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Malta Classics Association,

The Department of Classics and Archaeology,

Archaeology Farmhouse, Car park 6,

University of Malta, Msida

classicsmaltasoc@gmail.com

www.classicsmalta.org

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Comparing history and tragedy: the case of Polybius and Plutarch

Nijole Juchneviciene

One of the distinct features of Greek historical thought – if we are inclined to accept the existence of one in classical Greek culture and do not regard it as totally unhistorical¹ - is that it was greatly influenced by the poetry and was expressed primarily in poetry; according to C. M. Bowra, “poetry has been the normal method of remembering the past”.² The first historical dimension of man in Greek culture was poetical.³ When historiography came into existence, it, though very

1 After the emergence of the concept of the so-called scientific historiography Greek historiography was downgraded and regarded as ‘existing prior to science’ and not trustworthy due to its inconsistent presentation of the past events. Greeks were said to be ignorant of history as a means of getting familiar with the past through certain historical patterns and, allegedly, they did not understand the historical process as the fundamental change and continual progress (Collingwood (1946) 22 ff.); Driver (1967) 19-38). In other words, Greeks were thought to lack any of historical thinking (for more details see Juchneviciene (2013) 240-241). In fact, it is difficult to disagree that the historical consciousness, *i.e.* awareness of the fact that societies and their institutions do change, emerged not in the 17th or 18th centuries, but considerably earlier. In Herodotus’ and Thucydides’ works the main principles of historical thinking were first realised. Among those principles were the interest of cognition, perception of time changes, as well as empirical research, which turns the empirical data of the past into significant material in the present, also, interpretation and the right form of representation, as well as cultural orientation, which grants people a historical identity and meaning in their lives. According to Alexandra Lianeri, Thucydides is “a narrator of radical social change and society that he himself experienced in his own times” (Lianeri (2011) 26). Despite the fact that the past was sometimes imagined as the lost “golden age” (see Selincourt (1982) 25; Driver (1967) 10), Thucydides’ *Archaeology* clearly mirrors the perception of economic, cultural and social advancement. See also Jaeger (1939) I, 381; Gomme (1954) 138; Toynbee (1964) IX-XXV, ff.; Bury (1958) 103-104; Bowra (1957) 188-190 ff.

2 See Bowra (1957) 189.

3 According to F. Hartog (Hartog (2000) 389-392), confrontation with the history, or “the discovery of historicity” was for the first time reflected in *Odyssey*: Odysseus, while listening to Demodokus song, recognises himself in history; the presence of Odysseus himself proves that the events told about really happened, and that they happened exactly as it is told (*Od.* 8. 499-531). According to Hannah Arendt, this

popular,⁴ had never become the central axis of Greek culture and education:⁵ this position from the very beginning steadily belonged to poetry, especially to epic and tragic poetry, and later to rhetorics. Basic historical knowledge was usually acquired through the knowledge of literature.

On the other hand, no member of a postmodern society could be surprised by the statement that history first of all is a verbal structure. It comprises of a limited amount of material selected, the ways of its interpretation, as well as theoretical notions that explain that material, and narrative structure which sets forth the material as happening in the past; thus this activity is of poetic nature, which succumbs to the author's will of choosing a certain narrative strategy, or to the model of interpretation.⁶ According to J. Rüsen, even though many historians were taken aback by the nature of such thinking, it all depends on the interpretation and the interpreter; the interpreter makes facts historical.⁷

That is why Greek historiography, as the *historiography of change*,⁸ from the 5th century BCE onwards (starting with the *History* by Herodotus) did not avoid to take tragedy as a model of interpretation.

scene is paradigmatic both for poetry and history-writing, as "the reconciliation with reality, catharsis (purification), which according to Aristotle was the essence of tragedy, and, according to Hegel, was the ultimate purpose of history, came about through the tears of remembrance" (Arendt (1954) 45).

4 F. Jacoby, while compiling his corpus of Greek historical fragments (*FGrHist*), did not expect to come across so many authors: he counted more than 800 names of historians (Brown (1973) 1).

5 History was not an academic discipline or field of study (*cf.* Marrou (1956) 167, 280; Gibson (2004) 103-129). Possibly, it was paid more attention to only in the school of Isocrates, whereas the first to include it into the study curriculum was Plutarch.

6 White (1973) X-XI.

7 Rüsen (2005) 93-109.

8 *Cf.* Momigliano (1972) 285. This concept does not mean to involve a notion of progress.

Primary goal of *historia*, as a critical research of the events and achievements of the past and their literary presentation,⁹ was to reveal truth, according to the famous principle, already acknowledged by Thucydides and much later repeatedly formulated by Leopold von Ranke (the historian must relate what actually happened).¹⁰ Nevertheless, any action and any event have two constituent parts, the subjective and the objective one; according to R. Collingwood, an action is the unity of subjective and the objective constituents. Trying to conceive the subjective motivation historian is impelled to invoke his imagination, to re-think the thoughts of the past.¹¹ According to Aristotle, both historian and poet, in order to properly imitate actions of men, has to envisage things, as if one was present at the events himself (*Poet.* 1455a.25);¹² they do not differ much in the ways they implement their ideas.¹³

Aristotle was the first to compare tragedy and history. Historiography was regarded by him as less serious and less philosophical genre than poetry, since "*poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars*".¹⁴ According to him, poet is the poet

9 The word *ιστορίη* for the first time was used in this sense in Herodotus' *History* (1, *praef.*)

10 Cf. Th. 1.22.3.1: τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἤξιῶσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὡς ἐμοὶ ἔδοκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀκριβεῖα περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελεθῶν. He approached the subject in the manner quite different from that of his predecessor, Herodotus (cf. Hdt. 4. 195: Ταῦτα εἰ μὲν ἔστι ἀληθῆς οὐκ οἶδα, τὰ δὲ λέγεται γράφω). The famous phrase of L. von Ranke ("wie es eigentlich gewesen"), accepted by the historians as a *motto* in the 19th and the early 20th cent., was used in the preface to his *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514*. Leipzig-Berlin, 1824.

11 Collingwood (1946) 213-215.

12 οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἐναργέστατα [ὁ] ὄρων ὥσπερ παρ' αὐτοῖς γιγνόμενος τοῖς παρτομένοις εὐρίσκοι τὸ πρότερον καὶ ἥκιστα ἂν λανθάνοι [τὸ] τὰ ὑπεναντία.

13 According to Hayden White (White (1987) 25) historical narrative is "emplotted" in various ways, using the models of epic, romance, tragedy, comedy, farce *etc.* (White (1973) 5-7).

14 1451b.5: διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποιήσις ιστορίας ἐστίν· ἢ μὲν γὰρ ποιήσις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἢ δ' ιστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει. Malcolm Heath's translation (1996).

as a result of creation of his plots and his imitation of a selected action. Historian does not imitate actions: his purpose is "to describe not a single action, but a single period of time, i. e. all events that occurred during that period involving one or more people, each of which has an arbitrary relation to the others" (Po. 1459a.21).¹⁵ Therefore, according to B. L. Ullman's interpretation, history should not seek to arouse fear and pity, "especially through the unexpected and through change of fortune"¹⁶.

According to G. M. A. Grube¹⁷, Aristotle, by accentuating that history is a kind of factual report and expressing the demand for factual particularity and accuracy, protests against the entrenchment of the epideictic eloquence style in historiography.¹⁸ However, if that is the case, it is rather odd that Aristotle's choice for an exemplary historian *par excellence* is Herodotus, who can hardly be called a representative of rhetorical historiography; instead, his style is notorious from the Antiquity for being strongly influenced by epic and tragic poetry.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is obvious that Aristotle tends to regard historiography as a mere documentary genre rather than fiction.

