessors, like the mysterious Cratippos, a young contemporary of Thucydides whose work covered the period 411–393 BCE at least (Schepens 2001): he prepared a list of Thucydides' "omissions" in Book 8 to demonstrate not only the unfinished aspect of the history but also its inconsistency – the end of the work, in his view, did not issue from "the same literary choices, and

not in the same vein of composition" as the beginning (Dion. Hal., *Thucydides* 16.2–4). At this date the "Thucydidean model" is clearly not yet formed: consideration of historiography, which is restricted in the sources we have to a few passages from Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle, is limited to defining history in terms of its content and not its methods, and to examining only superficially its relation to rhetoric – "historiography" appears as timid and embryonic (Nicolai 2006: 698).

The second class of historian is *in theory* made up of those who used *The Peloponnesian War* as a source. "In theory" because this category, artificially inflated in the nineteenth century by the works of Quellenforschung (source investigation) which erected hypothesis upon hypothesis to try to explain the origins of historiographical texts, tends nowadays to void itself of content and to become virtual. If it is in fact likely that several post-Thucydidean historians – especially authors of the vast syntheses called "universal histories" (*koinai historiai*) – exploited material in *The Peloponnesian War*, there are only a few among them who, like Diodorus of Sicily, actually mention Thucydides among the sources they have consulted. There are at least two reasons for this silence. The first, already mentioned, is that ancient writers were not accustomed to citing their sources. The second is historical and geopolitical: the conquests of Alexander the Great and then the rise of the Roman Empire shifted the classical world's center of gravity first eastwards and then westwards, and at the same time fixed the interest of historians on new subjects. In this new context, where history played itself out and was written on a global scale, the work of Thucydides, which relates to micro-history and tells of an inglorious episode in Athens' history, must have appeared to be merely a marginal witness to an era which had completely disappeared.

The second moment in the reception of Thucydides in antiquity is when his *presence* becomes an *influence*, when his history moved from being a work of *reference* to being a *model* worthy of *imitation*. Such a transformation was only possible because the work had ceased to be considered only in terms of its subject matter (which was open to being reused), and had become the object of critical analysis of the choices (methodological, ideological, and aesthetic) which governed its composition. This shift, which seems to have been initiated by "history practitioners" such as Polybius, was rapidly passed on and developed by those whom for convenience we shall call the "rhetors," a generic term taking in professors of eloquence as well as theoreticians of literature and specialists in language and style: it resulted in the construction of a double "Thucydidean model," historiographical and literary.

The role played by Thucydides in the development of ancient historiography was the subject of much debate during the twentieth century, largely dominated by the opinions of Eduard Schwartz, Felix Jacoby, and Arnaldo Momigliano (Schepens 2010). According to them, Thucydides succeeded in convincing the Greeks of the superiority of "Zeitsgeschichte" – that is to say, contemporary history focused on political and military events – over all other historiographical genres (universal history, regional history, genealogy, chronography, *archaiologia*, biography). More recently, this view

has been countered by those who, like Guido Schepens, believe that the dominant position attributed to Thucydides in the development of antique historiography is based on an illusion deriving from the state of the documentation that we have. The fact that the only Greek histories which survived the destruction of ancient literature in any coherent (if not complete) form belong to “grand” political and military history (Polybius, Cassius Dionysius, Appian) has given rise to a belief in the notion of a “Thucydidean mainstream.” However, recent research on “fragmentary history” (i.e., on historiographical works which have been lost or preserved only in a fragmentary state, collected by Felix Jacoby in his *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*) has revealed the extraordinary vitality of the historiographical genre in the Hellenistic era, its amazing capacity to adapt to new circumstances, and the great variety of forms it took. Furthermore the attitude of, for instance, Polybius, who presents himself as the heir to the Thucydidean tradition, is a long way from reflecting, as was once thought, any dominant tendency: while he may himself have been convinced of the superiority of contemporary political and military history, he recognized the right to exist of several kinds of historiography (Schepens 2010: 128–9). Aware of going against the stream, on several occasions he feels the need to justify his decision to write a “pragmatic” history (Polybius, *Histories* IX.1 ff).

