

## **Abstract**

A thorough analysis of Greco-Roman contemporary historiography reveals a clear set of essential conventions defining the genre. These conventions establish the reader's expectations of the text, creating boundaries that both guide and limit possible interpretations. Further, innovation within and sometimes across these boundaries have shaped conventions and thus the genre over time. Assessing such innovations within a text helps the reader identify lines of influence between historians, figuratively building a family tree of contemporary historiography in which literary relationships help further define the reader's expectations of the text. Properly locating a historical narrative within that family tree respects the historical and literary context of the text and enables the reader to develop a hermeneutic that reflects the unique text and context of the narrative.

Applying the same process to the book of Acts demonstrates not only its most appropriate location within the family of contemporary historiography but also indicates the conventions and innovations guiding its composition. Assessing how both these conventions and influences function within the text illuminates the boundaries placed by the text on possible interpretations, which in turn suggests profitable avenues for developing a robust hermeneutic that is uniquely suited to Acts.

***Literary Families and Ancient Hermeneutics:  
Acts and Greco-Roman Contemporary Historiography***

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## Chapter 1

### Framing the Discussion

The growing consensus that Acts is indeed a work of history<sup>1</sup> leads in turn to the question of where Acts fits within the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition, and what the implications of understanding that tradition are for interpreting the book of Acts. The original readers of Greco-Roman historical texts understood that a particular hermeneutic was required to properly interpret and appreciate historical narratives. In other words, these accounts not only obey certain conventions and display a consistent praxis in execution (within a range of acceptability) but assume a specific set of expectations on the part of the reader—expectations that include both a distinct hermeneutic directing how they may be read as well as accepted horizons of understanding that govern their interpretation.

Applying this historical literary paradigm to the book of Acts requires first situating Acts within the larger world of classical history. Next, the common parameters of interpretation must be assessed—that is, describing the conventions, expectations, and actual praxis held in common within the family of texts that both inform and limit their common hermeneutic. Finally, these parameters will be applied to the book of Acts, assessing in turn both fit to those conventions and, eventually, hermeneutical implications that may emerge from their use in the narrative.

It must be noted from the outset that this language of “common” may appear somewhat misleading and fail to take into consideration the diversity that exists not between authors but even within a given author's total body of work. However, it is possible and even

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1. Thomas E. Phillips, “The Genre of Acts: Moving Toward a Consensus?” *CBR* 4.3 (2006): 365–96.

essential to draw the basic outlines of these criteria to demonstrate where traditions do exist and are followed—and where these traditions are blatantly flouted in favor of innovation.

Developing a reading strategy historically appropriate for Acts requires first understanding that the author of Acts positions Luke-Acts within the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition. He signals the genre of his account by means of his preface(s) (Luke 1.1-4; Acts 1.1-2) and other cues. These cues indicate that he not only follows the conventions of classical historiography but that he also offers the view of a historian contemporary to the events he relates and should be read according to the particular conventions and expectations governing that subgenre of Hellenistic histories.<sup>2</sup>

### **Framing the Problem**

Based on this identification of Acts as Hellenistic history, the current project will develop a reading strategy for the Acts account that is reflective of both the conventions and practices of Greco-Roman historiographers. Developing such a paradigm requires appropriately analyzing the narrative in terms of its overall fit within the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition. For this reason, analysis of the Greco-Roman literature precedes any analysis of Acts.

### **Defining the Terms**

Before embarking on such a process it is essential to clarify any issues that may cloud the horizon. It may be helpful to address the most basic terms first. For example, the basic step of defining the *reader* in modern literary terms is a very different step when considering the Greco-Roman concept of a reader, given that questions such as these were not high-priority concerns for classical authors, most of whom thought in terms of audiences rather than readers. Many Hellenistic literary works, both poetry and prose, offer a dedication in

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2. See below and chapters 3-5 for a fuller treatment of the contemporary historians, both Greek and Roman.

their prologues to a particular individual for either personal or political reasons. For example, Josephus dedicates his *Antiquities* to an Epaphroditus (*Ant.* 1.8ff), Cicero dedicates *De Natura Deorum* to his friend Brutus (1.1), and Quintilian dedicates his *Institutio Oratoria* to his friend Marcellus (1.6). In terms of political dedications, Vitruvius names Augustus in the dedication of his *De Architectura* and Pliny names Titus in the dedication of his *Historia Naturalis*.

Thus Hellenistic authors often had a very specific, real audience in mind, and this was often an individual whom they wished to persuade, impress, inform, or flatter.<sup>3</sup> However, Hellenistic authors were realists as well. They understood that others in addition to their particular target audience would read their work, and for this reason they often included information or arguments unnecessary for their target audience but also important to clearly communicate their point to a larger audience.<sup>4</sup> This larger audience may be termed an *ideal audience*: a readership of peers competent in the subject matter and sympathetic (or at least, open-minded) to the author's perspective. For history, this would be the author's perspective on or interpretation of events and people.<sup>5</sup>

The text, as used forthwith regarding both classical literature and the biblical text of Acts, is simply the final form of the text. Questions of traditional source criticism of either biblical or classical texts will not enter into the discussion unless those questions bring a clearer understanding of the larger issues at stake; thus assessment of sources will be

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3. Often the dedication named a patron or a potential patron. The author seems to hope that his work will gain the approval of the target individual and either commence or strengthen a patronage relationship. See Pieter J. J. Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity* (Performance Biblical Criticism Series; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 123–24.

4. For example, Quintilian includes significant amounts of elementary material that would surely have been unnecessary or even redundant to Marcellus. Works dedicated to political entities (especially to emperors) demonstrate this dual readership as well. The authors expected that their works would circulate through their peerage and through the peerage of their dedicatee. See Botha, *Orality and Literacy*, 123–26.

5. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 130.



included where these intersect with demonstrations of the author's methodology and approach to source theory.

The theoretical approach outlined thus far clearly privileges the author and his context as the most appropriate location for deriving meaning of the text. Yet it is only fair to ask if this is even a legitimate enterprise. Is it valid to seek the meaning of a text, to ground its interpretation, in the intention of the author?

### **The Question of Meaning: Epistemology and Hermeneutics**

In order to address this question adequately one must start behind the question of textual meaning and ask first where meaning itself is found. If meaning is found only in the subjective consciousness<sup>6</sup> and must be fully replicated in another's experience in order to consider the communication of that meaning effective, then seeking meaning outside of one's subjective experience of a discourse or text is irrelevant: a single subjective internal experience is simply non-replicable—in terms of perfect replication—in either an objective format or in the subject consciousness of another person.<sup>7</sup> If, then, the subjective consciousness is the location of meaning, language is inherently indeterminate, for meaning cannot be fully communicated via language and thus no instance of language in use will always mean the same thing in each use.<sup>8</sup> Modern literary approaches like deconstructionism and reader-response celebrate such an indeterminate quality of texts.<sup>9</sup>

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6. This issue was brought to life in Umberto Eco's authorial experience of the reader reception of work; see *Umberto Eco, Foucault's Pendulum* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989). See also Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (New York: Cambridge, 1992), 80. E.D. Hirsch provides a more prosaic explanation of the perspective; see E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1967), 15–16, 39–40.

7. Hirsch Jr., *Validity*, 39.

8. For example, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1976), 157 and Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (eds. Richard Macksey and Eugene Donato; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1970), 264.

9. This is especially true of reader-response criticism (Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* [Cambridge: Harvard University, 1980], 251–67), deconstructionism (Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," 264), and post-structuralism (Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 38–40, 84–88).

However, this lack of boundaries in meaning creates a nearly insurmountable hazard to practical communication.

If instead meaning may be communicated without requiring a perfect replication of its fullness, if meaning may be sufficiently, effectively communicated as a reasonable approximation of a subjective internal experience,<sup>10</sup> then the process of interpretation is that process of communicating—to the best of one's ability—the sensation and conceptual reality of that experience.<sup>11</sup> To do this requires language, and the meaning—or the intended meaning—of the speaker is privileged over the received understanding of his or her audience. Thus we speak of miscommunication, when the speaker intends one meaning but is understood to communicate a different meaning (Or the significance the audience attaches to the communication is so different from the author's intended meaning that the communication may be practically considered to have failed in its purpose).

This is a practical and realistic theory of meaning and communication, for no one (outside of purely artistic or literary communication<sup>12</sup>) celebrates the reception of a meaning

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10. Hirsch Jr., *Validity*, 39–40.

11. It is important to note here the implications of Hirsch's differentiation between significance and meaning. Hirsch links *meaning* to that which the author seeks to communicate, while *significance* indicates the “interpreter's response” or the meaning she receives from the text. The significance of a text, then, may change from reading to reading and reader to reader, yet its meaning remains constant. In this way, a reading of the text may be affirmed as a reader's experience of the words, yet the meaning of the text remains in a sense protected by its first-order link to the author. The current study follows this distinction in that discussions of “meaning” reflect this author-bound relationship of meaning to text. See Hirsch Jr., *Validity*, 39–44. See also Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 137.

12. The groundbreaking essay by William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” (see William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* [William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley; Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954], 3–20) asserts the impossibility of ascertaining, or even validly discussing, an author's intended meaning. Their thesis swept literary circles and was soon applied to many different types of literature, to the extent that virtually no written text could withstand the claim that even speaking of the author's intent was indeed a fallacy. However, Wimsatt and Beardsley's essay concerns poetry and the inherent instability of meaning in a genre that prioritizes art over direct communication and celebrates polyvalency, inversion, reader interaction and interpretation, and mystery like poetry does. Their arguments simply are not entirely valid for all other forms of literature, especially those with strong traditions of authorial cues guiding the reader toward a specific interpretation. Their basic thesis, however, does encourage some caution before definitively settling on “the meaning” of a text, knowing that the written text may both act as a guide to its own interpretation and an obstacle to understanding when the reader suffers from an incomplete knowledge of how to approach that particular type of text. In this case, building an appropriate reading paradigm is essential

different from that which was intended. Our experience of language and communication teaches us to continually seek the closest possible match between the meaning we perceive internally and subjectively, that which we communicate, and that which we perceive our audience to understand. This is the effective transfer of meaning, from a practical perspective.

And this is true of either spoken or written communication. Yet here another difficulty arises: while the distance between speaker and audience may be closed via verbal response and verification, that between text and reader may feel infinite, especially in the case of ancient texts that not only remove the physical presence of the author but place a seemingly insurmountable chasm of time, culture, and even language between them. Even worse, the authors of many ancient texts are nearly completely inaccessible, for either very little is known of the author outside of his writing or—irreversible tragedy—the author has disappeared and the authorship is left completely anonymous.

Is the text, then, simply cut adrift and left to ride the currents of a sea of indeterminacy,<sup>13</sup> blown by the winds of reader tendencies and community readings?<sup>14</sup> Or is there a legitimate anchor to which we may safely moor our hermeneutical boat? The answer to this question lies again behind the problem, in the concept of meaning. Meaning is a subjective inner reality, one that is reduced to language and communicated in a best

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for picking up on the cues a text provides regarding its interpretation. See Hirsch Jr., *Validity*, 10–19. Philip Esler reflects this distinction when he describes the New Testament as a “practical” text, one that exists to communicate a message, as opposed to “literary” texts that prioritize the aesthetic and artistic over communication of a specific message (Philip F. Esler, *New Testament Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005], 93–97). Difficulty arises, however, when the text in question occupies the liminal space between practical and literary, when it is meant to communicate a message yet do so artistically. When both art and message are prioritized, how can the reader know which is at the forefront at a given time? It is a complex issue, yet the best response continues to point to context. In this case, literary context may provide a model for tracing the interactions of convention and reality, message and art, thereby providing the reader with a basic framework that gives shape and direction to his reading of a text. See also Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 134, 136.

13. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976), 30.

14. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* 320–21.

approximation of the original experience, and inferred and interpreted again to a best approximation by the audience or reader. It is significant to note here that meaning is thus bound to the speaker. However, meaning is also deeply inflected by the world of the speaker, by her experiences, her beliefs, her culture, her education . . . all those elements that shape, inspire, and restrain one's conceptual world.

Yet knowledge of these elements serves not only to create meaning but also to decipher it. These, then, become guidelines that the audience uses in face-to-face discourse, guidelines that help the audience limit the possible array of meanings in order to land on the most likely, best approximation of the author's intended meaning.<sup>15</sup> These guidelines—these elements—may be summed up in one word: context. The contexts of time, place, and situation bear on the hermeneutical process, as do inner-discourse contexts of the discourse as a whole. And of course the audience uses knowledge of the speaker—her character, her background, her opinions and convictions as known to the audience, her history of action and of speaking—to limit the likely meanings of the discourse and to inform and guide the process of narrowing these down to the most likely option(s).<sup>16</sup> Context thus provides unspoken answers to unspoken questions in the hermeneutical process, questions the audience may not even be aware of asking. The more the audience knows and understands the context of the author and discourse, the more clearly these may serve as guidelines and boundaries in the hermeneutical process.<sup>17</sup>

Now even without an author physically present to answer spoken questions of meaning and intent, context remains fully alive in the world of text. However, the greater the distance between author and audience, the more difficult it is to fully recreate the context originally shared by author and audience. This is no lost cause, however. Firmly situating a text within its historical milieu, understanding its political and cultural realities, becoming

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15. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 119.

16. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 126, 135.

17. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 135.

familiar not only with the other texts that comprise its literary heritage but also with those texts that are its literary neighbors: this is the process of recreating the world of the text and, by extension, of the author. When the author is known, recreating the history of his life, his beliefs, his character, and his reputation populates this world with rich detail and drama. Each piece of the puzzle offers the opportunity to read the text anew, using each piece to inform the reading of the whole, gaining a clearer picture each time in a process of successively limiting the most likely options toward a best approximation of the author's intended meaning.<sup>18</sup>

There is, then, a legitimate anchor to which we may moor our hermeneutical boat, and it is in fact possible for a modern reader of ancient texts to discuss meaning in terms of authorial intent.<sup>19</sup> But the historical world of events, people and texts must be recreated as fully as possible in order to most nearly approximate the contexts, the horizons of meaning shared by both author and original audience. These are the elements that inform both the writing and interpretation of the text. When the author is anonymous or very little is known about him, the world of the text is where the reader must start.<sup>20</sup> And fundamental to understanding the world of the text is understanding the literary world in which the text was born and discerning its place within that world. To this end, issues of genre and literary tradition come to the fore.

## **Genre**

Beyond questions of reader and text—and the significantly more complex issues of epistemology and hermeneutics—lies the immense realm of genre, specifically here the genre of history. Exploring these issues is a worthwhile venture, and particularly so in the context of the book of Acts. If Acts truly is a historical document,<sup>21</sup> its text must be read and

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18. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 126.

19. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 140.

20. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 141.

21. See below for a discussion of Acts as historiography.

analyzed not only as Scripture but also as historical text. Reading Acts as Scripture without taking into consideration its historical nature produces an incomplete reading that is not grounded on the bedrock of original historical context. As Scripture, a spiritual understanding of the text is not incorrect, merely incomplete, and dangerously so without the guidance and boundaries an understanding of the original context provides. As a historical document, the text deserves also a historically appropriate interpretation, one that takes into consideration its literary, cultural, and historical context. This is true not only for the narrative sections of Acts but for the discourse sections as well. Like the stories, the speeches of Acts should be read according to their particular literary and rhetorical context in addition to their Scriptural context. The following chapters will seek to clarify that context and build a reading strategy based on comparisons to other contemporary historiographies. This will enable us to develop a historically competent understanding of the text.

In addition, this thorough grounding in Greco-Roman historiographical convention and practice will not only properly inform one's reading of Acts and provide helpful guidance for interpretation but will also resist the distortion that occurs when a historically naive reader assumes modern categories, methods, or concepts may apply equally well to ancient texts.<sup>22</sup> Simple terminology proves a stumbling block of just such proportions. Critical concepts such as genre, history, historicity, rhetoric, and even text and reader must be engaged from a critical historical perspective in order to assess what may prove valuable to the modern reader of ancient history as well as what may be detrimental to a historical reading of the text.

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22. For a brief but excellent treatment of this problem, see Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 100–108. See also Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) for a detailed defense of Luke's historical accuracy within the context of Hellenistic conventions regarding historiography. In addition, see the following chapter for a more in-depth discussion of the history of scholarship regarding these issues.

Thus a theoretical ground must be laid from the outset: one that critically assesses both modern and ancient constructs of these key concepts, allowing the historical constructs to engage and even redefine or challenge (as appropriate) modern assumptions in order to develop a thoughtful, historically aware and appropriate critical mindset with which to approach ancient historical texts, Acts included. In fact, the case for such an approach is even more pressing in the case of Acts because of the work's complex and, for many, troubling status as both history and Scripture.

Underpinning all of these issues is the concept of genre and its proper identification. Essentially, genre is the classification of a text into a family of texts with similar characteristics. However, genre is not simply a helpful tool for identifying a text but also provides much-needed guidance to the reader: by observing the author's cues, the reader is able to anticipate not only stylistic elements but also story arcs and themes common to the genre. In short, genre “functions as a set of expectations”<sup>23</sup> that guide the reader in how to interpret the text.

Because these authorial cues are essential to understanding a given text, no text may be labeled *sui generis* simply because there would be no generic expectations to guide interpretation.<sup>24</sup> And without appropriate cues to guide interpretation, the text lacks intelligible meaning: the reader is lost in a labyrinth without map or signposts to indicate the true path toward the center. For this reason, a text must function within a recognized genre (in a very real sense, it must come equipped with at least a rudimentary, recognizable map) in order to be accepted and understood by its audience.

The implications of this for the author are also quite real: in order to confidently communicate his message, the author must invoke the essential shape of the genre that will cue the expectations his reader needs in order to correctly interpret the text. For example,

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23. Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (New York: Cambridge University, 1992), 53.

24. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 53.

dressing history as fantasy is not the most effective way to communicate one's account of the past,<sup>25</sup> as the audience will simply fail to take the work seriously. Thus genre is an unspoken pact between author and reader, a shared agreement that the meaning and the intent of the author may best be understood when the genre he or she cues is in fact used to guide the reader's interpretation of the text.<sup>26</sup>

Understanding genre in this light—as an agreement between author and reader—also implies that each text must be studied in light of contemporary works. Because genre is a developed construct that becomes a tacit hermeneutical agreement between author and reader, only literary works and generic categories that actually existed in the world of the author and his original reader(s) may be validly applied to a given text. In other words, modern readers cannot competently engage or interpret Greco-Roman literature, including history, as though it is modern literature.<sup>27</sup> Neither claiming modern genres for ancient texts nor applying modern definitions of shared genre titles is a valid exercise: ancient texts must be understood on their own ground, in their own literary atmosphere. The literary theory and generic conventions of modern and ancient worlds are simply too different. The modern map cannot solve the ancient labyrinth.<sup>28</sup>

In the same way, identifying existing genres must also be based on observation. It is the ancient literary world that identifies the genres at work within its boundaries, and thus the

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25. Unless that account is an avant-garde commentary on society, in which case it must conform to a very different set of generic expectations or risk leaving its cleverness unappreciated!

26. See footnote 11 regarding Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy".

27. Meaning, either textual or in spoken discourse, is fundamentally bound to the speaker (or author). Attempting to interpret a text according to modern literary approaches is simply replacing the original context that guides interpretation with a modern context that is completely unrelated to the original historical experience of either author or text. This is a case of forcing an interception of dislocated hermeneutical horizons and, as such, is guided by the reader more than by either text or context. See the previous discussion of epistemology and hermeneutics for a more in-depth discussion of these issues.

28. However, completely abandoning modern understanding of narrative and linguistics would also be folly. A careful assessment of modern literary tools yields a plethora of methods, theories, and just ideas that offer helpful insights into structure, style, language, and other aspects of the text. What must be avoided is the uncritical application of modern concepts and methods to historical texts. Thoughtful, reasoned adaption, though, has great potential for revealing, clarifying, and expressing new understandings of ancient texts.



role of the modern reader (and especially the trained historian) is descriptive, not prescriptive.<sup>29</sup> Even when ancient and modern genres share similar names, structures, or themes, the modern reader must remain aware of the fundamental differentness of the ancient mindset and avoid blundering into literary anachronisms.<sup>30</sup> Every element of the genre must be questioned and tested, not in a hypercritical attitude but in a quest to understand—not assume—how the ancient authors themselves thought of the pieces and of the whole. Issues of convention (what they wrote about literature) as well as praxis (how they actually wrote literature) are both significant sources for understanding their perspectives. And areas of disagreement, be they between authors or between the conventions dictated by an author and his praxis, are just as important, if not more so, than are areas of agreement. Combining the two adds depth, nuance, and life to an otherwise flat and sterile description of what a particular genre looks like and how it acts or functions.

The work of discovering the particular genre family to which a text belongs requires more practical detailed observation as well. Broadly speaking, both internal and external features are useful in identifying the genre of a given text.<sup>31</sup> Interesting elements and characteristics add to the quality and intrigue of a text but do not determine its genre. The external features include such structural elements as titles, prefaces, and closing formulae. Internal features include the actual content of the work, especially its plot, focalization, themes, and style. Again, texts which share similar features become recognized by their contemporaries as belonging to a particular family—or genre—of writing, and these features

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29. René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982 reprint of 1963 edition), 225–26, 262–62.

30. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 100: “It is anachronistic to assume that ancient and modern histories share all the same generic features (e.g., the way speeches should be composed) merely because we employ the same term today to describe them. Thus those who evaluate Acts’ historical details only according to modern standards, whether to defend or to condemn them, themselves risk distorting the historical task.”

31. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 126.

create the shared expectations mentioned above that guide a reader's interpretation of the text.

At this point it is also valuable to distinguish between modes and genres. A given text may function within various modes yet belong to a very different genre. For example, comedic mode does not demand comedy as the genre.<sup>32</sup> It is the larger shape, whole content, and key structural elements that offer the best and most stable clues to a text's genre.

The relationship of mode to genre also leads to one final issue: a generic label always identifies the entire text as a single genre. Sections of the text that function in different ways or contain different themes do not, of course, receive a generic label of their own within the larger body of work to which they belong. A tragic excursus such as Thucydides' pathos-imbued account of the plagues (*History* 1.117) is not described as a tragedy within his history; this is instead a section of his history that is written in a tragic mode yet remains history and part of the unified work.

This may seem an unnecessary caveat, but will hopefully alleviate some potential confusion later, as some modes within a genre (particularly that of speeches within narrative) may be seen to have recognized, accepted features that form an intrinsic part of the work yet require unique reading and interpretive strategies in much the same way as do genres themselves. In addition, the language used to describe these modes and their particular qualities and demands may echo the language used in discussions of genre. However, all modes function solely within the larger text in which they are found, and close observation reveals the complex structural and thematic ties between the modes and the unified whole that disprove any thought of the mode's independence from that whole. Thus regardless of the mode, the text's genre remains stable, and those portions of the text

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32. For an excellent discussion of these issues, especially as they relate to ancient concepts of genre, see Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 26–53 and Gian Biagio Conte, *Generi e Lettori: Saggi Su Lucrezio, l'Elegia d'Amore, l'Enciclopedia Di Plinio* (Milan, Italy: Mondadori, 1991), 188–90.

written in different modes remain generically constant, upholding the text's generic identity.

### **Historiography, History, and Historicity**

As a genre, *history* may be etymologically defined as an account of the past: events, people, or situations that actually took place in the past. Telling the story of the past implies narrative, at least as the main literary vehicle, making history a written narrative about past events, people, or situations.<sup>33</sup> *Historiography* is the study of history, particularly the processes, strategies, and purposes of writing history.

Being a written account, history is also a form of literature, one that requires a very particular interpretive approach of the reader, for it is not simply literature but also claims to provide a reliable account of past events. History tells the story of past events—or does it? This is the question of historicity: how true, faithful, or accurate is the written account to the actual events of the past? Yet is historicity a question of truth, faithfulness, or accuracy—or all, or none of these? And what do these descriptions really mean? The answers to these questions depend on the text and the author, and also in large part on the historical tradition both belong to. For this reason it is critical to assess each text on its own merits, within its own cultural and literary context.

However, the process of identifying the specific tradition to which a text belongs already assumes a basic competence in historiography on the part of the reader. In the same way that the details of a painting carry the greatest meaning when seen in relation to the larger brush strokes that provide their context (and boundaries), the details of differences and similarities between historical traditions may be difficult to see and carry little meaning—much less hermeneutical help—without a broader view of the tendencies of history as a genre against which to compare them.<sup>34</sup>

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33. John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 3.

In his quest to find a more pragmatic and yet flexible definition of history, John Van Seters analyzes examples of historical narratives from a variety of time periods and cultures. While his work is primarily directed toward use in Old Testament history, he expresses his observations at a fairly general level, suitable for just the sort of universal inquiry needed at the outset of a genre study. In addition, he draws out the implications of authorship in the process of writing history (in the sense of individual authorship versus community-driven oral tradition).

Van Seters observes that the act of writing the account makes history “a literate form of tradition, the product of literacy”<sup>35</sup> and thus more permanent in its produced form than its oral cousin. It is a created account, the product of an individual author's investigation and interpretation, and once written becomes its own tradition,<sup>36</sup> a unique and intentional perspective on the past. It may share in traditions and perspectives common to its community of origin, but the act of writing filters these traditions and perspectives through the vision of one author, shaping the final account into something more or other than community tradition.

The role of the author thus goes beyond simple reporting: even the choices of what to include and how to order the account are at heart interpretive decisions. The very act of choosing which events, people, or situations to relate is in fact an act of interpretive guidance.<sup>37</sup> The author chooses what she writes about because she considers it significant, and her account will seek to convince the reader of that significance. The result of this

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34. Granted, fictional speeches may seem as realistic or true to life as a historical speech and may be equally meaningful, yet understanding the nuances and tendencies within a given genre enable the reader to draw more far-reaching conclusions regarding the metaphysical and theoretical aspects of the text (such as source theory and issues of the author's world view) as well as guide interpretation toward avenues that would not be considered if not for a recognition of how the author plays upon the texts of his own literary world. A fuller discussion of the real ramifications of generic competency may be found in chapters 3-6 in the context of analyses of the texts and synthesis of their patterns into a reading model.

35. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 3.

36. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 4.

37. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 69.

deliberation may be seen either subtly or overtly as the author, through the text, “considers the reason for recalling the past and the significance given to past events.”<sup>38</sup> The text's internal debate or argument for significance provides cues to the reader, telling him how to interpret the events of the past.

In addition to arguing for the meaning and significance of the past, history is also deeply invested in describing and arguing for the causes of past events. Past events are significant to the present only insofar as they implicate current events or situations, and thus the issue of causation is born. The events of the past caused contemporary conditions, and the trail of causation frequently backs up beyond the past events under purview as the author explains what caused the past events in their turn as well.

Van Seters observes that for ancient authors, causation was primarily identified in moral terms of responsibility and character.<sup>39</sup> The fates of cities and empires could be traced back to the characters of their leaders, incidentally making excellent case studies for the improvement of readers' characters as well. Thus causation and morality become entwined, and even more in Van Seter's final observation on historical texts: “History writing is national or corporate in character. Therefore, merely reporting the deeds of the king may be only biographical unless these are viewed as part of the national history.”<sup>40</sup> Ancient historians were concerned with the ebb and flow of major forces in their worlds, and tracing the impact of each back to its starting impetus. Biography was not unknown, but this same drive for revealing significance avoided the interests of the common man in favor of themes and influences that gave meaning to the world and held—or could be argued to hold—true significance for author and reader. Biography or even characterization are thus not

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38. John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1983), 5.

39. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 5.

40. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 5.

intrinsically valuable but are evaluated in terms of their usefulness to the account as a whole.

For this reason, a descriptive approach to identifying history observes the author's role in shaping the account and interpreting events; his tendency toward narrative; his interest in establishing lines of causation and in exploring their results; his tendency to highlight the role of morality in both causation and in interpretation of events; and his prioritization of the corporate over the individual. Each of these features builds upon the others to make a solid case for the genre of a given text. Once the genre is identified, the reader's expectations are established and she embarks on reading the text within the interpretive boundaries she associates with that genre.

Yet this process is by and large a subconscious one, and genre is usually instinctively recognized without being formally, consciously identified by the reader at the outset of reading the text. So when the original context is dislocated from the reader by time and/or culture, how does the reader identify the genre of the text with any confidence? The answer lies in the peers of the original author, in the readers and authors contemporary to the original work. Because genre is linked to a specific culture and history, the most competent readers available to the modern historian are those located in the time and culture of the original author. How did his contemporaries read his text? How did the following generation or two (those being closest in cultural and literary context) read and respond to the work? Appealing to the author's contemporaries underscores how utterly essential it is to take a text on its own merits, in its own time, without uncritically imputing to it any modern theories or concepts, regardless of any apparent similarities.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 86. While Keener admits that "there are considerable similarities, the ranges overlap, and modern analogies evolved from these ancient forms," he also states rather conclusively, "But conventions differed, and only those who have done little reading in the ancient sources will simply equate ancient and modern historiography." (100).

Having examined the theoretical foundations of genre studies and, in particular, of history as a genre, the focus narrows further to the Greco-Roman tradition of history. Perhaps, though, it may be more precise to speak of Greco-Roman traditions in plural, for Greco-Roman history can hardly be lumped together under one roof without violent disagreement and vitriol between authors. Yet it is that disagreement and those outbursts of polemic and innovation that created precisely the right literary atmosphere to birth the Acts of the Apostles and that produced the literary evidence needed to interpret the text according to the appropriate branch of tradition and within the family of Greco-Roman history to which it belongs.

### **Greco-Roman History**

But what exactly makes up this family of Greco-Roman history, and who decides which authors are in or out? According to the process outlined above, it is the readers who are contemporaries (or near-contemporaries) of the author and his text who locate that text within a specific genre. There is no official arbiter of genres; there is only a contemporary consensus on the issue, a shared recognition of what to expect and how to read the text. While there may be disagreement regarding how well various authors fulfilled the expectations of the genre (disagreements both ancient and modern!), there is surprisingly little debate—especially among ancient authors themselves<sup>42</sup>—regarding which texts are intended and should be read as history.

The primary reason for this general agreement is the use of cues within the texts that signal a specific frame of interpretation. These cues are simply features that have become so common to a particular genre that when the reader finds them in the text she instinctively locates the text within that genre.

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42. Even in polemic, criticizing the publications of other historians, there remains the undercurrent of understanding that the criticism would be groundless if these texts were not, in fact, historiography: e.g., see Polybius on Timaeus (*Histories*, 12).

Content is, of course, by far the most obvious cue: the text tells the story of past events, claiming a true accounting and focusing on issues of cause and effect and on the personalities that drove the events. The structure of the work is another such cue. Prefaces are often used to introduce the historical situation and provide some overview of its causes and significance.<sup>43</sup> Sidebar discussions or the occasional excursus are often structurally significant ways to insert the narrator's voice, opinions, and interpretation of events, character flaws, decisions, or causes (Polybius, *Histories* 1.14-15, 35; 2.56-63; 3.6-9; also Tacitus, *Ann.* 21-33). Conclusions that state the moral lesson the reader should learn from the text or that sum up the causes, results, or significance of the events are another structural element common to Greco-Roman history.<sup>44</sup> In addition, stylistic cues such as mimetic casting of past events in terms or in a narrative frame reminiscent of the works of past historical masters<sup>45</sup> effectively urge the reader to treat the current text as they would the historical text it reflects. John Marincola provides a succinct, very basic description of how some of these common elements work together to produce a recognized type of text, one that is instinctively read as history:

Now historical narrative, as it first appears in Herodotus and continues to Ammianus (and beyond), is a largely third-person account that employs some element of creative imitation or representation (mimesis) to portray the actions, thoughts, intentions, and words of characters who are presumed, with more or less certainty to have really existed and acted so.<sup>46</sup>

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43. For example, the prologues in Thucydides, *Peloponnesian Wars*, Herodotus, *Histories*; Polybius, *Histories*; Livy, *History of Rome*.

44. Plutarch's *Lives* is overtly structured in terms of moral lessons, while Tacitus' *Agricola* offers moral lessons that feel today very like political lessons instead (*Agricola* 42, 44-46).

45. Compare Thucydides' prologue to that of Herodotus (John Marincola, *Greek Historians* [Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics.31; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 1); also ; compare Livy's *History* to Virgil and thence to Homer; and compare the style of Sallust to that of Thucydides (A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, OR: Areopagitica Press, 1988), 127), and from thence to Tacitus (A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus Reviewed* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998], 22).

46. John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 6.



While it is predominantly the formal features such as structure and content that cue genre identification, there are three elements that together have strongly defined the character of Hellenistic history without necessarily receiving the same level of attention as these other, more well-known features. These three elements are tradition, innovation, and rhetoric, and it is to these and their influence that we now turn.

### Appeals to Tradition in Greco-Roman History

In a very real sense, any discussion of literary tradition overlaps with discussions of genre in significant ways. After all, literary tradition is the accumulation over time of texts that build cultural literary knowledge regarding content and style for different types of texts, and—as a result—regarding appropriate expectations for those texts as well. These are the same core issues that so strongly guide the development and recognition of genre. Understanding and performing competently within a literary tradition is—from a very pragmatic perspective—a matter of knowing and allowing those expectations and guidelines to guide the reading process and determine the interpretive strategy one applies to the text.

Recognizing the overlap in the concepts of genre and tradition is significant to the current discussion because of the unusual way in which Greco-Roman historians appeal to their historiographic literary tradition. It is true that the appeal to tradition is a key element that establishes how the author intends his work to be read. Yet the use of literary tradition within Greco-Roman histories goes far beyond simply locating the text within its appropriate genre.

The historian's appeal to tradition answers a unique need within history. John Marincola's study of these appeals argues that while the epic or novel simply tells a story—be it based on history or not—the historian claims a faithful recounting and true interpretation of actual past situations, people, or events.<sup>47</sup> For this account and

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47. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 6–7.

interpretation to prove persuasive to his reader, the historian must be viewed as authoritative—not merely entertaining or instructive—from the outset. An appeal to tradition is a claim by the historian to identify with those authors that defined the genre and thus to wield their same authority: “A contemporary historian, in making Thucydidean claims for his subject, was clearly asking to be seen in the light of his predecessors.”<sup>48</sup> In the case of Greco-Roman history, then, an appeal to tradition “is itself a part of the historian's authority, for it is a shorthand used by the historian to identify his interests, approach, and alliances.”<sup>49</sup> It both seats the work within a particular strand of the genre and also acts to confirm the historian's authority as narrator and interpreter of the past.

It is clear that Greco-Roman historians fully appreciated how essential appropriate generic identification was to their craft and to the reception of their work. Their careful and artistic mimesis of previous historical masters demonstrates the value they placed on associating themselves with those masters and thus remaining solidly within an established and respected tradition.<sup>50</sup> Yet even a cursory reading of a few Hellenistic historians demonstrates their diversity in style, in structure, and even in content. How could such a strong desire to identify with the literary establishment also peacefully coexist with an evidently equally strong determination to innovate and blaze a trail in a different direction from what has been written before? The answer is found in the social dynamics of honor-shame agonistic societies.