Having this limited amount of information, it is hardly possible to redevelop Aristotle's historiographical theory. Yet, if Aristotle considered this sort of factual report of historical events to be the main criterion of historical works, it is likely he did not have many supporters. As much as it is known, not one of the intellectuals of Antiquity expressed such a view. It is not even necessary to mention such radical figures as Philodemus (1st century BCE) who criticised both the peripatetic literary theory (by denying the mimetic nature of literature), and Plato (he did not agree that poetry was neither the

15 και μη ὁμοίας ἱστορίας τὰς συνθέσεις εἶναι, ἐν αἷς ἀνάγκη οὐχὶ μιᾶς πράξεως ποιεῖσθαι δήλωσιν ἀλλ' ἐνὸς χρόνου, ὅσα ἐν τούτῳ συνέβη περὶ ἓνα ἢ πλείους, ὧν ἕκαστον ὡς ἔτυχεν ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα.

16 Ullman (1942) 25-26.

17 Grube (1968) 84.

18 B. L. Ullman also admits the possibility of the fact that Aristotle, while discussing the difference between tragedy and history, had Isocrates in mind (Ullman (1942) 27).

19 For more details see Fohl (1913), Chiasson (1979), Waters (1966).

educator of society nor the teacher); the only function of literature, according to him, was the aesthetic pleasure that it provides.²⁰

In the other treatises on literary criticism extant today, historiography is given the same requirements as all literary prose. The main feature of a good historical work is a proper selection of historical facts, being one of the aspects of τὸ πρέπον - the elements of harmony and fitness which make up a piece of literary work.²¹ One of the most famous Greek literary critic after Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus,²² who also valued the τὸ πρέπον,²³ was of the opinion that the historian should not tell everything, rather, he should think of what should and should not be included into the narrative (*Pomp.* 3. 11: τίνα δεῖ παραλαβεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν γραφὴν πράγματα καὶ τίνα παραλιπεῖν). When the author of *Περὶ ὕψους* discusses the sublime style, he means it both in poetry and prose in general (33.1), and there is no objection for him to juxtapose Homer and Herodotus (*e. g.* 26.2), Homer and Xenophon (*e. g.* 19.1), or Phylistus, Aristophanes and Eurypides (*e. g.* 40.1). History for him is sheer literature and he does not make any difference between the *συγγραφεῖς* and *ποιηταί*.²⁴

Nevertheless, the discourse of history *vs* poetry in general originated long before Aristotle, in the works of the historians themselves. It had a long living tradition, starting already with Thucydides (Th. 1. 21-

20 For more details on this, see Grube (1968) 195; Kennedy (1989) 215-219.

21 Arist. *Po.* 1455a25; *Rh.* 1404b18, 1408a10; Diog. Laert. *Vitae* 59.2; 59.5; 3.20 etc.

22 The works of the famous critics of earlier days – Hegesius, Hermagoras and others – are not extant.

23 πασῶν ἐν λόγοις ἀρετῶν κυριωτάτη τὸ πρέπον· ταύτην ὁ Ἡρόδοτος ἀκριβοῖ μᾶλλον ἢ Θουκυδίδης· ὁμοειδὴς γὰρ οὗτος ἐν πάσι, κὰν ταῖς δημηγορίαις μᾶλλον ἢ ταῖς διηγήσεσιν· ἐμοὶ μέντοι καὶ τῷ φιλάτῳ Καικιλίῳ δοκεῖ τὰ ἐνθυμήματα αὐτοῦ μάλιστα <μιμησασθαί> τε καὶ ζηλῶσαι Δημοσθένης (*Pomp.* 3.20); καὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις χρήμασιν ἅπασιν παρεῖναι δεῖ τὸ πρέπον, καὶ εἰ τι ἄλλο ἔργον ἀτυχεῖ τούτου τοῦ μέρους, καὶ εἰ μὴ τοῦ παντός, τοῦ κρατίστου γε ἀτυχεῖ (*De compositione verborum*, 20.3)

24 *De subl.* 40. 2: ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτι γε πολλοὶ καὶ συγγραφέων καὶ ποιητῶν οὐκ ὄντες ὑψηλοὶ φύσει, μήποτε δὲ καὶ ἀμεγέθεις, ὅμως κοινοῖς καὶ δημῶδεσι τοῖς ὀνόμασι καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπαγομένους περιττὸν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ συγχρῶμενοι, διὰ μόνου τοῦ συνθεῖναι καὶ ἀρμόσαι ταῦτα δ' ὅμως ὄγκον καὶ διάστημα καὶ τὸ μὴ ταπεινοὶ δοκεῖν εἶναι περιεβάλλοντο, καθάπερ ἄλλοι τε πολλοὶ καὶ Φίλιστος, Ἀριστοφάνης ἐν τισιν, ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις Εὐριπίδης, ἰκανῶς ἡμῖν δεδήλωται.

22) and gaining the most complete form in Polybius. It comprises the discussion of historiography, the discourse of truth as the main purpose of *history* and the highest standards of accuracy in narrating the course of events (*ἡ ἀκριβεία*, Th. 1. 22. 1). All those principles reveal themselves in historiography, while the fiction (*τὸ μυθῶδες*, Th. 1. 22. 4)²⁵ is the characteristics of poetry. This discussion reflects the search of the identity of the genre. It was the pretensions to the supreme truth and judgement, the concern to make the reader appreciate the works by the historians that made this discourse a *τόπος κοινός* in Greek historiography. This discourse entails an analysis of the main principles both of the historical research and its presentation, and the ways of cognition of history, what was later called by J. G. Droysen *Historik*.²⁶

It is generally stated that the line, drawn between poetry and history by Aristotle, was transgressed in the school of Isocrates; according to B. L. Ullman, "it is clear from Isocrates' speeches that, if he had written history, he might have been under the influence of epic and tragedy".²⁷ Isocrates did not write history, but the most famous disciples of his school, - Ephorus, Theopompus, Timaeus – did. Their works in a later Greek historiographical tradition were considered as the examples of the so called 'tragic history', or the tragic style in history. The list of the so-called 'tragic historians' has never been closed; Plutarch includes in it Herodotus as well, as a 'tragic historian' *par excellence*.

The modern-day discussion on the tragic history is biased mainly on the interpretation of the *histories* by Duris, Philarchus (his dramatic

25 Dionysius of Halicarnassus claims that Thucydides outshines Herodotus in the strength and intensity of the narrative (*Pomp.* 3). Dionysius as a typical representative of rhetorical criticism, paid attention to the use of certain stylistic devices; as claimed by G. M. A. Grube, he did not view the work as a whole, therefore, he was unable to rightly evaluate the dramatic nature of Thucydides' narrative (Grube (1968) 229). On the narrative technique of Thucydides, see Rood (2004); Hornblower (2004: *Narratology and Narrative Techniques in Thucydides*) 130-166.

26 J. G. Droysen. *Grundriss der Historik*. Leipzig: Veit & Comp. 1868; also J. G. Droysen. *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*. Hrsg. R. Hübner. München-Wien, 1937.

27 Ullman (1942) 28.

style is mostly commented upon by Polybius and Plutarch) and Agatharchides.²⁸ Ed. Schwartz, F. Jacoby and most German scholars associated them with Aristotelian school and made a conclusion that they tried to apply the theory of poetry to history,²⁹ whereas B. L. Ullman saw the origins of the so called school of tragic history in Isocrates' school.³⁰ In opposite, F. W. Walbank considered that such a school did not exist and it is a definition of style.³¹

Duris from Samos, Theophrastus' disciple, who described the events of 370-281 BC (this piece of work probably was quite popular in Antiquity)³² applied utterly different criteria to historiography from Aristotle, as it is visible from the remaining fragments of his works. In one of the extant fragments (*FGrHist*, 2, F 1) Duris criticises the *histories* by Ephorus and Theopompus. According to him, they lack the ability to adequately portray historical events, since there is no *μίμησις*³³ in their works and they do not provide any aesthetic pleasure:

Δουρις μὲν οὖν ὁ Σάμιος ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν αὐτοῦ
 ἱστοριῶν οὕτω φησὶν· Ἐφορος δὲ καὶ Θεόπομπος
 τῶν γενομένων πλεῖστον ἀπελείφθησαν· οὔτε
 γὰρ μιμήσεως μετέλαβον οὐδεμιᾶς οὔτε ἡδονῆς
 ἐν τῷ φράσαι, αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ γράφειν μόνον
 ἐπεμελήθησαν.