The example of Polybius should not, however, lead one to think that post-Thucydidean historiography had largely turned its back on Thucydides. On the contrary, the limited success of “Zeitgeschichte” as a historiographical genre did not inhibit the widespread diffusion of what quickly became the main “message” of Thucydides, namely his methodological discourse (*Thuc.* 1.20–2). His conception of history and of the historian’s role, which can be summarized, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus did (*Thuc.* 7–8), as an absolute demand for *truth*, had a “potential universality” that could transcend the differences between all the forms of history. In fact the great Thucydidean principles (rejection of myth, critical scrutiny of facts, search for causes, exactness, impartiality, a wish to be useful now and in the future) rapidly became commonplaces (*topoi*), “recycled” in historians’ prefaces throughout antiquity. This initial conceptualization of Thucydides, who was now elevated into the “high priest of truth” (Dion. Hal., *Thuc.* 8.1), may have originated in peripatetic philosophy (Canfora 2006: 747), but we can see it clearly manifested in the sometimes virulent critiques that ancient historians directed at each other, sometimes across the centuries. Denunciation of “ignoramus,” “liars,” “flatterers,” or “calumniators”, whether directed at individuals (as in Polybius’ famous accusation against Timaeus of Sicily in his *Histories* Book 11) or more generally (Flavius Josephus denigrates the entire profession in *Contra Appionem*), is voiced in the name of Thucydidean dogma, *but always without explicit reference to Thucydides*, which seems to prove that the historian’s methodological principles very rapidly fell into the “public domain” and became part of the common culture of all the learned. In authors who are not writing history themselves or whose proposals are mainly theoretical, explicit reference to Thucydides is almost always coupled with reference to another “father of history,” Herodotus. Comparison

between the two historians can at times appear almost a caricature, as in Plutarch's pamphlet *De Malignitate Herodoti*, where Herodotus is the incarnation of the archetype of "bad" historians and serves as the antithesis to Thucydides. In contrast, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Thuc.* 5–6) the figure of Herodotus is not systematically contrasted with that of Thucydides, but is analyzed in a "developmental" perspective: for Dionysius, who sees a continuous progress in the history of historiography, Herodotus is a milestone, a necessary staging-post, between the *archaism* of authors of local history such as Hecataeus of Miletus (who are presented as compilers of oral and written tradition, only concerned with being exhaustive and lacking any spirit of criticism) and the *modernity* of Thucydides, consisting in his rigor and rationality.

In the Latin tradition, on the other hand, and especially in Cicero – the first Roman theorist of history and a practitioner of it himself – reference to Thucydides is strikingly restrained, or even absent. In fact Thucydides is never cited as a model, nor is his methodology invoked or commented upon, even though certain passages (*de Oratore* 2.62–3) exhibit undeniable similarities between the Ciceronian and the Thucydidean conceptions of history: the primacy of truth, the choice of contemporary history, the enquiry into causes (Binot 2010). In point of fact, what interests Cicero in Thucydides is the *writer* more than the *historian*, the *style* more than the *substance*, the *form* more than the *content*. This essentially rhetorical approach is explained by the fact that Cicero, in conformity with the Isocratic and Aristotelian tradition, associates the genre of history with the display of eloquence (it is thus *epideictic*). It is also driven by the polemics that around 47–6 BCE divided Cicero and Brutus, leader of a new generation of orators, on the subject of political eloquence in Rome (Cicero, *Orator Ad Brutum*); this quarrel gave a central place to the figure of Thucydides, whose "Attic simplicity" was invoked and held up as a model by the new guard. Irritated by the extravagances of these "devotees of Thucydides," Cicero replied that it was absurd to want to take a representative of the epideictic genre as a model for eloquence in the forum, while on the other hand the style of Thucydides alone did not constitute Atticism!

The example of Cicero allows us to stress an essential point: the emergence and construction of the other facet – rhetorical and literary – of the Thucydidean model are inseparable from the succession of Atticizing fashions which marked the intellectual history of the Greco-Roman world between the first century BCE and the third century CE. It is important to understand that this infatuation with Thucydides mainly concerned the "oratorical parts" of his history (*dēmōgoriai*), that is to say, the language that he attaches to figures in his narrative, and these discourses, although for the greater part fictional, were nevertheless considered by the "Atticists" to be *living* witness to the eloquence of action of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, just like the judicial or political speeches of Lysias or Demosthenes. This is the reason why these writers were held up by teachers of rhetoric as models to be *imitated* by their pupils aspiring to a political career, as much as by those (often the same ones) who foresaw themselves writing history. This apprenticeship, which envisaged the