### Innovation in the Midst of the *Agon*

Two major and, in this case, seemingly opposite cultural forces strongly shaped Greco-Roman society. First, both Greeks and Romans placed great value on antiquity. The antiquity

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48. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 263–64.

49. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 19.

50. See chapter 5 for a fuller treatment of the role of mimesis and tradition in classical historiography.

of an idea, a people, or a work was often its own validation.<sup>51</sup> This preference expressed itself not only in a strong drive toward preserving tradition and traditional approaches to many aspects of life—including literature—as well as an instinctive suspicion of sudden change.<sup>52</sup> Works which stood the test of time and endured became the standards for various arenas of writing.<sup>53</sup>

The second cultural force at work in Greco-Roman society and Hellenistic literature is simply the intense competition rooted in the shame-honor dynamic that undergirded and pervaded all Hellenistic cultures.<sup>54</sup> Honor and shame are the opposite sides of a single social force that shaped the Greco-Roman world in the first century. Honor here is not an individual's personal evaluation of herself, separate from world's opinion, but rather the individual's honor defined by and in relation to society.<sup>55</sup> The individualism of modern Western cultures obscures this community focus and identification of self within society. Yet for those living in the first century, honor and shame were the primary indicators of one's value, which was clearly defined with reference to the community. Thus the honor given to a landowner, for example, was a function of his perceived value and indicated his place in the society. Self-respect,<sup>56</sup> too, was shaped by the shame-honor continuum and was in its turn a

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51. For example, several ancient historians, including Jewish historians, appealed to the antiquity of their people as compared to Rome in order to enhance the reputation of their culture against that of Rome. See the works of Eupolemos and Artapanos, among others (Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* [SuppNT; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1992], 224–25). Even Diodorus Siculus, who is demonstrably anti-Semitic, evidences strong respect for the antiquity of Jewish origins (Diod. 1, 34).

52. This includes a change of character; see Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 159. Also, the sudden growth of Christianity was problematic in this regard: see Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 544.

53. Homer is, of course, the epitome of these past masterworks. His works set the standard for poetry and epic for both Greeks and Romans for thousands of years.

54. Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 25–66.

55. David Arthur deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 26–27.

56. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 25.

function of the respect—honor— shown him by other members of his community.

Thus honor was defined by the community and thus reflected the values of the community.<sup>57</sup> As its opposite, shame was a devaluing of an individual (or family) due to actions that ran contrary to group values. A loss of face could carry significant ramifications for one's standing on this continuum. It is difficult to overstate just how crucial reputation becomes in honor-based societies. An honorable reputation opens doors, both literal and figurative, providing both opportunity and further engagement with higher-status members of the community. A poor reputation can close doors and eliminate opportunities for both the individual and his family. In addition, because the honor/shame dynamic pervaded the entire culture, every interaction in every sphere of life brought either increased honor or increased shame and thus shaped the reality and future of a family.

When personal value and the future of the family are the stakes in this game, it is not surprising that the game becomes very competitive indeed. Be the game politics, battle, or words, honor is the coveted prize that goes to the winner, while the loser was heaped with shame. The inevitable result is that Hellenistic society was—at its very core—an agonistic society: Margaret Mitchell describes such cultures as “inherently dualistic and combative.”<sup>58</sup> In other words, individuals in such cultures naturally see the world in terms of opposing binaries. Social advancement requires earning honor by demonstrating not only one's rightful place on the “correct” or winning side, but also that all others in disagreement are on the “wrong” side, the losing side.

These two cultural forces—the inherent competition emerging out of the honor/shame dynamic and the prioritization of antiquity—resulted in constant competition that was conducted in accordance with traditions established in antiquity. On the one hand we find a

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57. Malina and Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts,” 27–30; Malina and Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts,” 27–30. See also deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 26.

58. Margaret Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2012), 26.

strong emphasis on *mimesis*, or imitation, of the works of previous generations. On the other hand the constant pressure of the *agon* placed authors in competition not just with one another (the competition of contemporaries) but also in competition with respected authors of antiquity. Yet the drive to prove oneself better than all others must in some way also submit to the demand to conform and follow those who have gone before.

The modern concept of imitation connotes an effort to duplicate the original work. In contrast, Hellenistic *mimesis*—this imitation within the *agon*—was more a creative homage to the original author and work, a montage of the well-known presented in an innovative way.<sup>59</sup> This could include not just style or structure but even methodological approach and perspective. For this reason *mimesis* became not simply copying the work, ideas, or methodology of a previous text—especially a particularly well written text—but at best improving upon it, in a sense beating the original author at his own game:

good imitation . . . was rather an understanding both of the general spirit of the original and of those things that were admirable in previous writers, whether they be choice of language, arrangement, attitude, or even the subject matter itself. . . . the writer must appropriate the spirit of his model or models and breathe new life into them, to show how something could be better done, or, if not better done, then well done in a different way.<sup>60</sup>

These two cultural forces—traditionalism and competition—strongly shaped the process of history writing in Hellenistic cultures. Traditionalism impeded any movement toward radical innovation while competition challenged authors of each generation to add something new, something uniquely their own: “to be incrementally innovative within a tradition” in such a way that both their homage and their creativity would be on display, a testament to the author's skill and traditionalism.<sup>61</sup>

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59. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 12.

The one arena in which competition ruled is that of polemic, which was freely applied to both one's predecessors and one's contemporaries.<sup>62</sup> Criticism, blame, or outright contradiction were all fair game and served to assert one author's authority, skill, or place in the literary tradition over and against his opponent. Of course, attacking a leader in the field had to be accomplished delicately or circumspectly (at the very least respectfully) but remained a completely valid and well-attested way to highlight one's unique contribution to history.

Clever polemic provided a clear path to shaming the opposition and accruing honor for oneself. But both criticism and homage, distance and *mimesis*, may indicate avenues of influence as well as literary distancing. In his *Histories*, Tacitus appears to follow a Sallustian model of historiography with his Thucydidean, nearly terse language and lack of elegant phrasing. Yet Tacitus very obviously fails to follow the philosophical cues Sallust develops, avoiding his predecessor's hopeful look toward the future of Roman values. Tacitus' demonstrably more pessimistic take on the Empire turns taciturn Sallustian style upside down, yet to the alert reader the homage is clear.<sup>63</sup> The combination of homage in style with a dramatic and pointed departure in tone demonstrates precisely the way traditionalism and competition wend around each other to create constant, subtle innovation between authors and, in the larger picture, within the genre.

Recognizing the reality and function of innovation within Greco-Roman history over time also significant impacts our modern view of the genre.<sup>64</sup> We may not speak of

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60. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 13–14.

61. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 14.

62. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 261.

63. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 167.

64. Even modern literature innovates constantly within its genre, extending this more fluid concept of genre across the centuries, with due allowance made for cultural and theoretical differences. See John Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation in Greco-Roman Historiography," in *The Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts* (ed. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus; Boston: Brill, 1999), 281–324 for a more extensive discussion of both modern and ancient generic categories.

Hellenistic genre (in particular) as an unchanging literary force with set methodology, perspective, or treatment but as a slowly moving and changing body of literature caught between the forces of tradition and innovation.<sup>65</sup> In fact, taking a page from Marincola's discussion of genre and innovation, genre may be best considered in terms of the relationship between what a text says and how it says it: content, structure, perspective, and style intermingle in particular ways to create patterns that, while constantly and subtly changing, nevertheless describe families of texts.<sup>66</sup>

Marincola's approach to genre has the benefit of remaining descriptive, not prescriptive of literature and literary families of texts. Instead of imposing rules regarding genre, the reader observes, assesses, and analyzes a given text according to its features, both structural and content. Only then do similarities and differences between the text under consideration and its contemporary literary traditions come to light, shedding light in turn on how the author wants his audience to read the text—in other words, which genre with its implicit hermeneutic suits the text best and should be used to help interpret the text.

Five factors within the text shape Marincola's assessment of its genre and its location within the literary tradition.<sup>67</sup> The most basic factors are whether the text is narrative or not and what comprises its subject matter. After these, then, more complex issues of focalization, chronological delimitation, and arrangement (especially its relationship to the account's chronology) come to the fore.

The account's subject matter offers vital information regarding genre (and the particular tradition within that genre) as well as clarifying the historian's intent and intended audience.<sup>68</sup> Focalization is most simply understood as the point of view at work in a given section or work; there may be more than one perspective in any given section, and the

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65. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 281.

66. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 282.

67. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 302.

68. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 306–8.

perspectives delineated may act as commentary on the narrator's own opinions and interpretation.<sup>69</sup> Chronological delimitation communicates more than simply the beginning and end of the story but also gives insight into what the narrator considers significant and provides clues toward how its meaning and, incidentally, how he intends the text to be interpreted (the text must be interpreted in light of the beginnings and endings the narrator provides).<sup>70</sup>

Analysis along these five vectors should by no means be used simply to assign a label, Marincola asserts, but should be seen

rather as a first step to understanding what the historian sees as relevant to the portrait of the past that he is attempting to create, and how the inclusion of such material in his work tries to mediate between that vision of the past and the present reality in which he finds himself. The form and content cannot be divorced from the context in which the work was produced, and the interplay of all of these factors must be considered in any evaluation of an historiographical work. Such an approach, it seems to me, better reflects the way the ancients themselves viewed the materials and methods available for an inquiry into the past, and will make it much less likely that we force ancient works into modern categories.<sup>71</sup>

This approach to genre implies a significantly more flexible and responsive reading of the text and, although Marincola does not overtly extend his approach in this direction, provides precisely the paradigm needed to analyze works within a genre with a view toward describing branches of tradition within that larger genre.<sup>72</sup> Implicit within Marincola's

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69. Jan Christoph Meister and Jörg Schönert, "The DNS of Mediacy," in *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization: Modeling Mediation in Narrative* (eds. Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 13–15. See also Simon Hornblower, "Narratology and Narrative Techniques in Thucydides," in *Greek Historiography* (ed. Simon Hornblower; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 134.

70. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 305.

71. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 309.

72. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 310.



analysis is a comparative element that assesses interactions between texts and allows the reader to trace lines of influence and response over time as well as between contemporaries.<sup>73</sup> This assessment is the first step toward identifying families of texts within a given genre.

These lines of influence and response may also—quite validly—be described in terms of innovation and tradition, bringing the current discussion full circle to the dual forces of competition and tradition. Using Marincola's five-pronged analysis allows the reader to consider the impact of these forces within a literary context, specifically that of a particular work of history. As will be seen, the result is a dynamic view of genre that is true to the Greco-Roman historical context. It also demonstrates that pushing the boundaries of genre and in fact mixing genres and literary traditions within genres was encouraged and even rewarded as such efforts, well-executed, received significant accolades and forged their own places as precedents in new literary traditions.<sup>74</sup>

Yet the force of tradition held sway even in this world of competition and innovation, and it did so in part by dictating the very rules of innovation and the structure within which it occurred. Classical rhetoric ruled the process of writing, described recognized avenues of innovation, and guaranteed a hermeneutic that all Hellenistic readers were at least familiar with, if not also rigorously trained in.

#### Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Histories

Greco-Roman rhetoric was, according to Quintilian, at heart “the art of speaking well” (*Inst.* 2.15, 37) though he did admit that at its most pragmatic, rhetoric was also the art of persuasion. (*Inst.* 2.2-23). Born in the courtroom, classical rhetoric systematized the process

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73. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 313.

74. Todd Penner, “Madness in the Method? The Acts of the Apostles in Current Study,” *CBR* 2 (2004): 256. Also, Caesar's *Gallic War* refuses to fit neatly within standard generic categories and demonstrates surprisingly significant innovation, especially considering that the author labels his work a *commentarius* (see Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 197–207).

of creating persuasive arguments, outlining not only the three species of rhetoric—forensic, deliberative, and epideictic—but also the types of arguments that suited each species best and the most appropriate strategies for themes or topics within those arguments. Forensic rhetoric found its home primarily in the courtroom, accusing or defending as needed. Deliberative rhetoric was appealed to peers or the masses, persuading them toward a particular action. Epideictic rhetoric sought to convince its audience of the glory or shame of its topic through the use of praise or blame and was commonly used in funerary orations. Regardless of species, classical rhetoric demanded that all speeches demonstrate careful and strategic use of arrangement, topics, themes, style, form, and structure in order to create speeches that were appropriate and enjoyable as well as persuasive. In fact, the aesthetic quality of the speech comprised a significant part of its persuasive power.

It should be evident merely from this basic description that classical rhetoric had expanded far beyond the courtroom. In fact, the use of rhetoric extended to nearly every arena of the Hellenistic experience. The study of rhetoric was outlined in myriad handbooks (called *progymnasmata*) and longer treatises; these demonstrate that grammar and rhetoric were considered fundamental to a rudimentary education, and further studies in rhetoric were essential for any Roman or Greek considering a public career. Rhetoric thus dominated education and permeated all public discourse, trickling through the spoken word into the written, ruling the literary world as effectively as it did the world of formal speech.

Because rhetoric was considered core to education and the public life, it became not just a guide to the process of speaking and writing but also a means of assessing the author and his work. It was the standard by which an audience judged a performance or a reader judged the text. An author's lack of rhetorical skill showed him up to be poorly educated and without cultural finesse shaming him. In the same way, clever argumentation, subtle jabs at the opposition, complex wordplay, or brilliantly artistic language all bolstered the reputation and honor of the speaker or writer. In the competitive Hellenistic atmosphere, every advantage mattered.

Rhetoric provided a means of understanding the author's work as well as of assessing its quality. The conventions guiding rhetorical argumentation provided guidelines not just for the speaker in his creation of the text but also for the audience in their interpretation of his argument. Observing the author's use of rhetorical strategies and paying close attention to such subtle elements as wordplay or intertextuality not only provided the reader with a rhetorical map of what the author was doing in the text but also gave the reader insight into the author's purposes in writing. In other words, how the author used rhetorical guidelines revealed—and continues to reveal—what the author is seeking to communicate. For both the ancient and modern reader, classical rhetoric is an indispensable heuristic for both analysis and interpretation. Here rhetoric becomes hermeneutic.<sup>75</sup>

These implications held no less true for history than for any other genre of writing. The rhetorical handbooks provided guidance on how to treat narrative as well as rules that outlined the best ways to arrange and integrate smaller narratives into a larger work.<sup>76</sup> Like every other author, historians were expected to pay attention to the various elements of their account, using the structure, style, arrangement, and language that would suit both his content and purposes.<sup>77</sup> This is true not only of the narrative sections of his work but also the discourse elements within it: the speeches within a history must demonstrate careful attention to rhetorical detail not just within the speech itself but also in its integration into the larger work. In addition, paying close attention to the strategies used within speeches as well as the means by which the author integrates the speech and narrative reveals a great deal regarding not only the function and meaning of the speech but also the author's purposes, biases, and message.

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75. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 22–25. For a more in-depth discussion of the relationship of rhetoric to hermeneutic, see Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (Yale Studies in Hermeneutics; New Haven, CT: 1997, 1997), 8–41.

76. For example, see the *progymnasmata* of Theon, Aphthonius, and Hermogenes. Quintilian in his *Institutes* also provides preliminary exercises (*Inst. Or.* 2.4).

77. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 13.

The role of rhetoric in the composition of history creates certain difficulties for the modern historian, though. This intersection of rhetoric and history forces the reader to confront the question of historicity. When rhetoric dictates so much of how themes and topics should be presented and treated—and even more how speeches should be constructed and delivered—issues of accuracy and faithfulness become concerns central to—and very much impacting—how the texts themselves should be read and understood. This is particularly true in the matter of the author’s treatment of his sources.

#### Historicity and Source Theory Among the Greco-Roman Historians

Modern concepts of *historicity* (accurate reporting of historical events<sup>78</sup>) have been deeply influenced by modern technology and our current ability to capture an event “as it happened” without being forced to rely entirely upon memory. For this reason, the standard for accuracy today demands a nearly scientific precision of description,<sup>79</sup> and truth in modern history is measured in terms of an audiovisual recording of an event which captures everything that happened precisely as it really occurred.

However, prior to the modern era, access to past events occurred not via recording devices but via memory—living or written down—and memory was valued not just for retelling the events but for recalling their abstract qualities as well, such as the energy, focus, or mood of a speaker or even a crowd (e.g., Polybius, *Hist.* 12.25). History gave life to these accounts, and ancient concepts of accuracy and historicity revolved around reporting events not only according one's memory of how they unfolded but also according to the spirit in which they occurred (this last applies especially to speech events<sup>80</sup>). Clearly both one's memory and the quality of one's sources significantly influence how well a historian

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78. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 100.

79. Even handbooks written for very young students emphasize the importance of precision in gathering data: see *Vandenberg-Davies, ed., Making History: A Guide to Historical Research Through the National History Day Program* (College Park, MD: National History Day, 2006), 90–95.

80. See also Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 1.22, Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 81–82 and Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 43–45.

fulfills the promise of truthful, accurate retelling that is implicit within the genre of history.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to memory and source quality, how the author views and uses those sources greatly influences the historical quality of his account. In other words, is the author faithful to his sources? Is he unbiased in his interactions with them? Does he engage them critically, assessing his sources in order to determine whether or not they are reliable? The answers to these questions indicate the extent to which the author has sought to remain faithful in his narrative to the historical events he relates.

It is true that the distance of millennia and differences of culture make reading ancient history particularly challenging. The role of rhetoric in both the creation and interpretation of Hellenistic texts exacerbates this challenge significantly.<sup>82</sup> Because rhetoric was so foundational to the Hellenistic concept of communication, be it spoken or written, the modern reader faces a quandary in assessing the historical faithfulness of Greco-Roman historiographies: how much did classical rhetoric influence or even shape the accounts we read? In other words, which held priority in the author's mind, historical precision or rhetorical skill?<sup>83</sup> The rhetorical *progymnasmata* provide guidance for appropriate treatment of a wide variety of themes and topics, many of which are common to history. When an author addresses one of these themes, does he depend more on information from his sources

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81. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Letters* 783-784 and Polybius, *Histories* 12; see also Kenneth S. Sacks, "Historiography in the Rhetorical Works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus," *Athanaeum* 61 (1983): 72 and Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 45.

82. The following discussion provides an overview of the admittedly complicated subject; more detailed treatment will await analyses of specific texts.

83. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 1-15 provides an overview of historians optimistic regarding this issue (see Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* [with a foreword by Riccardo Di Donato; Sather Classical Lectures; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990], 37-44) and of historians who take a more pessimistic view (Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 199-201. Marincola himself seeks the middle ground, assessing each author on his own merits; he uses both internal (style, language, structure) and external (comparisons with other accounts, the responses of peers) evidence in his analyses (Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 7).

regarding the historical events or people, or does he prioritize the *progymnasmata* and their concepts of appropriate treatment?

This question is particularly vexing in regards to assessing an ancient author's source theory, because Hellenistic historians as a rule avoided citing their sources. In a culture where reputation is a tremendous advantage in competitive persuasion,<sup>84</sup> the word of the author—staked on his reputation—seems to have been considered sufficient to guarantee the faithfulness of the account.<sup>85</sup> A close reading is called for, then, that compares (when possible) other accounts of the same historical events. Where no such synoptic views are possible, the author's style, any comments on methodology he may make throughout his work, or the praise or criticism of his peers may all be helpful cues that indicate his approach to and use of sources.<sup>86</sup>

In fact, the role peer pressure played in an author's use of sources may explain the disconcerting dichotomy of bias versus truth that we see in a work in Greco-Roman historical narratives. Again and again one finds the classical historians apparently equating impartiality with truth: claims to have written an impartial history appear to be meant and even understood as claims to have recounted historical events truthfully.<sup>87</sup> This is especially common among the Roman historians.<sup>88</sup> From a modern perspective, though, it is difficult to see how a claim against partiality is in any way equivalent to a claim for objective, truthful accounting.

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84. Manfred Kraus, "Ethos as a Technical Means of Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (eds. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 73–87.

85. Dylan Sailor, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 36–40.

86. See chapters 3 and 5 for further discussion of these factors.

87. For example, see Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 39 and Tacitus, *Histories* 2.101.1 ; See also Woodman, *Tacitus Reviewed*, 8, 22; Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 136; Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 134; Witherington III, *Acts*, 50. For a more detailed discussion of how these claims have been read by modern historians and biblical scholars, see chapter 2.

88. A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, Or.: Areopagitica Press, 1988), 82–83.

When seen in light of the Hellenistic *agon*, however, the impact of competition and peer pressure becomes much clearer, especially in the case of contemporary historians who recounted events from their lifetimes and often from their own experiences (such as Polybius and, in certain of their writings, Thucydides, Sallust, Dio Cassius, and Tacitus). These contemporary historians lean heavily on language of bias and impartiality, arguably more so than their fellow historians writing universal or ancient histories. This is due to the nature of contemporary history. The danger of writing contemporary history was that the author would not have been the only individual who experienced the events he recounts: his peers would have experienced the same events, albeit from differing perspectives. Publishing an account that was incomplete or heavily weighted in favor of one party or another would generate steep criticism and censure from his peers, leaving the author with a reputation for flattery or enviousness.<sup>89</sup> Given the social dynamic of the *agon* and the pressure to maintain one's status and reputation, a contemporary historian had a lot to lose by accusations of bias.

Claims to impartiality, then, were the author's first strike against such accusations, essentially challenging the reader to see if the author was guilty of bias via omission or commission. Bias was considered the greatest enemy of truth, and claiming impartiality was immediate defense of the faithfulness of the account.<sup>90</sup> The implication is clear: truth in accounting was seen in light of what was included or excluded. If all significant events<sup>91</sup> were included (see Cicero, *De Orat.* 2.62-64), regardless of whether they supported the author's thesis, and none were excluded, then his narrative could be counted faithful in the critical eyes of his peers.<sup>92</sup> Granted, this is a somewhat different perspective on truth than is

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89. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 263.

90. T.J. Luce, "Ancient Views on the Causes of Bias in Historical Writing," in *Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 293, 296-7.

91. Granted, significance was seen through the author's eyes; see later chapters for a more thorough engagement with this concept.

92. A. J. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," in *Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 271-72.

assumed today, but for the ancient world, dependent as it was on personal memory, identifying faithful accounts in terms of inclusion and exclusion—not forgetting anything important—would reasonably stand as the baseline for true depictions of the past.

Practically speaking, then, disclaimers against bias functioned as preventative defense of the account’s faithfulness to the actual events that transpired. Truthfulness was a matter of faithful inclusion of all that was known and considered significant, regardless of whether events appeared to support the author's particular perspective. This did not mean the author could not provide his own rhetorical angle on the account or even introduce his own explanations, but the event itself would be included so as to remain faithful to the events as the author understood them to occur.<sup>93</sup>

The issue becomes more complex, however, with the addition of rhetoric and expectations of displays of skill and creativity. The implicit demand for creative rendering of known traditions would be somewhat lessened for contemporary historians, though, as fewer or no accounts already existed to establish any sort of tradition regarding such recent past.<sup>94</sup> Skill and creativity would be tasked primarily to energize the narrative and bring vividness to the actions, people, and speeches of yesterday. Given the degree to which rhetoric was an expected and assumed part of all that was written, with guidelines from how to write battles to how to describe characters, it is difficult to separate the rhetorical flourishes from the historical substratum it builds on.<sup>95</sup> Being able to recognize these rhetorical markers, though, is key not only to understanding the author's perspective and purpose but also to understanding the flow and structure of the narrative and the relationships of events, people, and speeches.

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93. Although Woodman’s own view is somewhat pessimistic, this is the essential point he communicates; see Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 92.

94. For example, no literary tradition on the subject existed before Tacitus wrote his *Agricola*, but Livy faced a tremendous body of tradition that he was obligated to interact with in his *Histories*. For a scholarly perspective, see Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 205.

95. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 91–92.



The question of speeches in classical history is of particular interest, considering the generic correspondences to Paul's speeches in the book of Acts. Given the birth of classical rhetoric in speechwriting and speechmaking—and their primary function as educational exercises for orators-in-training—it is not surprising that the *progymnasmata* provide much more detailed guidelines for speeches than for narrative.<sup>96</sup> This external pressure toward rhetorical presentation creates the expected complications: the rhetorical artistry of the author blurs the line between his rhetorical expression of the speech and the historical speech event itself.

However, the ancient dichotomy of bias versus truthfulness may be of some assistance here. If the Greco-Roman concept of truth involved the inclusion of all that is significant, excluding nothing important, then the filter, while important, is not more important to the author and his peers than is the careful insertion of the main points of the argument. This suggests that the general shape and direction of the argument—with its crucial topical points if known—would be valuable to preserve, while the rhetorical skill the speech displays would reflect positively on the historian, and more so than it would on the historical character in whose mouth the speech has been placed.<sup>97</sup>

Unlike modern speeches, where the use of quotation marks implies and even guarantees the exact words of the character, speeches were considered as events in much the same way as were battles, political maneuvering, and other themes common to Greco-Roman histories.<sup>98</sup> As such, speeches were treated in the same way rhetorically: the significant

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96. Although Theon clearly intends his work to be used not only to train orators but also poets and historians, his *Progymnasmata* and those of others allot significantly more space to discussions of declamations and oratory, while poetry and narrative receive attention primarily in terms of their use in and for oratory. See George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), x-xiii, where Kennedy describes the general character and use of *progymnasmata*.

97. This creates a reading consonant with Thucydides' preface (*History* 1.22.2) as well as with Polybius' claim that history is a matter of true accounts (*Histories* 1.3-10; 14.6). This also coheres well with Cicero's claims regarding the laws of history (*de Orat.* 2.62-64).

98. Polybius develops this concept more fully in both theory and practice than any other contemporary historian. See his *Histories* 12.25a.3.

elements, highlights, and even tone should be preserved, while the artistry, arrangement, and overlay may be due to the skill of the storyteller.<sup>99</sup> The speeches are faithful renderings of the original event—as best as that event is understood—yet are not precise recordings of the words spoken. This lack of perfect preservation, this annihilation of quotation, may be deeply uncomfortable to the modern reader, yet it remains one of the cultural and chronological hurdles the reader must accept and overcome in order to read these ancient documents sympathetically, according to the standards contemporary to the text and not to its modern reader.

In fact, these debates over source theory and precision of recounting are themselves anything but a modern invention: Polybius is well-known for outlining a methodology that demanded a high degree of faithfulness and critical engagement with one's sources for both narrative and speeches (*Hist.* 12). He couples these high standards with devastating and detailed criticism of historians such as Timaeus who failed to attain those standards (*Hist.* 12). This indicates that for some historians such as himself, the method by which they chose the content of their histories was deeply influenced by their concern—and priority to transmit history faithfully and critically. Polybius' diatribe against Timaeus—both of whom were apparently well-known historians—strongly indicates that the modern reader must examine each ancient historian on a case-by-case basis in order to identify the methodology and theory he espouses in his work.

In addition, addressing the historians on a case-by-case basis also enables the reader to build a mental map of the approaches, assumptions, and expectations held in common by the historians. In essence, the reader creates a descriptive reading paradigm uniquely suited to interacting with and interpreting Hellenistic history. Such a model overcomes the

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99. See the discussion in chapter 4 (Cicero: Methodology) for a more in-depth discussion of the relationship of the *exaeditio* and the hard core of facts from which the historian should draw. Also, see *De Orat.* 2.62-64, as well as T. P. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Bristol, UK: Bristol Phoenix, 2003), 32.

hypercritical reading Acts has endured over the past century, replacing it with a historically nuanced approach appropriate to its historical identity and thus particularly suited to engage Acts critically on a historical level. Because the Greco-Roman norms and expectations regarding speeches in history are so very different from those of modern historians, reading the speeches of Acts through the lens of its historical counterparts is all the more crucial to building a hermeneutical paradigm for Acts that encompasses both a historically appropriate reading and Acts' status as Scripture.

### **Acts as Ancient History**

At this point, however, proceeding forward with analyses of individual classical historians would be somewhat precipitous. The pool of historians is quite large, and any cursory reading demonstrates that its fish are widely, even wildly, varied in scope, content, and approach (just to name a few options). Thus it behooves the careful reader to identify not only the genre of Acts in general (does it belong in the pool at all?), but also to observe any further qualities of the author's approach that might help determine what type of fish it is and thus what school—or group of historiographical texts—it may most appropriately be grouped with.

The genre identification process outlined above and adopted from Marincola's discussion of genre and innovation<sup>100</sup> offers a basic, common-sense yet objective means of assessing a text. The five factors Marincola uses in his preliminary genre identification are the text's narrativity, its subject matter, focalization, chronological delimitation, and arrangement (especially its relationship to the account's chronology).

Acts is clearly a narrative, yet identifying its precise subject matter is a rather more complicated maneuver. Suffice it to say (for now) that Acts relates the stories of past events that are significant to the present reality of the author and his readers.<sup>101</sup> Focalization in

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100. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 302–9.

101. A more detailed treatment of the precise subject matter of Acts may be found in chapter 2.

Acts—most simply put as the point of view demonstrated by the text—is primarily external, with the story told from a nearly omniscient distance from the main characters. The well-known “we” sections, however, offer an intensely internal focalization from a location very close to but not identical with Paul. The chronological delimitation of Acts is severely circumscribed, beginning with the unexpected absence of Jesus and ending only a few decades later with Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

Finally, the arrangement of Acts is overtly chronological, using time markers (“after,” “at the same time as,” or “then”) and indicating successive days, weeks, or months marking the passage of time.<sup>102</sup> This chronology is deliberately linked to political chronology as well, naming public figures and their offices in order to provide historical context recognizable to the ancient readers of Acts.<sup>103</sup> Overall, the evidence indicates that the author of Acts intended his narrative to be read as history. The “we” sections strongly argue that the author further intended his text to be understood as contemporary history.<sup>104</sup> Traditional approaches to genre identification in general concur that Acts is intended as history, though precisely what type of history—the historical subgenre—continues to be strongly debated.<sup>105</sup>

However, simply taking Acts seriously as a text of Greco-Roman history requires not simply reading the narrative as an account of past events but reading the speeches as accounts of past events as well. Here, developing a thoroughly historically grounded reading paradigm is particularly useful, for as noted above, the Hellenistic approach to speeches feels vastly different from today's concept of recorded speech. Moreover, it is one thing to identify the individual threads—such as rhetoric or speech as event—that give the modern

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102. E.g., Acts 4.5, 6.1, 9.1, 10.9, 10.24, 11.27, 12.1, 15.36, 21.1-4.

103. Acts 18.12 names Gallio proconsul of Achaia, while the Jewish High Priest Ananias, Felix the procurator of Judea and Porcius Festus his successor are noted in Acts 24, and Acts 25 brings in Herod Agrippa II, ethnarch of Palestine.

104. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 131. A more detailed discussion of the dating of Acts may be found in the following chapter.

105. A more detailed investigation of the history of genre identification in Acts and its complications may be found in the following chapter.

reader insight into the ancient mind. It is a different endeavor altogether to map out the relationships of these threads and the patterns they weave in similar texts, and to read Acts with these patterns in mind, searching for echoes or divergences that may indicate where Acts fits in this historiographical puzzle and offer insight into the intent, artistry, or innovation of the author. It is to this endeavor that we now turn.

### **Methodological Matters**

In order to create a workable model we must assess a sufficient number of texts to be certain of discerning true patterns that cross barriers of author and text, yet then rely only those texts that are true generic parallels to guide our hermeneutic and final reading of Acts. For example, histories narrating ancient times—such as Livy's *History of Rome*—may not prove close generic siblings to Acts and thus might not provide patterns of structure, style, or methodology that would be applicable to or helpful in analyzing Acts from a historical-literary perspective.

On the other hand, texts that share core generic factors with Acts would be excellent sources to mine for precisely the types of literary and cultural threads and textual patterns that we could expect to find in Acts. And these threads and patterns that may shed light on where Acts fits in the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition and provide parameters that guide a truly historical reading of the speeches of Acts.

### **Establishing Parameters**

The five factors discussed above (narrative, subject, focalization, delimitation, and arrangement) allow the reader to construct a very basic generic outline of a given text, and when applied to multiple texts enables the reader to loosely organize the texts in relation to one another. Using the generic outline established above for Acts, we find that the single greatest delimiting factor is that Acts presents itself as contemporary history. That is,

textual cues within Acts (especially the “we” sections) signal the reader that the narrative was written by an eyewitness who had even experienced parts of the story himself.<sup>106</sup>

The difference between accounts of ancient history and stories of the recent past is significant, especially within the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition. In terms of historical theory, Craig Keener points out that “ancient historians were less accurate when they wrote about people of the distant past than when they wrote about recent events (as Luke does), and they were themselves aware of this difference.”<sup>107</sup> In fact, he continues, “many ancient writers pointed out the obscurity of reports from centuries earlier but expected a much higher standard of accuracy when handling reports closer to their own period.”<sup>108</sup>

John Marincola also notes significant differences between contemporary historians and historians of early antiquity:

A fundamental difference between contemporary and non-contemporary historians is not so much in their attitudes towards inquiry as in their presentation of it. As a rule, the contemporary historian avers his autopsy and inquiry at the outset of the work, and thereafter only very infrequently calls attention to it. In addition, his work has few variant versions in it. The whole is marked by a type of narrative assuredness: he presents himself as the establisher of the tradition, and is not in the main concerned to justify that account at every turn.<sup>109</sup>

Leaving aside methodological differences for now, it is sufficient to note that there are significant stylistic differences between the contemporary and noncontemporary histories. These are precisely the types of patterns and generic indicators that suggest we may be on

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106. See the above discussion on establishing the genre of Acts. For a more in-depth treatment that interacts more fully with past scholarship on this question, see the following chapter.

107. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 103.

108. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 129.

109. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 262.

the right path: they are quantifiable, identifiable, and extend across texts and authors that are clearly related outside of the stylistic marker itself. These are the types of patterns that, put together, may help create a reading paradigm uniquely suited for this family of texts.

### Preliminary Comments Regarding Approach

The process of building a model requires an interdisciplinary line of inquiry that employs a variety of critical approaches. Classical rhetoric offers precise tools that are uniquely suited to an investigation into nearly any form of public or formal communication in the Hellenistic world. Modern literary criticism, though, provides insights into the textual world and what words accomplish in this world that classical rhetoric did not aspire to describe: issues of intent, spatial structure, and hermeneutics were not the purview of Greco-Roman rhetoric, but modern literary theorists have developed the language and tools necessary to interact with and analyze these issues. Narrative criticism, as a particular branch of literary criticism, is also an essential tool for the reader of historical texts; it enables the reader to visualize the structure of the story and describe the relationships of various elements within the narrative, leading to a deeper understanding of what the text is doing as well as saying. Finally, social or socio-cultural criticism performs the significant task of fleshing out the world behind and around the text.

Yet on the whole, model-building—be it a scientific or a literary model—is a process of exploration, synthesis, comparison, and further synthesis. These formal approaches to text will be invaluable tools in the quest to analyze and understand the dynamics of a given text, making them an essential part of the exploratory phase of the model. Analysis, comparison, and final synthesis will gather the threads revealed in exploration and begin to trace out the patterns common to Greco-Roman contemporary history, creating a historical-literary perspective, a reading strategy which may then be applied to the speeches of Acts.