28 Jan P. Stronk even considers that a forerunner to that style, which ultimately was defined by Duris, was Ctesias and his *Persica* (Stronk (2010) 42).

29 For more details see Sacks (1981) 147.

30 Ullman (1942) 27-34.

31 Walbank (1960) 216-234 and (2002) 34. Similarly Marincola (2001) 133-135; Sacks (1981) 151-160; also see Grube (1968) 157-158; Hornblower (2004: *Introduction*) 44-45.

32 Cic. *Att.* 6. 1.18: *Duris Samius, homo in historia diligens.*

33 There are different opinions about the meaning of *μίμησις* in this context, from the requirement of factual accuracy to "vivid and emotional representation of events" or "the portrait" (see Walbank (2002) 35; Sacks (1981) 151-153; Stronk (2010) 42-43).

It is also known that Duris took interest not only in historiography, but in the problems of tragedy writing as well.³⁴ Plutarch, who indicated Duris as one of his sources³⁵ refers to his style in tragedy terms:

Δουῖρις δ' ὁ Σάμιος τούτοις ἐπιτραγωδεῖ, πολλήν ὠμότητα τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ τοῦ Περικλέους κατηγορῶν, ἦν οὔτε Θουκυδίδης ἰστόρηκεν οὔτ' Ἔφορος οὔτ' Ἀριστοτέλης· ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἀληθεύειν ἔοικεν, ὡς ἄρα τοὺς τριηράρχους καὶ τοὺς ἐπιβάτας τῶν Σαμίων εἰς τὴν Μιλησίων ἀγορὰν καταγαγῶν καὶ σανίσι προσδήσας ἐφ' ἡμέρας δέκα κακῶς ἤδη διακειμένους προσέταξεν ἀνελεῖν, ξύλοις τὰς κεφαλὰς συγκόψαντας, εἶτα προβαλεῖν ἀκήδευτα τὰ σώματα. Δουῖρις μὲν οὖν οὐδ' ὄπου μηδὲν αὐτῶ πρόσεστιν ἴδιον πάθος εἰωθῶς κρατεῖν τὴν διήγησιν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀληθείας, μᾶλλον ἔοικεν ἐνταῦθα δεινῶσαι τὰς τῆς πατρίδος συμφορὰς ἐπὶ διαβολῇ τῶν Ἀθηναίων (Plu. *Per.* 28).

Perhaps Duris indeed stood out in the general epideictic historiography context and took many things over from drama. It is possible that he liked to introduce his characters into the narrative in the dramatic way, as the heroes of tragedy enter the scene, and applied certain scenographic details (it is implicit in the detailed descriptions of their clothing).³⁶ However, it is hardly possible to make such

34 He is considered to be the author of the non-extant works *Περὶ τραγωδίας* and *Περὶ Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους*.

35 *Alcibiades*, 32; *Lysander*, 18; *Eumenes*, 1; *Agessilaus*, 8; *Alexander*, 15; 46; *Phocion*, 4; 17; *Demosthenes*, 19; etc.

36 *FGrHist* Fr 14(31)=(Athen. XII 50 p.535 E-536A): Δουῖρις δ' ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ καὶ εικοστῇ τῶν Ἱστοριῶν Πausanias μὲν (φησὶν) ὁ τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν βασιλεὺς, καταθέμενος τὸν πάτριον τρίβωνα, τὴν Περσικὴν ἐνεδύετο στολήν. Ὁ δὲ Σικελίας τύραννος Διονύσιος Ξυστίδα καὶ χρυσοῦν στέφανον ἐπὶ περὶ ὀνή μετελάμβανε τραγικόν. Ἀλέξανδρος δ', ὡς τῆς Ἀσίας ἐκυριεύσει, Περσικαῖς ἐχρήτο στολαῖς. Δημήτριος δὲ πάντας ὑπερέβαλλε. Τὴν μὲν γὰρ ὑπόδεσιν, ἦν εἶχε, κατεσκευάζεν ἐκ πολλοῦ δαπανήματος· ἦν γὰρ κατὰ μὲν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς ἐργασίας σχεδὸν ἐμβάτης, πῆλμα λαμβάνων τῆς πολυτελεστάτης πορφύρας· τούτῳ δὲ χρυσοῦ πολλὴν ἐνούφαινον ποικιλίαν ὀπίσω καὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐνιέντες οἱ

assumptions as J. B. Bury does, about the insistent recommendations for other historians to portray the characters' clothing according to the time and circumstances.³⁷

In the historiographical criticism of the Hellenistic age, the comparison between history and tragedy was *τόπος κοινός*. The first one of the surviving authors to consider the relation between tragedy and history in a more detailed approach, after Aristotle, is Polybius, a representative of pragmatic historiography³⁸ and Thucydides' school. His account of the *historia* genre does not resemble that of Aristotle's; in fact, it expresses an absolutely opposing view. According to Polybius, only historiography is capable of mirroring the life's truth and collective past, whereas tragedy is a mere deceit and a way to confuse the reader by appealing primarily to his feelings; in this respect tragedy appeals to the lowest passions and has a negative impact on character. The stoics (Polybius was one of them) were more favourable towards tragedy than any other philosophical school. According to them, the fear induced by tragedy (*ἔκπλεξις* or *κατάπλεξις*, cf. Ps-Long. *De subl.* 1. 4), on condition that it is used rightly and helps to put the audience in the right mood, *i.e.* contributes to its education, it can be referred to as *εὐπάθεια*, and not *πάθος*.³⁹ However, to Polybius, tragedy means a deceit, which, as a matter of fact, is the greatest threat posed by poetry. He draws contrast between tragedy and history. In his opinion, the study of history is the source for a right and decent life (*ἀληθινός βίος*). Polybius was the first one,

τεχνίται. Αἱ δὲ χλαμύδες αὐτοῦ ἦσαν ὄρφνινον ἔχουσαι τὸ φέγγος τῆς χροᾶς, τὸ δὲ πᾶν ὁ πόλος ἐνύφαντο, χρυσοῦς ἀστέρας ἔχων καὶ τὰ δώδεκα ζῶδια. Μίτρα δὲ χρυσοπάστος ἦν, ἡ καυσίαν ἀλουργή οὖσαν ἔσφιγγεν, ἐπὶ τὸ νῶτον φέρουσα τὰ τελευταῖα καταβλήματα τῶν ὑφασμάτων. Γινομένων δὲ τῶν Δημητρίων Ἀθήνησιν, ἐγράφετο ἐπὶ τοῦ προσκηνίου ἐπὶ ἧς οἰκουμένης ὀχούμενος.

37 Bury (1958) 172.

38 It was Polybius who gave the name to the stylistic trend of historiography, which is called pragmatic historiography (*πραγματική ιστορία*) and was initiated by Thucydides. Polybius very often applies this notion to his own work: ἡ πραγματική ιστορία (1.35), πραγματικός τρόπος, ἡ πραγματεία (1.1). And namely from his *History* the notion *πραγματική ιστορία* arose (Sacks (1981) 145).