memorizing and reciting of complete passages from *The Peloponnesian War*, gradually transformed Thucydides into a source of outstanding examples making up part of the baggage of all learned people (Bompaire 1976), as seen in the *Progymnasmata* (“preparatory exercises”) of Aelius Theon, where Thucydides features high on the list of authors from whom the teacher of rhetoric will draw examples for his pupils to learn by heart (Spengel 1854–6: 66.23ff = Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 10ff). This is also the case with the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonios, which presents Thucydides as the “historian par excellence” (*syngrapheus*: Patillon 2008: XII.1), to the extent that a “eulogy of Thucydides” is proposed as a subject in the passage devoted to this exercise (VIII.4–9). In these technical treatises Thucydides is celebrated above all for the qualities of his narration and for his descriptions. Thus the account of the confrontation between the Plataeans and the Thebans in Book 2 of *The Peloponnesian War* is analyzed by Aelius Theon as a model of verisimilitude and propriety (Spengel 1854–6: 84.19–85.28 = Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 46–8). He uses the same episode to illustrate various different modes of utterance (affirmative, interrogative, jussive), subjecting the beginning of the account of the Thebans’ night attack on the Plataeans (Spengel 1854–6: 87.21ff = Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 50ff) to a series of rewritings. Finally, Thucydides is regularly cited as an example for his descriptions of battles on land, at sea, and at night (Aphthonios: Patillon 2008: XII.2; Aelius Theon: Spengel 1854–6: 118.25–2, 119.3–5 = Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 67–8; Ps.-Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*: Patillon 2008: X.3).

More precisely, Thucydides has an important place in the great debate about *stylistic forms* which runs throughout antiquity, from the *Rhetoric for Herennius* up to Photios, by way of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the pseudo-Demetrius of Phaleron and the treatise on the *Sublime* of the pseudo-Longinus. This discussion, in which subjectivity plays a considerable role (since it involves assessing the effects of discourse on a listener), developed diverse systems for the classification and ranking of styles, and gave rise, notably in the case of Thucydides, to differing and even opposite characterizations – “elevated,” “sublime,” “rough,” or “Gorgianic.” In fact the rhetoricians often reproached the historian for his lack of “clarity.” Theon himself, while recognizing in Thucydides a historian of the most accomplished kind, capable of covering all kinds of history, identifies obscure and abstruse features in his work beside others that are sublime and brilliant (Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 104–5) and advises tackling him last, after Herodotus, Theopompus, Xenophon, Philistos, and Ephorus. Indeed, if Hermogenes in his *Stylistic Categories* classes Thucydides among those who exemplify the “noble style” and offers him as a model of the panegyric style in prose, he acknowledges that he is at times “rough and difficult and quite obscure” in his expression; he also observes that the arrangement of words is often “exceedingly discordant” and he deplores a certain “harshness” (Raab 1969: 408–11). But if the roughness and austerity of Thucydides’ style make it difficult to use him as an oratorical model, the same characteristics conversely make him a good philosophical model: rhetoricians praise the scientific exactitude and the ethical rigor of this unornamented style that is above all concerned with searching out the truth (Chiron 2010).

One cannot sufficiently stress this *scholarly* aspect of the reception of Thucydides, which enables us to detect a *continuum* through antiquity and up to the Byzantine era. For instance, it has been shown that down the centuries two famous episodes from *The Peloponnesian War*, the siege of Plataea (2.75–8) and the “plague” of 430 BCE (2.47–54), formed part of the standard repertoire of all the *pepaideumēnoi* (educated readers). Byzantine historiography supplies many “plague narratives” where “linguistic” imitation of the Thucydidean model (literal quotation of whole phrases, lexical borrowing) is accompanied by a distancing from that very model, which is adapted, updated, even contradicted, to give a better account of the epidemic event being narrated, whose nature – origins and symptoms – are often very different those of the Athenian *loimos* of the fifth century BCE (the “plague” of Constantinople of 524 CE, described by Procopius of Caesarea in Book II of his *Bellum Persicum*; the “Syrian plague” of the end of the sixth century described by Evagrius in Book IV of his *History of the Church*: Reinsch 2006). The omnipresence of Thucydides in the memory of the educated is a fact which one must bear in mind whenever one finds a literal borrowing (quotation, lexical echo, syntactical figure) from Thucydides in a text: these “imitations” may arise just as much from involuntary recollections, the fruit of a common culture, and a long impregnation, as from the conscious and deliberate work of authors who choose to be inspired by the Thucydidean model.