In other words, exploring the primary texts (Greco-Roman contemporary history, looking particularly at the speeches within these texts) will lead to examination and

comparison across these classical sources in order to establish (the synthesis stage) a historically faithful and appropriate reading model for these texts. The process of comparison will next extend to the text of Acts in order to ascertain how and in what ways Luke's text follows (or does not follow) the conventions and practices already noted in classical history, and thus both discover where Acts belongs within the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition and produce a historically centered hermeneutic that may produce a historically appropriate reading of Acts and, eventually, of its speeches in particular.





## Chapter 2

### Historical and Contemporary Conversations

The first question faced by every reader, regardless of the text, is simply “How do I read this?” In other words, what should the reader's expectations of the text be, and what sort of meaning can the reader reasonably anticipate finding within its words? The question of expectations and the sense that a text must provide some sort of guideposts to the reader—signals that indicate how the text operates and what the boundaries of reasonable interpretation are—are the foundation upon which all readings of a text rest. When the answers to these questions change, the meaning of the text changes dramatically. In fact, the choice to disregard such questions<sup>1</sup> actually underscores their significance, demonstrating vividly how crucial their answers are to the process of retrieving meaning from the text.

This question is no less appropriate when asked of speeches within a text. A speech is both part of the surrounding text—be that text narrative or informative—and yet somehow distinct from it. A speech is self-contained yet immersed in and engaging with what surrounds it. Thus the expectations guiding one's reading of speeches within text are both predicated upon the surrounding narrative and yet also function according to different rules, rules that do not actually apply to the narrative portions of Acts. Reading the speeches in Acts requires not only a precise identification of one's expectations of the type of text Acts appears to be and a firm grasp of the conventions guiding the writing and reading of speeches, but also a working concept—a model, if you will—of the dynamic relationship between speeches and narrative within the Acts text-type.

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1. Such as in reader-response criticism; see Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*.

## Reading Acts: Genre and Historical Hermeneutics

Simon Buttica notes, “The genre effectively functions as a reading pact between the author and the reader that serves to guide the reception of the text in question.”<sup>2</sup> On the author's side, the pact acts as a “generative grammar,” establishing boundaries for what may reasonably be included in a text and suggesting possible shapes the text may take within a given genre.<sup>3</sup> On the reader's side, then, this same pact tells the reader what expectations she may have of the text and, by implication, establishes boundaries to those expectations that guide the reader's interpretation of the text.<sup>4</sup> It follows, then, that a more accurate—or even more precise—identification of the genre offers a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the text and a reading that demonstrates a better fit with both author and text.

The text of Acts has been identified as a variety of genres and sub-genres over the past century of scholarship. Each new identification offers a new voice and new insights, marking its place in a dialogue of sorts between modern and ancient philosophies, cultures, and assumptions. The process of identifying the genre of text is in fact plagued with underlying philosophical and literary assumptions that must be brought into the light in order to adequately evaluate the final product—the identification itself. In addition, the proposed genre identification must fit the text; it must demonstrate compelling explanatory power for the chronological context and the various literary features of the text.

### What is Acts? The Process of Genre Identification

Identifying the genre of Acts has always been the first step in that journey to a historically plausible and consistent reading. At the most basic level Acts has always been

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2. Simon D. Buttica, “‘Has God Rejected His People?’ (Romans 11.1). The Salvation of Israel in Acts: Narrative Claim of a Pauline Legacy,” in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel* (eds. David P. et al. Moessner; LNTS; New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 163.

3. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 32.

4. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 53.

identified as a story, a narrative. Consistent references within Acts to real people, places, and events of the past urge the reader toward a historical reading. If this is an appropriate reading, what kind of history is Acts, and what generic implications does this hold for reading its speeches? If Acts should not be read as a history, what genre is it, and what reading model—from a historical literary perspective—would best fit the narrative and its speeches?

### **Giving Voice to Critical Questions**

Nearly a century ago, Henry Cadbury identified Acts as historical writing—specifically, a history of the church.<sup>5</sup> In doing so he chose to read the text as it represents itself—an approach followed by classicists and historians analyzing historical texts worldwide.<sup>6</sup> One of the great strengths of Cadbury's work is the weight he gives the extra-biblical historical and literary evidence in his reading of Acts. He consciously sought to allow the Greco-Roman perspective on historiography to shape his expectations of both Luke and his text.

Cadbury draws a sharp and realistic demarcation between modern and ancient historians, observing that claims to value research, communicate facts, and remain faithful to events are shared by both yet defined very differently by Hellenistic historians. He maintains that in practice, speeches are consistently composed freely and inserted into events; traditions and military reports are given equal weight as evidence; and sources appear to be accepted without question.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the author's purpose in writing—either stated or understood—is also a strong indication of his biases and how those biases impact his account.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: The MacMillan Company; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1927; reprint 1999), 132–33.

6. For example, see Simon Hornblower, ed., *Greek Historiography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 1–72, particularly pp. 1–20.

7. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 318–21.

8. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 362–64.

As Cadbury notes, good Greco-Roman historians take into account both events that support and events that detract from their argument; bad historians ignore what does not fit into their interpretation of the past.<sup>9</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that Cadbury's assessment of the actual historicity of ancient history is pessimistic:

in view of the complexity of the process of authorship, and the many factors on which historical accuracy depends, it becomes obvious that a uniform grade of reliability can hardly be expected in any writing.<sup>10</sup>

He extends this assessment to the speeches as well, concluding that “by an even more clearly recognized ancient convention Luke's speeches were, as we have said, probably written without intending strict historical accuracy.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet Cadbury's very brief distinction between good and bad historians offers a small yet inconclusive ray of hope for uncovering actual historical events underlying ancient history, and this ray of hope allows him a hesitantly optimistic reading of Acts. Cadbury reads Luke's preface to Acts (a continuation of sorts to his preface beginning his Gospel) as a statement of purpose indicating Luke's intent to not only stay faithful to his sources but to reflect his sources as fully and clearly as possible, with as little authorial interference as possible. Thus after comparisons of style and linguistic level Cadbury is able to describe Acts' narrative as “made of the stuff of unadorned tradition, whose art is natural and whose creation is unconscious, social rather than individual, and popular rather than literary.”<sup>12</sup> He finds in Luke less a “composer” than an arranger of corporate tradition, thus resulting in a text that adheres more closely to actual events in history than do many ancient and even modern historical accounts.<sup>13</sup> Cadbury's comparative reading leads him to conclude that the different

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9. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 320–21.

10. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 364.

11. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 367.

12. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 137.

13. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 139.

styles found in the text of Acts to reflect the original sources and thus demonstrate how closely Luke followed his source material.<sup>14</sup>

However, his study of Greco-Roman historiography convinced Cadbury that conventions guiding the use of speeches in history consistently pointed toward the free—or nearly free—composition of those speeches, regardless of the historian: “It is evident that the ancient writers and their readers considered the speeches more as editorial and dramatic comment than as historical tradition.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, after examining Livy's use of Polybius in his *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, he moves a step further, rejecting the possibility of historical accuracy in speeches reported in Greco-Roman histories:

it may be confidently affirmed that many an ancient writer paraphrases without acknowledgment the narrative of his source, but when he professes to report the speech of a general or statesman he deliberately rejects the same source's earlier version, whether authentic or unauthentic.<sup>16</sup>

Cadbury's rather pessimistic reading demonstrates the challenges inherent in reading Acts as classical history. His contradictory conclusions regarding the faithfulness of Acts and Greco-Roman history are indicative of the tension he senses between the rhetoric of Greco-Roman history in general and his desire and instinct to read Acts as it self-presents, as an authoritative, trustworthy history. He is caught between the forces of rhetoric, authority, and impartiality that so strongly shaped Greco-Roman history as a genre. His reading of Acts highlight the reality of the historian as an interpreter of the past, a role that demands a

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14. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 138, 365 (where he appeals to Luke's handling of Mark's Gospel and the events of Paul's life).

15. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 185.

16. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 186. Cadbury appears somewhat uncomfortable with this conclusion, though, later allowing for the “possibility that some of the speeches [in Acts] are closely dependent on written sources or oral information,” and yet again—only a page later—concluding once more that “the author has like other historians more or less successfully composed speeches suited to the speakers and occasions out of his own imagination” (190). It seems Cadbury wishes to hold out the hope that the speeches of Acts are faithful to the historical events, yet finds the historical literary comparison discouraging toward this view.

critical reading that is historically informed and consciously developed within the historical and literary context of that historian and of his text.

### **Genre as a Context for Reading**

It is essential, then, to determine the context within which we will search for resolutions to these questions. More to the point, we must be confident that we are asking these questions of the correct genre. Conventions regarding subject matter, structural elements, acceptable literary features, or the research and writing process will change as we move from one genre to another. The more precisely we are able to identify the genre of Acts and where the text fits in the Greco-Roman literary tradition, the better placed we are to develop historically responsible and appropriate answers to these critical questions.

### **The Rise of Sub-Genres**

The rise of literary and genre studies in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrated to many scholars the importance of reading a text in light of intentional genre identification, while the issues raised by Cadbury demanded further exploration within this context as well. A number of scholars influenced by contemporary genre criticism began to note the unique qualities of particular types of Greco-Roman history and apply those insights to the book of Acts. In the 1970s Charles Talbert compared Acts to historical founding narratives that related the genesis of a movement. He found a close parallel in Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives*.<sup>17</sup> The *Lives* each provide an account of the founder of a given philosophical school and follow the birth of that school through to the founder's chosen successor, ending with a summary of that school's beliefs.<sup>18</sup> Talbert acknowledges that Acts only contains two of the three generic components (the account of both founder and successor) but concludes that the parallels between the *Lives* and Acts are strong enough that "the differences are not decisive."<sup>19</sup>

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17. Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974), 127.

18. Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 127.

Talbert's study represents a significant step forward in studies of Acts' genre in that he observed different types of texts existing within one genre, that of Greco-Roman history. Further, it was clear to Talbert that these different types of texts function in different ways and encode very different expectations for first-century readers.<sup>20</sup> Applying his insights and observations to the book of Acts, Talbert discerned similarities that implied a common literary heritage between Acts and Greco-Roman history. Talbert then used Acts' place within the tradition to build a reading approach—a model, if you will—that both offered historically plausible explanatory power for the text's seemingly unique characteristics and communicated the expectations and interpretive boundaries that would be historically appropriate for Acts.

Unfortunately, while Talbert's implicit recognition of subgenres within Greco-Roman history proved vastly influential, his particular identification of Acts as a founding narrative was not without its difficulties. Most tellingly, Talbert did not distinguish sufficiently between *bioi* and *historia* as distinct sub-genres within classical history. This resulted in his inadequate identification of Act's genre: Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives* self-presents and was received as biography (*bios*), not the history of a movement (*historia*), while Acts tells the story of the church's early development and does not offer a biographical sketch of a single individual. In fact, Greg Horsley's study of the speeches of Acts<sup>21</sup> demonstrates significant genre distinction between *bios* and *historia* simply in the presentation of speeches, for compared to other biographies of equivalent length, "Acts is clearly set apart from them by its use of 'lengthy' set-piece speeches."<sup>22</sup> In addition, significant criticism was also leveled at Talbert for his apparent failure to fully appreciate the genre cues implicit in the text's preface: the preface of Acts, when read along with Luke's preface, establishes expectations

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19. Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 133.

20. Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 134.

21. G. H. R. Horsley, "Speeches and Dialogue in Acts," *NTS* 32 (1986): 609–14.

22. Horsley, "Speeches and Dialogue," 613.



more in line with traditional history, not a biographical origins narrative.<sup>23</sup> Terrance Callan assesses the import of the prefaces of the two works, comparing them to the prefaces of Sallust (*Cat. Consp.* 4.2-3), Josephus (*Wars* 1.6; *Antiquities* 1.3-4) and Tacitus (*Annals* 1.1). He notes that the literary elements shared between these works weight the argument strongly in favor of Acts as a history of events, not a biography of a personality.<sup>24</sup> Finally, neither Diogenes Laërtius' contemporaries nor later generations appear to recognize the *Lives* as anything but *bioi*, suggesting that Talbert's "founding narrative" genre is simply a modern construct. Willem van Unnik's closing remarks best reflect the growing awareness that ancient thought and literary heritage must be judged by their own standards, not by modern theory:

It is not sufficient to remind ourselves that he was not a historian in our sense, but in that of antiquity; but we shall have to walk with him along his roads, to see and hear with his eyes and those of his contemporaries.<sup>25</sup>

#### From Speech to Genre: Testing the Consensus

Talbert's careful reading of Acts against Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives* spurred other scholars to read Acts in the context of a wider field of Greco-Roman literature. Comparative readings of Acts or its particular features led scholars to reexamine Acts' place in the Hellenistic literary world and offer new evidence or new identifications for the text. For example, in 1986 Horsley appealed to a mixture of historical comparison and modern literary theory to study the length and frequency of direct speech in Acts. Horsley's methodology combined the developing fields of genre identification and literary theory to analyze the speeches. He concluded that the speeches of Acts bear most resemblance to speeches in

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23. Phillips, "Genre of Acts," 375-76 for a detailed analysis of these positions.

24. Terrance Callan, "The Preface of Luke-Acts and Historiography," *NTS* 31, no. 4 (1985): 576-81.

25. W.C. Van Unnik, "Luke's Second Book and the Rules of Hellenistic Historiography," in *Les Actes Des Apôtres: Traditions, Rédaction, Théologie. Papers Presented at the 28th Colloquium Bibliocum Lovaniense, 17-19 August 1977* (ed. Jacob Kremer; Louvain, Belgium: Louvain University Press, 1979), 60.

historiographies. Having extrapolated the genre based on features of the speeches, Horsley then assessed Acts' speeches based on a comparative study of history roughly contemporary to Acts. Horsley's example—this movement from text feature to genre and then back to text—proved tremendously influential and fruitful over the next several decades.

In fact, the following year Richard Pervo traced a similar methodological path as Horsley, but with very different results.<sup>26</sup> Like Horsley, Pervo's analysis of the speeches of Acts feeds into his identification of Acts' genre. Unlike Horsley, who relies on Greco-Roman literature contemporary to Acts to shape his concept of genre and expectations for the speeches, Pervo appeals to modern definitions of both genre and limits his exploration of contemporary ancient literature to his assessment of Acts' unique features. In other words, Pervo appeals to modern literary theory to define the ancient genre of novel,<sup>27</sup> then identifies Acts as an ancient novel based in large part on this definition.

However, his approach ignores both major genre markers for history as well as the fact that Acts is missing major genre markers for ancient novels.<sup>28</sup> Pervo fails both to examine a larger sample of ancient literature and to widen his engagement to larger literary elements—those elements that frequently serve as cues to genre identification—and his argument suffers greatly from the resulting lack of widespread supporting evidence. He amends this lack in a later essay in which he compares the speeches to various Latin monographs (including those written by Sallust and Tacitus),<sup>29</sup> concluding that the quantity of direct speech in Acts far exceeds that found in any other example of ancient history. Pervo again argues for identifying Acts as a novel, but now leans more heavily on ancient concepts and examples of the genre (such as 2 Maccabees, Judith, and other Second Temple

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26. Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

27. Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 105.

28. Sean Adams, *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography* (SNTS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15.

29. Richard I. Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 3 (2006): 291–92.

literature),<sup>30</sup> finding the instances of direct speech in these texts to more nearly parallel those found in Acts than either match ancient history.<sup>31</sup>

In his most recent treatment of Acts, Pervo has further nuanced his stance on the genre of Acts, asserting that calling Acts “history” does not implicate any particular stance on either its genre or its historical accuracy. Even describing Acts as biblical history apparently bears no generic claim. Instead, Pervo offers several arguments against Acts as Greco-Roman history, including unique aspects of the Luke-Acts prefaces; the subject of Acts as the development of a cult; and unique aspects of the speeches of Acts (including its high percentage of direct speech); the text’s lack of objectivity; and the free use of narrative “techniques” that Pervo considers more at home in ancient novels—“popular works”—than in ancient history.<sup>32</sup> Each of these issues, however, finds reasonable resolution in a more historically nuanced understanding of the Greco-Roman literary tradition, as may be observed below.

First, Pervo has received significant criticism for failing to recognize and account for the strong historiographical elements in Acts, including (most significantly) the Luke-Acts prefaces.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Pervo seems to have ignored many of the literary elements that are intrinsically characteristic of ancient novels, such as the unrealistic drama—or, more precisely, the melodrama—that drives the plot and creates its air of suspense and excitement.<sup>34</sup> Further, a later study by Plümacher argues for precisely the type of parallels between ancient historians and Acts that Pervo denounced. Plümacher reads the apostles' gospel speeches in the context of speeches found within the *Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and finds that Luke is in fact using styles and techniques common to Greco-

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30. Pervo, “Direct Speech,” 292, 297–99.

31. Pervo, “Direct Speech,” 301–3.

32. Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 17–18.

33. Loveday C.A. Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (Early Christianity in Context, LNTS; New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 161.

34. Alexander, *Acts*, 156–60.

Roman histories: the speeches mark turning points in the growth of the church and serve as an apologetic for its mission and message. Pervo's complaint that the rise of a cult is an inappropriate subject for history simply holds no power in the face of Hellenistic ethnographies such as those composed by Berossus, Manetho, or even Fabius Pictus.

Finally, while Pervo asserts that the novelistic narrative techniques observable in Acts irretrievably skew any identification of the text as history, he fails to consider the increasing tendency even within Hellenistic history to further smudge borders between genres. One could easily consider this tendency all the more natural in a text that itself is intended to cross multiple ethnic and cultural boundaries and yet remain familiar and retain that sense of belonging over multiple audience instances.<sup>35</sup> In short, Pervo's argument for Acts as an ancient novel simply lacks persuasive power against the weight of evidence—among both historiographies and novels—that casts doubt on his reading.<sup>36</sup>

#### Acts as Apologia?

Pervo's strong comparison of Acts to its contemporary literature reflected an intensifying focus within Acts studies on reading the text within its historical literary context. Furthermore, significant studies published following his work are not content to simply identify Acts as belonging to a particular genre family but seek to discover more precisely where in the family it belongs. Discussions begin to revolve not around the larger genre labels but around which sub-genre Acts shares the most features. This trajectory is especially true of studies placing Acts with the genre of history. For example, Hubert Cancik reads Acts against a rather diverse grouping of philosophical and religious histories, observing that Acts shares significant thematic elements with religious and philosophical historiographies.<sup>37</sup> These themes, Cancik argues, are sufficiently exclusive to a particular type of history to warrant their own sub-grouping, which he terms “institutional history.”<sup>38</sup>

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35. Each of these points will be further fleshed out in the following chapters.

36. Phillips, “Genre of Acts,” 369.

Gregory Sterling picks up on the thematic elements Cancik highlights yet notes as well the further features—both thematic and cultural—that nuance the genre of Acts just beyond a straightforward institutional history.<sup>39</sup> The Luke-Acts prefaces in particular strongly slant Acts in terms of defense, and reading Acts instead against Josephus' *Antiquities*, Sterling concludes that Acts is best described as *apologia* (apologetic history). Both texts, according to Sterling's reading, offer a history of the origins of a people group—a movement—couched in such a way as to defend that group's roots as well as its social and political place in the Roman Empire.<sup>40</sup>

Sterling finds strains of classical *apologia* most apparent in the Luke-Acts prefaces and Luke's emphasis on the church's roots in and continuity with Judaism,<sup>41</sup> yet Loveday Alexander notes that the speeches of Acts offer unique opportunities to extend the *apologia*:<sup>42</sup> “In Acts speech is an important event in its own right, transcending the boundaries of narrative to exert persuasive force directly on the readers.”<sup>43</sup> This use of apologetic speech effectively blurs the boundary between discourse and narrative, focusing the reader's attention on the themes and arguments driving the events.<sup>44</sup> In fact, speech and narrative in Acts are mutually affirming; they support and explain one another,<sup>45</sup> each driving the other forward thematically, theologically, or chronologically.<sup>46</sup>

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37. Hubert Cancik, “The History of Culture, Religion, and Institutions in Ancient Historiography: Philological Observations Concerning Luke's History,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 4 (1997): 673–95.

38. Cancik, “History of Culture,” 694.

39. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*.

40. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 387.

41. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 378, 393.

42. Alexander, *Acts*, 184–86, 193.

43. Alexander, *Acts*, 201.

44. Alexander, *Acts*, 200.

45. Alexander, *Acts*, 203.

46. Peter's speech to Cornelius in Acts 10 is one such example. The conversion of Cornelius and his household is a narrative hinge for the book of Acts, a turning point between a focused Jewish mission and a growing Gentile mission. Peter's speech defends this turning point and thus the entire Gentile mission, yet also cues the reader toward a particular interpretation of the events, while the events shape in turn the reader's interpretation of Peter's words (see Alexander, *Acts*, 203). Another dramatic turning point in the narrative occurs in the final chapters of Acts with Paul's incarceration. Paul's defense in Acts 26 draws an even more direct parallel of dramatic audience with the text's real audience (Alexander, *Acts*, 201), inviting the reader into Festus' palace as though Paul speaks directly to her as well as to Agrippa.

Some features of *apologia*, however, seem to sit uncomfortably—or at least ambiguously—with Acts.<sup>47</sup> If Acts is *apologia*, does it seek—as Sterling claims—to defend the church against the Roman empire or—as Alexander suggests—is it “a plea for a fair hearing at the bar of the wider Jewish community in the Diaspora, perhaps especially in Rome” (an identification which would make better rhetorical sense of Acts 28)?<sup>48</sup> Neither option appears to fully explain all of the features of Acts. As an appeal to Rome, Acts is uncomfortably concerned with the church's degenerating relationship with Judaism, which undermines any attempts to claim continuity with Judaism and enjoy its legal benefits. As an appeal to the Jews, Luke's emphasis on Paul's Roman citizenship and the church's innocence in political matters seems unnecessary. If Acts is in fact an *apologia*, it is cast to so general an audience that its purpose is nearly completely lost.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, Greco-Roman *apologias* characteristically feature a strong authorial voice, unlike the self-effacing author we observe in Acts.<sup>50</sup> The reader simply does not encounter in Acts the emphatic voice and utter lack of subtlety characteristic of *apologias*.<sup>51</sup> Sterling also fails to thoroughly explore structural literary features shared by Greco-Roman *apologia*, making his case for Acts based on thematic and interpretive parallels instead.<sup>52</sup> Finally, some significant parallels Sterling finds between Acts and Josephus' *Antiquities* are a definite stretch, such as Josephus presenting his *Antiquities* as a continuation of the LXX just as Luke presents Acts as a continuation of the “sacred narrative”<sup>53</sup> of the Gospel.<sup>54</sup>

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47. For example, see Alexander, *Acts*, 40.

48. Alexander, *Acts*, 205–6.

49. Alexander, *Acts*, 200.

50. Alexander, *Acts*, 191.

51. Alexander, *Acts*, 192–93.

52. Darryl W. Palmer, “Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph,” in *Ancient Literary Setting, Vol. 1 of The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 18.

53. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 363.

54. Palmer, “Historical Monograph,” 17.

Yet even with these unresolved elements, Sterling’s argument is compelling and carries significant explanatory power. As Loveday Alexander observes, identifying Acts as *apologia* enables the reader to maximize the apologetic qualities of Acts’ speeches and more fully describe the unusual dynamic that exists between speech and narrative in Acts.<sup>55</sup> After surveying the past century of scholarly interaction with Acts, Craig Keener similarly concludes, “Acts is history, probably apologetic history in the form of a historical monograph with a narrow focus on the expansion of the gospel message from Jerusalem to Rome.”<sup>56</sup> At the very least, Sterling makes a compelling argument for the overall genre—history—and at least one of the purposes—apology—of the book of Acts.

### **Developing a History-Shaped Reading of Acts**

Having roughly identified Acts as Greco-Roman history, then, we proceed further to fill in the shape of the genre by examining its conventions and unique aspects. As we gain a greater understanding of the limitations and expectations that create the genre’s shape and boundaries, we are better able to see how our improved understanding of a text’s place in the literary tradition shapes in turn our reading of its features (such as its speeches). In fact, even tracing the rather extensive outer boundaries of Greco-Roman history we quickly find textual and cultural dynamics that feel completely foreign to modern history. The first (and arguably most influential) of these is rhetoric. Classical rhetoric stood behind all written and oral communication in Hellenistic societies—including history—to the point that James D. G. Dunn describes the genre in terms of “history as rhetoric, not simply using rhetorical

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55. Alexander, *Acts*, 193–200.

56. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 115. Yet as Mikael Parsons notes, generic boundaries remained surprisingly fluid in the first century, and Luke’s innovative use of multiple genre features should not be overlooked: “Luke demonstrated command of a number of rhetorical conventions and techniques, drew on various cultural and social scripts, and blended multiple genres of writing (including, but not limited to, elements of ancient biography, historiography, novel, and perhaps epic)” (Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* [Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 4).

devices.”<sup>57</sup> Such an absolute definition demands our close attention, for while rhetoric is a valuable ally in good writing regardless of era, the fundamental commitment of Greco-Roman rhetoric to argument, to building and winning a case, brings the question of slanted reporting to the forefront of the reader's mind. Clare Rothschild draws out the implications further when she notes that “ancient historians, in their historical works, adhered to conventions requiring the subterfuge of argument in favor of unadorned exposition of fact, apart from opportunities afforded by speeches.”<sup>58</sup>

Such descriptions give rise to rather uncomfortable questions: can we trust Greco-Roman history? Does it offer an account that is in fact faithful to actual events and people?

### Can We Trust This Text?

The study of Acts in light of Greco-Roman rhetoric enjoys a long tradition of scholarship. In modern scholarship, it found an explosive catalyst in Martin Dibelius, who did not hesitate to confront the complex and at times even unsettling implications of rhetoric's role in classical history. For Dibelius, Luke was a skilled historian and orator,<sup>59</sup> providing the interpretation and clarification expected of a first-century historian.<sup>60</sup> However, differences in style between narrative and speech in Acts—as well as elements Dibelius labels discrepancies between the events and the contents of the speeches—led him to suspect the authenticity of Acts' speeches.<sup>61</sup>

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57. James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Christianity in the Making; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 71.

58. C.K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (WUNT; 2004), 292.

59. Although Luke's actual practice of rhetoric was, in Dibelius' opinion, deliberately understated in order not to outshine the gospel proclamation. See Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* (ed. K. C. Hanson; Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 80.

60. Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (Heinrich Greeven; London: SCM Press, 1956), 138.

61. These differences in style Dibelius explored in comparison to other historiographies, but his thoroughgoing commitment to form criticism strongly shaped his final analysis, arguably more so than did his rhetorical criticism. Here, form criticism suggests that differences in styles indicate separate narrative sections, probably by different authors (see Dibelius, *Studies*, 179), while analysis following rhetorical conventions outlined in the *progymnasmata* would look first to the use of *prosopopoeia* (speech in character) (see Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.2.36).



## Rhetoric, Interpretation, and Biased Reporting

In keeping with the pattern we have observed, Dibelius turns to Acts' literary heritage and the uses of rhetoric in historiographical speeches in an effort to answer these discrepancies. For example, Dibelius notes a wide diversity of styles within the speeches as well as an apparent discrepancy between the event catalyzing the speech and the content of the speech itself such that "we find that, in the course of the speech, he often pays no further regard to the situation and the actual problems of the moment."<sup>62</sup> Both the diversity of style and perceived lack of appropriate fit to the situation did not resonate with Dibelius' concept of Greco-Roman conventions for history, thus leading Dibelius to question whether the speeches at all reflected the actual words spoken at the historical event.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, Dibelius prioritizes the interpretive role of the historian over his role as the trustworthy teller of past events. Dibelius' grasp of the role of the classical historian was acute in that he recognized its extent and impact on the text:

The historian's art begins where he no longer contents himself with collecting and framing traditional events, but endeavors to illuminate, and somehow to interpret, the meaning of the events. . . . The questions of sequence of events, development, and meaning need not necessarily be unequivocally answered, but the possibilities offered in reply to the questions must help to make the subject clearer to the reader.<sup>64</sup>

However, while interpretation is essential to history, it is not necessarily more important than the historian's concern to relate historical events faithfully. Dibelius, however, assumes that for a Greco-Roman historian, relating actual historical speeches (in particular) comes

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62. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 80.

63. It is surprising that Dibelius did not fully apply the Greco-Roman convention of using speech in person to this discrepancy he observed (see Dibelius, *Studies*, 139), since speech in person was often used to introduce a variety of rhetorical styles to both reflect the speakers and to entertain the audience with the author's rhetorical skill. Instead, he assumed the changes in style from beginning to end of Acts to indicate the presence of another author. This aspect of the speeches of Acts will be discussed in more detail below.

64. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 49.

secondary to ensuring the readers' proper interpretation of events (where proper is determined by the historiographer). For this reason “the ancient historian was not aware of any obligation to reproduce only, or even preferably, the text of a speech which was actually made” but “his chief concern is what is characteristic of the situation, rather than what is characteristic of the persons.” and “even if he can remember, discover, or read somewhere the text of the speech that was made, the author will not feel obliged to make use of it.”<sup>65</sup>

Yet even while Dibelius argues that Luke uses rhetoric competently to communicate his interpretation of the past, he also assumes that Luke neglected basic speech conventions. For example, Dibelius explains the variety of styles used within Acts' speeches as “a desire to be appropriate to the occasion,”<sup>66</sup> and that the use of Semitisms in speeches that are not matched in the narrative or even in the linguistic register of other speeches in Acts. However, he ignores the vital element of the speaker's character in his analyses. In other words, Luke sought to create speeches that were appropriate to situation but not to character, even though fit to character is not only a basic element of speechwriting for the rhetorical student but also is expected to neatly dovetail with a reasonable fit to the situation as well (Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.2.36).

Ward Gasque argues in response that the Semitisms of Acts—especially of the first half of Acts—reflect character first and situation second. In fact, Gasque sees this reflection not as an intentional mirroring of the historical character but as a realistic reflection of the actual speech, of the source of Luke's material:<sup>67</sup>

to compose speeches in the style of the Greek Old Testament in the early chapters and in a semi-classical style in the latter, and to vary his theology according to speaker, there would seem to be a higher degree of historical probability in favor of

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65. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 52.

66. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 81.

67. W. Ward Gasque, “The Speeches of Acts: Dibelius Reconsidered,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (eds. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 249.

the view that some kind of source (written or oral) lies behind the speeches.<sup>68</sup>

For Gasque, at least, the Semitisms of Acts are real reflections of real speech events, included by Luke intentionally or unintentionally, simply because they occurred within the original historical event and were passed on by his source. In addition, the linguistic and theological diversity of the speeches suggests at least close correspondence to the types of arguments favored by a character. They may even possibly reflect the historical arguments used in the actual speech events themselves: the different structure and even proofs used in Peter's Pentecost speech (Acts 2) and Paul's speech in Antioch (Acts 13) suggest not only that Ps 16:10 was a key OT text for the early church, but that the integration of the text into the gospel message had occurred in uniquely different ways for Peter and Paul.<sup>69</sup>

Yet whether or not these OT reflections do mirror actual events, their inclusion does strongly suggest that Luke's purpose was to fashion his narrative as closely as possible to the real events and to make his narrative as realistic as his sources make possible. This dedication to realism echoes Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions calling orators to make their speeches suitable to situation and audience (Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.2.36), and calling authors to ensure that their speeches in narratives echo the character and situation of the historical speaker (Lucian of Samosata, *How to Write History*, 58).<sup>70</sup>

Issues of historical faithfulness and the role of rhetoric in history are by no means limited to Acts, of course. These issues in Acts simply reflect the larger issues of rhetoric, interpretation, and bias that classicists encounter in their readings of Greco-Roman history. Roberto Nicolai argues that developing a historical understanding of rhetoric and its

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68. W. Ward Gasque, "The Book of Acts and History," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 63.

69. Gasque, "Acts and History," 62–63; see also Jan Willem Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics In the Synoptic Gospels* Jan Willem Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1954).

70. These are, of course, issues that blur the division between rhetoric and methodology and will be investigated later from a methodological perspective as well (see below, Source Theory: Process and Methods).

conventions in the first century is absolutely crucial to understanding the structure, shape, and trajectory of any Hellenistic histories:

That such an influence [of rhetoric] existed is very likely, but this does not necessarily lead to a vision of ancient historiography as integrally submissive to the demands and techniques of rhetoric and almost indistinguishable from the fictitious oratory of declamation on historical themes. To recognize the presence of models and narrative techniques that derive from rhetoric is instead valuable when analyzing the works of historians and distinguishing various levels of elaboration . . . ancient historians use the forms taken from the schools of rhetoric, but their works should not be considered unreliable testimonies because of this.<sup>71</sup>

Nicolai continues his overview of Greco-Roman historiography with an appeal to Cicero, who in a staged literary debate with his old friend Atticus engages this very issue. In a rather heatedly debated passage, we find Atticus remonstrating with Cicero that it is the right of orators to “exceed the truth of history” so that they may present the fates of their protagonists more dramatically (Cicero, *Brutus* 42-44).<sup>72</sup> A variety of implications have been read into Atticus' words, from a Ciceronian disavowal of the trustworthiness of all Greco-Roman history to the significantly more optimistic reading Nicolai represents in his interpretation, in which we find

Atticus giving a lesson to Cicero himself, pointing out the difference not so much between oratory and historiography as between the orator who can lie even when writing a historical work . . . and the historian . . . who holds to the facts.

The modern debate over this passage involves whether Cicero intended the work to be read ironically or as a straightforward critique of the current state of historiography. The growing

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71. Robert Nicolai, “The Place of History in the Ancient World,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 21.

72. See chapter 4 for a more detailed analysis of the text itself.

majority opinion among classical historians is that Cicero intended irony,<sup>73</sup> though it remains difficult to be certain the modern reader has fully and accurately grasped the humor of an author separated from us by time, distance, culture, and language. Taking the passage ironically, then, suggests that Cicero is mocking the freedom of orators to lie in order to put the best face on their argument, and he does so by comparing the rhetorical boundaries of those who write history as orators—and feel free to invent to their benefit—and those who write as historians and provide a faithful account of past events.

The freedom an orator felt to craft his argument to his benefit, regardless of accuracy, reflects the birth of Greco-Roman rhetoric in the courtroom where winning the argument was the entire purpose of oration. The historian's craft was irrevocably shaped by its birth in such a different context, and “just as the orator needs to convince the judge that his reconstruction, and only his, is the truth, so the historian must present himself as a convincing and authoritative narrator, being able to put into the background those facts that do not fit into his reconstruction.”<sup>74</sup>

Cicero himself never wrote history; he was a lawyer and gifted orator, and his legal background shows clearly in his writing. P. A. Brunt notes that when he writes about historiography, then, Cicero addresses not the process of research preliminary to writing but the process of writing itself and how history should be written.<sup>75</sup> In other words, Cicero is concerned with historiography and the genre of history, distinguishing it from other rhetorical pursuits by its style, limitations, and subject matter. In style, it is to be compared to philosophical treatises because, like philosophy, history ought to avoid the harsh and pointed rhetoric of the legal courts.<sup>76</sup>

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73. Matthew Fox, *Cicero's Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 241–73.

74. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 22.

75. P.A. Brunt, “Cicero and Historiography,” in *Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 212.

76. Brunt, “Cicero and Historiography,” 226. He points to *de Orat.* 1.144, 3.37 and *Orat.* 79 in his discussion of Cicero's treatment of proper style for historiography.

In addition to style and subject, Cicero categorizes history on the basis of rhetorical species. He finds history most closely aligned with epideictic rhetoric (the rhetoric of praise or blame; see *Orat.* 37): history by nature focuses on examining and interpreting past events and the people who catalyzed them (or were simply caught up in the action), and—due in part to the ancient understanding of the past as a moral exemplar—the interpretive end of this process in the first century by nature involved passing judgment on the choices and character of the protagonist. Brunt observes, however, that even as Cicero underscores their similarities in rhetorical type and structure, he particularly contrasts history to epideictic rhetoric in terms of purpose. The purpose of epideictic speech was the enjoyment of the audience, much like poetry, and Brunt reads Cicero's contrast to indicate that the primary purpose of history, then, was truth. Centuries earlier, Ephorus would make a similar distinction, setting history apart from rhetoric based on the process of research engaged by the historian—a process dedicated to uncovering the reality of past events, to the collecting of facts.<sup>77</sup> For this reason Brunt reads Atticus' statement in *ad Brutus* 42 to indicate that orators may lie as they recount history, but historians are required to stick to the truth.<sup>78</sup> Cicero's purpose in including the dialogue was thus to mock his own “embellishments” of history, revealing strategic falsehood as a realistic practice for his profession,<sup>79</sup> although in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner.

Brunt implicitly affirms Nicolai's optimistic reading of Cicero in his interpretation that Cicero's mocking tone is meant to be read in opposition to approval: in other words, Brunt assumes that Cicero's mockery indicates his fundamental disapproval of the elasticity with which orators approach history. Yet the unspoken option remains viable: Cicero's mocking tone may well accept the convention of dramatic embellishment in all forms of rhetoric

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77. Guido Schepens, “History and Historia: Inquiry in the Greek Historians,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 50.

78. Brunt, “Cicero and Historiography,” 230.

79. Brunt, “Cicero and Historiography,” 230–31.

while recognizing—with self-deprecating humor—the havoc it plays with actual fact. A. J. Woodman leans toward the latter, aligning Cicero's mocking thrust at oratory with his concept of truth in rhetoric and history.<sup>80</sup>

In his letter to Lucceius, Cicero urges his friend to compose his biography, adding the further request that the final product be distinctly positive, even to the point of sacrificing truth for a more favorable portrait of himself (*Ad Familiares* 5.12.3). In other words, Cicero asks his friend to sacrifice truth for the sake of Lucceius' friendly bias toward himself. The implication of his comment is that the impartial account is the truthful account.<sup>81</sup> Equating truth with impartiality and falsehood with bias is by no means unique to Cicero: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus all present truth in a dichotomous relationship to bias in the context of writing history (Sallust, *Cat.* 4.2-3; Livy, *Preface to Book I*; Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1.3; *Annals* 1.1.3).<sup>82</sup> From a Greco-Roman perspective, partiality bred fiction, twisting the truth to promote an agenda.<sup>83</sup>

Defining truth in terms of impartiality is foreign to the modern Western reader with our Enlightenment-defined ideals of absolute truth and scientific precision. As Woodman notes, however, Hellenistic cultures were shame-honor cultures in which every interaction, every decision, brought glory or dishonor on the family.<sup>84</sup> As noted above, history as the examination of events and people was intrinsically involved in praise and blame,<sup>85</sup> in creating and perpetuating the reputation not only of the characters within the account but also of the author himself:

since the historian was responsible for recording and perpetuating men's honour in as elaborate a medium as possible, he found himself in a particularly awkward position. On

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80. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*.

81. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 73.

82. See also Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 258.

83. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 160.

84. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 246.

85. See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 41–43 for a more detailed analysis of historiography as epideictic rhetoric.

the one hand he could not risk alienating one group of readers or another by appearing to be either too prejudiced in favour of someone to whom they were opposed, or too biased against someone of whom they approved.<sup>86</sup>

Seen from this perspective, bias put the author's honor at risk among his contemporaries. Yet we see indications of bias throughout the classical historiographies: Tacitus' appeal to impartiality in his *Annals* (1.1.3) does not appear to discourage his enmity against tyrannical emperors, for example.<sup>87</sup> What, then, did these authors mean by impartiality, and why did some types of bias seem to be acceptable without damaging the credibility of the author's account?

Before entering into the discussion in earnest, it is essential that the modern reader understand the type or expression of bias to which Greco-Roman author appear to refer. Again, post-Enlightenment ideals of history and accurate reporting require absolute objectivity, for history ought to be a scientific endeavor and thus subject to scientific theory and reasoning.<sup>88</sup> Yet experience has taught us that history is anything but ideally objective, no matter how hard the historian tries: memory itself is to some degree interpretive,<sup>89</sup> and the role of historian in interpreting events means that the historian is always seeking to persuade. She may be convinced of the accuracy of her account, yet that account is still to some degree interpretive, making sense of events for her readers. Modern readers accept

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86. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 246. In a nearly identical comment in another publication Woodman continues, "On the other hand, the historian would not wish to appear invidious on his own part," thus further noting the impact of the historian's critical analysis or jealous appraisal on his own reputation (Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 74).

87. Luce, "Ancient Views," 292. It may reasonably be argued that in the case of tyranny, Tacitus displays remarkable self-restraint, not bias. However, Tacitus' account of Nero (*Annals* 14) is unquestionably hostile and the language at times deliberately derogatory (see, for example, his repeated references in Book 14 to Nero's "degrading" tastes). The tone and language are strongly biased against Nero, leading the reader to question whether Tacitus' account presents a clear view of the emperor, unclouded by the author's antipathy.

88. It is possible that "bias" is not the best term to describe this force of perspective that was perceived as subverting the historian's conventional call to truth-telling, but it is the term used in classical discussion of the phenomena and for reasons of interdisciplinary clarity will be used in this study as well.

89. See, for example, Tom Thatcher, "Actual Past," in *Dictionary of the Bible and Ancient Media* (eds. Tom Thatcher, et al.; London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 18.



this quality of history—of modern history—yet often find it difficult to extend the same understanding to ancient history because the lack of scientific accuracy and precision in recording events forces the ancient historian to rely more upon memory for the events themselves, thus submitting his final account to yet another layer of subjectivity and interpretation.

The Greco-Roman reader, then, accepted the inevitability of a certain degree of subjective interpretation. However, because this represented a known hazard, conventions developed to safeguard the trustworthiness of history as a genre. For this reason, we will see that historians level charges of bias against each other when they consider the narrative in question to have deliberately omitted material that did not support the author's perspective, omitted alternate explanations of events, or interpreted all events in support of that perspective even when other interpretations offered more realistic and believable explanations. It is clear that for a Greco-Roman audience, bias was a force within authorial interpretation that overrode reasonable explanation, warped the facts of events, and abandoned impartial research in order to impose an agenda-driven perspective upon historical events. A good historian was expected to seek to persuade an audience, but was limited by convention from forcing history into a particular mold.

In his investigation of the causes of bias in classical history, T. J. Luce finds that only the contemporary historians make this claim to impartiality: “those who wrote of the distant past, such as Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Diodorus, and Cassius Dio, do not make it.”<sup>90</sup> Plutarch explains this phenomenon by claiming history may be separated into two major types, accounts of long past events, and accounts of events contemporary with the historian who recounts them. Each has its own unique obstacle to overcome in the quest for truth. The separation of time may prevent historians of the ancient past from publishing a true account

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90. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 293.

of the past, while it is favoritism, envy, and flattery that prevent a contemporary historian from writing truth from his lifetime (Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 13.12).<sup>91</sup>

In addition, in the competitive game of honor and shame, flattery could win favor from those higher on the social ladder for the contemporary historian. But the historian of the ancient past could be “neither helped nor harmed” by the subject of his text, eliminating the value of flattery for the author as well as the need to defend against charges of flattery.<sup>92</sup> Thus the desire to gain honor and favor create the partiality that writes historical fiction, while dedication to impartiality (it is assumed) offers a truthful accounting of events, much as a member of the jury was to swear impartiality in the courtroom.<sup>93</sup>

However, Luce lists several extenuating circumstances within which bias seems to be acceptable within a historical work. These include patriotic, political, or religious biases, although Luce finally concludes that the key appears to be settling on a bias agreeable to one's readers.<sup>94</sup> In these cases, the claim to impartiality appears to come in second place to these approved biases. The difficulty lies first in discerning whether the historian writes with bias and then, if so, exactly where it lies. Luce notes this difficulty was well understood by ancient authors, many of whom demonstrate critical engagement with the contemporary historians.<sup>95</sup> Thus contemporary historians were simultaneously both the only historians to make claims of impartiality and were also the authors under the greatest pressure to express partiality toward their subjects. Luce concludes that a degree of bias was inevitable in these texts, and that claims of impartiality were understood to indicate a level of relative impartiality, while the following generations were those best equipped to give verdict on the quality of the published work, being themselves free from the pressures of flattery or envy.<sup>96</sup>

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91. See also Luce, “Ancient Views,” 294.

92. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 287, 306–7.

93. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 296; See also Demosthenes 8.1; 23.97; 57.63; and Lucian *How to Write History* 38, 41, 47.

94. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 297–301.

95. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 301.

In sum, for the Hellenistic historian, asserting impartiality—as we find Tacitus doing in the prefaces to his *Histories* and *Annals*—appears to be equivalent to claiming a faithful account of past events, and evidence of some level of bias (such as Tacitus' enmity against tyrannical emperors) appears to have been considered acceptable when the audience also accepted the bias as a reasonable view of reality (i.e., when they agreed with the bias).<sup>97</sup> Yet how did first-century historians conceptualize “truth” in the process of writing? As Woodman notes, developing a satisfactory description of truthful accounting is an even more significant enterprise in light of Antonius' comment (through Cicero's pen) that rhetoric “depends on falsehood,”<sup>98</sup> while Cicero asserts that history is the business of those trained in rhetoric (Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.9.).

The Greco-Roman historiographers followed a process similar to the modern Western approach in two significant areas: first, all known facts deemed pertinent to the situation were to be included in the account, and second, a hard core of facts must create the structure upon which the tapestry of probability may be draped. The most significant difference between modern and ancient historiographers in this process is that ancient authors did not explicitly attribute the hard core of facts to the source from which it came. Instead, there appears to be on the one hand a certain assumption that the hard core may be recognized based on shared cultural history or on comparing multiple known accounts<sup>99</sup> and, on the other hand, an assumed control on extrapolating probabilities in the existence of still-living participants or other eyewitnesses of contemporary history.

Cicero provides perhaps the clearest explanation of this process in Hellenistic history.

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96. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 310–11.

97. E.g., Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 82–83.

98. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 74.

99. For example, see Cicero, *Brutus* 42–44, where Atticus assumes Cicero knows alternate, more canon versions of Themistocles' death. It is perhaps significant that Thucydides is the canonical version Atticus refers to, due to two factors: his reputation and the fact that he was most nearly contemporaneous to Themistocles of all the historians.

Using architectural terms, he describes the hard core of facts as the *monumenta*, while probable extrapolation is *ornamenta* within the text.<sup>100</sup> The *monumenta* concerns the time, person, place, and event,<sup>101</sup> while the *ornamenta* is the rhetorical elaboration of this core,<sup>102</sup> frequently precisely according to the rhetorical handbooks. As a minimal example, a triumphal notice<sup>103</sup> could serve as a hard core, while the details of the battle would be drawn according the rhetorical recommendations for portraying battle, combined with the author's knowledge of the character of his subject, the topography of the battle site, and the nature of the enemy (possibly involving some measure of ethnography in their depiction). This is by no means an exhaustive list of the factors that would shape the historiographer's *ornamenta*, merely a representative one.

Pliny the Younger reflects a similar understanding of historiography in his letter to Tacitus. He provides Tacitus with an account of his uncle's death at the eruption of Vesuvius. He concludes his letter with the curious remark that while he has provided Tacitus a full account according to his memory of events as they occurred, he knows Tacitus will use the important parts of his account to write his history, for he understands that writing a letter is different from writing history (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 6.16.22.). Woodman notes that Pliny's comment assumes a common understanding of historiography that meshes neatly with Cicero's exposition of the process: Pliny assumes Tacitus will draw the hard core of facts from his letter and provide the rhetorical elaboration based on that hard core and rhetorical convention<sup>104</sup>—a convention that plays out differently in history than it does in letters.

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100. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 250ff.

101. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 85. In describing the times and events, Antonius clearly advises the historian to keep to the order of events as they happened, thus retaining the all-important link between time and events: a chronological narration.

102. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 250. See also Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.62-63.

103. To take Woodman's basic example; see Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

104. See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

The distinction between *monumenta* and *ornamenta* sounds clear enough, yet the reality of it is that without careful attribution of sources it is difficult for the modern reader to distinguish between the hard core of facts and probability-based details. Referencing Cicero's *De Oratore*, Woodman describes the situation as “the elaboration of content by means of content.”<sup>105</sup> In his interpretation of Cicero, Woodman is careful to observe that “the first and second laws of historiography . . . are not his principal concern at all . . . the laws of historiography are subordinate to what is said in the rest of the paragraph”:<sup>106</sup> that the first law of history is that a historian must not lie, while the second is that the historian must not show partiality.

While this one caveat ostensibly forms the backdrop for all of Woodman's interpretation, he is profoundly pessimistic in his assessment of whether the modern reader is at all able to distinguish between *monumenta* and *ornamenta* in the real text, for in his view the hard core of facts becomes so miniscule as to nearly disappear:

In fact the distinction is exactly that which Thucydides himself voiced about the speeches in his work, names that there is a substratum of truth buried (so to speak) under a superstructure of rhetorical elaboration.<sup>107</sup>

Granted, Woodman has shifted his focus here from Cicero's description of historiography to Thucydides' practice of it, yet his argument assumes the same methodology—the same use of hard core adorned with rhetorical elaboration—between both Cicero and Thucydides.

Woodman's own rhetoric strongly argues against the trustworthiness of Greco-Roman historiographers because of this use of an unattributed and undefined hard core shot

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105. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 250–51, referring to Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.51–54, 62–63. See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 78.

106. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 82 Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 257; see also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 82; Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 82.

107. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 269; see also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

through with equally unattributed and undefined *ornamenta*: “the ancients saw a theoretical distinction between the core element and the superstructure of historiography in terms of truth, although in practice the distinction was usually impossible for them to make.”<sup>108</sup>

Woodman darkens his portrait of Hellenistic historiography further, claiming that

A time-honored and seemingly fundamental datum of Roman history could be the product of *exaedificatio* and hence false; a neglected and apparently trivial detail could be a core element and hence (but by no means necessarily) true. Given the rhetorical nature of ancient historiography, the relative significance of such data is no guide, since it was the essence of rhetoric to inflate the less significant and deflate the more.<sup>109</sup>

In other words, there is no way of knowing which detail actually reflects the original event, and which is provided by the historian based not only on probability but also on his interpretation of events, especially given that his selection of events and details was based on his discernment of which would best help his audience understand the significance of the past.

Further, Cicero’s Antonius describes *ornamenta* as including the manner of events, their reasons, causes, and the qualities, emotions, and character of the subject—all of which comprise rhetorical *inuentio*, or invention, one of the five canons of rhetoric an orator was expected to master.<sup>110</sup> Noting the implications of following the rules of *inuentio* in historiography given the birth of rhetoric in the courtroom, Woodman observes

Antonius' historian . . . would have automatic recourse to the rules of rhetoric in which he had been trained; he too would deal with matters of probability, as we have seen, but he would be unlikely to be responding to any unanswered questions: he would see

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108. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 274, 290.

109. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 92.

110. Cicero, *De Inventione*. The other four canons included arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 85–87.

himself in the role of advocate and would know in advance, as it were, the case which he would have to make.”<sup>111</sup>

Antonius' historiographer would thus elaborate the hard core according to his own interpretation of events, transforming the bare facts into an interpretive literary narrative in a process bounded and shaped by a strong reliance on probability and following well-established and well-known rhetorical guidelines. We see this principle at work in Thucydides, who in his description of the Athenian plague falls back on rhetorical conventions, possibly lacking himself the details needed to bring the plague to life in the minds of his readers.<sup>112</sup>

While Woodman has provided an invaluable analysis of the difficulties inherent in the interplay of rhetoric and history in ancient historiography, he paints the scene unnecessarily pessimistically. Yes, for the modern reader who expects modern norms of historiography to hold steady regardless of age or culture, the Greco-Roman historiographies are disappointingly ambiguous on the hard facts they claim as historical bedrock. The same is by no means true for the reader aware, as first-century readers were aware, that history was—due to the limitations inherent in an ancient society—based on hard facts and then elaborated into a literary narrative based on the rules of rhetoric (which again, were ingrained in first-century readers and audiences), which included using probability as the primary force to shape *ornamenta*, or rhetorical elaboration.

Yet the first two laws of historiography must stand behind this rhetorical process, shaping and limiting all that comes after: the historian must not lie and must not show partiality. In fact, Woodman himself notes that “the concept of a true hard core seems to have been the very thing which distinguished historiography from other types of

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111. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 88–89. The “case” to which Woodman refers would be the author's particular interpretation of historical events, and the elaboration of facts should be guided first by probability and second by the author's interpretation of what happened and why.

112. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 39.

literature.”<sup>113</sup> He further notes the implications of these laws for first-century authors steeped in rhetoric:

Thus if a historian had reason to believe that his hard core was false, it seems that he was debarred from using it . . . . If, on the other hand, an historian was faced with an awkward but true hard core, he was under an obligation not to omit it: on the contrary, he should / employ all his rhetorical skill to put a good interpretation upon it. Such a challenge was indeed the very essence of rhetoric.<sup>114</sup>

The second law of historiography—impartiality—further reinforces truth in the hard core by requiring that a historian's bias or even his agenda in interpretation must not implicate either the hard core he includes (or disallows) or his elaboration of that hard core.<sup>115</sup>

Realistically, of course, not all historians obeyed Cicero's stated laws of historiography: Polybius complains bitterly of historiographers corrupting their works and tainting the reputation of the profession (Polybius, *Histories* 12.25.1).<sup>116</sup> Further, his is not the only complaint—particularly of Timaeus—for Pliny, Josephus, and Cicero all cite Timaeus in the context of disagreements between historians and failures in truth-telling (e.g., Cicero, *Ad Atticus* 6.1.18; Pliny, *Natural History* 1.4, 6; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.16). Woodman remarks on the oddity of these historiographers complaining of false history when, to his mind, the elaboration by *inuentio* involved in *ornamenta* creates a degree of falsity inherent to the genre. He finds his resolution in the rhetorical concept of plausibility, or probability: where the history was both based on a true hard core and a plausible *ornamenta*, it was true history, yet where the hard core was false, the entire history—no matter how plausible—was false.<sup>117</sup>

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113. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

114. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 271–72. See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 91–92.

115. See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 93.

116. See also Eugenio Manni, *Miscellanea di studi classici in onore di*, Vol. 1 (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1980), 318.

117. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 91–92.



Yet if discerning between *monumenta* and *ornamenta* in historiography was as difficult as Woodman suggests, how could these historians complain that particular histories were in fact false and based upon a false hard core? Woodman himself offers only an unsatisfactory response to the question in the historiographies themselves. To be specific, he finds his answer in the prefaces, citing such historiographers as Thucydides, Sallust, and Livy: “historiographical prefaces were replete with 'signals' from which readers might infer what line a historian was intending to take.”<sup>118</sup> In other words, methodological assertions in the prefaces indicate the school of historiography followed by the historian and thus communicate how stringently he examined his hard core and followed the laws of historiography. Yet there are other factors Woodman overlooks.

Hellenistic societies, even in the first century, were cautiously navigating the transition from an oral to a literary culture.<sup>119</sup> While the evidence for literacy at nearly all levels of society continues to grow, the degree of literacy unsurprisingly changes based on demographic. Wealthier and more elite families demonstrate higher levels of education and thus literacy, while subsistence-level family units by and large maintained only functional literacy that met their day-to-day business needs.<sup>120</sup> Within these types of societies, oral tradition passed from generation to generation remained a key and trustworthy source of knowledge about the past. The importance of memory and of eyewitnesses in the process of history-writing bears witness to this dynamic in the Hellenistic world. The hard core passed down via memory and oral tradition would serve as a safeguard against the wholesale falsification of *monumenta*, while putting a spotlight on those instances of false history decried by the above historiographers.

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118. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 160.

119. Beth M. Sheppard, “Historiography, Ancient,” in *Dictionary of the Bible and Ancient Media* (eds. Tom Thatcher, et al.; London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 172–76. See also Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz, “Look and Listen: History Performed and Inscribed,” in *Between Orality and Literacy: Communication and Adaptation in Antiquity* (ed. Ruth Scodel; Mnemosyne; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 175–96.

120. Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity* (Early Christianity in Context, LNTS; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 26–28.

In addition, both Cicero and Josephus—regardless of the disparity of their backgrounds—indicate that the historiographies were widely read and well known by other historians (Cicero, *Ad Atticus* 6.1.18; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.16-18.). Clearly historiographers were not afraid to publicly censure examples of false history, and the effect of such accusations in a shame-honor society would be significant, heaping shame upon the character of the author and rendering all of his work questionable. The knowledge that one's works would be compared against other accounts, both written and oral, would itself serve to control the creativity and free composition Woodman fears is so rife in Hellenistic history. The fear of public humiliation and loss of reputation—and what such shame would do to the future of one's family—would serve as a powerful deterrent against falsifying history. Incidentally, these cultural dynamics gain power when the author is a contemporary or near-contemporary to the events he narrates simply because of the existence of strong, trustworthy eyewitness testimony that may affirm or denounce his account.

Thus there are clearly some significant controls that limit the amount of free composition allowed in history. Methodological claims in the preface indicate the author's intent to narrate a true account while assuring his audience of his strict adherence to the laws of historiography. Competing oral tradition, the word of eyewitnesses, and the threat of public humiliation introduced cultural dynamics that shaped a historian's method and safeguarded the validity of his final product. While Timaeus stands among the historians as a token example that not all historians followed the laws of historiography, the continual jockeying for reputation among the historians<sup>121</sup> bears witness to the power of these factors in Hellenistic history.

Clearly rhetorical conventions shaped classical historiography far more than the modern reader is comfortable with, and they introduced a level of uncertainty in our

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121. See, for example, Josephus' defense of his reputation in *Against Apion* and of course Polybius' tirade against Timaeus in his *Histories* 12.

reliance on these texts to describe past events precisely as they happened. However, developing a historical understanding of the forces shaping historiography enables us to discern the rhetorical conventions at work within the histories, and paying attention to authorial cues regarding methodology, historical hard cores, and reputation enable us to develop an understanding of the author's process and thus of his trustworthiness. In sum, each author must be evaluated on an individual basis in each of these categories, and understanding where that author places himself procedurally and generically in the literary tradition guides us in turn as we read and interpret his text.

What, then, are the methodologies we find espoused within these prefaces, and what are their implications on our study of Acts as classical history? Having examined the influence of rhetoric on Hellenistic historiography at the philosophical level—and analyzed the cultural forces at work in the process of historiography—we turn now to a more detailed examination of how these historians actually handled the hard core they had, and how—or if—we can discern between *monumenta* and *ornamenta*, especially in the speeches. Source theory is at the heart of this question, and issues of rhetorical innovation, free composition (particularly within the speeches), and the rules of *prosopopoeia* (speech in character) play significant—albeit for us modern readers, uncomfortable—roles.

#### Source Theory: Process and Methods

The question of methodology and source theory has become a thorny one in Acts scholarship. While Henry Cadbury raised the question in *The Making of Luke-Acts*,<sup>122</sup> it was Dibelius who delved into the issue in such depth that his analysis defined the field for a generation. Dibelius paid particular attention to issues of source theory as they impacted the speeches of Acts. In assessing his arguments, it is essential to realize that the working concept of source theory Dibelius displays reflects a more modern understanding of the

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122. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 362–64.

discipline in which the use of quotations should ideally indicate word-for-word accuracy. Accepting the limitations of ancient cultures means lowering these standards yet retaining their ideal as a guiding principle.

In *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, Dibelius surveys both ancient essays discussing historiography and historical works themselves, concluding finally that historians did not feel obligated to reproduce even the basic content of the speech, but would fashion the speech in such a way as to fit it into the structure of the narrative, making the real question of scholarship that of the speech's function, not its historicity.<sup>123</sup> According to Dibelius, Luke followed these conventions, offering commentary, clarification, and interpretation of events but through the voices of Peter, Stephen, and Paul, with an intended audience not within the narrative but outside it, in Luke's readers.<sup>124</sup>

Further, Dibelius—remaining consistent in both his reading of genre and his reading of the text's features—concludes that actual historical support for the speeches of Acts is so far outside the realm of plausibility that historicity simply ceases to become a question one may pose of the text:

The safest way is to regard the speeches in Acts as Luke's work: since, for reasons concerning the history of tradition, they can hardly have been handed down and, considered from the literary angle, they have their parallels in the historians and, as regards content, they often enough express a later standpoint . . .<sup>125</sup>

His conclusion—well-argued and supported as it was—set the tone for studies in Acts for the next generation of scholars. Dibelius' adherence to a historically contextualized reading of both genre and speeches also proved a powerful example that later scholars would follow,

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123. Dibelius, *Studies*, 138–45.

124. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 21, 33–34, 36.

125. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 33–34. Or in short, “All this explains itself if we ignore completely the question of historicity and see here the author's hand fashioning the material” (67).

and his dismissal of the question of historicity for Acts' speeches proved an equally powerful deterrent to investigations of Acts' speeches as windows into Petrine or Pauline rhetoric.

Dibelius' conclusions against the historicity of the speeches in Acts did not go unchallenged, however. Ward Gasque responded with an in-depth rebuttal, arguing that Dibelius fundamentally misunderstood the methodological conventions ruling the composition of speeches in Greco-Roman historiography.<sup>126</sup> For example, Gasque notes that Dibelius lumped a variety of types of historical writing together, drawing conclusions based on the practices observed within the group and applying these conclusions to the genre as a whole. In fact, Gasque claims that “the most important examples cited by Dibelius to demonstrate the general acceptability on the part of Graeco-Roman historians of the custom of inventing speeches actually go to prove the opposite, except in the case of Josephus.”<sup>127</sup> While he certainly overstates his case, matching Dibelius' sweeping statements with one of<sup>128</sup> his own, the validity of Gasque's basic argument deserves some acknowledgement: there are different types of history, and applying to all the attributes of some is poor historical analysis indeed.

In a later essay, Gasque appeals to both Thucydides and Polybius to affirm his conclusion that Greco-Roman historiographical conventions did not in fact support the free invention and composition of speeches within histories.<sup>129</sup> He traces their conservative influence down to Tacitus' *Annals*, in which Tacitus includes a speech by Claudius (Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.23-24.) at Lugdunum which is recorded on the Lyon Tablet (Lyon, France being the modern site of Lugdunum). While Tacitus' version is without doubt different from the imperial record, Gasque claims “Tacitus has not freely created the version which appears in the *Annals* but rather has freely abridged and paraphrased the original speech.”<sup>130</sup>

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126. Gasque, “The Speeches of Acts,” 242.

127. Gasque, “The Speeches of Acts,” 245. See below regarding Josephus.

128. See further discussion of Tacitus' account of this speech by Claudius in chapter 5, Tacitus: Methodology.

Gasque somewhat simplifies the case: Tacitus did maintain some of the style apparently original to Claudius as well as some the main supporting proofs, but the speech as a whole is noticeably different. In fact, by today's standards of historical accuracy, Tacitus failed in his historical duty.<sup>131</sup> Woodman captures our modern conflict between today's standards and ancient perspective on history when he insightfully distinguishes between reality (historical events) and its representation (history):<sup>132</sup>

The Greeks and Romans were capable of accepting reality and the representation thereof each on its own terms, no matter how much the latter 'misrepresented' (as we see it) the former. . . . The 'bi-focal' capacity of the ancients is so fundamentally alien to modern historical thought that we often fail to come to terms with it or recognise the chasm between classical and modern historiography which it implies.<sup>133</sup>

In other words, ancient readers understood that history offered the historian's best recovery of actual past events, presented through his interpretation and with his best literary style, best suited (as he saw) to the character and situation.<sup>134</sup>

Conrad Gempf alludes to this merging of recoverable facts with interpretation and stylistic improvements when he affirms that Tacitus' version of Claudius' speech is in fact faithful history by Greco-Roman standards: "it is the general sense of what was really said,

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129. Gasque, "Acts and History," 59.

130. Gasque, "Acts and History," 61.

131. Following Frank W. Walbank, *Selected Papers: Studies in Greek and Roman History and Historiography* (New York: Cambridge University, 1985), 212.

132. Marincola observes, "No history is *the* representation of the past but rather *a* representation, and such literary "representations" of the world, whatever their genre, demand criteria of inclusion and exclusion." (John Marincola, "Speeches in Classical Historiography," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* [ed. John Marincola; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011], 121). Marincola here refers to Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (trans. J. B. Solodow; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1994), 106–8.

133. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 14–15.

134. Even Thucydides, the ancient historian *par excellence*, offers speeches based on his best reconstruction plus his best insight into the character and situation, implicitly demanding that the reader trust his discernment and research absolutely. See W. J. McCoy, *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.

phrased in a way that the historian felt was most appropriate.”<sup>135</sup> In fact, Gempf even finds some echoes of “Claudius' pedantic manner” in Tacitus' account as well as the “general sense” of the original speech, thus including not only the message of the speech but also the character of the orator.<sup>136</sup> Marincola also notes that Tacitus essentially rearranges the original speech and “while producing a stylistically superior speech, keeps the general point and even some of the arguments used in the inscription.”<sup>137</sup> Thus when Gempf concludes the speech is in fact “faithful to the event,”<sup>138</sup> he reflects a shift in focus from modern expectations of accuracy and precise reporting to a more historically nuanced view of ancient historiography.

Even Josephus, whose speeches in both his *Histories* and *War* are so long and rhetorically grandiose that they defy historical plausibility, serves Gasque’s reading: the brevity of speeches in Acts is striking when read against Josephus' long inventions, suggesting to Gasque that while longer speeches are more probably invented, shorter speeches are inversely then likely to reflect dependence on actual speech events.<sup>139</sup> In addition, the lack of speeches at useful points of the narrative (Gasque highlights Acts 5:21 and 28:16) suggests also that Luke is depending on sources and not on narratology for Acts' speeches.<sup>140</sup> Among the speeches that are found in Acts, the different functions of the same OT text (in this case, Ps 16:10) in different speeches (Acts 2 and 13) as well as the very unique

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135. Conrad Gempf, “Public Speaking and Published Accounts,” in *Ancient Literary Setting, Vol. 1 of The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 284.

136. Gempf, “Public Speaking,” 285.

137. Marincola, “Speeches,” 129.

138. Gempf, “Public Speaking,” 285. Gempf here highlights a major flaw in the thinking of many modern readers, as we have noted above: we may not assume that conventions for first-century historiography were the same as they are for 21st-century historiography. In other words, we must adjust our standards of accuracy to account for the lack of digital records of events and speeches. Eyewitnesses, memory, second-hand textual accounts, and sometimes short-hand notebooks were the extent of the ancient historian's resources, and the Greco-Roman concept of good historical accounting should be thought of more in terms of faithfulness to the event, as Gempf notes, rather than the digital accuracy and precise reporting of today. See also Gempf, “Public Speaking,” 299–300.

139. Gasque, “Acts and History,” 61.

140. Gasque, “Acts and History,” 62.

strategy of argumentation in each speech appear to affirm the use of sources for these speeches.

A closer examination of Gasque's position reveals that he has somewhat overstated the realities of Greco-Roman histories. In fact, he seems to have chosen historians who represent a more conservative view of historical method and source theory while failing to engage those with a freer interpretation of the literary conventions (such as Livy, Lucian, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus). The exception to this is Gasque's reading of Josephus. While he does engage Josephus, who clearly has a different view of speeches within history than, say, Thucydides, Gasque fails to account for the difference or assess the implications of Josephus' rhetorical freedom on the Greco-Roman concept of the historiographical genre and its literary tradition, which would certainly have bearing on the conventions and expectations guiding both the writing and reading of Acts. In fact, Marincola notes that the larger pattern of speeches within Greco-Roman historiography is that speeches are shorter than they would actually have been, though they also remain (somewhat unrealistically) erudite, direct, and rhetorically balanced.<sup>141</sup> Thus Josephus serves as an outlier to the pattern, which may or may not be related to an individual speech's faithfulness to the original speech event.

Regardless of the weaknesses of his approach, though, Gasque demonstrates the growing realization that the apparent contradiction of speech composition within Greco-Roman historiography created a source theory problem within Acts studies that demands resolution. It is curious, however, that thus far all analyses of Greco-Roman histories—in whatever elements or parts of the works that are studied—are applied *in toto*, that is, to all Greco-Roman histories regardless of any generic differences that Greco-Romans themselves may perceive within the larger genre of history.

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141. Marincola, "Speeches," 127.



In other words, biographies, essays on historiography, histories contemporary to the author's life, and histories of times ancient even to the Greco-Roman author are all read through the same methodological lens. There is unfortunately very little investigation into the possibility that Greco-Roman history may have developed specialized sub-genres that assumed their own conventions and expectations in addition to—or even in tension with—the earliest authoritative texts that established so many conventions of the genre *in toto*.<sup>142</sup> According to this approach, all Greco-Roman histories are subject to the same rules, conventions, and criticisms. Those works that obviously departed from said conventions are taken as exceptions to the rule and thus inappropriate examples to use in drawing parallels to other texts such as Acts.

Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter take the study of methodology a different direction, examining not the asides or prefaces in which historians describe their methodology but exploring instead their actual practices, comparing multiple accounts by different authors of the same events and historical figures.<sup>143</sup> For example, Cicero and Sallust both discuss the Catilinian conspiracy, and Sallust explicitly references Cicero's speeches.<sup>144</sup> Sallust does not include Cicero's own words but only notes the work and then continues his narrative. He also claims to present Catalinian correspondence, even when Cataline's own letter seems to contradict Sallust's portrayal of him; Sallust appears to accept Cicero's interpretation of events without question. In short, Sallust demonstrates less critical judgment than we could hope, and Cicero is openly biased in his part in the events surrounding the conspiracy. The authors suggest that understanding context and purpose for writing—for both Cicero and Sallust—helps the modern reader evaluate each author's presentation, yet also note how

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142. We will explore these key texts in the following chapter and trace their influence through several hundred years of Greco-Roman historical narratives in later chapters.