39 Lacy (1948) 241-271.

after Thucydides,⁴⁰ to talk about the lessons that history teaches: the experience gained from reading the ‘pragmatic’ history is the best way to prepare oneself for real (*i. e.* political) life, because only pragmatic history without prejudice endows its students with the true ability to make the more right decision, whatever the situation is (1. 35, 9-10).⁴¹ Polybius acknowledges that literature (including the historical writings), like other works of art, not only guides towards a decent life, but also harms. The paradigmatic function (*χωρίς βλάβης*) can be most suitably fulfilled only by pragmatic historiography, *ἡ πραγματικὴ ἱστορία*. Epideictic historiography, *i.e.* dramatized historical text, does not meet the requirements stated by Polybius. As a result, it is held valueless⁴² (if there is no bad will detected) and, moreover, harmful (if the historian is using the style of tragedy on purpose).⁴³ Polybius thinks that *histories* by Philinus and Fabius are valueless, however, he regards their authors as decent people, based on their lives and moral principles (1. 14. 2: *στοχαζόμενος ἐκ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτῶν*) and tries to justify their bias by claiming that their works were written with great knowledge (*ἐμπειρότατα*), whereas the inaccuracies (*ἐψεῦσθαι*) occurred due to their honest sympathies towards a certain side, and not due to any bad will. Polybius likens their sympathies to lovers’ feelings (*πεπονθέναι τι παραπλήσιον τοῖς ἐρώσι*).⁴⁴ Most of his criticism is directed against

40 In 1. 22. 4, Thucydides describes his work as a political practice manual; due to this reason, it will never lose its value (*κτῆμα εἰς αἰεῖ*). Polybius, too, regards the political experience and wisdom to be the highest form of wisdom.

41 ἐξ ὧν συνιδόντι καλλίστην παιδείαν ἡγητέον πρὸς ἀληθινὸν βίον τὴν ἐκ τῆς πραγματικῆς ἱστορίας περιγινομένην ἐμπειρίαν· μόνη γὰρ αὕτη χωρὶς βλάβης (ἐπι) παντὸς καιροῦ καὶ περιστάσεως κριτὰς ἀληθινοῦς ἀποτελεῖ τοῦ βελτίονος (*cf.* 1. 1; 3. 32; 5. 75 *etc.*).

42 1. 14. 6-7: ὥσπερ γὰρ ζῶντων ὄψεων ἀφαιρεθεισῶν ἀχρειοῦται τὸ ὄλον, οὕτως ἐξ ἱστορίας ἀναιρεθείσης τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ καταλειπόμενον αὐτῆς ἀνωφελὲς γίνεται διήγημα.

43 12. 7. 1: Ὅτι πολλὰ ἱστορεῖ ψευδῆ ὁ Τίμαιος, καὶ δοκεῖ τὸ παράπαν οὐκ ἄπειρος ὧν οὐδενὸς τῶν τοιούτων, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς φιλονεικίας ἐπισκοτούμενος, ὅταν ἅπαξ ἢ ψέγειν ἢ τούναντίον ἐγκωμιάζειν τινα πρόθηται, πάντων ἐπιλανθάνεται καὶ πολὺ τι τοῦ καθήκοντος παρεκβαίνει.

44 1. 14. 1-3: Οὐχ ἦττον δὲ τῶν προειρημένων παραξύνθην ἐπιστῆσαι τούτῳ τῷ πολέμῳ καὶ διὰ τὸ τοὺς ἐμπειρότατα δοκοῦντας γράφειν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ,

Phylarchus and Timaeus (nearly all surviving book 12). Phylarchus, Aratus' contemporary and political enemy, who, as claimed by Polybius, is thought by some to be a trustworthy historian,⁴⁵ is rather harshly criticised for telling lies on purpose.⁴⁶ In Polybius' words, Phylarchus liked to adorn his historical narrative with pathetic and tackily dramatic scenes.⁴⁷ By describing in detail the sufferings of the citizens of Mantinea, he aimed at providing visual effects to his story, to place them in front of the eyes of the reader and to portray it like a tragedy played on stage. This type of narrative Polybius calls a lie, τὸ ψεῦδος (2. 56. 2). Tragedy, according to him, is uncomaptible with history. For tragedy invokes the feelings of pity (2. 56.7: εἰς ἔλεον ἐκκαλεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας) and fear in the audience by showing torment and grief (2. 56. 8: πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τιθέναι τὰ δεινὰ), and encourages empathy in people (2. 56. 7: συμπαθεῖς ποιεῖν τοῖς λεγομένοις). It turns the reader into the viewer.⁴⁸ For a historian, on

Φιλῖνον καὶ Φάβιον, μὴ δεόντως ἡμῖν ἀπηγγελκέναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν. ἐκόντας μὲν οὖν ἐψεῦσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας οὐχ ὑπολαμβάνω, στοχαζόμενος ἐκ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτῶν· δοκοῦσι δέ μοι πεπονθέναι τι παραπλήσιον τοῖς ἔρωσι. διὰ γὰρ τὴν αἴρεσιν καὶ τὴν ὄλην εὐνοίαν Φιλίνῳ μὲν πάντα δοκοῦσιν οἱ Καρχηδόνιοι πεπραχῆθαι φρονίμως, καλῶς, ἀνδρωδῶς, οἱ δὲ Ῥωμαῖοι τάναντία, Φαβίῳ δὲ τοῦμπαλιν τούτων.

45 2. 56. 1-2: Ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς καιροὺς Ἀράτῳ γεγραφότων παρ' ἐνίοις ἀποδοχῆς ἀξιούται Φύλαρχος, ἐν πολλοῖς ἀντιδοξῶν καὶ τάναντία γράφων αὐτῷ, χρήσιμον ἂν εἴη, μᾶλλον δ' ἀναγκαῖον ἡμῖν, Ἀράτῳ προσηρημένοις κατακολουθεῖν περὶ τῶν Κλεομενικῶν, μὴ παραλιπεῖν ἄσκεπτον τοῦτο τὸ μέρος, ἵνα μὴ τὸ ψεῦδος ἐν τοῖς συγγράμμασιν ἰσοδυναμοῦν ἀπολείπωμεν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

46 Most scholars detect some personal motives behind Polybius' criticism, - political bias, social prejudice, a liking for rhetorical display or even personal dislike and jealousy; he developed no clear criteria to distinguish between "truth" and "lies". According to Christopher A. Baron, his polemistic fervour is aimed to elevate his own status as the authoritative historian (Baron (2013) 59).

47 Plb. 2.56.7-8: σπουδάζων δ' εἰς ἔλεον ἐκκαλεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας καὶ συμπαθεῖς ποιεῖν τοῖς λεγομένοις, εἰσάγει περιπλοκάς γυναικῶν καὶ κόμας διερριμμένους καὶ μαστῶν ἐκβολάς, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις δάκρυα καὶ θρήνους ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν ἀναμιξ τέκνοις καὶ γονεῦσι γηραιοῖς ἀπαγομένων. ποιεῖ δὲ τοῦτο παρ' ὄλην τὴν ἱστορίαν, πειρώμενος (ἐν) ἐκάστοις ἀεὶ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τιθέναι τὰ δεινὰ.