That said, the question of the direct or indirect, voluntary or involuntary, nature of references to Thucydides arises as early as the fourth century BCE in respect of authors who were more or less contemporary with the historian, and for whom we cannot invoke the “rhetorical tradition” because quite simply it did not yet exist. Two examples, Demosthenes and Isocrates, illustrate this problem. Their temporal and intellectual closeness to Thucydides has long fostered the idea that the two orators not only had a direct and close acquaintance with his work but also wanted to imitate him, at the level of ideas as well as of style. This longstanding view belongs as much to the influence of works in the later rhetorical tradition which quickly set about recognizing “stylistic relationships” between the authors as it does to factual reality (Fromentin 2010). The case of Demosthenes is an example of this practice. From antiquity onwards critics believed they could detect an affiliation between the historian and the orator (Pernot 2006a: 220–4): an anecdote recounted by Lucian of Samosata (*Adversus indoctum et libros multos ementem* 4) claims that Demosthenes copied out eight times by hand from *The Peloponnesian War*, and a note by the rhetor Choricios of Gaza in the sixth century CE, offering Thucydides as the “rhetorical spring from which Demosthenes often drank” (Foerster and Richtsteig 1929: 32.2), translates into a striking image the stylistic influence which Dionysius of Hallicarnassus had already worked on analyzing at length centuries earlier. In fact in his short work *Thucydides* Demosthenes is presented as “the only orator who had sought to rival Thucydides on many points” (*Thuc.* 53.1). He claims that it was from the historian that Demosthenes had borrowed many of the essential characteristics of his style (speed, density, vehemence,

mordancy, and harshness) as well as a virtuosity needed to stir the feelings (*Thuc.* 53–5; cf. *Demosthenes* 9–10, *Ad Pomp. Gem.* c. 3.20). Following these witnesses, modern criticism has sought to discover echoes of *The Peloponnesian War* behind certain formulas or arguments of Demosthenes (Canfora 1992: 11–41; Hornblower 1995: 52; Yunis 1996: 240–1, 256–7, 268–77). For instance, when Demosthenes defines the role of the orator in the city and suggests as a principle that one should prefer proposals which would be topical, and when he lucidly analyzes relationships between Greek cities in terms of right or might, what flows from his pen seems to be the very words of Thucydides (Gotteland 2010). However, even if these similarities reveal a real affinity, a true intellectual closeness between the two men, it is perhaps sensible in some cases to see not a direct and deliberate borrowing by one from the other but the two authors reaching a similar position on themes that were widely discussed at the time and shared with many other contemporaries.

This analysis is broadly applicable to Isocrates too, even if with him *imitatio Thucydidis* is more thematic than stylistic. There are numerous echoes of *The Peloponnesian War* in Isocrates' political discourses, where the analysis of regimes, the relationships between Greek and the pan-Hellenic aspirations of Athens all seem to be drawn from the Thucydidean well, both in general reflections (*gnōmai*) and detailed explanations. As with Demosthenes, however, there is nothing that allows one to say with certainty that the orator took the historian for his model deliberately and directly; it is better to acknowledge “Thucydides' real but diffuse influence in shaping Isocrates' culture” (Nouhaud 1982: 117), and not to underestimate the importance of sundry intermediaries who certainly contributed to feed the orator's thinking on matters such as Athenian imperialism and the crisis in democratic values which were widely debated at the time (Luschnat 1970: coll. 1276–80; Nicolai 2004: 83–7).

The double “modeling” (construction of a historiographical model and a literary model) which we have tried to describe has doubtless helped in distinguishing the two aspects of Thucydides' identity (historian and writer), which each had its own life. Furthermore, throughout the imperial period and into the Byzantine era his work was used in various ways, usually independent from one another: allusion to his methods, recycling of historical “matter,” resumption of his narrative framework and psychological analyses, stylistic pastiche, and more or less literal quotations, de- or re-contextualized.