143. T. Hillard, A. Nobbs, and B. Winter, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus I: Ancient Literary Parallels," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, vol. 1 (eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 183–213.

144. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, "Ancient Literary Parallels," 192.

Sallust's neglect of what modern readers consider basic rules of historiography suggests that these rules were not as well known or as strictly followed as we could hope.<sup>145</sup>

Following their assessment of Sallust and Cicero, the authors proceed to assess two other groupings of authors: Favorinus (*Or.* 37 and 64, Dio Chrysostom),<sup>146</sup> Gellius (*Attic Nights*), and Philostratus (*Lives of the Sophists*); and Julian (*Letter to the Athenians*) and Ammianus Marcellinus (*Res Gestae* 14-25). Gellius and Philostratus demonstrate how the depth of character development in a text may change depending on whether the author knew the subject personally or not. While Philostratus' portrayal of Favorinus is not inaccurate insofar as it goes, it is nonetheless demonstrably lacking in detail and characterization when compared to Gellius' portrayal of the philosopher.<sup>147</sup> Quite simply, the distance between author and subject matters tremendously.

Like Cicero and Sallust, Julian and Ammianus Marcellinus report different perspectives of the same events.<sup>148</sup> However, in this case one was the subject himself (Julian's letters recounting his actions) while the other (Ammianus) was a contemporary and an experienced historian. In this case it is striking that “the onlooker, the historian, was able to make subtle judgements based on his first hand knowledge of the figure concerned and of his life and times.”<sup>149</sup> Julian's autobiographical account is apologetic, and while not inaccurate in its data, it is biased in its reasoning and interpretation of the events, while Ammianus offers an analysis that is critical without ceasing to also be favorable.<sup>150</sup> Thus it appears that contemporary accounts offer greater detail and depth in recounting character and events, yet some distance from the epicenter of events seems advisable in order to foster a less invested, more analytical account.

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145. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, “Ancient Literary Parallels,” 210–11.

146. Winter points to the discussion of A. Barigazzi, *Favorino Di Arelate: Opera Introduzione, Testo Critico e Commento* (Florence: Lelice Le Monnier, 1966), 245, 298ff to link these orations to Favorinus.

147. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, “Ancient Literary Parallels,” 212.

148. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, 208–9.

149. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, 210.

150. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, “Ancient Literary Parallels,” 212.

In addition to his account of Julian, Ammianus also provides us with asides and programmatic declarations of methodology comparable to those we have seen already with Herodotus and Thucydides. In these asides Ammianus confirms his own adherence to the ancient laws of historiography in his commitment to truth (*Res Gestae* 15.1.1; 31.16.9), based on his status as eyewitness and on the eyewitness testimonies of his sources, much as did both Thucydides and Polybius several centuries earlier.<sup>151</sup> In addition, Ammianus' avowal of truth in his accounting in the face of his proximity to events may suggest a commitment to impartiality that pairs with truth, as we saw in Cicero's letter to Luceius (see above discussion). In sum, Schepens notes that Ammianus' declaration of methodology

is a strikingly “classic” formulation of the method of personal inquiry in history: it envisages *veritas* as the result of a process of research and evaluation (*scrutari*) through autopsy or the careful interrogation of participants in the events.<sup>152</sup>

Schepens' assessment is all the more impactful when we consider that the “classic” formulation he refers to extends back through the previous seven centuries, surfacing regularly and especially in the works of contemporary historians.

Ammianus proves that a general form of methodology winds through Greco-Roman historiography, appealed to and adhered to by some but not by others, yet never ceasing completely to exist. It raises its head in various authors to various degrees, recognizable yet always influenced by that author's individual perspective. Thus while the preeminence of eyewitness testimony, of autopsy and examination of witnesses, remains strong in certain historians, we must conclude with Schepens that the variation we have witnessed among the Greco-Roman historians simply does not support and in fact “makes it impossible to agree with the often repeated idea that the Thucydidean model in particular set the pattern for all subsequent Greek historiography.”<sup>153</sup>

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151. Schepens, “History and Historia,” 39.

152. Schepens, “History and Historia,” 39.

In fact, in light of the diversity of approaches explored above, we must acknowledge that “no definitive canon or master narrative exists and that any attempt to construct either must be resisted,”<sup>154</sup> with the caveat mentioned above, that the evidence demonstrates the existence of a strand of methodology in which Thucydides played a key developmental role, a strand that emerges time and again in different authors and, while possibly never becoming the definitive canon Schepens seeks, nonetheless remains influential, especially among the contemporary Greco-Roman historians.

While both the existence and influence of this strand of historiography have been hotly debated, a careful reader of Greco-Roman history will observe the reverence with which later historians treated his text and methodological example. W. James McCoy notes that of all the classical historians, only one—Dionysius of Halicarnassus—actually criticizes Thucydides, and that for his “choice and arrangement of subject material as well as the content and appropriateness of his speeches.”<sup>155</sup> In other words, the only criticism ever leveled at Thucydides did not address his methodology but his sense of style, elaboration, and his judgment of speech content. Whether or not a historian met Thucydides’ standard or agreed with his methods, there can be no question of his influence, particularly regarding issues of source theory.

### Thucydides: Father of Source Theory?

Thucydides attacks the question of source theory and faithful accounting in the speeches head-on in his preface, establishing programmatic language against which all other claims by other historians will be read (at least, by the modern reader):

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153. Schepens, “History and Historia,” 49.

154. Schepens, “History and Historia,” 54.

155. W. J. McCoy, “In the Shadow of Thucydides,” in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. Ben Witherington III; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10. McCoy refers to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides* 28, 24.

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense (τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης) of what they really said.<sup>156</sup>

Thucydides candidly admits the impossibility of retaining word-for-word accuracy for these speeches, offering instead a thoughtful, critical approach to reconstructing or possibly recreating them. His words have been read in many ways, some optimistically inclined toward his greater accuracy, some pessimistically inclined toward his free creativity.

The crux of the matter lies in his phrase τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης, which seems to translate most nearly to “the general gist,” or “the main thesis,” (in this case referring to the speech).<sup>157</sup> In this case, Thucydides is understood to seek to relay the crux of the argument, the main idea the speaker sought to communicate. On the other hand, Marincola interprets Thucydides' words to indicate that the historiographer presents “what he imagined the speakers, given their particular aims in their particular situations, would have needed to say to make their point as effectively as possible.”<sup>158</sup> Momigliano concurs, relying explicitly on Thucydides' experience of politics (his *bios*) and his character and reputation as a historian (his *ethos*), concluding like Marincola that “he had to indicate what they must have thought, even in cases where they were likely to have spoken differently.”<sup>159</sup> Thus even for Momigliano, an acknowledgedly conservative historian, Thucydides creates speeches based on his own concept of appropriate content and not on his research of what was actually said.

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156. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Richard Crawley; The Loeb Classical Library; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1910), 1.22.1.

157. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 11. Here Woodman follows G. E. M. De Ste Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Cornell University Press, 1972).

158. Marincola, “Speeches,” 121.

159. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 42.

Perhaps, though, a closer look at Thucydides' language will yield a better understanding of his methodology. Leone Porciani performs precisely this type of examination, noting how both the syntax and semantics Thucydides uses indicate how he views both action and speech in terms of potentiality and possibility, set in opposition to unreal or implausible and emphasizing a goal of substantiated possibility.<sup>160</sup> Thus he concludes that “one sees here the scrupulous nature of an investigation that seeks the best information on the content of the speeches, and not the creativity of one who writes what “each speaker might have been able to say.”<sup>161</sup>

As for the substance—the content—of the speeches, Porciani reconsiders the conventional translation of “what was in my opinion demanded of them,” concluding that *τα δέοντα* more accurately indicates what was appropriate to the speaker. According to this perspective, then, Thucydides did not write what he thought the speakers *should* have said, but what he considers they *would* have said, based on his understanding of both speaker and situation. Marincola affirms the nuancing Porciani offers, describing Thucydides' speech reconstructions as “what he imagined the speakers, given their particular aims in their particular situations, would have needed to say to make their point as effectively as possible”<sup>162</sup>

Finally, Porciani offers a substantially different translation of *τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης* as indicating the complete argument of the speaker, not simply the main points or core of the speech. Thus his final translation of Thucydides' statement runs as follows:

I wrote the discourses as it seemed to me that each speaker was most likely to have advised what had to be done in each situation, holding myself as close as possible to the entire reasoning laid out in the speeches that were actually spoken.<sup>163</sup>

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160. Leone Porciani, “The Enigma of Discourse: A View of Thucydides,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 329.

161. Porciani, “The Enigma of Discourse,” 330.

However, Thomas Garrity provides a much more finely tuned analysis of Thucydides' language here, arguing that what Thucydides is doing is creating a precise differentiation between form and content in his description of the speeches. Thus the form of the speech—its arguments, how the speaker would have structured the speech—Thucydides recreated based on his best understanding (the substantiated possibility of Porciani) of speaker, situation, and rhetorical conventions. The content, though—the general sense, the summaries he had received from witnesses—he remained faithful to, building the rhetorical structure upon and around the hard core of fact he had received.<sup>164</sup> Garrity's translation of τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης as the sense or main point(s) of the speech reflects a more realistic approach to the obstacles limiting precise record transmission in ancient, predominantly oral cultures—more so than does Porciani's translation of “entire reasoning.” In addition, it coheres much more closely with Thucydides' own admission that remembering the speeches word-for-word was unrealistic and, in practice, impossible (Thucydides, *History* 1.22.1.).

Finally, it is curious how closely Garrity's perspective of the Thucydidean approach mirrors Cicero's description of the *monumenta* and *ornamenta* of historiography. Although he does not highlight the parallels to Cicero's theoretical treatment, Osvaldo Padilla (following Garrity) nearly paraphrases Cicero in his description of Thucydides' process:

as far as the *content* of the speeches is concerned, he does his best to provide a summary (probably integrating some *ipsissima verba* here and there whenever possible) of what was said; as to the *form* of the speeches, Thucydides allows his historical knowledge and imagination to help. . . . Thucydides is committed to provide a faithful gist of what the

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162. Marincola, “Speeches,” 121.

163. Porciani, “The Enigma of Discourse,” 331.

164. “As for the form . . . of the speeches, in whatever way I thought the individuals would have said what was required, more or less, on a given occasion, that is the form (or ‘manner’) in which the speeches have been presented (by me).” See Thomas J. Garrity, “Thucydides 1.22.1: Content and Form in the Speeches,” *AJP* 119 (1998): 373.

speakers said, even if he adorns this in form by allowing the speakers to sound as they should, given their background and situation.<sup>165</sup>

Yet is this approach unique to Thucydides? We have already seen how Thucydides' historiographical process strongly shaped the approaches of later historians and, while not exactly creating a single uniform school of thought, appeared again and again—especially in the writings of contemporary historians—in more or less individualized interpretations for nearly seven centuries after Thucydides published his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. John Marincola examines the wide sweep of speeches across the centuries of Greco-Roman history, concluding that

as a literary genre, historiography developed a set of formal conventions that, while not iron-clad rules to be applied to every historian in every situation, nonetheless reveal certain patterns, approaches, and/or habits of thought in the ancient historians.”<sup>166</sup>

So what are these conventions he finds, and how do they compare with what we have seen already in Thucydides and find in Acts?

First, in keeping with the conventions we have seen at work already, only events and speeches worth recounting are included in the text. As Marincola notes, this approach does not seek to falsify the record or even necessarily to skew it: instead, “the historian focuses on the things that he has decided are important and conducive to a “proper” interpretation.”<sup>167</sup> Within this elite grouping of significant occurrences, Polybius stresses that “what was actually said” must be related along with the historian's analysis of why it was effective or not (Polybius, *Histories* 12.25b.1). Thus for Polybius, the essence of a speech

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165. Osvaldo Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 127. Padilla caps this description with Thucydides' final comment that he has yet remained as faithful as possible to “the general sense of what was actually said.”

166. Marincola, “Speeches,” 127.

167. Marincola, “Speeches,” 122.



is bound up on a causal relationship with the action that follows from that advice: the advice, that is, explains the actions, and if one fails to give what was actually said and resorts instead to one's own invention, one removes the readers' ability to understand why certain actions were taken. . . Word becomes divorced from action.”<sup>168</sup>

Speeches, then, provide commentary and interpretation of events both leading up to and following from the speech event itself. Marincola follows the implications of this perspective to their end, noting that “

If we thus understand the attendant circumstances of an action—and this is provided mainly by speeches—then we have a “true” and useful history. That is why Polybius says that speeches “in a sense sum up the whole history and hold it together” (12.25a.3).<sup>169</sup>

Yet even a brief overview of speeches within Hellenistic histories demands we must also set this emphasis on accuracy within the context of rhetorical convention and the obstacles within the ancient world limiting precise recordkeeping. Tacitus' reconstruction of Claudius' speech is a prime and well-known example, for Tacitus could have simply copied down the text given in official records (in this case, on the Lyons Tablet posted as a public monument). Instead, he considered the plaque a source to be used but not reproduced. The reconstructed speech he provides in his text (Tacitus, *Annals* 11.23-24) is, as Marincola observes, “stylistically superior” while retaining the general gist and core arguments of the officially recorded speech.<sup>170</sup>

Thus while Polybius provides a carefully thought-out rationale for the historian's faithfulness to speech events, in practice Tacitus reflects Thucydides' distinction between form and content as perceived by Garrity. In fact, both Thucydides and Tacitus together

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168. Marincola, “Speeches,” 123.

169. Marincola, “Speeches,” 124.

170. Marincola, “Speeches,” 129.

reflect Cicero's distinction between the *monumenta* of a hard core of facts and the *ornamenta* of rhetorical elaboration based on plausibility and the historiographer's interpretation of his subject and the events themselves. The pattern is remarkable, though incomplete. It is hardly a sweeping analysis of Greco-Roman historiographers when so few are represented. A more thorough exploration of at least the contemporary historians is called for before any pattern may be identified with confidence. However, even this brief overview demonstrates how identifying and understanding the conventions ruling Greco-Roman historiography may shape our reading and interpretation of the speeches.

Taken together, these studies advise a cautious approach, acknowledging that the conventional rules of historiography may not have been quite as conventional as the modern reader hopes.<sup>171</sup> For this reason, identifying the influences which shaped a given historiographer is essential to developing a reading of the text that best reflects its original, ancient reality. For example, although Xenophon continued Thucydides' account of Greek history, his methodology appears to have fallen short of the standard his predecessor established, spurring Gempf to warn readers, “the fact that it was possible for a historian to be interested enough in a predecessor's work actually to continue it without also taking up the method should make us very cautious about assigning importance to the methodological precedents of any particular author.”<sup>172</sup>

In nearly the same breath, however, Gempf admits that Caesar and Sallust both appear to have deliberately followed Thucydides' school of historiography,<sup>173</sup> thus strongly reaffirming the principle of individual assessment: each historian must be examined on his own merits, with recourse to such factors as his own words on methodology, any comparisons possible between his accounts and those by other authors, his distance (or lack

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171. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, “Ancient Literary Parallels,” 211.

172. Gempf, “Public Speaking,” 281–82.

173. Gempf, “Public Speaking,” 282–83.

thereof) from the events he relates, and his reputation among his fellow historians. In fact, identifying the influences on an author's methodology may simply be another way to describe our current task of identifying literary influences on a text—which in turn help us place the text within a particular literary family—with the end result of tracing out how understanding both influences and genre shape our (historically developed) interpretation of its literary features, including its speeches.

### **Retrospect and Prospect**

Scholarly consensus—if we can term it so—appears to weigh heavily toward placing Acts within the literary family of Greco-Roman histories.<sup>174</sup> Closer examination of these texts demonstrates that this family is comprised of several subgenres of history. Most of these subgenres are identified based on their subject matter, but two are identified on the basis of chronological delimitation relative to the historian: contemporary and non-contemporary history are distinguished from one another by the temporal distance of the historian from his subject. Contemporary history narrates events that occurred within the lifetime or near to the lifetime of the author, while noncontemporary history concerns events that took place long before the author's generation.

In antiquity, different research processes applied to these two types of history. The difference in process is due to Greco-Roman judicial preference for eyewitness testimony over written records. Thus conventions for contemporary history favor interrogation of witnesses and critical examination of multiple witness accounts. Given that Acts was most probably written in the generation or within a generation of the events it relates, Acts would register as contemporary history to its audience/readers. A more thorough investigation is called for, then, into the conventions, processes, and limitations guiding this genre of history in order to more fully grasp how reading Acts through the lens of contemporary history

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174. Phillips, "Genre of Acts," 366.

shapes our understanding of its literary features and influences our interpretation of the text.

As far as identifying a genre for Acts based on its subject and purpose, Sterling's choice of apologetic history seems to carry the most explanatory power, yet Acts' reliance on Jewish themes and content reinforces a rather flexible concept of genre that reflects the innovative approach of the *progymnasmata* toward mixing discourse types and genres.<sup>175</sup> Todd Penner's conclusions of over a decade ago continue to hold true: each historian and text must be evaluated on its own merits with an open mind toward the innovative integration characteristic of classical authors, yet also paying close attention to generic boundaries that realistically did enforce limitations on that innovation. In other words, creativity does not imply anachronism, but too much creativity outside of essential generic attributes may suggest that a different genre would be more a more appropriate identification. The process of genre identification, then, involves tracing literary influences while identifying a place in the tradition that fits the text's creativity. In terms of Acts, then, the designation *apologetic history* may describe a starting point rather than a conclusive placement in the tradition.

Implicit within the question of genre and literary tradition is that of reading. Assigning a generic label to literature strongly informs, if not determines, the reading strategy with which one approaches the text. With contemporary history as a starting point, we will next explore the Greco-Roman contemporary historians seeking clues for their concept of philosophy of history and their approaches to rhetorical elaboration, source theory, and the speech-narrative dynamic in order to develop a more realistic historical-literary model we may in turn apply to our reading of Acts.

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175. Penner, "Madness in the Method?" 240-62.

**Chapter 3**  
**Literary Families**  
**The Founding Fathers**

Although a great deal has been said already about genre and Greco-Roman history, very little of the discussion has actually revolved around the literature itself. Before proceeding to firmly identify Acts as any particular genre and assess the implications of that genre on reading the text, we must allow this vast and diverse body of literature—and its earliest recipients—to have their own say on the questions of literary families, genre, and reading.

As noted in the previous chapter, genre not only communicates what realistic expectations the reader may have of the text but also sets limitations to interpretations that may be considered appropriate to that genre. For this reason, genre has frequently been described as a “contract between writers and readers”<sup>1</sup> in which genre mediates the message, guiding the process of reading according to mutually recognized rules of interpretation. When the genre of a text is identified according to its historical context—by readers and texts contemporary to the work in question—reading strategies that reflect the historical context of both author and writing further limit the types of readings that may legitimately be applied to the text. Using modern literary categories to identify the genre of an ancient text will not yield interpretations that realistically reflect the text, its author, and its earliest readers: the author’s voice becomes skewed and lost across the span of centuries. When, however, historical literary criteria and analysis are applied to a text, the resulting reading more accurately reflects the experience of its first audience.

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1. Jonathan D. Culler, *Structural Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1975), 31.

## Genre and Sub-Genre Within Greco-Roman History

Because using historically contextualized criteria is so critical to developing this type of reading, we will begin by assessing not the literature itself, but the various classification systems currently used to identify and organize the literature. These systems identify particular shared elements in texts that may indicate larger literary families, the members of which share a specific generic contract that guides the reading process for all texts in the family. The single greatest complication in this process is the silence of centuries: it is impossible to know what texts have simply been lost through attrition, and creating any system based only on extant texts is tentative at best.

### Felix Jacoby and the Five Genres of Classical History

Traditional systems of organization focused on the subject matter of each historical text as the single greatest cue indicating a particular genre. The most influential of these systems was proposed by Felix Jacoby in his seminal 1909 article<sup>2</sup> introducing his magnum opus, *Fragments of Greek Historians*.<sup>3</sup> Jacoby argued that Greek history was comprised of five subgenres (in order of their proposed development): mythography, ethnography, chronography, contemporary history, and horography. In Jacoby's schema, mythography includes all historical works that treat the very ancient past, particularly those narratives recounting origin stories and legends. Ethnography describes history focused on particular geographic areas, their peoples, and their cultures. Chronography includes works organized according to dates of authority figures (magistrates, priests, etc.) and frequently limited itself to local events and dating systems. Contemporary history examines events leading up to and occurring within the author's lifetime and told from the author's Greek perspective. Horography, Jacoby's final category, treats events and people of local history. Although

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2. Felix Jacoby, "Über die Entwicklung der Griechischen Historikerfragmente," *Klio* IX (1909): 80–123.

3. Felix Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (Orig. Weidmann, Berlin; reprint Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, orig. 1923; reprint ed.1998).

Jacoby originally applied this system to Greek history only, his classification system quickly influenced scholars of Roman history to the point that the terms he used are applied equally to both Greek and Roman historical works.

While Jacoby's system has proved immensely helpful in imposing some order on a simply massive amount of literature, his teleological approach has proved faulty and misleading when it comes to tracing relationships between texts and sub-genres. Jacoby's preference for Herodotus as the epitome of Greek history's development created a false standard that blinds the reader to the dynamic presence of external cultural and literary forces.<sup>4</sup> In other words, setting Greek (and Roman, for that matter!) history along a developmental timeline assumes a gradual building of standards and norms that does not reflect the agonistic Greek culture and the social pressure inherent within limited honor societies. In agonistic honor-based cultures, "honor is a limited commodity. Through successful challenge and riposte, one gains honor at the loss of another's honor."<sup>5</sup> In the Greco-Roman literary world, these pressures broke out in historical texts as moments of creative innovation that Jacoby's static categories simply cannot accommodate.

Response, reaction, innovation, and competition with predecessors are some of the most important elements of ancient literary creation, whether in history or in any other genre. One of the primary goals of composition was to be both traditional and innovative, to follow the models of established excellence (some of which had existed for centuries) while creating something slightly different, something that was uniquely one's own.<sup>6</sup>

Making the system even more problematic is the fact that Jacoby's categories are based on modern literary theory, not on actual historical categories used by the authors and their audiences/readers.<sup>7</sup> Because they do not emerge from the historical context of the

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4. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 291.

5. Ronald A. Simkins, "'Return to Yahweh': Honor and Shame in Joel," *Semeia* 68 (1995): 50 *Semeia*, vol. 68 ed. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin; Atlanta: SBL Press, 1995.

6. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 299.

7. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 292-301.

works themselves, the entire system must be imposed from above, with the uncomfortable result that some texts simply do not fit the categories. Jacoby's response was to term these texts "problematic" because they violated the limitations of the subgenre to which he assigned them.<sup>8</sup> This lack of flexibility casts a strong shadow on Jacoby's process of identification.

More recently, Charles Fornara has attempted to finesse Jacoby's categories into a more flexible classification system.<sup>9</sup> He subcategorizes the histories into five distinct and—by now—familiar types: genealogy or mythography, ethnography, political history, local history (horography), or chronography.<sup>10</sup> Although he admits that the types are not wholly separate from one another, there is a strong sense that each subgenre is in some way observably distinct from the other. Again, we notice that these subgenres are predominantly identified in terms of subject matter, where the main themes, purpose, and subject of a text serve as essential markers that determine its placement within the family of texts to which it is most closely related. Like Jacoby's original system, though, Fornara's map of historical texts is suspiciously neat: even a brief perusal of the diverse world of Greco-Roman history demonstrates that the world of genre and subgenre is a much murkier business than Fornara suggests (exactly what is Tacitus' *Agricola*,<sup>11</sup> anyway?).

In addition, it is clear from his treatment of research and speech composition that he considers the process of history-writing to have found a predominant expression, and certainly a preferred expression, in the more conservative (and thereby more trustworthy)

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8. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 300–301.

9. Fornara terms political history simply "history," which he describes as "centered in the depiction of the actions of men as they occur in time" (Charles William Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* [Eidos: Studies in Classical Kinds; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983], 29) and is the only genre concerned with mimesis and the implications of past events upon each other and upon the present (1). According to his view, the other four genres are primarily concerned with their ability to "collect data and report them." Fornara here errs in applying a more modern understanding of history to the Greco-Romans. Even the annalists chose what events to record, indicating some level of interpretation and presentation even in the most rudimentary forms of ancient history.

10. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*.

11. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 300.



Thucydidean tradition.<sup>12</sup> For Fornara, then, treatment of sources and research found its ideal in Thucydides, and this ideal was carried through the genre. Granted, not all historians attained this ideal, yet their failures are seen as outliers and serve primarily to highlight the norm. In fact, even as Fornara seeks to make allowance for such outliers, his language itself reveals how entrenched these categories are: he describes Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* as "paradoxical" because Caesar's peers recognized the text as *commentarii*, yet its substance Fornara likens more to memoirs.<sup>13</sup> Clearly the traditional labels are at least as limiting as they are helpful.

In addition, exchanging Jacoby's preference for Herodotus with his own for Thucydides in no way addresses the problem he has created in his assertion of a single epitomic standard for Greco-Roman history. The diversity found in the actual texts themselves does not mesh well with the ideal of a single historical process, style, or even a single standard for authorial goals. In addition, Fornara completely overlooks the very real issue that his categories share the modern literary roots of Jacoby's classification system. Clearly Jacoby's schema (and Fornara's update), while helpful at a superficial level, is not the best tool we may use to describe the influences on and relationships between historical texts. In fact, the distance between texts implied by the classification of genres has prompted more than one modern scholar to seek a metaphor that better captures the true interrelatedness of classic texts:

All of these genres constituted a type of galaxy (rather difficult for us to decipher because of the loss of so many works) that was linked to other galaxies, such as the various genres of geographic literature which also gave space to genealogical, historical, and ethnographic concerns.<sup>14</sup>

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12. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 47–48.

13. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 184.

14. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 17.

It seems clear that we need a more historically descriptive, more flexible concept of subgenre than that offered by Jacoby and Fornara. Using the language of literary families suggests a world of familial likeness and interdependence in which a text may be closely or distantly “related to” or influenced by other texts. Historical works demonstrating closer bonds of influence should be read against the backdrop of the related text, with a view toward tracing that influence through various degrees of intertextuality and allusion. Works reflecting similar generic characteristics and influences are more closely related and should be read according to a shared reading model. Such an approach, combined with a historical and textually based process, will result in a more useful, more realistically descriptive reading model than will a more traditional “top-down,” prescriptive approach.

#### Literary Families: Issues of Influence, Relationship, and Family Bonds

Developing a family tree of classical history is—while a worthy and exciting endeavor—far beyond either the needs or scope of the current project. However, if we zero in on a particular branch and trace out its family lines, pinpointing where Acts might best fit on that branch, we will discover the shape of the subgenre and thereby the essential literary parallels required to develop an appropriate reading model we may apply to Acts. It is the related texts and lines of influence we seek that offer promising narrative parallels. These closely related texts can guide our reading and create boundaries to guard against both modern intrusions and modern misunderstandings of the ancient literary world.

Due to the very real impact of innovation within Greco-Roman historiography,<sup>15</sup> we cannot speak of the genre as an unchanging literary force with a set methodology, perspective, or treatment but as a slowly moving and changing body of literature caught between the dynamic forces of tradition and innovation.<sup>16</sup> In fact, taking a page from

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15. Even modern literature innovates constantly within its genre, extending this more fluid concept of genre across the centuries, with due allowance made for cultural and theoretical differences. See Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation” for a more extensive discussion of both modern and ancient generic categories.

Marincola's discussion of genre and innovation, genre may be best considered in terms of the relationship between what a text says and how it says it: content, structure, perspective, and style intermingle in particular ways to create patterns that, while constantly and subtly changing, nevertheless describe families of texts.<sup>17</sup>

Marincola's approach to genre has the benefit of remaining descriptive, not prescriptive of literature and literary families of texts. Instead of imposing generic rules upon a text, the reader observes, assesses, and analyzes that text according to its features, both in terms of structure and content. Only then do similarities and differences between the text under consideration and its contemporary literary traditions come to light, shedding light in turn on how the author wants his audience to read the text—in other words, which genre with its implicit hermeneutic suits the text best and should be used to help interpret the text.

The five factors Marincola applies to his analyses of Greco-Roman history<sup>18</sup> are particularly well-suited to the task of identifying nuances within the genre. Even more important, analyzing texts along these vectors will also indicate types of history or even changes within the conventions that define a type of history. Marincola's approach offers such versatility because it is descriptive, producing a bottom-up analysis of core features of the text, including narrativity, focalization, chronological delimitation, arrangement, and subject. We will add one more key factor to his list: we will use the near history of reception of a given text to add historical context in order to create an essential historical boundary to our reading. This will serve as a check against our own, potentially modern analysis, because the earliest record we have of a text's reception is our best guide to the reading experience of its first audiences.

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16. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 281.

17. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 282.

18. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 302–8.

Following a brief introduction to each factor, we will then address a wide variety of Greco-Roman contemporary history, analyzing each text in terms of its expression of each factor. The tendencies and patterns we see shared by these texts will assist us not only to assess the fit of Acts within that family but also to develop a historically centered reading strategy for Acts. This reading strategy, in turn, may be mined for its hermeneutical implications for our understanding of the text.

Marincola developed this five-fold assessment in order to, as he says, “look at the totality of an historical work before forming conclusions about its nature and purpose.”<sup>19</sup> Analysis along these five vectors should by no means be used simply to assign a label, but should be seen rather as a first step to understanding what the historian sees as relevant to the portrait of the past that he is attempting to create, and how the inclusion of such material in his work tries to mediate between that vision of the past and the present reality in which he finds himself. The form and content cannot be divorced from the context in which the work was produced, and the interplay of all of these factors must be considered in any final evaluation of an historiographical work. Such an approach, it seems to me, better reflects the way the ancients themselves viewed the materials and methods available for an inquiry into the past, and will make it much less likely that we force ancient works into modern categories.<sup>20</sup>

This approach to genre implies a significantly more flexible and responsive reading of the text and, although Marincola does not overtly extend his approach in this direction, provides precisely the paradigm needed to analyze works within a genre with a view toward describing strands of tradition within that larger genre. Implicit within Marincola's analysis is a comparative element that enables us to assess interactions between texts and allows the reader to trace lines of influence and response over time as well as between

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19. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 302.

20. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 309.

contemporaries. This assessment is the first step toward tracing lines of influence and relationship within Greco-Roman history and eventually identifying literary families of texts that share significant elements, patterns, or tendencies.

Marincola begins with the broadest of all strokes: determining whether a text is narrative or not. Usually this is also the simplest quality to determine, for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* could never be construed as narrative, while Polybius' *Histories* could never be anything but. Acts is similarly straightforward to assess: it is unquestionably narrative.

Next Marincola examines the focalization of the text: what is the perspective from which the author presents his work? The reader must identify where the narrative fits on a spectrum that extends from the individual to individual group, city-state, and nation of city-states, all the way through to nation versus nation and even the entire known world. There was no standard perspective, no normative focalization in Greco-Roman historiography. Instead, we see a study in contrasts where the strength of the individual perspective within sections of Polybius' *Histories* (32.12.1-5), for example, sharply sets off the implicit perspective of the Roman state in Livy's *History of Rome*. Similarly, the focalization of Acts is that of an individual group, yet the "we passages" of Acts<sup>21</sup> offer a much more personal, truly individual perspective on events, one that demands we fully engage with its potential before coming to a final conclusion on the question.

The third factor Marincola assesses in his exploration of the practical realities of historical genres is that of the text's chronological limits, which give insight into what the narrator considers significant and provide clues toward how he intends the text to be interpreted. The text must be interpreted in light of the beginning and ending provided by the narrator. In addition, the choice of time frame relative to the historian (contemporary vs noncontemporary history) carries implications for Greco-Roman historiography that extend far beyond arbitrary generic separation. In fact, "The choice of chronological limits was

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21. Passages written in the first person plural in Acts include 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; and 27:1-28:16.

important,” Marincola observes, “not only for the investigative work required of the historian, but also for the imposition of meaning and the emplotment of the narrative.”<sup>22</sup> It would be difficult to find three more crucial elements of the historical process than these he highlights. If in fact the chronological limits of the text carry implications for research, interpretation, and emplotment, it is then no exaggeration to say that describing those limits is the single most significant step toward identifying the genre of a text. And once we identify its genre, we are finally in a position to determine the reading strategy that best fits the text.

Returning to our earlier examples, Livy’s *History of Rome* is the epitome of noncontemporary history, treating as it does the origins and legends of the founding and early history of Rome, far out of reach of any eyewitness reports. Polybius’ *Histories*, on the other hand, qualifies as contemporary history because the earliest events he relates are within reach of eyewitnesses contemporary to Polybius, while he relates later events from his own memory. In our previous chapter we tentatively described Acts as contemporary history because the Luke 1:1-4 preface—linked to Acts by the Acts 1:1-5 preface—describes a research process of interviewing eyewitnesses. In addition, later passages such as Acts 16:10-17 are written in the first person, suggesting that, like Polybius, the author began by recounting events within reach of eyewitness reports but later relates events from within his own experiences.

Following his discussion on chronological limitation, Marincola completes his narrative analysis by assessing the content and arrangement of the narrative. In terms of arrangement, we must ask whether the text follow a strictly chronological flow of events. If it does not, does the author introduce events “out of order” in order to more clearly communicate his interpretive schema or the themes or moral of his account? In terms of Acts, a preliminary reading—particularly of the prologue—suggests that Acts is intended to

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22. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 305.

portray at least an outline of chronological order: the beginning, end, and many of the significant events certainly fit within an ordered chronology.<sup>23</sup> Determining the chronology of the various episodes that move Acts toward its conclusion, however, may require more careful analysis.

Marincola's fifth and final factor examines the subject of the narrative: does it treat traditional matters of "high history" such as politics and war, or does it reflect a "low history" tradition and give histories of religion, customs, local leaders, or wonders? Again, Polybius situated his work within the mainline Greco-Roman historiographic tradition, narrating political and martial events that were significant to all Hellenistic peoples: his *Histories* cover the epic scope of Rome's rise to power over the entire Mediterranean world. On the other hand, Hecataeus and Berossus offer classic examples of historiography with their treatments of the culture and history of Egypt and Babylon, respectively. Here even a brief perusal demonstrates that Acts is far from high history yet does not fit neatly within the Greco-Roman "low history" tradition, either. No single leader moves the story forward and there is no delineation of religion, customs, or list of wonders, although each of these has their place in the plotment of Acts. In short, Acts is an odd duck that requires some explanation, especially since the process of describing the content of a narrative also performs the important function of clarifying the historian's intent and intended audience. And since intent and audience are both elements essential to developing a best-fit reading approach to Acts, we will explore its content and quirks in detail later.