48 Cf. Arist. *Po.* 1452a: [...] οὐ μόνον τελείας ἐστὶ πρᾶξεως ἢ μίμησις ἀλλὰ καὶ φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεινῶν [...]; 1455a: Δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους συνιστάναι καὶ τῆ λέξει

the other hand, this sort of approach should be alien; moreover, the attempt to appeal to one's feelings should not be becoming in men – it is undignified and feminine. Polybius accounts for it rather strictly: τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀγεννές καὶ γυναικῶδες τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτοῦ παρείσθω, τὸ δὲ τῆς ἱστορίας οἰκεῖον ἅμα καὶ χρήσιμον ἐξεταζέσθω (2. 56. 9-10). According to Polybius, the objectives of history and tragedy are totally different (2. 56. 11: τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἱστορίας καὶ τραγωδίας οὐ ταῦτόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄναντίον.). It is imperative for a historian to stick to the actual facts and the flow of events, however ordinary they may seem, and through his proper account of the deeds done and the words said to educate and teach intellectual readers. Whereas the goal of tragedy poets is to deceive the viewer by creating the illusion of reality, to force into believing their made up tales, as if they were real events. Thus, historians, who *καθάπερ οἱ τραγωδιογράφοι* strive to overwhelm the reader by intimidating them (*ἐπιπλήττειν*; 2. 56. 10) employ deception. They narrate the story in great detail, adding some elements from their imagination, as if they are seeing, or have seen, everything with their own eyes (2. 56.10). Polybius is in favour of the idea of occasionally appealing to the reader's feelings, however, it should be done without changing the true course of events (2. 56. 11: τῶν δὲ πραχθέντων καὶ ῥηθέντων κατ' ἀλήθειαν⁴⁹ αὐτῶν μνημονεύειν), and its purpose should be to put the readers into a certain mood and to benefit them. Meanwhile, Phylarchus employs a different approach: he excessively laments over the sufferings of the citizens of Mantinea (Polybius indirectly agrees that the situation in Mantinea was tragic), yet, he chooses not to say anything about the nobility of the Megalopolitans. So, it is obvious to Polybius that Phylarchus, talking solely about criminal acts and not presenting any antithetic act of nobility and honour, shows how unprofessional he is; he is not aware of the true purpose of literature – its educational

συναπεργάζεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέμενον [...].

49 The word *ἀλήθεια* is one of Polybius' most commonly used abstracts (86 times); the objectivity of the narrative he calls *ἀληθινολογία* (12. 26. 1); see Mauersberger (1956) s. v.

function.⁵⁰ The portrayal of the injustice and crimes should not be considered a historiographical norm. It has a negative impact on the ethical motivation of the reader and does not help educate virtuous citizens. A historian should avoid any relation with the genre of tragedy, since it is *via* dramatic effects that lies slip into history, and it contradicts the nature of history (3. 47. 6-7).⁵¹ Historians of such like, who are lost in their own tales are forced to employ *μηχανή* (*sc. τραγική*) and introduce gods and heroes into the pragmatic historiography so that they would be able to somehow finish their narrative.⁵² This kind of history has no value whatsoever, because it is based on lies and assumptions that do not correspond to the reality.

According to Polybius, the traits of quackery and pretension that feature the epideictic historiography are the symptoms of the illness prevalent in the literature and general culture of those days, when authors knowingly reject the historical truth that renders a historical narrative immortal. Instead, they choose an easier and a more popular way of trying to outshine one another with meaningless chat and unlimited imagination: *τὸ δὲ πρὸς ἀλαζονείαν καὶ φαντασίαν ἐπαινούμενον καὶ ζηλούμενον, ὡς μέγα τι καὶ θαυμάσιον, ὃ καὶ τὴν*

50 2. 61. 1-4: Χωρὶς τε τούτων τὰς μὲν Μαντινέων ἡμῖν συμφορὰς μετ' αὐξήσεως καὶ διαθέσεως ἐξηγήσατο, δῆλον ὅτι καθήκειν ὑπολαμβάνων τοῖς συγγραφεῦσι τὰς παρανόμους τῶν πράξεων ἐπισημαίνεσθαι, τῆς δὲ Μεγαλοπολιτῶν γενναιότητος, ἢ περὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἐχρήσαντο καιροῦς, οὐδὲ κατὰ ποσὸν ἐποίησατο μνήμην, ὥσπερ τὸ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἐξαριθμῆσθαι τῶν πραξάντων οἰκειότερον ὑπάρχον τῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ τὰ καλὰ καὶ δίκαια τῶν ἔργων ἐπισημαίνεσθαι, ἢ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν ἠττόν τι διορθουμένους ὑπὸ τῶν σπουδαίων καὶ ζηλωτῶν ἔργων ἢπερ ὑπὸ τῶν παρανόμων καὶ φευκτῶν πράξεων.

51 Ἐνιοὶ δὲ τῶν γεγραφότων περὶ τῆς ὑπερβολῆς ταύτης (*sc. the march of Hannibal's army through Alps*), βουλόμενοι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας ἐκπλήττειν τῇ περὶ τῶν προειρημένων τόπων παραδοξολογία, λανθάνουσιν ἐμπίπτοντες εἰς δύο τὰ πάσης ἱστορίας ἄλλοτριώτατα· καὶ γὰρ ψευδολογεῖν καὶ μαχόμενα γράφειν αὐτοῖς ἀναγκάζονται.

52 3. 48. 8-9: ἀγνοοῦντες ἕκαστα τῶν εἰρημένων ἤρω τινὰ φασιν ἐπιφανέντα συνυποδείξαι τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτοῖς. ἐξ ὧν εἰκότως ἐμπίπτοντι εἰς τὸ παραπλήσιον τοῖς τραγωδιογράφοις. καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοις πᾶσιν αἱ καταστροφαὶ τῶν δραμάτων προσδέονται θεοῦ καὶ μηχανῆς διὰ τὸ τὰς πρώτας ὑποθέσεις ψευδεῖς καὶ παραλόγους λαμβάνειν, τοὺς τε συγγραφεὰς ἀνάγκη τὸ παραπλήσιον πάσχειν καὶ ποιεῖν ἤρωάς τε καὶ θεοὺς ἐπιφαινομένους, ἐπειδὴν τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀπιθάνους καὶ ψευδεῖς ὑποστήσονται.

κατασκευὴν ἔχει ῥαδιεστέραν καὶ τὴν εὐδόκησιν ὀλιγοδεεστέραν (16. 20. 3). The greatest shame for historians is the ignorance of both how to write history and of the historical truth, because it is that, what makes up τὸ καλόν in historiography.⁵³

By showing how to write history, Polybius in fact showed how not to write history, deliberately using as an example the works by the historians against whom he may have had a personal dislike (his criticism is based mostly upon style of their narrative, that is likened to the style of tragedy and therefore their *histories* are regarded as sheer lies) and expiating the same faults in the works by the historians he was favourable to.

Plutarch, to whom Polybius was the source for his *βίοι*⁵⁴, also associates lies in history with tragedy and *μηχανὴ τραγικὴ*.⁵⁵ The deception, characteristic of tragedy, is discussed in essay *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*. The falsehood is primarily associated with the goal to firstly appeal to the viewer's feelings (17 A: πλάσμα πρὸς ἡδονὴν ἢ ἔκπληξιν). In his *Lives* Plutarch usually relates fiction and made up events with theatricality.⁵⁶ In *Theseus*, he clearly separates the history from the events displayed in the oral tradition, that belonged more to the sphere of tragedy and myths rather than history (*Thes.* 1.3-4: *καλῶς εἶχεν εἰπεῖν τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα τερατώδη καὶ τραγικά, ποιηταὶ καὶ μυθογράφοι νέμονται, καὶ οὐκέτ' ἔχει πίστιν οὐδὲ σαφήνειαν*). Having no alternative sources, Plutarch intends to

53 16. 20. 2-5: Ταῦτα δέ μοι δοκεῖ, καὶ καθόλου τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἀλογημάτων, πολλῶν ἐπιφέρειν αἰσχύνην τοῖς συγγραφεῦσι. διὸ δεῖ μάλιστα μὲν πειροῦσθαι πάντων κρατεῖν τῶν τῆς ἱστορίας μερῶν· καλὸν γάρ· εἰ δὲ μὴ τοῦτο δυνατόν, τῶν ἀναγκαιοτάτων καὶ τῶν μεγίστων ἐν αὐτῇ πλείστην ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν. Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν προήχθη εἰπεῖν, θεωρῶν νῦν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων, τὸ μὲν ἀληθινὸν καὶ πρὸς τὴν χρεῖαν ἀνήκον ἐν ἐκάστοις ἐπισευρημένον, τὸ δὲ πρὸς ἀλαζονείαν καὶ φαντασίαν ἐπαινούμενον καὶ ζηλούμενον, ὡς μέγα τι καὶ θαυμάσιον, ὃ καὶ τὴν κατασκευὴν ἔχει ῥαδιεστέραν καὶ τὴν εὐδόκησιν ὀλιγοδεεστέραν, καθάπερ αἱ λοιπαὶ τῶν γραφῶν.