It will be sufficient here to give some examples of equally rich literary fortunes by opening this brief survey with the figure of Plutarch. To begin with, the variety and extent of Plutarch's work, composed as it is of two distinct components, the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, make the question of Thucydides' influence rather delicate. However, by schematizing a little, one can assert that Plutarch used the historian in two ways. He used him firstly as one source among others for the history of Athens in the fifth century, especially in the lives of Pericles, Nicias, and Alcibiades. Plutarch knew Thucydides well, but let himself be inspired freely by him, not



hesitating to rework information to adapt it for the specific perspective – more psychological than historical – of his biographical project (Romilly 1988), and perhaps also because he was looking to supply his own analysis of the actions and motives of his different protagonists, an analysis which is at times finer and more nuanced than that of Thucydides (Pelling 2002).

This use of Thucydides as a historian takes another, and rather unexpected, form in the shape of Plutarch's great admiration for his style, clearly shown for example in the preface to the *Life of Nicias*. There Plutarch affirms directly that, unlike Timaeus, he is not seeking to rival Thucydides stylistically, because the historian had reached a form of perfection in this realm that made him "inimitable" (1.1, 4): his style is varied (*poikilōtatos*), excels in the representation of human passions (*pathētikōtatos*), and has an outstanding mimetic quality, *ēnargeia* (*enargēstatos*), which breathes such "life" into the things described that the reader believes he has them "before his eyes." The *Life of Fabius Maximus*, highlighting Thucydides' taste for maxims, sentiments of general or universal bearing, rounds off this eulogy of the historian's style (1.8). Ultimately it is somewhat surprising to find in Plutarch's work few "literary" quotations from Thucydides, while there are frequent borrowings from writers like Homer or Euripides. One can nevertheless emphasize that from this point of view Thucydides receives privileged treatment, different from historians like Herodotus, Timaeus, or Philistos, whose literary talents Plutarch clearly did not esteem enough to use them as anything other than sources of information (Titchener 1995).

It is necessary to examine the position of Lucian in this account of Thucydides' reception as he is the only ancient author whose historiographical treatise has survived. This rather brief text called *How to Write History* has suffered a mixed reputation for a long time. It is presented by Lucian as a work arising from particular circumstances, written during the Parthian Wars of the second century CE with the aim of giving methodological advice to those of his contemporaries who were inspired by real events to throw themselves into a literary genre whose rules they did not know (4, 14). Not fully understanding the author's project, some critics condemned the work for failing to develop any originality or true depth of thought on the subject. According to them the treatise presents no more than an array of hackneyed rules and commonplaces imitated from the schools of rhetoric of the era (Finley 1975: 11). From this perspective, references in the work to Thucydides can be nothing more than another measure of the weight of the "rhetorical culture" (15, 18, 19, 26). The interest of the work lies essentially in the panoramic view it gives us of historiographical production in the second century CE, and in the gallery of satirical portraits of historians who would mostly be otherwise unknown to us.

In recent years, however, a new focus on the links between rhetoric and history has excited renewed interest in the treatise, which is no longer considered a simple work arising from circumstances but a polemical text taking a stand on the debate about historiography in the second century, condemning the excesses of a genre become rotten with sycophancy, the praise of courtiers, and the blisters of an all-conquering rhetoric

(Zecchini 1983; Pernot 2006b; Trédé 2010). From this perspective, the position of Thucydides is central because the accounts commented on in this work are here “assessed in terms of the great figure of Thucydides” (Trédé 2010: 193). He is cited directly as someone to be imitated, and is always present in the work as an implicit historiographical model, even if other historians, notably Herodotus and Xenophon, are invoked beside him (2, 19, 39, 42, 54). In this work, which begins with critical observations (7–33) before continuing with a collection of precepts (34–62), Thucydides serves as much to stigmatize the errors of Lucian’s contemporaries (15, 19, 26) as to establish the rules of a worthy historical narrative (42). Seeking the audience’s approval, the taste for irrelevant eulogia, poetic elaborations, excessive Attic purism, long descriptions, overemphatic prologues, and crude factual and geographic errors, all of these contravene the methodological principles laid down by Lucian, in which we can easily recognize the Thucydidean model: the need for the true historian to write for posterity (the *ktēma es aiei*, which is asserted four times in the text, 5, 42, 61, 63), seeking out the truth, founded on a personal investigation and analysis of observed facts, independence, and freedom of mind (39, 41, 63). Even so, Lucian is not inspired by the Thucydidean model alone: his *technē historikē* is also influenced by post-Thucydidean historiography (Hellenistic and imperial), and in particular by Polybius (Georgiadou and Larmour 1994: 1450–78). Besides, if Lucian castigates the excesses of the historiography of his own times he does not completely exclude the *ekphraseis* and the *muthōdēs*, the metaphors imported from the realm of iconography and poetic expression, as long as they are used in moderation and the work does not darken into “historical tragedy.” Lucian’s *technē*, developed in a literary context characterized by the omnipresence of rhetoric, the fruit of the long evolution of the historical genre, is not therefore a simple repetition of the principles of Thucydides; it bears witness nonetheless to the central place occupied by the historian in the second century CE as a historiographical model. This impression is confirmed by Lucian’s *True Histories*, which tackle the historical genre from another angle, parody and pastiche: when the narrator announces that he is going to narrate things which he has “neither seen, nor lived, nor learnt from another” and that “the readers must not believe any of it at all” (*True Histories* A.4) he is doing nothing other than taking the antithesis of the Thucydidean position.