As noted above, we are adding one more factor to our analysis of Greco-Roman histories: that of the text's history of reception. Critically observing the reception of a narrative by its early readers (relative to us, of course!) enables us to develop a reading that is chronologically closer to the events of the account as well as to the author's own life, context, and concerns. Investigating the reception of the text provides a unique opportunity

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23. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 58, 63, 174, 193.

to peer into the expectations and experiences of the text's earliest audiences. Thus we discover the high esteem which Thucydides enjoys among certain historians such as Polybius,<sup>24</sup> while others (such as the unfortunate Timaeus) receive stinging criticism (Polybius, *Histories* 12.). The reception of these historians tells us that while both Thucydides and Timaeus are read by Polybius as history, his very different assessments of their methodology and philosophy of historiography lead him to read the texts with either more or less confidence in their accounts.

Polybius' assessment of these historians, then, provides us with a reading approach or interpretive paradigm that, while not functioning as the definitive word on our own interpretation of them, should carry some input into our reading of Thucydides and what little remains extant of Timaeus' writing. When Polybius' good opinion is reinforced by the positive evaluations of many other classical historians, we have significantly more confidence in giving Polybius' voice input into our reading of Thucydides. In the same way, when Timaeus is reviled by other historians in addition to Polybius<sup>25</sup> and—while frequently referred to—never praised for his faithfulness nor his critical methodology, we give Polybius' criticisms of Timaeus more credence in our reading of Timaeus. In the same way, consistent reception of Acts as a history of the early church strongly argues for a sympathetic reading of the text that accepts the narrative as it presents itself. However, Acts was accepted into the canon relatively late (compared to other NT books), and this earliest confusion about its nature and place in the church must also speak into our emergent reading of the text.

These brief observations on the narrative of Acts by no means offer a complete picture of the text and its relationships with other texts, particularly historical texts. However, because the field of Greco-Roman history is so large, we must employ some

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24. E.g., Polybius, *Histories* 3.31.12-13 and 38.4.8 // Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.4 and possibly Polybius, *Histories* 3.6-7 // Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.23.5-6. See also Tim Rood, *Imperialism, Cultural Politics, and Polybius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

25. E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.67.4 and Pseudo-Longinus, *De Sublimitate* 4.1-3.



preliminary method of filtering texts so that the task before us remains manageable in scope. To that end, we propose to tentatively accept our earlier description of Acts as contemporary history—to accept the text as it presents itself—and explore other examples of Greco-Roman contemporary history. As we identify various tendencies and patterns as work within the family of contemporary history, we may in turn set Acts next to these in order to assess how well Acts fits into this literary family. Finally, we will examine the implications of our final description of Acts: what does placing Acts within a particular literary family mean in terms of our quest to develop a reading that echoes the experiences of its earliest audiences?

### **Definitive Influences on Contemporary History**

In order to assess how well Acts actually fits with the contemporary histories we must identify the generic patterns that cued ancient readers to identify a particular text as contemporary history. The task appears straightforward enough when stated so baldly, yet—as we discussed in the previous chapter—the Greco-Roman concept of contemporary history appears to have included not simply textual cues but also a particular philosophy of history and its processes. Ascribing a uniform philosophy and methodology (or even a uniform ideal) to the genre based on our few observations thus far, however, would be an unscientific and purely anecdotal assumption. Instead, we will challenge the assumption that it is even appropriate to speak in terms of a school (or schools) of historiography which influenced and gave birth to contemporary history.

The complexities of source theory in Greco-Roman historiography provide a useful text case for this question as well as introduce one of the most fundamental and complex methodological issues in contemporary history. A brief review of modern versus ancient concepts of source theory should prove helpful in setting the case within its historical context. For example, while both ancient and modern historians agree that “history . . . is a narrative of facts,” Nicolai points out that “the means, however, by which a story is

conveyed and the aims of the historians are different.”<sup>26</sup> Thus Guido Schepens acknowledges that in modern source theory, the purpose of including a source is objective knowledge, yet an ancient historian's purpose in including source material is not to maintain the objective aspect of knowledge but to expand upon its subjective meaning for the historian's narrative.<sup>27</sup> The discernment, judgment, and historiographical process of the historian are thus much more important to the text than any instances of attributable material.<sup>28</sup> The historiographical process—“the various ways of collecting evidence”—itself reflected a critical method and thus was invested with what Schepens describes as “distinct critical value.”<sup>29</sup> The process a historian followed reflected upon his character (*ethos*) and, from there, the trustworthiness of his product. Cadbury understood this ancient dynamic well. He cites the practices and personality of the author as major factors playing into the reader's assessment of an ancient author's reliability, the “trustworthiness of his report.”<sup>30</sup> For this reason, historians wishing to establish their character and trustworthiness gave attention to their critical method and described their process within the text.

Modern methodology in source theory calls for rigorous attention to properly attributing source material and to maintaining its integrity with the original source. Our distinctions between plagiarism, allusion, and quotation hinge on this very clear sense that a source must be attributed, and attributed precisely. Greco-Roman historiographers, though, faced no such modern concepts. In fact, the influence of rhetoric demanded clever re-use of others' material. However, this re-use must be recognizable without being explicitly identified within the text, offering the ideal reader subtle congratulations for catching the joke or reference. In addition, the material being re-used must also be demonstrably

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26. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 13.

27. Guido Schepens, “Some Aspects of Source Theory in Greek Historiography,” in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University, 2011), 101.

28. Schepens, “Aspects of Source Theory,” 103–4.

29. Schepens, “Aspects of Source Theory,” 108.

30. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 362.

improved upon, giving the historian opportunity to show off his wit,<sup>31</sup> skill, or insight.<sup>32</sup> Thus the combined tensions of tradition and innovation work to both encourage and obscure intertextual dialog, as Nicolai notes with some frustration: “the account of an ancient historian tends to absorb—and therefore to make disappear, in varying degrees in various epochs—every trace of documentation used by the author.”<sup>33</sup> And thus the end result is a complex tangle of source material that is difficult and sometimes nearly impossible to unravel.

Even the bare essentials of reporting facts in history undergo some adjustment in ancient texts. The modern Western idea of truth in reporting implies that all relevant facts regarding a past event are included, and—most importantly—nothing is included that is not known to have actually happened. In other words, no words, no details, no actions are included that do not derive from hard facts. When details are added by the author based on the probability of their existence or on parallel situations, places, or people, we recognize the end product as historical fiction or novelized history. We demand a strict accounting for hard facts: we insist on distinguishing between a core of known facts, people, or events and the tapestry backdrop of probability and parallels that reflects what is known about that kind of life, place, or person. Today’s access to recordings of recent past events makes even conjecture unnecessary for modern history, yet what about historical events that occurred before such detailed records could be made? The events of, say, 500 years ago require some historically trained imagination to bring them to life.

Clearly the modern concept of history, dependent as it is on technology that records not only exact words and actions but even body language, places unrealistic demands on Greco-Roman history. Modern philosophy of history demands levels of precision and

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31. M. D. Usher, “Carneades’ Quip: Orality, Philosophy, and the Poetics of Impromptu Quotation,” *Oral Tradition* 21, no. 1 (2006): 190–206.

32. Geoffrey Lloyd, “Quotation in Greco-Roman Contexts,” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 17 (1995): 141–53.

33. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 13.

accuracy that were not only unrealistic but impossible for Hellenistic historians who relied primarily on memory, either their own or that of a trustworthy eyewitness.<sup>34</sup> At an even more basic level, the role of memory—more than mere data retrieval—has also undergone radical reversal. In modern historiography, memory is a poor second to digital records of events. The tendency of memory to bind with emotional registers, to capture only a particular facet of an event, and to intertwine itself with assumption and interpretation makes memory a suspect source of hard historical data for modern historians.

For ancient historians without modern technology, memory was by far the best resource. The judgment of an eyewitness was valued precisely because memory binds with emotion and interpretation. An eyewitness of impeccable character who had a reputation for critical thinking, insight, and wise assessment was a prized source for understanding not only what happened but why and what it meant. The events themselves were significant insofar as they made sense of the historian's present, and so the ability of an eyewitness to make causality connections between past events and the present—or simply to explain why past events occurred the way they did—was valued as much as was the data they communicated about the events themselves. The very mingling of data with interpretation, assumption, or emotion that modern historians deplore was treasured for the insight it could bring to understanding the past and thus bringing meaning to the present as well.

Resources through which a historian could access memories differed, however, depending on the type of history being written. History preoccupied with the origins of a people group or movement in the ancient past could not appeal to eyewitness memory and instead made do with secondary resources such as oral tradition and written records. Historians writing accounts of the recent past, though, sought out living eyewitnesses before

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34. Gempf, "Public Speaking," 285–300. See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 5–38; and Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 64, 214–20, 154, 167.

appealing to written sources. Even better was if the historian himself was the primary eyewitness; this gave his account a cachet and authoritative voice that simply could not be reproduced through any other means. Having a good memory, then, was prized. In fact, classical texts demonstrate that being known for having both an accurate memory and good judgment was a matter of some boasting: Seneca claimed to have written his *Declamations*, an account of rhetorical themes and their treatment by various Greco-Roman orators, entirely from memory. Or one could look to Pliny the Elder's encomium of Memory, "the greatest gift of Nature," in which Pliny relates feats of memory that, while occasionally beyond belief, demonstrate the value of memory in Hellenistic society (Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.* 7.24). Quintilian and Cicero both devote significant sections of their work to describe the method of *loci* in which one assigns physical referents to particular memories.<sup>35</sup>

What is particularly significant for historiography, though, is not just the value ancient historians placed on memory but also their appreciation of the interaction between memory and judgment. For the modern historian, our judgment and emotions color our memories of events with shades not necessarily present in the original events. To the ancient mind, this interaction added value to eyewitness testimony. Clearly the Hellenistic approach to source theory—the rationale behind how and why historians used their resources—involved concepts and cultural elements that remain foreign to our modern minds and literary philosophies.

One particular concept deeply embedded in Hellenistic culture feels particularly foreign to the modern reader. Classical rhetoric—with its carefully designed argumentation structures, systematic lists of *topoi*, and rules for *enargeia* and ornamentation—may be an unknown world for most readers, but familiarity (if not mastery) is essential for any claim to a competent reading of these ancient texts. Rhetoric may have been born in the courtroom, but by the first century BCE ruled every formal expression of literature. While its structured

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35. Also known as the palace of memory; see Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.2 and Cicero, *Orat.* 2.86-87.

arguments were of limited usefulness in narrative, its conventions for the arrangement of an account and for appropriate styles of expression in a given literary context still ruled supreme. And because rhetoric dictates the composition of a work, understanding the conventions of rhetoric is essential for interpreting the work as well. For Greco-Roman literature, rhetoric is at the heart of a historical hermeneutic.

Yet while hermeneutics are governed by rhetoric, and rhetoric is governed by conventions, conventions themselves must be interpreted by the historian as he composes his account. And a given application of conventions and rhetoric in history becomes an identifiable essence, a sort of literary footprint pointing back to the historian who created it. As this footprint becomes adopted and adapted by successive historians, we witness the influence of a composition and a perspective grow, eventually shaping the reading strategy of the audience and even, in turn, the very conventions that govern the genre. At that point, the question of influence itself becomes something of a double-edged blade.

When a later text bears witness to the influence of an earlier literary giant, deliberate echoes of one text cue the reader to apply the same generic outline to the other and thus the same reading strategy, the same hermeneutic. Yet the unwary reader who does so risks overestimating the similarities and overlooking the unique elements of the secondary text that may in fact shape the reading strategy away from that of the influencing text. In other words, similarities—especially deliberate echoes—of texts rightly cue similar reading approaches, yet a critical reading must also remain alert to unique characteristics of the text that might prompt us to re-evaluate our approach, tailoring our hermeneutic responsively to the generic cues we find in the text. This process of dialogic reading is essential because it continually shapes our reading strategy in response to the text, in turn developing a hermeneutic particularly suited to each text.

Tracing the influences of various authors, then, is a significant step toward developing a historically apt hermeneutic for a given text. Yet overestimating the influence of these authors may dangerously skew the hermeneutic: it is all too easy to overlook the

role that an individual author's innovations and quirks may have in revealing the interpretive schema the author himself is developing. For this reason we will first examine ancient authors who may rightfully be considered the most influential historians of the ancient world. As we map out the literary footprint of each historian, we will begin also to identify the various innovations of each author, especially where these innovations challenge other authors or prevailing tradition.

Assessing each author's approach to source theory in particular will enable us to test the question of influence through the lens of the questions we posed earlier: did "schools of historiography" exist in Greco-Roman literature? We will begin to trace evidence of literary influence through these authors and then down to other contemporary histories that are roughly contemporary with Acts. From there, we may examine Acts in the same way, identifying and tracing evidences of influence that shaped the concept and narrative of the book of Acts. This type of assessment primarily addresses the much larger questions of historical philosophy and methodology, especially as these work out in practice through source theory.

In addition, this approach will clarify the relationship of Acts to contemporary history. If the text of Acts was strongly influenced by elements and concepts unique to contemporary history, then defining Acts as contemporary history is a valid enterprise. And once we have established whether it is appropriate to speak of Acts in terms of contemporary history, we may then identify where Acts fits within this rather diverse literary family. The more certainly we identify the immediate family of the text through lines of influence and innovation, the better our hermeneutic will fit the text and the more confidence we will have in our reading of Acts.

#### Herodotus

Although not technically a contemporary historian, the fifth-century "father of history" earned his place as one of the most influential historians with his *Histories*, an

immense narrative examining the origins and catalyst(s) of the Greco-Persian wars in the early fifth century BCE. Herodotus' account pioneered Greek history as a genre, establishing the basic conventions that would guide centuries of later historians.

### **Herodotus: Assessing the Genre**

Without question, Herodotus composes a narrative account. Yet within this narrative are large sections of prose description. Herodotus' ethnographic and geographic asides are among the largest in the Greco-Roman histories. In fact, the entirety of his second book (*Euterpe*) is taken up with descriptions of Egypt's culture, geography, religion, politics, and even animals. Herodotus' rationale is transparent: Egypt is a significant location for Greco-Persian altercations, and its exotic appeal clearly reaches centuries further back beyond Cleopatra and Mark Antony. With the exception of these long ethnographic and geographic asides, though, Herodotus arranges his account in roughly chronological order.

The subject of the *Histories* is, as Herodotus describes it, the great deeds of both Greeks and "barbarians," particularly focusing on why the hostilities between Greeks and Persians began. So Herodotus establishes from the outset that history is a matter of glorious acts, particularly in war. Yet in addition to military prowess and investigations into the catalysts of and motivations behind these engagements, Herodotus also includes a surprising number of supernatural events. Unlike modern historians who consider reports of the supernatural to reflect local or personal superstition, and rarely include them in historical accounts, Herodotus freely relates his sources' accounts of miracles and other supernatural events.

Often, however, these accounts are preceded or contextualized by his own opinion or assessment of the report (e.g., *Histories* 6.82.1; 7.134.1; 7.137.2). For the most part, Herodotus maintains a strong external focalization in his narrative. This consistency makes his use of an intrusive narrative voice particularly noticeable. Yet his deviation from the norm<sup>36</sup> serves



an important function: Herodotus' intrusive first-person narrative voice provides essential interpretive cues for his audience.<sup>37</sup> Thus while Herodotus does not shy away from supernatural accounts, they do mark one of the distinctive contexts in which Herodotus inserts his own voice and his opinion of an account's proper interpretation and general trustworthiness.

Even first-person asides that appear to simply emphasize the difficulty of Herodotus' task actually serve to underscore his critical methodology, weighing the results of his research by its distance (or lack thereof) from himself. We see this in action when he indicates how immediate a report is to his own experience (versus second- or third-hand knowledge; see *Histories* 2.99). Also, his first-person intrusions frequently emphasize the monumental effort he expended to secure a report and ascertain its faithfulness to actual events.<sup>38</sup> Reports of events he has experienced or has laboriously confirmed thus weigh in more heavily as witnesses to his overall thesis. In this way he cues a particular interpretation of events by telling his audience personally which accounts in his narrative are most trustworthy to shape their understanding of the past.

Written sometime around 426 BCE,<sup>39</sup> Herodotus' *Histories* examine the origins and catalysts of the Greco-Persian wars, much of which occurred before Herodotus was born. However, the wars continued until 451 BC, with an official treaty possibly accepted around 449 (*Histories* 7.151; see also Dio. Sic. 12.4). The *Histories*, however, begin with Athens' blockade of Sestos, around 479 BCE, which locates the account within non-contemporary history.

Herodotus begins his narrative long before the Greco-Persian wars, in fact finding their origin in the Trojan War (*Histories* 1.1-5). With this starting point, Herodotus expands

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36. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 6.

37. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 20-21.

38. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 7, ft. 25.

39. Charles William Fornara, "Evidence for the Date of Herodotus' Publication," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 91 (1971): 25.

his subject to include not only the wars but also the deep-seated antipathy between the Greek and Asian peoples. He develops his theme through his interpretation of events, explaining this antipathy in terms of slavery and freedom, associating slavery with the Persian empire, and freedom with Athens and the league of city-states.<sup>40</sup> Although the end of the *Histories* may seem abrupt, it nonetheless reinforces the dichotomy Herodotus sets up. More significantly, the concluding statement communicates the final ideological victory of freedom over tyranny, as the Persians recognize the inestimable value of freedom when suddenly threatened themselves with slavery (*Histories* 9.122.4). And so even without relating the end of the Greco-Persian wars, Herodotus presents us with a tidy package, fully resolved ideologically if not narratively.

And though he receives praise as the “father of history,” Herodotus has also faced significant criticism (and not just from modern historians).<sup>41</sup> In large part because of his inclusion of the supernatural,<sup>42</sup> many Hellenistic authors considered him gullible at best, and a liar at worst. Cicero describes his work as full of *fabulae* (*On the Laws* 1.5), while Plutarch expands his attack, dedicating an entire essay to Herodotus and giving it the title *On the Malice of Herodotus*.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the *Histories* continue to prove themselves faithful to the general shape of events, especially insofar as modern historians are able to verify them.

### **Herodotus: Philosophy of History**

It is clear from Herodotus’ own introduction that he considers the role of history to be memorialization of great deeds (*Histories* 1.1.1). Historical accounts preserve acts of glory, particularly in battle. His occasional and strategic use of an intrusive narrative voice

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40. John Hart, *Herodotus and Greek History* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 47–50. See also Herodotus’ comment regarding freedom and free speech in Athens versus the tyranny of Persia (5.78).

41. For a thorough examination of Herodotus’ reception history, see Jessica Priestley, *Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture: Literary Studies in the Reception of the Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

42. In this he certainly seems to have transgressed an early norm; see also Alexander, *Acts*, 141.

43. While it is true that Plutarch’s essay could be viewed as a rhetorical exercise, particularly in view of Herodotus’ overall popularity, he nonetheless presents some valid arguments about and complaints of real errors in the *Histories*.

demonstrates that while he views his role as historian to be that of a guide to the proper understanding of events, he leaves the final interpretation to his audience. Herodotus lays his research before his audience, points them to what he considers the most likely or most accurate account, and then retreats.<sup>44</sup> The onus of interpretation he places squarely on his audience.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to serving as a somewhat distant guide, Herodotus also shamelessly champions Athenian values and preeminence. There is no disclaimer against bias in the *Histories*. Though born in Halicarnassus, at that time part of the Persian Empire, Herodotus writes for a free Greek audience and makes no effort to distance himself or seek objectivity. One receives the impression that for Herodotus, the superiority of the Athenian cause and values is not a matter of partiality but of fact.

### **Herodotus: Methodology**

Considering the status of the *Histories* as the pioneer of its kind, we are not too surprised to find within its text the first real treatment of source theory in the genre. Piecing together various asides and tangents, we see Herodotus strategically differentiating between events he himself has seen and reports he has gathered by word of mouth (*Histories* 2.99). And when he offers an account from another source, he offsets the account with his own opinion of its credibility (another example of that first-person narrative voice). Arnaldo Momigliano finds the key to Herodotus' historiographical process here: "The emphasis on the trustworthiness of his information is one of the most characteristic features of Herodotus' critical method."<sup>46</sup> Comparing Herodotus with his predecessor, Hecataeus,

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44. Catherine Darbo-Peschanski, "The Origin of Greek Historiography," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World.; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 30.

45. Carolyn Dewald, "The Construction of Meaning in the First Three Historians," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 94.

46. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 37.

Momigliano observes that

unlike Hecataeus he [Herodotus] was no longer primarily a judge of what he heard but a discoverer of new facts. Therefore he had to indicate which of the reports he could vouch for. . . . But for the purpose of establishing the truth the cross-examination of witnesses became more important than the rational justification of a theory.<sup>47</sup>

Thus Momigliano interprets Herodotus to indicate that the historian considered research—especially of the testimony of eyewitnesses—a more significant part of his historical process than, for example, persuading his reader to agree with his interpretation of events. This conclusion requires some explanation, for the modern reader instinctively understands Momigliano to mean that Herodotus thought discovering truth was more important than pushing an agenda, just as modern historians claim today.

However, we must remember that ancient historiography followed ancient conventions, not modern standards, and these must be understood against the backdrop of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions. Because rhetoric (particularly classical rhetoric, born as it was in the courtroom) is fundamentally the art of persuasion, the historical narrative itself serves the author's thesis and acts as a witness affirming the author's interpretation of events.<sup>48</sup> This does not necessarily deny the faithfulness of the final account to the events that actually occurred, but rather reemphasizes the distance—cultural and chronological—between text and modern reader.

This distance reminds today's historian to read ancient accounts critically, mindful of any modern assumptions.<sup>49</sup> While ancient and modern historians essentially agree that a

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47. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 37.

48. See the previous chapter for a more in-depth discussion of classical rhetorical conventions and their impact in general on ancient historiography. The following chapters will interact more fully with specific historians, their use of rhetoric, and the impact of rhetoric on their historical narratives.

49. It is absolutely essential to not lose sight of the distance between modern and ancient readers in

historian seeks to uncover the truth, the role of ancient historians included not only determining which events were significant but also offering plausible and compelling explanations of both the events and their significance to ancient readers. How a historian prioritized these functions—seeking the actual events of the past, determining their significance, and explaining that significance—remained the purview of the historian.

For this reason, understanding the historian’s methodology—particularly regarding source theory—is essential to developing a realistic interpretive paradigm that can yield an appropriately historical reading of the text. When we look to Herodotus and see the distinction we have already noted between first-hand and second-hand knowledge, Momigliano draws our attention to the implications of this distinction, particularly on our level of confidence in the historian’s faithfulness to actual events.

Yet while useful, those are not the only implications we see for Herodotus’ methodology. Although Herodotus did make an important distinction between first-hand and second-hand knowledge, the contrast was not always between Herodotus’ own memory and that of another, but often between the first-hand experiences of a credible witness and secondary reports heard by that witness.<sup>50</sup> This contrast not only leads to the possibility Momigliano noted (that Herodotus prioritizes research), but also indicates significant differentiation between levels of research. In fact, the distinction between personal, first-person (but not Herodotus), and hearsay demonstrates three distinct methods of research, each assigned what Guido Schepens describes as its own “critical value” in the historiographical process.

In other words, when Herodotus notes the source of a given account, he implies a research process in which he has weighed the historical value of each account based on the source of the report (and, by implication, the method he used to access the source).<sup>51</sup> For this

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order to reveal and minimize the subconscious generic assumptions modern readers may impose on ancient texts; see Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 47.

50. Wiseman, *Clio’s Cosmetics*, 145.

reason Schepens concludes that “the manner in which the historian gathers his material” signifies “an important critical act.”<sup>52</sup> Thus the methodology practiced by the historian suggests a particular level of critical engagement with his sources. Increased critical engagement in turn implies significant effort on the part of the historian to remain faithful to events, even within his interpretive schema. It will take several centuries of Greek and Roman historiography, however, to demonstrate how influential this particular aspect of Herodotus’ legacy actually proves to be.

### **Herodotus: Rhetoric**

Cicero remarks that Herodotus was the first historian to apply the rules of rhetoric to his composition (*Orat.* 12). In keeping with Cicero’s focus in *The Orator*, he primarily refers to Herodotus’ use of ornamentation, rhythm, and general style. However, the *Histories* also provide a helpful baseline for the use of rhetorical arrangement in Greco-Roman history.

### Herodotus: Arrangement

It is useful at this point to note again that arrangement within the system of classical rhetoric addressed somewhat different concerns than does Marincola’s concept of arrangement. Chronology is a major concern for Marincola, as well as the significance of the beginning and conclusion of the narrative for the historian’s purposes and interpretation of events.<sup>53</sup> Rhetorical arrangement includes chronological order as a possible strategy, but also considers the larger questions of the structure of the account and how the narrative moves from one event to another.

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51. Alexander, *Acts*, 140.

52. Schepens, “Aspects of Source Theory,” 108.

53. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 302.

Tim Rood notes that Herodotus structures his account in terms of “the ongoing pattern of hostility grounded in patterns of reciprocity and revenge.”<sup>54</sup> This pattern provides not only the motivation for military action but also its consequences, as each event propels the cycle forward another step. The narrative consistently demonstrates that although participants seek to end the cycle, they “repeatedly fail at their plans precisely because they have not paid attention” to the “unexpected contingencies” presented by the reality of the cycle and the consequences of events on other participants.<sup>55</sup>

In terms of rhetorical strategies, Herodotus’ arrangement of his *Histories* is straightforward and fairly simple. His tendency to present alternate reports of events slows the narrative and injects an element of repetition that somewhat blurs the structure of his account.

#### Herodotus: Style

But it is in matters of style that Herodotus moves the genre forward significantly, clearly following rhetorical guidelines in his presentation of events. As rhetoric called for vibrancy and full-textured narrative worlds to give life to text and speech,<sup>56</sup> we see Herodotus using vivid imagery and imaginatively reconstructing events and contexts for his audience. His use of rhetorical ornamentation sets Herodotus apart from previous historical prose: historical accounts prior to Herodotus do not evidence the degree of realism and the evocative language he uses.<sup>57</sup>

Cicero describes Herodotus’ style as a serenely flowing river (*Orat.* 12), though he transforms the compliment into a somewhat backhanded one later when he claims that Herodotus, like the other early historians, had no sense of linguistic rhythm in his narrative,

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54. Tim Rood, “The Development of the War Monograph,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World.; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 154.

55. Dewald, “Construction of Meaning,” 99.

56. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.10-11; see also Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.29-30.

57. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 134–36.

except by chance (*Orat.* 56). Clearly, rhetorical expectations changed significantly in the intervening centuries.

The breadth of Herodotus' narrative, his claims of careful, methodological research, and the innovations he employed to bring characters and events to life and guide his audience's interpretation of them all proved enormously influential among later generations of historians. In a very real sense, all historians after Herodotus will be measured by the strength of his influence over them, both in terms of their compliance with conventions he either followed or established and in terms of their own innovations that give them a unique identity apart from the father of history.

### Thucydides

If Herodotus is, for lack of better imagery, the trunk of this family tree, Thucydides stands as one of its leading branches. He continues Herodotus' work,<sup>58</sup> picking up chronologically where Herodotus left off. While he is very aware that he stands in Herodotus' sphere of influence, he also develops innovations that together define his own unique style. For example, Thucydides' retelling of the Peloponnesian War is cast in light of the Greco-Persian War, particularly in the contrasts Thucydides draws for Athens and the other city-states.<sup>59</sup> The homage implicit in Thucydides' work suggests that he expected his audience to both know Herodotus' work and recognize the links he draws between his own history and that of his predecessor.<sup>60</sup> In other words, Thucydides expects his audience to interpret his own work in light of Herodotus' *Histories*.

### Thucydides: Assessing the Genre

Like the *Histories*, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is a narrative. Unlike

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58. Luciano Canfora, "The Historical 'Cycle'," in *Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University, 2011), 387.

59. Tim Rood, "Thucydides' Persian Wars," in *The Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts* (ed. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus; Boston: Brill, 1999), 166.

60. Rood, "Persian Wars," 164.



Herodotus, Thucydides inserts very little in terms of ethnography or geography. Instead, the story moves directly from event to event without much at all to slow the narrative down. As noted above, Thucydides continues the history of the Greeks, taking up his account with the war between the city-states that erupted in large part as fallout from the Greco-Persian war. Like Herodotus, Thucydides focuses on wars, military leaders, and significant political events in his historiography.

Also in keeping with the father of history, Thucydides limits his treatment of these leaders to their engagement with and action on the political and public stage.<sup>61</sup> Interest in the personal lives of public personas is a relatively recent innovation, and in an honor-based culture the attention is all the more intensely upon the character and actions that carry weight in determining one's social identity and community value. Yet where Herodotus also included stories of the supernatural intervening in the lives of his characters (as well as his opinion of the accounts), Thucydides simply avoids mentioning the supernatural whenever he is able. In fact, in his preface Thucydides very pointedly remarks that his account may be less enjoyable but more truthful for its omission of myths (*Hist.* 1.22.4). And when he is unable to avoid it, such as in the case of omens or oracles that impacted events and personalities, Thucydides derides those who put faith in such things (as opposed to Herodotus, who occasionally affirms local superstition or stories of divine intervention).<sup>62</sup>

Thucydides maintains an external focalization throughout his narrative, only occasionally falling back on the internal focalization of a personal narrative voice (e.g., *Hist.* 2.51.1). When Thucydides does insert his own voice, it is usually only to explain an omission as insignificant or to deemphasize the significance of a report (e.g., *Hist.* 2.54.3). This use of the narrative voice carries implications for Thucydides' methodology (see below) in that it

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61. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 91.

62. Andrew Gregory, *The Presocratics and the Supernatural: Magic, Philosophy and Science in Early Greece* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 120.

demonstrates Thucydides' commitment to remain faithful to the events as they actually occurred, whether he believes them significant to the overall narrative or not.

Thucydides begins his narrative with the events leading up to the war, couched in terms of the motivational forces of power and fear (1.23.5-6). Like Herodotus, he demonstrates a strong conviction that understanding the origins of a historical event is key to a proper interpretation of the past. Also like the *Histories*, Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* does not relate the end of the war. Again, whether this is due to the narrative catching up to historical events, to Thucydides' choice of conclusion, or to the ravages of history, we cannot fully know. But the end of the *Peloponnesian War* is even more abrupt than Herodotus' conclusion to his *Histories*: the account simply ends abruptly, announcing the conclusion of the 21st year of the war (Thucydides, *Hist.* 8.109.2).

This reference to the 21st year reflects the consistent and precise chronology that governs Thucydides' account. Much more so than the *Histories*, the narrative movement of the *War* is tied strictly to the chronology of events. And while both Herodotus and Thucydides narrate the story of a relatively recent war, only Thucydides may be properly termed a contemporary historian. The events Herodotus narrates all occurred before his lifetime, but Thucydides narrates events that occurred within his adult life, and in many of which he participated as an Athenian general.

It is perhaps Thucydides' role as eyewitness and participant that catalyzed his emphasis on unearthing accurate eyewitness accounts on which to base his history. In this case it should not be surprising, then, that this combination netted Thucydides the most authoritative reputation of any historian in Greco-Roman history.

### **Thucydides: Methodology**

When Thucydides established ἀκρίβεια as a cornerstone of the genre, he revealed much more than the goal of his methodology: he gave us the heart of his methodology. Linking ἀκρίβεια with his methodology implies not only that readers could place the highest

degree of confidence in contemporary history, but inversely, that Thucydides' process (which generates this confidence) can only be applied to contemporary history. While his method of corroboration could in theory be applied to writing about the ancient past, without eyewitnesses to interview there is no living memory to connect the past and present faithfully. And we have seen, no greater test of verification existed for Thucydides than to compare accounts given from living memory. In fact, the level of confirmation that was essential for his work finds no equal in Herodotus' work.<sup>63</sup> Probably for this reason—and unlike Herodotus—Thucydides avoids legends of origin or of famous forebears in his account. Nothing occurring so long ago would pass his stringent fact-checking: again, there would be no eyewitness reports, no memories to verify. For this reason, claims of autopsy (eyewitnesses) and inquiry (the verification process) are exclusive to contemporary history.<sup>64</sup>

Thucydides' approach to his methodology, both in theory and in his text, marks one of his significant departures from Herodotus. If—unlike Herodotus—Thucydides is silent about his efforts and keeps his explicit opinions out of the story, it is only because he feels he already said all he needs to say on the subject before his story began. In fact, Thucydides' programmatic preface is the first extensive treatment of methodology and source theory in the classical histories.<sup>65</sup> The crucial core of Thucydides' preface may be found in the following few lines, which remain today the most highly debated text in the *Peloponnesian War* and are well worth including here *in toto*:

And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of

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63. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 138. Padilla very generously describes Herodotus' predicament as "challenging."

64. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 80.

65. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.8, 134-138.

the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the [lack] of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other.<sup>66</sup>

Thus Thucydides presents us with a critical distinction in methodology between his investigations of the distant past and his research into contemporary events: when researching events that occurred within his own lifetime, he relied on his own involvement where possible and the testimony of eyewitnesses otherwise.<sup>67</sup> John Marincola notes the overt technical language Thucydides employs in his *Archaeology* (the first volume of his *Peloponnesian War*: terms such as probability (εἰκός); evidence/witness (σημεῖον, μαρτύριον); reasoning (εἰκάζειν); and examination (σκοπεῖν) echo the legal terms of courtroom arguments and the logical terms of philosophical debates.<sup>68</sup>

Thucydides' use of such technical terminology draws attention to his philosophy of history and to the systematic approach he developed while writing the *Peloponnesian War*. Philosophically speaking, the language suggests that Thucydides saw history both in terms of a lawyer's struggle to bring the truth of an accusation to light and a philosopher's wrangling to strip the pretense from ideas and discern the fundamental principles that drive reality. From a systematic perspective, his words imply the existence of a scientific process of hypothesis, testing, and thesis behind his ordered narrative.

With this preface, Thucydides has essentially drawn back the curtain here, exposing the behind-the-scenes research upon which his history is built. Like Herodotus, Thucydides prioritizes eyewitness testimony, be it his or another's. In fact, Thucydides here makes no mention of written records at all. Unlike Herodotus, though, Thucydides does not claim to differentiate between his own memories and the reports of second- or third-hand witnesses.

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66. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.1–3.

67. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 44.

68. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 97.

Instead, he subjects all reports to a stringent fact-checking, apparently discarding some eyewitness testimony when a conflict arises between multiple reports of the same event.

Thucydides' transparency reveals an aspect of eyewitness testimony that Herodotus seems to ignore: memory, while preferable to written reports, is prone to error. Some facets of an event may be overlooked due to forgetfulness, prejudice, or simply inattention. Such loss of potentially significant data shapes the resulting interpretation of events immeasurably. For this reason, claims Thucydides, he required corroboration of all reports before accepting them as faithful accounts of the past, acceptable for use in the *Peloponnesian War*.<sup>69</sup> By doing so, Thucydides established ἀκριβεία, or historical faithfulness, as a fundamental principle of historiography and a new standard for the genre.