54 Errington (1969) 228, 236.

55 *De malignitate Herodoti* 39. 870 C

56 Lacy (1948) 160.

rely on the least dramatized stories (τῶν ἥκιστα τραγικῶς εἰρησθαι).⁵⁷ The story about Minotaur is also believed to be τραγικώτατος (*Thes.* 15. 6; 16. 7). Plutarch harshly criticises the historians who employ μηχανὴ τραγικὴ which distorts the historical truth; one of the objects of Plutarch's criticism is Phylarchus, who had also been reprehended a number of times by Polybius. Plutarch hits out at the dramatizing the narrative and depicting historical events too visually, as if they were taking place on stage: ἅ τε Φύλαρχος, ὥσπερ ἐν τραγωδία τῇ ἱστορία μονοноῦ μηχανὴν ἄρας καὶ προαγαγὼν Νεοκλέα τινὰ καὶ Δημόπολιν, υἱεῖς Θεμιστοκλέους, ἀγῶνα βούλεται κινεῖν καὶ πάθος, [ὁ] οὐδ' ἂν ὁ τυχῶν ἀγνοήσειεν ὅτι πέπλασται (*Them.* 32. 4-5). According to Plutarch, Theopompus wrote in a similar manner (γράφει καὶ τραγωδεῖ): he presented the Athenians' behaviour after the lost battle of Chaeronea as shameful, whereas the truth is different (*Dem.* 21. 2).⁵⁸ Ctesias is also claimed to often distort the truth in his *Lydiaca* by employing the style of drama and made up events (*Art.* 6. 9).⁵⁹ The notion of 'tragic' in *Moralia* is even used to describe the views that are deemed wrong and that are criticised by philosophical schools⁶⁰. But the most critical attitude ever was by him expressed against Herodotus as a writer of 'tragic history', for whom he had a strong personal dislike.

Plutarch, however, who criticises the main method of tragedians – the aim to affect the viewer's feelings as hastily as Polybius, even more readily than Polybius uses the same criticised method in his own works.⁶¹ Plutarch goes back to the classical principle of the

57 *Thes.* 2.2 – 2. 3: καὶ μετὰ τοῦ δυνατοῦ τὸ ξυνετὸν ἔχοντες· πόλεων δὲ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων ὁ μὲν ἔκτισε τὴν Ῥώμην, ὁ δὲ συνώκισε τὰς Αθήνας· ἀρπαγὴ δὲ γυναικῶν ἐκατέρω πρόσσεστιν· οὐδέτερος δὲ δυστυχίαν περὶ τὰ οἰκεία καὶ νέμεσιν ἐγγενῆ διέφυγεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τελευτῶντες ἀμφοτέροι λέγονται τοῖς ἑαυτῶν προσκροῦσαι πολίταις, εἴ τι τῶν ἥκιστα τραγικῶς εἰρησθαι δοκούντων ὀφελός ἐστι πρὸς ἀλήθειαν.

58 οὐ ταπεινῶς οὐδ' ἀγεννῶς φέρων τὸ συμβεβηκός, ὡς γράφει καὶ τραγωδεῖ Θεόπομπος (*FGrHist* 115 F 329).

59 οἷα πάσχει πολλάκις ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ, πρὸς τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ δραματικὸν ἐκτρεπόμενος τῆς ἀληθείας.

60 Lacy (1948) 161.

61 Stadter (1965) 217.

visualisation of the narrative and as an example of imitation to historians suggests pictorial display of feelings and characters instead of a scenic view, and especially praises Thucydides, for the application of this principle:⁶²

τῶν ἱστορικῶν κράτιστος ὁ τὴν διήγησιν ὥσπερ
 γραφὴν πάθει καὶ προσώποις εἰδωλοποιήσας.
 ὁ γοῦν Θουκυδίδης ἀεὶ τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς ταύτην
 ἀμιλλᾶται τὴν ἐνάργειαν, οἷον θεατὴν ποιῆσαι
 τὸν ἀκροατὴν καὶ τὰ γινόμενα περὶ τοὺς
 ὄρωντας ἐκπληκτικὰ καὶ ταρακτικὰ πάθη τοῖς
 ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἐνεργάσασθαι λιχνευόμενος (*De
 gloria Atheniensium* 347A).

Although in painting, like in lyrical poetry, Plutarch also sees deception,⁶³ he tends to tolerate it, since he does not detect a deliberate aim or any bad will of the author to overwhelm or frighten the audience. Tragedy, according to Plutarch, is born out of irrationality, or madness (*μανία*) and anger (*ὀργή*).⁶⁴ So Plutarch's view on tragedy is more comparable to Plato's ethical evaluation rather than Aristotle's view. That is why he often deems lyric poems which glorify historical

62 In Antiquity, poetic works were perceived as one of the forms for visualising reality (Kennedy (1989: *Introduction*) XIII). It reflects the visual perception of the world prevalent in Greek culture (Jaeger (1939) XXI-XXII). The comparison of poetry with painting in Antiquity is rather frequent: Simonides has described painting as silent poetry (this thought is attributed to him by Plutarch, *De Gloria Atheniensium* 346F5: Πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν. Aristotle claimed that tragedy is slightly similar to painting, since the artistic basis, 'the soul', of the two, is a fable (*Po.* 1450a-b); Plutarch reiterates Simonides' idea that poetry is eloquent painting (*Aud. poet.* 18A: ζωγραφίαν μὲν εἶναι φθεγγομένην τὴν ποίησιν, ποίησιν δὲ σιγῶσαν τὴν ζωγραφίαν). Romans thought similarly, too - for instance, the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (4. 39: *poema loquens pictura*), Horace, who uttered the famous *ut pictura poesis* (*A. P.*361). This tradition survived till the 18th century (cf. Diderot (1759) 201-203).

63 *Aud. poet.* 16 B-C: ὥσπερ ἐν γραφαῖς κινητικώτερόν ἐστι χρῶμα γραμμῆς διὰ τὸ ἀνδρείκελον καὶ ἀπατηλόν, οὕτως ἐν ποιήμασι μεμιγμένον πιθανότητι ψεῦδος ἐκπλήττει καὶ ἀγαπᾶται μᾶλλον τῆς ἀμύθου καὶ ἀπλάστου περὶ μέτρον καὶ λέξιν κατασκευῆς; *Aud. poet.* 15C: τὸ ἀπατηλὸν αὐτῆς (sc. τῆς ποιητικῆς).

64 *De cohibenda ira* 462 B: καὶ τὴν μανίαν αὐτὴν καθ' αὐτὴν ἢ Ἀντίκυρα θεραπεύει, μυχθεῖσα δ' ὀργῇ τραγωδίας ποιεῖ καὶ μύθους.

events more trustworthy than historical accounts written in a pathetic style of tragedy.⁶⁵

In Plutarch's times historiography was one of the most popular genres; Herodotus and Thucydides, even Ephorus⁶⁶ and Theopompus were among most popular authors. Historical works and names of historians, largely quoted by Plutarch, prove the statement that historiography was thought by him to be a necessary part of *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία*. Yet, at the same time, he could see great harm in it. An ill-willed historian, who merely pretended to be objective, and who mastered the art of words, could intend to conceal the lies and libel by using stylistic devices.⁶⁷ Excessive use of stylistic devices is associated with deception, whereas a simple and clear (*ἀφελής*) speech means a straightforward and honest way.⁶⁸ In *De Gloria Atheniensium* Plutarch claims that actions speak louder than words, for if there were no people in history, there would not be any historian who describe the events (1. 345 C: *ἂν γὰρ ἀνέλῃς τοὺς πράττοντας, οὐχ ἔξεις τοὺς γράφοντας*). In *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* the content is proclaimed to be more important than form (15 C - 17 A).⁶⁹ Plutarch considers Herodotus an ill-willed historian of such like. Plutarch does not even try to conceal his personal dislike against Herodotus. According to Plutarch, Herodotus has slandered all Greeks but especially the Boeotians and favoured the barbarians,

65 For instance, he regards the poems of Simonides, Pindar and other poets as more reliable historical sources than Herodotus' *History*: *De malign.* 867 C; 868 A; 869 C; 870 E, F; 871 A; 872 E; 873 B, C.