Thucydides’ influence on the Greek historian Cassius Dio, author of an ambitious *History of Rome* in eighty books, has long been established. The judgment of the Byzantine Photios, establishing Thucydides as the almost exclusive model for the Severan historian (*Bibliotheca* 71), especially for the discursive parts (“In the *dēmēgoriai* he imitates and excels Thucydides, except that he looks more to be clear”) for a long time influenced the critical view, which was focused on establishing the evidence for this *imitatio Thucydidis* in the *History of Rome*: lexical and stylistic borrowings, taking of freely adapted quotations, insertion of long passages in a direct manner (often presented in antilogy, a form dear to Thucydides), reuse of explanatory or narrative schemas (Litsch 1893; Kyhnitzsch 1894; Millar 1964; Lintott 1997; Bertrand 2010). Some contexts seem to favor these borrowings: it has been shown that battle narratives in particular are the site of such encounters, the narrative of military operations

being at times modeled on confrontations described by Thucydides. It is true that it would be dangerous to limit Cassius Dio's literary models to the single figure of Thucydides. And yet even when some critics have sought to emphasize the influence of other historians, such as Herodotus (Lachenaud 2003) or Xenophon (Lucarini 2003), or the importance of rhetoric in the work of Cassius Dio, it is no less true that the Thucydidean model has a crucial place in the construction of Dio's narrative. If it allows him to demonstrate his command of literary culture and to enroll himself in a historiographical tradition that was undeniably popular at the time, it also helped to clarify his political analysis and to construct his *History of Rome*.

Thucydides seems therefore to constitute, even in the third century CE, a historiographical model that was inspiring to historians and in whose terms we can study and interpret literary works (particularly historical narratives) which first saw the light of day in this era. It is in fact perhaps not so much the historians themselves who feel the need to construct their narratives within the formal framework established by Thucydides – or to distinguish themselves by not doing so – as their readers and commentators who, from the outset, seek out the traces or absence of the historian in their works, since it is impossible to read or assess a historical narrative without calling up the ghost of Thucydides. Thus Thucydides rapidly became and remained throughout antiquity a tutelary figure who, even outside the single genre of historiography, besides other things deeply informed the thinking and the creative processes of Greek and Latin authors. Equally he very quickly came to influence critics' interpretation of these works. The difficulties which any investigation of the reception of Thucydides runs into are essentially of two sorts. On the one hand it is relatively easy to list the "Thucydidisms" in an author, but often much trickier to explain the reasons for these borrowings and their objectives: why and with what aim does a writer from antiquity choose to quote Thucydides, *usually without naming him*, or to imitate him, *usually without saying so*? On the other hand one must take care not to overvalue a presence which was abundantly commented upon and exploited from the outset (at times to the detriment of other more discreet and less illustrious influences), and doubtless thus contributing to the construction of a distorted image of Thucydides' reception, remote from what were the real importance and practical impact of his work.

### Guide to Further Reading

Two recent works include many different chapters addressing the question of Thucydides' reception in antiquity: Rengakos and Tsakmakis (2006) treats this theme in its third part; Fromentin, Gotteland, and Payen (2010) is largely devoted to many aspects of the reception of Thucydides in antiquity. Other important discussions in English are Hornblower (1995) on Greek receptions of Thucydides, Pelling (2002) on Plutarch, and Samotta (2012) on the Roman reception of Thucydides and Herodotus.

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