### **Thucydides: Philosophy of History**

While Thucydides' first comments in his *War* appear to follow precisely the same lines as those laid by Herodotus, later in his preface Thucydides demonstrates that his philosophy of history diverges somewhat from that of his predecessor. In his very first statement, Thucydides claims the value of his subject lies in its surpassing greatness over all wars preceding it (possibly a rather pointed dig at Herodotus!). This appears to confirm Herodotus' view of history as the memorializing of glorious deeds.<sup>70</sup>

However, later remarks indicate that this is simply Thucydides' defense of his subject, not his philosophy of history. Instead, he writes that the purpose of history is to create "a possession for all time" (*War* 1.21.2). Thucydides' focus is not on the glory of the act but on its value to later generations. True, at heart both historians seek to immortalize greatness, but Thucydides' focus on the utility of history for the following generations of readers is an important step in the overall development of Greco-Roman historiography.

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69. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 69.

70. Dewald, "Construction of Meaning," 101.

After presenting his philosophy and methodology at length in his preface, Thucydides does not mention the matter again in his narrative. Instead, he presents a whole story, virtually unbroken in flow and noticeably lacking in Herodotus' personal intrusions. Having established the character of his narrative as verified and unassailable, the authority of his narrative voice is absolute. In fact, Thucydides extends that sense of proven authority to his entire narrative, including both events and interpretation.<sup>71</sup> It is no coincidence that Thucydides' authoritative voice emerges after he presents his methodology.

In fact, he clearly bases his authority on his methodology. Thucydides considers his reliance on eyewitnesses and scrupulous corroboration to provide the only reasonable and trustworthy picture of the past. Again, this indicates that the only history in which Thucydides placed complete confidence was contemporary history. Without living memory to link the ancient past to the present, readers could have at best only very limited confidence in the account. In other words, Thucydides assumes a direct link between memory and historical faithfulness, and events within recollection are the only events about which a historian may claim to present a faithful account.<sup>72</sup> For Thucydides, "the only real history was what surviving witnesses could be cross-examined about."<sup>73</sup>

And this brings us back to the issue of the historian's authority, for not only does Thucydides implicitly claim authority because of his verification process, but his narrative voice carries additional authority simply by virtue of relating events within the memory of living witnesses. He knew, and the audience knew, that other living witnesses (beyond those he questioned) would be able to affirm or deny his history. The honor-shame dynamic which undergirded Hellenistic cultures meant that in publicly publishing his account, a historian was vulnerable to the praise or condemnation of his readers. For this reason, publishing

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71. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 9 See also P.A. Brunt, *Studies in Greek History and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 149.

72. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 41.

73. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 146.

content that was so open to criticism implied that the author's unassailable confidence in his narrative. In essence, his narrative voice carried the authority of implied impunity.

This is the authoritative narrative voice that emerges in Thucydides' assessment of both events and people. While Herodotus "overtly judges" his events, people, and even sources, Thucydides subtly weaves his judgment into his narrative, ensuring that all elements in his narrative seamlessly work together toward a unified understanding of the war.<sup>74</sup> We do not hear Thucydides' voice—as we often hear that of Herodotus—abruptly breaking into the narrative to speak directly to us. In the same way, where Herodotus is happy to enlarge upon his tireless efforts to ascertain the truth of an account, Thucydides simply offers the final product of his research, allowing nothing to distract from the continuing flow of his narrative.<sup>75</sup>

It is clear that Thucydides defines his role as historian very differently than does Herodotus. Instead of merely acting as a tour guide, leading the audience through all the evidence and presenting some arguments occasionally for one account over another, Thucydides' historian is an interpreter of the evidence. If he is a guide at all, he is a guide to (what he considers) the proper interpretation of the past. The differences between Thucydides and Herodotus in their philosophies is significant, and from an interpretive standpoint it is not an overstatement to say that Thucydides uses both likeness to and deliberate divergence from Herodotus to convince his audience to follow his particular interpretation of the Peloponnesian War.

Finally, because the events Thucydides relates are recent, not enough time has elapsed for these events to enter into trope, poetry, drama, or epic. Thucydides was not competing against other literary efforts and had no need to distinguish his account and his voice against those of other authors. In a world where shame and honor were opposing and

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74. Dewald, "Construction of Meaning," 96.

75. Schepens, "History and Historia," 47.

limited binaries—where the honor of one author brought shame to his competitor—it was essential to shame the authors of competing accounts in order to bring honor to one’s own work. But without this honor-driven competition, Thucydides had no need to indulge in the polemic so characteristic of Greco-Roman histories, and such diatribes are entirely absent from his account.<sup>76</sup>

However, while the *Peloponnesian War* is free of the agonistic verbal battles of other histories, later audiences pinpoint a tectonic fault that runs through contemporary histories: contemporary histories were particularly vulnerable to accusations of flattery.<sup>77</sup> Only in contemporary accounts could the quest for honor via faithfulness to the past be subverted by the quest for honor from living legends. In the never-ending *agona*, it must have been a great temptation to bias the account just slightly in order to favor the powerful and receive the benefit of their approval. By and large, Thucydides escapes accusations such as these,<sup>78</sup> maintaining a spotless reputation for preferring truth and “public interest” over personal gain.

What is particularly interesting is that Thucydides himself does not appear to equate a lack of bias with truthful reporting (an assumption that many of Thucydides’ later fans fall prey to, ironically enough<sup>79</sup>). Instead, Thucydides differentiates between his verification process and his ongoing difficulty with how vulnerable memory is to partiality.<sup>80</sup> This struggles indicates that Thucydides recognized two separate issues (bias and faithful reporting) and developed distinct strategies for addressing each.<sup>81</sup> Even considering our limited understanding of the author’s mind and actual practices, Thucydides’ own words and

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76. And, in fact, from nearly all contemporary histories. See Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 224.

77. Lucian, *How to Write History* 39.

78. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 134.

79. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 98.

80. *Peloponnesian War* 1.22.1-3. See also McCoy, “In the Shadow of Thucydides,” 8.

81. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 76. Here Marincola cautiously describes Thucydides as having “a more comprehensive understanding of the problem than is to be found in later writers.”



example strongly suggest that his reputation for faithfulness and impartiality were well-earned.<sup>82</sup>

### **Thucydides: Rhetoric**

Thucydides innovated in a variety of other ways as well. One significant (and influential) departure from Herodotus' *Histories* includes his use of rhetoric. There is no question even to the neophyte reader that the tone, arrangement, and general flow of the narratives reflect very different approaches by two very different historians.

### Thucydides: Arrangement

In terms of structure, we have already established Thucydides' preference for a strictly chronological movement in the narrative. However, when faced with concurrent events, Thucydides frequently proceeds thematically, finishing a theme before addressing any simultaneous events.<sup>83</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus in fact criticizes Thucydides on this point, claiming that this strategy in fact obscures the correct order of actual events (*On Thucydides* 9).

Thucydides did not rely entirely on chronology and thematic links, however. He also developed distinctive ways of linking events in order to create unity and a structure for interpretation in his narrative. Marincola notes four strategies Thucydides uses to link events, creating patterns that enable his audience to interpret and predict the narrative flow. He describes these as juxtaposition, prefiguring, iteration, and contrast and reversal.<sup>84</sup> Each of these strategies prompt the audience to interpret events in relation to a particular part of the surrounding narrative, most obviously of course in his use of juxtaposition.

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82. It is worth noting here that Thucydides does not share the modern conviction that one must have sufficient distance in time from an event in order to develop an accurate perspective and understanding (or interpretation) of the event and its significance. Thucydides was interested in assessing the impact of events up to and on his own time; he was not concerned with assessing their full historical impact. For this reason he focuses on the causes and current impact of events.

83. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 69–75.

84. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 69.

However, when Thucydides uses prefiguring he also expects his audience to interpret his current text in light of a specific portion of earlier text, while iteration requires that all instances of the repetition be interpreted together. Contrast and reversal likewise dictate that the audience understand one event in light of or as the inverse of another.

Simon Hornblower adds another strategy to this list: anachrony.<sup>85</sup> This is a very different type of link, an artificial link between episodes that Thucydides forges in order to cue the significance of a particular event. Often Thucydides uses anachrony to reinforce the significance of an episode. Frequently, however, he instead links episodes in order to deemphasize the implications of an event. For Thucydides, this use of anachrony functions as a reverse McGuffin,<sup>86</sup> subtly suggesting to the audience that a given episode has no impact on the storyline.<sup>87</sup>

Each of these strategies—juxtaposition, prefiguring, iteration, contrast and reversal, and anachrony—functions to provide an unspoken cue to the audience, marking Thucydides' unique way of arranging his account and revealing how Thucydides shapes the interpretation of events. Together, these strategies also indicate the particular interpretation of the past that Thucydides creates and toward which he persuades his audience.

### Thucydides: Style

Though Thucydides enjoyed an excellent reputation as a historian among both Greeks and Romans (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides* 8), Cicero did not think much of

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85. Hornblower, "Narratology," 139–43.

86. A McGuffin is an element introduced in a narrative which provides the protagonist's motivation and drives the plot forward, but then serves no further purpose in the story.

87. One could argue that Thucydides' use of anachrony to deemphasize events actually speaks quite highly of the historical faithfulness of his accounts: he includes material he knows happened but does not consider truly significant to his thesis. In fact, that Thucydides developed a specific rhetorical means of handling this problem strongly suggests that he valued faithfulness so far above the rhetorical persuasiveness of his account that he was willing to include material that may have hurt his thesis, simply because he knew it happened (and happened a particular way).

his rhetorical style, describing it as impetuous and linguistically disconnected, missing even the essential well-rounded periods of serious literature (*Orat.* 9, 12). And Thucydides suffers with Herodotus under Cicero's criticism that they both lack rhythm, except by the occasional happy accident (*Orat.* 56). Even Dionysius of Halicarnassus condemns Thucydides' rhetorical efforts as tedious and austere (*On Thucydides* 24-26).

Yet Thucydides—like Herodotus—manages to uphold the most basic of rhetorical conventions. For example, he uses vivid and dynamic language to portray the characters of his history. Thucydides also follows Herodotus in varying his narrative voice according to the setting, but he does so in even more detail than did his predecessor.<sup>88</sup> In fact, Thucydides even varies his narrative voice to reflect local cultures and dialects, particularly in the speeches of the *Peloponnesian War*. While the diversity may intentionally reflect rhetorical conventions of appropriate speech and *prosopopoeia*, Simon Hornblower offers an intriguing alternative. While these instances “may be just artistry,” Hornblower proposes that “it may also or alternatively be a sign that real people . . . were his oral informants.”<sup>89</sup> Although Hornblower's hypothesis is impossible to prove, it demonstrates how realistically Thucydides reproduces the unique linguistic quirks of ethnic groups or geographic districts. It would in fact be difficult to reproduce these quirks without having heard the speakers in person.

Examining these several facets of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* gives us a sense of Thucydides as a historian and a writer, enabling us to piece together the essential shape of his style, philosophy of history, and methodology. This literary shape, in both its innovation and adherence to convention, is unique and yet fits within the general pattern of historiography we see at work in Herodotus. This is a shape to which we may compare later historians, for while similarities by themselves do not indicate direct influence, they may—in

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88. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 76.

89. Hornblower, “Narratology,” 166.

conjunction with each other and with explicit statements by historians—begin to describe a kind of literary family inheritance that allows us to assess influences on texts and relationships between texts.

### Xenophon

Just as Thucydides continued Herodotus' work, Xenophon picks up where Thucydides left off in the *Peloponnesian War* and continues the account with his own *Hellenica*. Later, Xenophon's *Anabasis* relates his experiences leading the Greek army on the long journey back to Greece from Persia. This account is the first of its kind: an adventure story that does not revolve around the victorious army of any nation, nor even tells the tale of any great war. Instead, it is an epic tale of a failed venture and the battle of a mercenary division to return home through hostile territory. It comes as no surprise, then, that Arnaldo Momigliano describes Xenophon as “one of the most experimental historians of Antiquity.”<sup>90</sup>

#### **Xenophon: Assessing the Genre**

In keeping with the conventions established first by Herodotus and strengthened by Thucydides, Xenophon presents his audience with a historical narrative. Like Thucydides, Xenophon wastes little time (and even less in the *Anabasis*) in explorations of ethnography or geography. His subject is unusual in that he does not center his narrative on a great war or on the actions of great leaders of nations or empires (although he does cover that ground in his *Hellenica*). The *Anabasis*, however, is the story of individuals and is wholly focused on the day-to-day realities of military life in war zone. The narrative is only incidentally concerned with great deeds of national importance.

Yet for all that Xenophon is the leader of this incredible journey, he avoids centering the story on himself. Instead, he maintains a strict external focalization, even referring to

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90. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 113. The quote in full reads: “Tacitus is one of the most experimental historians of Antiquity. Only Xenophon, among the historians who have come down to us, can be compared with him in this respect.”

himself consistently in the third person (e.g., *Anabasis* 2.4.15). There is no real doubt, though, of Xenophon's authorship of the work, and his personal involvement places the narrative firmly within contemporary history.

The account itself is a good example of storytelling pared down to the essentials. The beginning of Xenophon's story does provide the customary historical context that orients the audience in both time and place, and it ends precisely upon their return home, with only a brief comment detailing the length of the journey in distance and time. There are few tangents or incidental details to be explored along the way: the story moves directly from one incident to the other, constantly driven by the company's urgent need to continuously press northwest and homeward. Xenophon develops very little to unify the account thematically and creates no strategic structure that communicates a larger meaning. The cry of the displaced is enough of a theme to unify the work, and the struggle to return home provides Xenophon's structure.

There is no question that the *Anabasis* was read as contemporary history from its publication on. Further, Xenophon himself has consistently been received as an essentially faithful historian, praised by Lucian of Samosata as one who valued truth over personal bias (*Hist. Conscr.* 39).

### **Xenophon: Philosophy of History**

Unlike either Herodotus or Thucydides, Xenophon provides no preface nor any discussion of his work as history. He simply begins the narrative. For this reason, there is comparatively little to glean from his account regarding his concept of historiography or his role as historian. We can, however, consider the implications of his presentation on his philosophy of history.

In neither the *Hellenica* or the *Anabasis* does Xenophon present a well-developed concept of his role as historian. Yet it is clear from the first statements of each work that he assumes the absolute authority of his narrative voice. At least in the *Anabasis*, the historian's

authority derives largely from the simple fact of his personal experience. However, he also does not defend his authority in the *Hellenica*, even though it lacks that element of authorial eyewitness testimony. Xenophon's assumption reveals that, like Herodotus and Thucydides, he considers the role of historian as that of a knowledgeable guide to the past. And following Thucydides' example, Xenophon presents events without inserting his own opinion or overtly stating his interpretation. There can be no doubt that he expects his audience to receive his account as truth; there is no place for competing accounts, possibly no need for them, when the audience is privileged to receive Xenophon's personal testimony on events. For Xenophon, the historian is the absolute guide to the reality of past events.

This does not mean, however, that Xenophon's external focalization and absolute presentation are objective. On the contrary, Xenophon presents us with a highly idiosyncratic view of events that privileges "a technical military sphere of attention that also contains personal, moral, and ideological value judgments within it."<sup>91</sup>

### **Xenophon: Methodology**

In addition to avoiding philosophical statements about historiography, Xenophon also offers no defense of his method. *Anabasis* is narrative, from beginning to end. The simple rhetorical style of the narrative, though, evokes Thucydides' straightforward approach. Yet we cannot assume that similar styles indicate equivalent methodologies. In his assessment of Xenophon's speeches, Conrad Gempf concludes that the speeches do not reflect Thucydides' carefully balanced methodology: neither the *Anabasis* nor the *Hellenica* show signs of the verification process that was, to that point, so uniquely Thucydidean. In fact, observing this familiar, simple narrative style without the attendant trademarks of methodology is in fact a valuable warning for the modern reader:

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91. Dewald, "Construction of Meaning," 96.

the fact that it was possible for a historian to be interested enough in a predecessor's work actually to continue it without also taking up the method should make us very cautious about assigning importance to the methodological precedents of any particular author.<sup>92</sup>

In other words, we must assess each historiographer individually. While tracing elements of influence is useful in assessing relationships between texts and populating a literary family, influence alone does not indicate discipleship of the whole. We have an answer to our earlier question now: we cannot describe Greco-Roman historiography in terms of a single, developing school, particularly in matters of methodology. A historical narrative may follow a particular trend in historiography, but there are no models of the historiographical process that are accepted *in toto* by a consensus of authors, or even by a single author. Even strong lines of influence from one author to another do not indicate wholesale adoption of method. We assess each historiographer on his own terms as well as on the basis of the conventions of the genre and lines of influence and innovation.

### **Xenophon: Rhetoric**

Although Xenophon leaves us with an essentially undeveloped philosophy and methodology, his rhetoric is a different story. It may seem that his storytelling is straightforward and simple, but Xenophon combines a keen attention to narrative pacing and balanced periods with a lack of pretension that earned him only the highest praise for his rhetorical skill. Even Cicero, the master of the backhanded compliment, claims that the Muses speak in the voice of Xenophon (*Orat.* 19).

### **Xenophon: Arrangement**

Both the *Anabasis* and the *Hellenica* suggest that Xenophon intentionally limits the scope of his history to just the events, and those almost exclusively in the military sphere.

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92. Gempf, "Public Speaking," 281-82.

Yet even while the arrangement of his narrative appears to be simply comprised of the constant movement of the story from one event into another, it is clear that more than chronology influences Xenophon's structure.

Like Herodotus and particularly Thucydides before him, Xenophon is intensely interested in clarifying the causes of the events he portrays. His military experience shapes his interpretation and presentation of these causes, but it is clear that if any greater structural principle exists, it is motivated by Xenophon's desire to order events by their catalysts.<sup>93</sup>

### Xenophon: Style

Cicero describes Xenophon's style as "sweeter than honey" and the opposite of the confrontational style appropriate in the forum (*Orat.* 9). Given Cicero's love for rhetorically clever texts, his praise is perhaps unexpected for the modern reader. Yet the flow and balance of Xenophon's prose is inherently appealing. In fact, reading Xenophon is deceptively easy; it is consistently one of the first real Greek texts given to modern students of ancient Greek. This less literary linguistic register in fact obscures part of its effect: the impersonal style, surprisingly free from rhetorical elaboration, creates a stark account that in its very simplicity convinces the audience of its faithfulness to actual events.<sup>94</sup> The austerity of his language suggests that no adornment is needed to set off this larger-than-life adventure story.

Where Herodotus is nearly gossipy with events and culture alike, and Thucydides "severely analytical," Dewald describes Xenophon as "earnest and direct in the apparent transparency of his narrative."<sup>95</sup> Xenophon's rhetorical strategy is immensely effective: the simplicity of his account and the implied (but never addressed) authority of his role as

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93. Dewald, "Construction of Meaning," 100.

94. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 10.

95. Dewald, "Construction of Meaning," 98.



historian give his narrative voice an instantly felt reliability that is unexpected, particularly given the thoughtful development of narrative authority present in his predecessors.

### Polybius

Polybius stands in a unique place in our study, roughly midway between the architects of Greco-Roman historiography and their literary descendants (particularly those writing around the first century, near when the book of Acts was written). He bears the influence of the great historiographers like Herodotus and Thucydides yet also introduces innovations in his own histories that proved influential in their own right. Unlike Xenophon, Polybius provides us with more than ample material to assess his concept of historiography and of his role as author within it. In this he follows Thucydides' example. In fact, both the parallels and contrasts between Polybius' *Histories* and Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* are so obvious and so strategic that it seems Polybius wrote his account as an homage to and continuation of Thucydides' work.<sup>96</sup> But it is Polybius' tangents concerning the nature of historiography and of his role as historian that may be most useful to us as we seek to describe the genre and identify its influences.

#### **Polybius: Assessing the Genre**

The forty volumes of Polybius' *Histories* comprise a single extended narrative, broken up with a variety of asides concerning philosophy (12.27-28), politics (6.1-9), methodology, ethnology (6.11-56), military strategy (5.84; 9.13), science (9.14-15), mathematics (9.21), and polemic (12.9-15). Yet for all his wide-ranging interests, Polybius is fundamentally invested in telling the story of Rome's rise to power in the second and third centuries BCE. The majority of Polybius' narrative treats the causes, events, and consequences of the Punic Wars. In this, Polybius is wholly in line with the conventions established by his predecessors: he writes about great acts and glorious deeds, mostly in battle.

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96. Rood, *Imperialism, Cultural Politics, and Polybius*.

Although the first several books of his *Histories* narrating the events of the First and Second Punic War are set before his birth, the dramatic events of the Third occurred during Polybius' life. His emphasis on relying as wholly as possible on eyewitness testimony further locates his account within contemporary history.

And Polybius reinforces the centrality of this theme—the birth of the Roman Empire—with the chronological delimitations of his account. Polybius establishes the context with a comparison of the empires preceding the *Pax Romana* (*Histories* 1.2; Polybius claims to begin where Timaeus ends; see 39.19). In his conclusion, Polybius not only extends his account to relate the defeat of all of Rome's significant enemies in his lifetime, but also provides a formal conclusion summarizing his work and praising the power of triumphant Rome (*Histories* 39.19). Clearly, both the introduction and conclusion of his narrative function according to the conventions set by earlier contemporary historiographers.

Polybius' use of focalization, however, innovates strongly away from established conventions. Until his *Histories*, Greco-Roman history boasted a very stable tradition of external focalization within the narrative proper.<sup>97</sup> Internal focalization could be used infrequently to insert the historian's own opinion of an account or interpretation of events or characters. But instead of abiding by this convention, Polybius interjects his own voice arbitrarily within the narrative itself.

Occasionally he uses the first person to locate himself socially in the ranks with all humanity or with Greeks as an ethnic unity ("we" or "us"; see *Histories* 4.21.1; 31.4-5; 5.75.4-6; 1.63.4.), but the most surprising use of the first person is his personal use. While he usually refers to himself in the third person, he occasionally breaks this pattern without warning (*Histories* 36.11.1-4). Polybius explains his unexpected personal intrusion in a fascinating aside:

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97. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 192.

It should cause no surprise if at times I use my proper name in speaking of myself, and elsewhere use general expressions such “after I had said this” or again, “and when I agreed to this.” For as I was personally much involved in the events I am now about to chronicle, I am compelled to change the phrases when alluding to myself, so that I may neither offend by the frequent repetition of my name, nor again by constantly saying “when I” or “for me” fall unintentionally into an ill-mannered habit of speech. What I wish is by using these modes of expression alternately and in their proper place to avoid as far as possible the offence that lies in speaking constantly about oneself, as such personal references are naturally unwelcome, but are often necessary when the matter cannot be stated clearly without them. Luckily I have been assisted in this matter by the fortuitous fact that no one as far as I know, up to the time in which I live at least, has received from his parents the same proper name as my own (*Histories* 36.12.1-5).

Polybius thus explains away his poor literary manners by dint of pleading that continued use of his own name would detract from the narrative flow. He then further pleads that his self-aggrandizing “me” and “I” be excused as a rhetorical necessity and not be attributed to any desire on his part to draw attention to himself.

The most curious piece of his defense, however, is that he considers his name’s uniqueness to support his case here: if he had been given a common name such as Marcus or Lucius, he would have considered using the first person imperative to preserve the clarity of the account. Yet what is truly significant is that his use and defense of the first-person narrator sets a precedent in Greco-Roman historiography. The first-person narrator now serves as an implicit affirmation of the historian’s role as an all-important eyewitness. Instead of a literary *faux pas*, Polybius has transformed the first-person narrator into yet another proof of the narrator’s authority.

While not all of his Hellenistic readers appreciated his decisive approach to historiography, Polybius nonetheless became a primary and trusted source of the events he narrates. Plutarch, Livy, Athenaeus, and Strabo clearly used the *Histories* in their own works, and Cicero is clearly conversant with Polybius' discussion of constitutions (Cicero, *de re Republica*).<sup>98</sup> Above all, the freedom with which later authors referred and appealed to Polybius is evidence of the historian's reputation as a faithful witness to past events.<sup>99</sup>

### **Polybius: Philosophy of History**

In his discussion of historiography in general, Polybius separates history into two categories: universal history and historical monograph (*Histories* 3.31-32; 7.7.1-6).<sup>100</sup> He does not differentiate between universal history and monograph based on length but subject. While a universal history seeks to treat all significant events that occurred within a specific time frame, Polybius describes a historical monograph as history that limits itself to a particular political event, war, or theme (*Histories* 3.32, 7.7).<sup>101</sup> Polybius himself favors the universal history, as he considers historical monographs to give significance to their subjects that is disproportionate to that subject's actual value (*Histories* 7.7.1, 7.7.6). Yet the distinction he makes is valuable beyond his own introduction of his work, because it

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98. Andrew Erskine, "How to Rule the World: Polybius Book 6 Reconsidered," in *Polybius and His World. Essays in Memory of F. W. Walbank* (eds. Bruce Gibson and Thomas Harrison; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 233-35.

99. Lester Grabbe, *The Coming of the Greeks: The Early Hellenistic Period (335-175 BCE)* (vol. 2 of *A History of Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*; Library of Second Temple Studies 68; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 120.

100. See also Palmer, "Historical Monograph," 5-6.

101. It is noteworthy that Polybius' example in Book 7 involves the death of an individual and not political events or a war. Darryl Palmer understands Cicero's description of a historical monograph (*Fam.* 5.12.2) as a history focused on "one theme and . . . one person," which complicates the generic distinction between historical monograph and *bios*. His understanding, though, seems to indicate a historical monograph may focus on a particularly essential or influential period of an individual's life, particularly in the political or martial sphere. So, for example, following a particular individual during the events of a war may qualify as a monograph but not a *bios*, since the account does not follow the life of that personality. See Palmer, "Historical Monograph," 13.

provides a framework within which one may read a work more appropriately, according to its intended scope and purpose.

In fact, in addition to defining appropriate subject matter for history, Polybius unapologetically sets out what he considers its proper and strategic purpose. For Polybius, while poetry may simply exist for beauty or entertainment, history must teach the audience and contribute to the development of their character and citizenship.<sup>102</sup> The historian is a teacher, and as long as his account educates, the strategies and means he uses may vary widely, with one exception: he must not deliberately lie but must tell the truth (as far as is verifiable).<sup>103</sup> Polybius explicitly includes speeches in this search for what actually happened, observing that

The peculiar function of history is to discover, in the first place, the words actually spoken, whatever they were, and next to ascertain the reason why what was done or spoken led to failure or success . . . But a writer who passes over in silence the speeches made and the causes of events and in their place introduces false rhetorical exercises and discursive speeches, destroys the peculiar virtue of history.<sup>104</sup>

Once the historian establishes the real events (including speeches), his role as teacher commences. Understanding is key to learning, and for this reason the historian seeks to explain events clearly, so that their first causes are easy to understand (*Histories* 11.19a).<sup>105</sup>

As David Moessner notes,

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102. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 24.

103. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 127–29.

104. Polybius, *The Histories*, Vol. IV (trans. W.R. Paton, rev. F.W. Walbank and Christian Habicht; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 12.25b.1, 4.

105. Thus Peter Darow argues that Polybius defines his primary task as historian to be explanation (Peter Derow, "Historical Explanation: Polybius and His Predecessors," in *Greek Historiography* [ed. Simon Hornblower; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996], 86): "Polybius is explaining . . . nothing so general as why a war broke out, but more precisely why whoever began it began it" (Derow, "Historical Explanation," 88).

Polybius seems to have inherited from the previous generation of history writers an operative assumption that without a clearly marked ‘beginning’, it is impossible to communicate the meaning of individual events as well as significances of the larger whole that the author wishes to convey.

And so Polybius crafts the explanation, ensuring that it fits the available data, and casts his interpretation—which includes the character building lessons he hopes to impart—with all of his persuasive ability. When Polybius seeks first causes for events, he bypasses the more obvious first action in favor of the more complex causes: motive and intent. Here he briefly lays aside his role as teacher in order to act as guide, pointing out the events that are significant to understanding the narrative as a whole, while bypassing those he deems inconsequential.<sup>106</sup> Polybius openly acknowledges the interpretive aspect of his process here, claiming that he has included in his history “only what was most vital and effectual.”<sup>107</sup> What may be true yet otherwise inconsequential is bypassed entirely.<sup>108</sup>

Polybius’ presentation of the ideal function of history and of his role as narrator is unapologetic and definite. This approach is a fair representation of the whole: of the narrators we have surveyed thus far, Polybius develops the most authoritative narrative voice by far. Unlike Thucydides and Herodotus, whose narratives invite the audience to interact, discern, and interpret, Polybius presents his research and interpretation together as a set whole. Like Xenophon—only even more so—Polybius expects his audience to receive his account as the final, authoritative word on the subject. This is completely in keeping with

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106. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 69.

107. Polybius, *The Histories*, Vol. IV (trans. W.R. Paton, rev. F.W. Walbank and Christian Habicht; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 36.1.7.

108. See Schepens, “History and Historia,” 42. Schepens here notes the fine line historians walk between discernment and judgment; he points out that discernment is essential to historiography but does not imply any loss of the account’s faithfulness to past events: “But to argue with Darbo-Peschanski that Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius made it their prime business to ‘judge the past’ and act as ‘adjudicators’ rather than try to investigate and accurately report events, problematizes the truth-claims of these historians to an extent that is hardly reconcilable with their emphatically professed aims.”

the philosophy of history he has described, though. If the aim of history-writing is paideutic and geared toward character development, it is not an exercise in critical thinking for the audience, but an opportunity to learn. History should present a coherent interpretation the student may learn from, so instead of prompting the audience's interpretation by arrangement and style (like Herodotus and Thucydides), Polybius' voice is both interpreter and teacher in his *Histories*.<sup>109</sup>

And as a teacher, Polybius is deeply invested in making sure his audience understands the history he relates. In other words, the reader must not only learn *what* happened, but *why* it happened as well. For this reason Polybius is very precise in his arrangement of the *Histories*. He deliberately structures his narrative chronologically, moving the narrative from a clear and detailed beginning through to each of the major events that move his story along (*Histories* 1.3.1-2). This concern with beginnings is not unique to Polybius, though; Marincola points out that

Polybius seems to have inherited from the previous generation of history writers an operative assumption that without a clearly marked 'beginning,' it is impossible to communicate the meaning of individual events as well as significance of the larger whole that the author wishes to convey.<sup>110</sup>

After all, it is the beginning that marks the first causes, and when understanding history is a matter of understanding first causes, then origins and beginning actions take on supreme significance. For Polybius, the great event that demanded explanation, that required a first cause, was the rise of Rome and, by extension, the wars upon which that rise was built.<sup>111</sup> And as Marincola noted, this quest for first causes is very much in keeping with Polybius' predecessors: both Thucydides and Xenophon find first causes to be the key to properly interpreting history.<sup>112</sup>

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109. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 125.

110. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 118.

111. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 121.

Yet more so than did any of his literary forebears, Polybius finds the first causes of history in the characters of the individuals he memorializes. To this end he analyzes the motives of individuals behind the political and military fracas: who started the war, and why?<sup>113</sup> In addition, he frequently includes character assessments as part of his introduction to a personality or to explain the unexpected actions of an established personality (*Histories* 7.10-12). These brief asides on character do not stand as tangents so much as explanatory notes on the causes of events and the results of those events in turn on the personalities that caused them or were in other ways involved. They trace out reciprocal influence from personality to event and back in a familiar reflection of Thucydides' preoccupation with what Marincola terms "the interplay of character and action."<sup>114</sup>

Yet where Thucydides found the impact of character on event fascinating enough, Polybius integrates character and action in such a way that each impinges and acts on the other.<sup>115</sup> While character certainly causes action, as Thucydides noted, Polybius adds the opposing force as well: actions and events forge character in both good ways and bad. His description of Philip of Macedon is worth noting in this regard, for while Hellenistic ontology generally claimed that character was fixed from birth,<sup>116</sup> Polybius describes events as forcing an essential change in the tenor of Philip's character from honorable to dishonorable, and the results of his actions then also change in keeping with his character (*Histories* 7. 11-12).

### **Polybius: Methodology**

Polybius strongly believed that the key to success in this process is personal autopsy

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112. Nicolas Wiater, "Polybius and Sallust," in *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* (eds. Ryan Balot, Sarah Forsdyke, and Edith Foster; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 659-76.

113. Derow, "Historical Explanation," 87-88.

114. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 144.

115. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 146.

116. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 28, 63.



and inquiry guided by adequate experience. In other words, like Thucydides, Polybius relies on first-hand reports whenever possible and then verifies the reports he gathers (*Histories* 1.15.9; 12.25e-25h). However, Polybius adds a third and unique element of experience that guides the actual practice of inquiry.

And even his process of verification is a multi-tiered affair, much more complex than Thucydides' comparative process. In fact, Polybius sets out a three-tiered process of studying literary sources (for those sections of his history that occurred before his lifetime), personally exploring the geography and locations where events occurred, and letting his "political experience" guide his interpretation of the reports he gathers (*Histories* 12.25e). These three stages in the research process serve as gatekeepers, identifying and securely retaining accurate data. In other words, when the report he gathered did not match the other sources, geography, or his own military and political experience, he considered the accounts suspect or disallowed them altogether.

In Book 12 Polybius discusses the use of secondary sources (as he is at that point arguing against Timaeus' sole reliance upon written records; see *Histories* 12.2e). Elsewhere he maintains that autopsy as personal investigation and report-gathering is to be preferred to literary sources. However, of the three stages, Polybius here actually ranks experience as the most crucial: "the more experiences," Marincola notes, "the better equipped the writer is to deal with the full range of possibilities presented by his history, and the more likely that he will have his eye trained on what is most important."<sup>117</sup> That Polybius prioritizes experience may come as a surprise given his claim earlier in the book that interrogation and personal autopsy are the most important step in writing history (*Histories* 12.4c).<sup>118</sup>

But this is not actually the reversal it appears to be. Instead, experience is the skill that wields interrogation and autopsy effectively. Prioritizing experience in this paradigm is

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117. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 138.

118. Schepens, "Aspects of Source Theory," 111.

thus both realistic and useful. It is rhetorically useful because Polybius is attempting to prove Timaeus' incompetency in history-writing, and Polybius appeals to the experience he himself gained in his political career to argue that his hard-earned discernment produces a better account and interpretation than does Timaeus' relative inexperience in public affairs.<sup>119</sup> Prioritizing experience is realistic as well, though, because even autopsy and interrogation will falter if the historian has no experience to guide his questions and in fact his entire investigative process (e.g., Polybius' prolonged analogy in *Histories* 12.25e-25g).<sup>120</sup> Thus while information gathered via personal autopsy and interrogation is weighted more heavily than that gathered from written sources (*Histories* 12.4c.3; 12.27.3),<sup>121</sup> the very process of autopsy is dependent upon the historian's experience in navigating the waters of similar historical events (*Histories* 12.28a.8-10).

Timaeus is not the only historian Polybius denounces, and very few historians actually receive his approbation. Yet of all the Greco-Roman historians, Thucydides remains conspicuously absent among those Polybius singles out. This silence, Walbank avers, is significant because it indicates "that on the general matter at issue between Polybius and those historians he attacks, Polybius and Thucydides stood in the same camp."<sup>122</sup> In that case, Polybius seems to expect that his agreement with Thucydides is evident within his methodology and commitment to ἀκρίβεια, and there is no need to draw attention to what is already obvious.