66 Incidentally, Ephorus, unlike Theopompus, is regarded to be a trustworthy historian by Plutarch.

67 *De malign.* 855 A 1-4: *ἐν λόγῳ χάριν ἔχοντι καὶ δύναμιν τοσαύτην ἐγγένηται τὰς τ' ἄλλας ἀτοπίας καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἀποκρύπτειν τοῦ συγγραφέως.*

68 The word *ἀφελής* is often used together with *εὐκόλος* by Plutarch (*Lyc.* 21. 1; *Cat. Maj.* 6. 4); Plutarch considers these qualities to be the opposition of ill-will (*κακὸν ἦθος, κακοῦθεια*). See Lachenaud (1981) 237-238.

69 *E. g.* 15F 1-5: *μηδ' ἡμεῖς οὖν τὴν ποιητικὴν ἡμερίδα τῶν Μουσῶν ἐκκόπτωμεν μηδ' ἀφανίζωμεν, ἀλλ' ὅπου μὲν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς ἀκράτου πρὸς δόξαν αὐθάδως θρασυνόμενον ἐξυβρίζει καὶ ὑλομανεῖ τὸ μυθῶδες αὐτῆς καὶ θεατρικόν, ἐπιλαμβανόμενοι κολούωμεν καὶ πιέζωμεν· ὅπου δ' ἄπτεται τινος μούσης τῆ χάριτι καὶ τὸ γλυκὺ τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἀγωγὸν οὐκ ἄκαρπὸν ἔστιν οὐδὲ κενόν, ἐνταῦθα φιλοσοφίαν εἰσάγωμεν καὶ καταμιγνύωμεν.*

therefore Herodotus' *History* is all a malign lie and slander. Plutarch confirms his arguments by comparing Herodotus' *History* to tragedy and making it a 'tragic history'. In *De Herodoti malignitate* Plutarch sees Herodotus' work as a classic example of ill-will and is truly angered by the fact that Herodotus, in order to seem honest and frank, imitates a simple and coherent style, this being a deliberate trick used to deceive the reader.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Herodotus' *History*, written in a simple and coherent style is called a tragic history (*μυθῶδες, θεατρικόν*). As Plutarch claims, Herodotus' made up stories outshine those created by tragic poets (*De malign.* 870 C 5: *τί γὰρ ἔδει φεῖδασθαι μηχανῆς τραγικῆς, ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπερπαίοντα τοὺς τραγωδοὺς ἀλαζονείᾳ*). Although the style of his narrative is pleasant, charming, mature and masterly, one should beware of his evil temper like of a scorpion hiding among the rose petals.⁷¹

Plutarch, like Polybius, demands truth in histories from historians, however, he, too, does not have the criteria for the historical truth. Plutarch claims that if there are several versions of a historical event and it is impossible to find out the true facts, the historian should not just state the facts about this kind of situation, but must choose the most favourable version⁷² and proclaim it as a historical truth. Historical truth cannot be adequately represented by a vast collection of historical facts. Naked facts should not be the aim of a historian. They are useless unless there is a moral implication:⁷³ they do not educate the *ἀρετή* of the audience, nor do they propagate justice, kindness and patriotic feelings, *i.e.* they do not represent the moral truth. Plutarch started working with historical material in his biographies in order to show *ἦθος καὶ τρόπος* (*Nic.* 1) of glorious

70 *De malign.* 854 E 1: Πολλοὺς μὲν, ὦ Ἀλέξανδρε, τοῦ Ἡροδότου καὶ ἡ λέξις ὡς ἀφελῆς καὶ δίχρα πόνου καὶ ῥαδίως ἐπιτρέχουσα τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐξηπάτηκε· πλείονες δὲ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸ ἦθος αὐτοῦ πεπόνθασιν.

71 The text originally says 'blister-beetle' (874 B 10): ἄλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν ῥόδοις δεῖ κανθαρίδα φυλάττεσθαι τὴν βλασφημίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κακολογίαν.

72 *De malign.* 855 F 1-5: ὁ δ' ἱστορίαν γράφων ἂ μὲν οἶδεν ἀληθῆ λέγων δίκαιός ἐστι, τῶν δ' ἀδήλων τὰ βελτίονα δοκεῖν ἀληθῶς λέγεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ χεῖρονα.

73 In the preface to the *Life of Nicias* Plutarch states that he took to writing biographies not for the reason of collecting useless historical facts, οὐ τὴν ἀχρηστον ἀθροίζων ἱστορίαν (*Nic.* 1).

politicians, to demonstrate how they came to be, who they were; he did this with the purpose to disclose the moral truth. On the other hand, in order to illustrate the moral truth, in *Moralia*, he refers to historical examples.⁷⁴ To Plutarch, history is an inexhaustible source of moral paradigms. Thus, often, poetical glorification of a deed has a more powerful impact on disclosing the moment of a historical truth, rather than a tight style of a historical document, and this function is best carried out by lyrical poetry. Tragedy, on the contrary, should be 'controlled', since the education of a decent person is based on the stimulation and development of the rudiment of love (*Sol.* 7.3: *τι τῆς ψυχῆς ἀγαπητικόν*), kindness and beauty. This kind of perception is best shaped by positive historical examples:

Just as colour is the proper object of the eye, and the brightness and charm of colour rekindles and feeds the sense of sight, so we should steer our rational faculty towards the contemplation of things which it finds pleasing and which therefore encourage it to aspire to its proper good. These are to be found among deeds motivated by virtue, which imbue those who investigate them with a kind of admiration and a desire that stimulates one to emulation.⁷⁵

By claiming that, on one hand, *καλοῦ τινος κἀγαθοῦ παράλειψις* (*De malign.* 855 D 9), and, on the other hand, the meticulous recording of drawbacks and errors (*De malign.* 855 C 1: *ὄτω κακὸν πρόσεστιν ἄλλως τῆ δ' ἱστορία μὴ προσῆκον*) is an evil flaw in history (*De malign.* 856 B 1: *δέχεται ... διήγησις ἱστορικὴ κακοθήθειαν*), Plutarch seconds Polybius' thoughts.

In his theoretical contemplations Plutarch sometimes expresses his thoughts more harshly than Plato (*cf.* *Pl. R.* 401b-d) and is more

⁷⁴ *De garulitate* 505A-511E; *De fraterno amore* 488 D - 489 F; *Amatorius* 768 B-D; 770 D - 771 C; *De malignitate Herodoti* 855 A 1; 856 A-B; 856 F - 857 A etc.

⁷⁵ ὡς γὰρ ὀφθαλμῶ χροῖα πρόσφορος, ἧς τὸ ἀνθηρὸν ἅμα καὶ τερπνὸν ἀναζωπυρεῖ καὶ τρέφει τὴν ὄψιν, οὕτω τὴν διάνοιαν ἐπάγειν δεῖ θεάμασιν ἂ τῶ χαίρειν πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον αὐτὴν ἀγαθὸν ἐκκαλεῖ. ταῦτα δ' ἔστιν ἐν τοῖς ἀπ' ἀρετῆς ἔργοις, ἃ καὶ ζῆλόν τινα καὶ προθυμίαν ἀγωγὸν εἰς μίμησιν ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς ἱστορήσασιν (*Per.* 1. 3-4). Translation by Robin Waterfield (2008).

utilitarian than Romans, whereas in his works, he does not always rely on his own theory. The lives of politicians, told by him, remind of true tragedies.⁷⁶ Plutarch sees the idolized past in a nostalgic view and primarily appeals to the reader's emotions. Therefore, he often employs the much criticised *μηχανή τραγική*. In *The Life of Themistocles* he chooses the more dramatic version of Themistocles' death (*Them.* 31) and rejects the version told by Thucydides (*Th.* 1. 138. 4), whom Plutarch looked up to the most in the context of history.⁷⁷ It is exactly Thucydides against whom Plutarch tries to compete, not so much as a writer, but as a historian, by presenting more comprehensive and more reliable historical material.⁷⁸ Although Thucydides is familiar with the more dramatic version of Themistocles' death (professedly he poisoned himself because he did not want to keep his promise to the king and lead the Persian army into the war against Greece), he claims that the reason of Themistocles' death was an illness. Whereas Plutarch portrays Themistocles as a real hero of a tragedy, who, during the crucial moment, chose to forget his personal grievances and sacrificed his life for his homeland.

The discourse on the history *vs* tragedy is central in a critical essay by Lucian, *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*, which was written, as it is supposed, as a result of the abundance of *histories* that appeared after the Armenian war in the year 165.⁷⁹ In part one (1-27) the biggest drawbacks of these stories – the love for tragedy and pathetics – that are condensed in a grotesque, are laughed at by comparing the admiration for tragedy to fever: all the citizens of Abdera had that fever after they saw the tragedy by Archelaus, *Andromeda* (1).⁸⁰ A great

76 For their analysis, see: Lacy (1951) 168-171; Tracy (1941) 213-221.

77 Rood (2004) 3-5.

78 For instance, *Nic.* 1. 1; 1. 5 (see Rood (2004) 3).

79 G. M. A. Grube thinks that way (Grube (1968) 336). However, it has not been stated for sure whether the names of the historians mentioned and the citations used are fictitious or real.

80 1. 1-10: Ἀβδηρίταις φασὶ Λυσιμάχου ἤδη βασιλεύοντος ἐμπεσεῖν τι νόσημα, ὃ καλὸν Φίλων, τοιοῦτο· πυρέττει μὲν γὰρ τὰ πρῶτα πανδημεὶ ἅπαντας ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης εὐθύς ἐρρωμένως καὶ λιπαρεὶ τῷ πυρετῷ, περὶ δὲ τὴν ἑβδόμην τοῖς μὲν αἶμα πολὺ ἐκ ῥινῶν ῥυέν, τοῖς δ' ἰδρῶς ἐπιγενόμενος, πολὺς καὶ οὗτος, ἔλυσεν

number of historians who described the Armenian war are likened to Abderites, who excessively 'recite *Andromeda*' (2). In part two (27-63) the criteria of historiographical works (*κανόνων*) are discussed, so that historians could apply the rules and tell the stories in the right way, in case another war breaks out in the future.⁸¹ So, Lucian intends to teach about the things to be avoided (6.1: *πρῶτα εἶπωμεν ἄτινα φευκτέον τῷ ἱστορίαν συγγράφοντι*) and things to be referred to while writing history (*οἷς χρώμενος οὐκ ἂν ἀμάρτοι τῆς ὀρθῆς καὶ ἐπ' εὐθὺ ἀγούσης*). Lucian, like Polybius, states that the goals of history and poetry are different: history should provide benefit while disclosing historical truth,⁸² whereas poetry aims at providing pleasure with unrestricted freedom and the only real thing in it – the will of the poet himself.⁸³ Thus, 'ποιητικῆς μὲν καὶ ποιημάτων ἄλλαι ὑποσχέσεις καὶ κανόνες ἴδιοι, ἱστορίας δὲ ἄλλοι. ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἄκρατος ἢ ἔλευθερία καὶ νόμος εἷς – τὸ δόξαν τῷ ποιητῇ' (8. 3-4). History does not tolerate any lies (7. 20: *ἡ δὲ οὐκ ἂν τι ψεῦδος ἐμπεσὼν ἢ ἱστορία, οὐδὲ ἀκαριαῖον ἀνάσχοιτο*). Lucian, on the other hand, especially accentuates that a good historian must have also an inherent talent of a narrator. It is thought to be an equal criterion of a good work (34. 1: *Φημί τοίνυν τὸν ἄριστα ἱστορίαν συγγράφοντα δύο μὲν ταῦτα κορυφαίωτατα οἴκοθεν ἔχοντα ἦκειν, σύνεσιν τε πολιτικὴν καὶ δύναμιν ἐρμηνευτικὴν*). It is hard to deny that Lucian had Polybius in mind while he was writing these words. Incidentally, Polybius himself agreed with the thought that a proper theme should be adequately narrated, but he gave a warning that the style of a work should not become the main goal of a historian (Plb. 16. 17. 9-11).

τὸν πυρετόν. ἐς γελοῖον δέ τι πάθος περίσιστα τὰς γνώμας αὐτῶν· ἅπαντες γὰρ ἐς τραγῳδίαν παρεκίνουν καὶ ἱαμβεῖα ἐφθέγγοντο καὶ μέγα ἐβῶν· μάλιστα δὲ τὴν Εὐριπίδου Ἀνδρομέδαν ἐμονώδουν καὶ τὴν τοῦ Περσέως ῥῆσιν ἐν μέλει διεξήεσαν, καὶ μεστή ἦν ἡ πόλις ὠχρῶν ἀπάντων καὶ λεπτῶν τῶν ἐβδομαίων ἐκείνων τραγῳδῶν,

81 5. 7-23: ἴν', εἴ ποτε πόλεμος ἄλλος συσταίῃ, ἢ Κελτοῖς πρὸς Γέτας ἢ Ἰνδοῖς πρὸς Βακτρούς (οὐ γὰρ πρὸς ἡμᾶς γε τολμήσειεν ἂν τις, ἀπάντων ἤδη κεχειρωμένων) ἔχωσιν ἄμεινον συντιθέναι τὸν κανόνα τοῦτον προσάγοντες,

82 9. 12: ἐν γὰρ ἔργον ἱστορίας καὶ τέλος, τὸ χρήσιμον, ὅπερ ἐκ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς μόνου συνάγεται.

83 8. 3-4: ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἄκρατος ἢ ἔλευθερία καὶ νόμος εἷς – τὸ δόξαν τῷ ποιητῇ.

In modern days, the first ones to talk about the relations between tragedy and historiography were the critics from the Renaissance. They stressed the similarities between the themes and contents of the two genres, and regretted that playwrights, in admiration of historical fable, tended to forget the importance of their genre and without paying heed to the canon of tragedy, gave in to the narrative suggestion.⁸⁴ Similar tendency in theoretical thought continued later and was well concluded by Diderot, who in 1759, in his *Discours sur la poésie dramatique* said that history is the basis of drama, and, although poetry is often likened to painting, it would be more appropriate to liken it to history.⁸⁵ This tradition has continued to this day.⁸⁶

So it would be more efficient to consider the discourse of 'tragic history' in the broader context of the development of Greek historiographical thought and the search for the identity of genre rather than in the context of the Greek literary theory. History *vs* poetry topic came to be a *τόπος κοινός* starting already from Thucydides; after Aristotle it took a history *vs* tragedy form. There are no solid proofs that such a subgenre did exist. As to the definition of the so called 'tragic style' in history, it seems to be in many cases a value judgement, easily used in the polemic against other historians in order to prove one's own reputation of authority, and, as the examples treated above show, sometimes has nothing to do with real text.

Nijole Juchnevičienė
Associate Professor of Classics
Vilnius University
Lithuania

84 For details, see Driver (1967) 4-5.

85 Diderot (1759) 201-203 and (1771) 267-269.

86 See Hayden White (1973) for tragedy as a historiographical archetypal story form of the 19th century Europe.

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