And the evidence of the *Histories* suggests that this ἀκρίβεια extends to the speeches within the text as well. While Walbank admits to the minor textual difficulties of *Histories* 29.12.10, the meaning of Polybius' comments is apparent: a historian must remain faithful to "what was actually said, and indeed the most important part of that, but he may cast it in his

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119. Schepens, "Aspects of Source Theory," 116.

120. See also Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 72.

121. See also Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 69.

122. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 252.

own words.”<sup>123</sup> Thus Polybius feels free to express the content of the speech according to his own concept of rhetorical style or in keeping with the personal style of the reports or eyewitness testimony.<sup>124</sup> And Polybius’ audience would have expected him to demonstrate his rhetorical skill in presenting (or rather, re-presenting) these speeches.<sup>125</sup>

But Polybius’ adherence to the rhetorical conventions expressed by Thucydides should not obscure the important fact that here Polybius actually parts ways with Thucydides. Where Thucydides allowed for invention of speeches (where the content was unknown), provided that it remained in keeping with the speaker and situation, Polybius makes no such explicit allowance. Perhaps optimistically, Walbank concludes, “I can find no passage where one can say confidently that Polybius has followed the formula to which even Thucydides in part subscribed when he spoke of recording ‘what he thought the speakers would have said’.”<sup>126</sup> Yet Walbank’s optimism actually highlights the fact that the burden of proof should be on the side of suspicion. In other words, reading the text as it self-presents is a more honest and more historically apt reading than is a reading of thorough-going suspicion. The burden of proof should be on the reader to demonstrate the legitimacy of her reading of suspicion, not on the reader who engages the text according to its own rules and presentation.

And it is a fact that no other historian (extant) offers such a complete description of his presentation as does Polybius. Nor do other historians antecedent or contemporary to Polybius, manifest his exact methodology. For this reason, Polybius goes to great lengths to describe and defend his methodology: he considers this his greatest innovation, his unique contribution to Greco-Roman historiography.<sup>127</sup> And encountering these types of unique and

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123. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 249.

124. And here Walbank criticizes Polybius for his failure to properly vet his reports for rhetorical style, allowing instead the less rhetorically appropriate (though still faithful) words of his eyewitnesses to emerge in the speech. See Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 259.

125. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 28.

126. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 259–60.

127. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 73.

highly visible contributions makes the process of populating a literary family tree much simpler, since encountering echoes of Polybius' idiosyncratic methodology presents a much stronger indication of his influence. And thus we may discern relationships between texts with much more clarity.

All of Polybius' careful argumentation in setting forth and defending his methodology, particularly in the preface and in Book 12, also serves to defend his authority as a trustworthy guide to history. His emphasis on history as a matter of true accounts (*Histories* 1.3-10; 14.6) reassures his audience that he guarantees his history at the pain of his reputation. His three-tiered verification process proves the lengths to which he went to ensure the faithfulness of his account to those real historical events. He is intent that his audience is confident he has included only the truth and not excluded any true matters of significance that he discovered. Momigliano notes that Polybius' strategy pays off: "Educated readers seem to have agreed with this evaluation of sources and to have regarded the writer of contemporary history as more reliable than the writer about the past."<sup>128</sup>

Polybius further supports his authoritative voice by building a strong authorial *ethos*. *Ethos* was the character of the author and an essential part of the persuasive power of an rhetorical argument or narrative. Having a strong and honorable *ethos* adds to the authority of the account because the audience can have confidence in the personal integrity of the author.<sup>129</sup> He consistently emphasizes both the effort he expended to gather reports and the discernment that was necessary to identify accounts that were both faithful and significant. His implicit message to his audience is that his hard work has given them the best historical account possible. Their confidence in him as an authoritative narrator is proportional to his efforts on their behalf.

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128. Arnaldo Momigliano, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), 163 And, in fact, this trend extends not only to readers but also to later contemporary historians. Momigliano points to Josephus (*War* 1.1) and Herodian (1.1.3) as examples.

129. Schepens, "Aspects of Source Theory," 117.

Finally, much of the later history Polybius relates engages events he himself experienced or observed, and Polybius understood the weight of personal testimony in ancient historiography. Having lived through the events he now explains gives the historian a unique perspective and a uniquely authoritative interpretation of the events because he himself knows the accuracy of the reports he now relates (*Histories* 12.25h.10).<sup>130</sup> As Schepens notes, claims of modern historians that early contemporary historians functioned as judges of the past rather than researchers and guides “problematizes the truth-claims of these historians to an extent that is hardly reconcilable with their emphatically professed aims.”<sup>131</sup> Approaching historical documents with this level of suspicion assumes an innate duplicity that is at odds with both the text itself and with reports of its contemporary readers. Polybius presents himself as an authoritative, trustworthy guide to the past because he witnessed it, researched it, and in his text faithfully attempts to communicate the actual events of the past, their causes, and their interpretation. This does not, of course, obviate Polybius’ role as interpreter but instead describes the delicate balance of faithful accounting with an interpretation that carries explanatory power and demonstrates the meaning and significance of past events to the present lives of Polybius’ readers.

Polybius’ emphasis on personal autopsy, and particularly his own role as eyewitness, strongly echoes Thucydides’ emphasis on first-hand knowledge of events, and like Thucydides, Polybius is also deeply concerned to guard the authority of his narrative voice against accusations of partiality. As Lucian remarks centuries later, one flatters the living, not the dead (*Hist. Conscr.* 39-42), and in the Hellenistic world, bias presented the greatest opposition to truth in historical narratives and led historians to exaggerate the insignificant, suppress the significant, and even freely invent what may cast a patron—or potential patron—in a favorable light. For this reason, Polybius presents his defense up front as a sort

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130. See also Momigliano, *Essays*, 163.

131. Schepens, “History and Historia,” 42.

of umbrella assertion of impartiality that gives his later account the ring of truth (*Histories* 1.14) and, of course, reinforces yet again the authority of his narrative voice.

Although he does not veer from convention in his view of bias, we have seen that Polybius innovates significantly in regard to his methodology. In fact, though Polybius' methods are based in part on those of Thucydides, Emilio Gabba doubts that Polybius' successors fully understood him (or even Thucydides).<sup>132</sup> This is an especially significant argument to make in light of the duelling dynamics of authoritative tradition and innovation. These forces were at work in Polybius' successors even as they were in Polybius' own work. If Gabba is correct, later contemporary historians will not reflect Polybius' influence, particularly in their methodology: while they may reflect his language, misunderstanding his method would certainly prevent later historians from actually using it. Only time will tell what, if any, influence Polybius actually exerted on the genre as a whole.<sup>133</sup>

### **Polybius: Rhetoric**

In his methodology Polybius follows the influence of Thucydides, particularly in his emphasis on eyewitness testimony. However, Polybius strikes out on his own rhetorically. He neither adopts the chatty approach of Herodotus nor the abrupt, analytical manner of Thucydides, and his demonstration of rhetorical skill leaves him far behind Xenophon in the eyes of many later historians. Yet despite apparently falling short rhetorically, Polybius nonetheless continues to stand as one of the most trusted of Greco-Roman historians.

### **Polybius: Arrangement**

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132. Emilio Gabba, "True History and False History in Classical Antiquity," in *Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 337, 341.

133. However, K. S. Sacks argues that though not a contemporary historian, Dionysius of Halicarnassus probably read Polybius and developed his own view of historiography out of Polybius' comments. See Sacks, "Dionysius of Halicarnassus," 73. See also the discussion later regarding Cicero's philosophy of history.

Polybius prefers to stay close to the actual chronology of events in his account, but in a very real sense, the chronology of the narrative is second to the story of conquest. For example, when concurrent events complicate the straightforward narrative, Polybius will regress the timeline and interlace events,<sup>134</sup> emphasizing significant events and prompting the audience to interpret a secondary action in light of the primary event. In addition, Polybius is committed to highlight the role of Tyche in world affairs, consistently linking synchronically events occurring in other parts of the Mediterranean world—events that would seem coincidental, even unrelated, without Polybius’ overt effort to connect them.<sup>135</sup>

On an even grander scale, as Polybius narrates the triumph and expansion of the Roman Empire, the reader begins to see a geographic arrangement overlay the chronological order of events. In this, Polybius reflects the earlier work of Ephorus, whose universal history is organized according to geographic regions.<sup>136</sup> But Polybius is committed to demonstrating how and why Rome is the greatest empire in history, and geographic expansion is more than a useful means of organizing reports: it is a key part of his argument.

### Polybius: Style

While Polybius does not overtly demonstrate the same process of analysis that we see in Thucydides, there are nonetheless marked similarities in their style.<sup>137</sup> The historians seem to share a preference for communicating the results of their research in plain speech, valuing intelligibility over rhetorical aesthetics. As Nicolai notes, utility wins over elegance.<sup>138</sup> For example, Polybius frequently appeals to the very basic rhetorical strategy of *oratio obliqua* “as a stylistic device to bridge the transition from narrative to direct speech.”<sup>139</sup>

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134. Nikos Miltsios, *The Shaping of Narrative in Polybius* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 59–60.

135. Frank W. Walbank, “Polybius and the Past,” in *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World: Essays and Reflections*, in *Tria Lustra. Essays and Notes Presented to John Pinsent* (ed. H. D. Jocelyn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 182.

136. R. Drews, “Ephorus and History Written *Kata Genos*,” *American Journal of Philology* 84 (1963): 44–55.

137. Wiater, “Polybius and Sallust.”

And in fact, Polybius himself apologizes for this lack of rhetorical variety, particularly in the speeches. In his examination of those speeches (*Histories* 29.12.10), Walbank finds “repetitions of phrases, similes, commonplaces and historical arguments” in the *Histories*. Walbank concludes optimistically that “they can be explained as having indeed been uttered by the speakers to whom Polybius attributes them.”<sup>140</sup> Thus Polybius feels free to express the content of the speech according to his own concept of rhetorical style or possibly even in keeping with the personal style of the reports or eyewitness testimony.<sup>141</sup> However, his consistent failure to adequately polish the speeches—according to the standards of the rhetorically inclined—doubtless contributed to Dionysius’ assessment of the *Histories* as tedious, poorly written, and almost impossible to read through in its entirety (*Comp.* 4).

### Conclusion

At this point, the general shape of Greco-Roman contemporary history is becoming clearer. Agreements between these major historians indicate conventions that they strengthen by sharing and maintaining them across their narratives. Narrativity itself is the strongest of these conventions, followed by chronological delimitations that contribute to the purpose of the narrative and establish it as contemporary history. Subject matter for the most part remains consistently centered on “glorious deeds,” primarily accomplished in battle. Focalization within the narrative is usually limited to an external perspective, though occasional internal focalization inserts the historian’s own opinion of an account or interpretation of an event. Polybius’ first-person narrator is a significant innovation away from this standard. The general arrangement of contemporary history is primarily

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138. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 24.

139. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 248.

140. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 256.

141. And here Walbank criticizes Polybius for his failure to properly vet his reports for rhetorical style, allowing instead the less rhetorically appropriate (though still faithful) words of his eyewitnesses to emerge in the speech. See Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 259.



chronological, though geographical concerns may provide additional structure to the narrative, and ethnographic asides add interest and background for the narrative.

In addition, clear beginnings are essential to good history in general, and a methodology based on personal autopsy begins to emerge as perhaps not essential (certainly not explicitly for Xenophon) but certainly influential. The impact of character on the origins of events is assumed and explored by both Thucydides and Polybius, though Polybius problematizes the situation by acknowledging the interplay of character on event and vis-a-versa. The impact of an honor-based culture also continues to be felt as authors consistently defend their reputations and compete for honor as they establish their authority and claim impartiality in their accounts.

These are some of the boundaries that mark the developing shape of contemporary history. Some of these are innovations that may or may not prove to be influential. The following chapter will examine not the historians of the first century per se, but rather the theorists, the historiographers who examined and systematized historiography in the years leading up to Acts and its literary contemporaries. Xenophon teaches us to beware of assuming that schools of historiography—sub-genre conventions based on a single author—existed as such when he follows Thucydides' style without his methodology. Such innovations were part of the *agona* of the Hellenistic literary world; the challenge is in identifying innovation without losing sight of the conventions that created firm boundaries in the genre.

## Chapter 4

### Writing About Historiography

#### Exploring Ancient Theory and Rhetoric in the Writing of History

Although assessing the ancient historians and their texts is essential in establishing the generic shape of history in the first centuries, it would be unwise to overlook significant voices that, though not historians, explore and reflect the attitudes and thoughts of their peers regarding historiography and rhetoric. Two voices in particular stand out, and though neither Cicero nor Lucian of Samosata actually wrote history themselves, their analyses and critiques have offered modern historians invaluable insight into not just what first century readers thought of historiography, but what features they considered to actually define the particular historiography exemplified by a given author or text. Outside of Polybius, relatively few historians write about historiography, yet the non-historians Cicero and Lucian present thoughtful and insightful analyses and critiques of historians, their texts, and their processes. They ask, “What makes it history, and what marks the difference between good history and bad?” We will begin with Cicero, who took up his rather sharp and pointed pen roughly a century after Polybius set down his.

#### Cicero

Unlike Lucian in his *How to Write History*, Cicero never wrote an essay wholly devoted to historiography. The modern reader must instead glean Cicero’s views on historiography from his asides and the occasional excursus on the subject within his other works, which span the later decades of his life. The difficulties inherent in compiling a coherent picture of Cicero’s concept of historiography are legion, and it may be argued that the enterprise itself is faulty: is it even reasonable to expect Cicero to maintain a perfectly consistent view of anything over the course of his lengthy literary life? Yet Cicero himself never indicates a sea change in his understanding of historiography, and his arguments—while often difficult to

unravel—do reveal underlying similarities of thought that justify the process of using Cicero to interpret Cicero.

In addition, as a lawyer Cicero saw his expertise primarily in terms of rhetoric, and the majority of his extant work is devoted to teaching or commenting on various aspects of rhetoric. It comes as no surprise, then, that his treatment of historiography is almost entirely focused on the relationship of history to rhetoric or, perhaps more accurately, the role of rhetoric in historiography. As noted in the previous chapters, this is a murky area and difficult to navigate, for the goal of rhetoric is persuasion and not necessarily the accurate reporting of events.

These factors together make constructing Cicero's historiography challenging, as evidenced by a general lack of agreement among modern scholars regarding Cicero's intended meaning,<sup>1</sup> the implications he draws out, and even his sense of humor. Using Cicero's own context and works to illuminate his comments does assume a general coherence to his thought but also offers the best path forward to reconciling the diversity of modern interpretations and compiling a coherent picture of Cicero's views on history as a genre and as rhetorical literature.

### Philosophy of History: Cicero

At first glance, Cicero's standards seem perfectly in line with those of the modern historian: he claims that the first law of historiography requires a historian to tell the truth, and the second law, to tell the whole truth (*de Orat.* 2.62; see also *de Leg.* 1.1, 15). In a phrase which has become immortalized as the historian's ideal, Cicero also describes history as "*testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis.*"<sup>2</sup> Peter Brunt draws the logical conclusion that this litany indicates Cicero's conviction that history must

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1. E.g., see Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 182 and Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 265.

2. Or "the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, life's teacher, proclaimer of antiquity."

above all things be truthful.<sup>3</sup> In fact, he finds in Cicero's words a distinct echo of Polybius' own emphases in his philosophy of history.<sup>4</sup> The echo should come as no surprise, though, given Cicero's high opinion of Polybius' reliability (*de Offic.* 3.113). He even describes Polybius as "unsurpassed in chronological accuracy" (*de Rep.* 2.27).<sup>5</sup> While perhaps it is true that we should not be surprised by Cicero's high opinion of Polybius, the echoes of Polybius' philosophy of history in Cicero's writing indicate a small crack in Gabba's earlier doubts that Polybius' successors understood him.<sup>6</sup> Though not a historian, it seems that Cicero has in fact grasped the import of the unique emphases of Polybius' philosophy.

Yet unlike Polybius, Cicero was very much an orator and as such, in many ways defined his philosophy of history in terms of its relationship with rhetoric. Not quite a decade after penning *de Oratore* and near the end of his life, Cicero would claim (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) that orators writing history felt it their privilege to flex their rhetorical muscles and go beyond the true historical events, while true historians simply stated what was known to have happened (though he also notes that even Thucydides included some of the more prevalent rumors surrounding key events) (*Brutus*, 42-43). The essential difference Cicero marks between orators and historians, then, is that historians indicate when they veer off the path of known fact, but orators give no such indication.<sup>7</sup>

Having established his ideal so clearly, Cicero proceeds to muddy the waters a bit for the modern reader. While the first two rules of historiography are to tell the truth and the whole truth, Cicero's third law—which he indicates is not his alone but is well known and accepted—is that the historian must be completely impartial in his narrative (*De orat.* 2.62-63). As discussed in previous chapters, this emphasis on impartiality derives from the honor-shame dynamic of Greco-Roman culture. Because honor is bestowed by the community and

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3. Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 183.

4. Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 188.

5. Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 189.

6. Gabba, "True History," 337, 341.

7. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 21.

particularly by those in higher positions of society, the temptation for every author—historian, poet, or novelist—is to curry favor with those in power.<sup>8</sup> Yet Cicero claims that a historian must be above such concerns, holding the example of history as a higher value than potential honor from his peers. It is significant that, by including this requirement in his ideal for history, Cicero weights his concept of ideal history toward contemporary history. Historians facing the judgment of peers who were involved in the narrated events would feel more pressure to curry favor than would those writing about the distant past, since the distant past has no present audience with a personal stake in how the events and characters are portrayed in the narrative.<sup>9</sup>

The relationship of Cicero's third law to the first two laws is problematic, though. It is unclear in the text whether Cicero perceives impartiality as complementary to his first two laws or whether he is using impartiality to further define truth. In other words, does telling the whole truth inherently exclude bias, or is truth being defined in direct opposition to bias? If impartiality is simply a logical by-product of truthfulness, then Cicero's ideal historian narrates true events as he understands them to have occurred, and Cicero is simply admitting that bias is the strongest contender against truth in contemporary history and thus the greatest opponent to good history.

If, however, as Anthony Woodman argues, Cicero sees truth “in terms of partiality [and] does not present truth as the opposite of what we would call fiction,”<sup>10</sup> then “truth” in Greco-Roman historiography is simply the absence of bias. Woodman finds this opposition of truth to bias prevalent in Greco-Roman historiography,<sup>11</sup> and if his understanding of its

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8. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 246.

9. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 293. One may argue that the an author could seek to curry favor with the descendants of the main characters, but Greco-Roman literature does not seem to consider this a likely scenario.

10. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 258. See also A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, OR: Areopagitica Press, 1988), 73.

11. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 244.

implications is correct, “truth” in the classical sense is not at all equivalent to “truth” in the modern sense.

Woodman finds confirmation for his interpretation in Cicero’s letter to Lucceius. In the course of the correspondence, Cicero asks his friend to transform his notes into a biography of his life. Cicero further requests that Lucceius praise his successes warmly, even while admitting that doing so goes beyond the laws of history and beyond what the truth could justify (*ad. Fam.* 5.12). On the one hand, Cicero is affirming truth as the recognized standard of historiography by admitting that airbrushing his career does not suit the spirit of the true historian.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, it appears that Cicero does place bias in opposition to truth, though whether it indicates that Cicero “sees truth only in terms of partiality”<sup>13</sup> remains to be seen. There is, however, a possibility Woodman seems to reject outright: impartiality is a logical result—the consequence—of an idealistic adherence to historical truth. In this case, impartiality is not so much the equivalent of truth as it is the factor that makes truth possible; in the same way the presence of bias precludes that of truth. Such a reading resolves the debate between truth and bias by redefining the relationship of the concepts. Though bias may be seen as the opponent of truth, its opposition does not inherently indicate that bias is the opposite of truth. Instead, the presence of bias in an account prevents truth-telling; bias necessarily warps the truth to suit its purposes. In fact, bias serves as a warning flag in a text that the author may not be fully trusted in his presentation of facts.

In the same way, impartiality is not inherently equivalent to truth but rather makes truth-telling possible. Evidence of impartiality indicates to the reader that the author does not have an agenda he is pushing in his presentation of events and thus—absent other warning factors—may be trusted to remain faithful to what he knows to be true. This reading

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12. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 101–2.

13. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 82–83.

of Cicero is internally coherent and maintains its integrity across both of these key portions of *de Oratore* and *ad Familiares*.

Impartiality, then, becomes a sign—one of three—marking good history, indicating a historian who places truth as a higher value than social prominence. When impartiality is combined with faithfulness to actual events and an author’s commitment to communicate all he knows about an event that is pertinent to its interpretation, we see Cicero’s laws of historiography working in harmony together to create faithful Greco-Roman history. Granted, it is at times difficult to assess (from the distance of a modern reader, particularly) whether a text is impartial or not. For this reason we also look to the reception of a historical work, which gives us a more accurate sense of how impartial and trustworthy ancient readers considered the text.<sup>14</sup> Moving forward, we will continue to test this reading of Cicero’s theory against the evidence we find of his approach to methodology and, even more significantly, his perspective on the relationship of rhetoric to historiography.

#### Methodology: Cicero

Because Cicero never wrote a historical narrative (and thus never engaged the practices and processes of such research and writing), the majority of his comments regarding historiography touch on issues of genre and rhetoric, not methodology. As Brunt notes, Cicero speaks to “the way [history] should be written, not with the work preliminary to writing.”<sup>15</sup> Yet Brunt finds in Cicero’s very failure to write history some insight into the methodology he thought appropriate to historiography.

It is significant that in 59 BC, when still deeply engaged in politics he abandoned the project of composing a geographical treatise, because of the labour involved in the examination of discordant sources (*Att.* II 6,1), and that at a time when his forensic

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14. Remember, however, that cultural and ethnic bias was laudable: “So attractive was it for a historian to show partiality of which readers would approve that the claim of impartiality would assume a decidedly secondary place.” Luce, “Ancient Views,” 301.

15. Brunt, “Cicero and Historiography,” 212.

practice was still exacting, he claims that he had insufficient time to spare to compose a history either of early Rome or of contemporary events (*de Leg.* I 8-10).<sup>16</sup>

However, a closer reading of the texts he cites reveals that Cicero's complaint, particularly of his proposed geographical treatise, was not the work of examining his sources but was the monotony of geography and his disappointment that the subject was not an appropriate venue for rhetorical embellishment.

It is significant, however, that Cicero very clearly divides history into two categories: the early days of Rome (or the history of antiquity) and contemporary history. In fact, in *de Legibus* Cicero displays a very clear preference for contemporary history (*de Leg.* 1.3). Atticus instantly sees the advantages to this preference, since writing contemporary history would give Cicero an opportunity to focus on events he himself experienced and thus cast his own successes and those of his political ally, Pompey, in a positive light.

The voice of Atticus seems uniquely placed in *de Legibus* to verbalize the unspoken realities of historiography and do so rather tongue-in-cheek,<sup>17</sup> so it is possible Cicero intends this comment as humorous self-mockery, a tacit admission of political bias. On the other hand, it is certainly true that Cicero's consulship did catapult him directly into key events that would shape Roman history, and external accounts of these events suggest that he received significant public approval and honor for his role in them. In addition, his admiration of Pompey stemmed from long observation of the general's character and actions; doubtless Cicero's historical interpretation of Pompey's political career would have been shaped by his understanding of the man himself.

Unfortunately, because Cicero never did write this history, and neither did Luceius write a biography of Cicero, we simply have no material evidence of exactly how Cicero envisioned these histories being told. Because the role of ancient historian was both to relate

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16. Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 186.

17. E.g., Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 35.



and interpret the facts and events, we cannot know whether Cicero's Atticus is advocating a biased presentation of facts (that might avoid pertinent facts that do not cast Cicero or Pompey in a positive light) or simply indicating that Cicero's personal interpretation of all of the facts is inherently positive toward himself and Pompey.

However, the simple fact that in his letter to Lucceius Cicero differentiates between the facts of events and the positive spin he hopes Lucceius will give them (*ad Fam.* 5.12) suggests two significant insights into Cicero's historiography and the genre of Greco-Roman history. First, Cicero's words indicate his own awareness that bias should not influence the writing of history. Second, Cicero is essentially writing a very minor defense of his desire to have Lucceius place a positive interpretation on Cicero's life and actions. He expects Lucceius to resist writing a biased account that might break the essential laws of historiography by going beyond the known truth in order to give praise and honor.

Cicero does not need to repeat the laws to Lucceius: his defense already tells us that the laws comprise shared generic expectations, making them deeply ingrained in the genre. If these laws—adhering to the whole truth of events and remaining impartial in their treatment—do function practically as assumed and thus act as essential limitations for Greco-Roman historiography, we have found a point of stability that is significant not only in our reading of historical narratives but also in our understanding of Cicero's own concept of the complicated relationship between rhetoric and history.

#### Rhetoric: Cicero

One way to clarify the role of rhetoric within historiography is to identify what type of rhetorical writing history most nearly imitates, and to what degree. In this matter, at least, Cicero is abundantly clear: he consistently identifies history with epideictic rhetoric, which he frequently describes as panegyric (*Orat.* 61; possibly also in *de Orat.* 2.35-36). As we see in epideictic rhetoric, history was seen as a tutor, teaching an honorable moral and ethical code through the examples—both successes and failures—of the past. Yet even this

moment of clarity brings its own complications, as epideictic rhetoric—perhaps even more so than forensic or deliberative rhetoric—is traditionally linked to blatant bias. After all, epideictic rhetoric was the language of praise or blame and was often used in funeral eulogies, declamations, and public honors (such as a dedication or triumph).<sup>18</sup> These are not occasions for even-handed treatment but for glorifying heroes and vilifying the opposition. The inherent partiality of epideictic rhetoric thus makes it a troubling choice for Greco-Roman history.

It is difficult, however, to reconcile this identification with Cicero's claim that impartiality is crucial to history (*de Orat.* 2.62-63). The apparent contradiction forces us to reevaluate our understanding of history as epideictic rhetoric. A closer reading of both Greco-Roman history and of Cicero reveals two significant facets of history and epideictic rhetoric that offer some insight into why Cicero would link these so closely. First, T. James Luce in his exhaustive examination of bias in Greco-Roman history has observed that while expressing personal bias could threaten the legitimacy of the historical narrative, expressing national or cultural bias was considered perfectly appropriate, even generating audience approval.<sup>19</sup> Patriotism apparently did not qualify as bias in history. Considering that the most acceptable themes for Hellenistic history were patriotic—wars, politics, and the leaders of wars and empires—perhaps epideictic rhetoric is not such a surprising parallel after all.

Second, a closer reading of Cicero reveals that where he provides supporting evidence for his claim, the majority of his evidence is specifically focused on stylistic issues. Cicero specifically mentions the smooth delivery and elevated language that is characteristic of epideictic rhetoric (*Orator* 20). When he later explicitly identifies history with epideictic oratory, the similarities he details include full periods, resolved sentences, and rhythmic and elegant language, all with the aim of audience enjoyment (*Orator* 61). Now this could be read

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18. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 75. See also Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.1358.

19. Luce, "Ancient Views," 298-301.

(as Woodman does<sup>20</sup>) to imply that history must be written to please the audience without considering fact versus fiction. However, the context makes it clear that Cicero is thinking of an artistic pleasure (not a political assent) that he holds in opposition to the shorter, more forceful style appropriate in the courtroom (see also *de Orat.* 2.64).

In his earlier *de Partitionibus Oratoriae*, Cicero gives us a systematic breakdown of the various types of rhetoric with the argumentation, style, and amplification appropriate to each. Again we see that in his analysis of epideictic rhetoric (which he here terms “panegyric”; see *de Part. Orat.* 20.), Cicero is most concerned with the register of language used and with achieving balance in his sentences, his arguments, and his structure (*de Part. Orat.* 21-22). These are primarily issues of arrangement and style, and have much less bearing on the presence of bias within a narrative.

However, the heightened use of amplification and embellishment that Cicero links to panegyric (*de Part. Orat.* 21) can carry significant implications for the content and faithfulness of a historical narrative to the actual events that transpired. As Cicero notes, the rules guiding the process of amplification are not particular to panegyric but are the same rules shared by all species of rhetoric. Epideictic rhetoric, then, follows the same rules as the other species but may be expected to use amplification and embellishment to a greater degree and possibly for a greater variety of purposes than do forensic or deliberative rhetoric. And this is the source of the difficulty regarding the role of rhetoric in historiography: at what point do these amplifications and embellishments surpass the truth?

Perhaps the best expression of this quandary is found in the mouth of Atticus, this time in Cicero’s *Brutus*: “*At ille ridens: tuo vero, inquit, arbitrato; quoniam quidem concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis, ut aliquid dicere possint argutius*” (*Brutus*, 42). In other words, in the hands of an orator, all facts are subject to rhetorical aim and persuasion. The truth is a place to start for the orator, but not necessarily a place to finish. A historian, though, finds

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20. Brunt, “Cicero and Historiography,” 230.

his narrative limited to, and even by, the known facts of events and people.<sup>21</sup> Atticus recognizes the dangers of applying rhetoric to an enterprise that claims to be built on truth and faithfulness to facts. In fact, he mocks various orators whose histories bear little resemblance to the known facts, while upholding Thucydides for restraining himself to events known to be true (*Brutus*, 42-43).

Cicero's response to Atticus tacitly assents to this view, admitting the strength of Atticus' position while "mocking his own resort to [rhetorical embellishments] in the process of creating his arguments."<sup>22</sup> Cicero here reflects a perspective on history and public speaking that feels foreign to the modern reader. When Cicero has been crafting supporting arguments for his defense of rhetoric, he feels free to warp historical facts to suit his need. But Atticus asserts that when historical facts are recounted as historical narrative, they must remain inviolate, reflecting the historian's best understanding of the whole facts as he knows them.

This suggests a startling quality of the relationship of history and rhetoric: the way a historical fact is used may change depending on the genre within which it is used. The same style and rhetorical approach of an epideictic speech may be put to use for a different "purpose and function" in a historical narrative.<sup>23</sup> Further, falsifying facts in a rhetorical argument (within a speech) is a strategy that was well understood and well used by Greco-Roman orators. Falsifying facts in the writing of history, though, is not acceptable—at least to Atticus. But such an unexpected re-visioning of the intersection of history and rhetoric should be tested further before we rely on it in our interpretations of Hellenistic historians. Even more important, we must determine if this dictum holds true as an essential quality of historiography, or if this is a characteristic subject to change, depending on the historian.

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21. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 21.

22. Brunt, "Cicero and Historiography," 230.

23. Brunt, "Cicero and Historiography," 230-31.

Once again, we must assess each author, each historian, on his own merits and work, not assuming shared philosophies or strategies without evidence to support our assumptions.

Of course, assessing Cicero's perspective on what qualifies as false history and, inversely, what qualifies as true history is further complicated by the fact that he never engaged in this enterprise about which he has so much to say. Without a practical demonstration of Ciceronian historical narrative, we are still simply interpreting Cicero's ideas by Cicero's theory. Yet it comes as no surprise that Cicero continues to have a great deal to say about both, particularly when it comes to the facts of history and their rhetorical treatment.

### **Historical Facts and Rhetorical *Exaedificatio***

Cicero is well aware of the danger that rhetoric and rhetorical training poses to history: his emphatic defense of truth as an essential quality of historical narratives demonstrates as much.<sup>24</sup> But even as he defends the role of truth, the modern reader begins to realize that his definition of truthful accounting and of remaining faithful to events (as they are known to have occurred) is somewhat different from our post-Enlightenment concept of scientific accuracy. In fact, immediately after insisting on the primacy of truth among the laws of historiography, Cicero (in the voice of Antonius) claims history is best suited to the skills of the orator, whom Atticus earlier excused rather tongue-in-cheek as having the right to surpass the truth when writing history.

Now, if indeed Atticus' comments indicate that facts should be used differently, according to genre (*Brutus* 42-43), then Antonius may be understood as simply referring to the orator's trained ability to produce speeches and literature that are stylistically superior to literature produced by the untrained. However, even this very sympathetic reading does

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24. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 32.

not fully resolve the question of whether issues of rhetorical style impinge on issues of factual content.

This concern is brought to the fore when Antonius proceeds to explain that the known facts are only the core of the narrative, while rhetoric and its rules build out the full body of the story (*de Orat.* 2.63-64). At least, that is how the modern mind instinctively interprets Antonius' words. However, we must acknowledge the gap of centuries and culture that exists between Cicero and the modern historian and, in that acknowledgement, give Cicero a closer reading that is more attuned to his time and place. Through Antonius, Cicero does describe a difference between known facts and rhetorical material, and he considers the entire historical narrative comprised of both known facts and rhetoric.<sup>25</sup> While we may read Cicero to indicate that his concept of historiography is diluted (or even polluted) by rhetoric, there is another, more realistic option that resolves Cicero's insistence on truth in historical narrative with his assumption and even defense of the use of rhetoric.

History is, at heart, story. But in pre-modern societies without access to modern recording technology, it was impossible to retain all of the actual details of events. As Polybius firmly believed (*Histories* 1.15.9; 12.25e-25h), experience is the most effective tool for filling in the blanks of a story in a way most likely to faithfully reflect actual events. This can be personal or cultural experience, the latter of which takes form, over time, in rhetorical tropes that reflect types of situations common in the ancient world, including sea voyages, battles, speeches, and epidemics. These tropes were never so systematically organized and taught as they were in Hellenistic schools of oratory.

Antonius is fully cognizant of the limitations and options available to historians in pre-modern societies. He compares the writing of history to constructing a building: both the known facts and the rhetorical overlay are necessary to create a story structure, an

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25. While Antonius accepts that history may be written without rhetoric, he clearly believes that without rhetoric, historical narrative is sub-par literature because it is not enjoyable reading (*de Orat.* 2.51-58).

*exaedificatio*, that can stand on its own. This is by no means a unique perspective on history, but one that extends back as far as the earliest Hellenistic roots of the genre, as Woodman notes, “In fact the distinction is exactly that which Thucydides himself voiced about his speeches in his work, namely that there is a substratum of truth buried (so to speak) under a superstructure of rhetorical elaboration.”<sup>26</sup> A century later, Pliny would reflect this same perspective, informing his friend Tacitus that he has supplied the truth (which Woodman terms the “hard core”), and expects Tacitus to supply the rhetorical frame for the account in his history.<sup>27</sup>

Yet even as Antonius claims a full integration of hard core and rhetorical elaboration in the historian’s narrative, in his next breath Antonius systematically details what each may include. Cicero is walking a fine line here: he wants to defend the essential role of rhetoric in historiography while protecting what he sees as essential to the genre: its faithfulness to the known truth. In order to do so, he first distinguishes between what may be considered the hard core and what qualifies as elaboration or *exaedificatio*.<sup>28</sup> This allows him to indicate precisely what comprises each category and, by implication, what does not.

Through the voice of Antonius, Cicero provides a list of what must be included in the hard core, the known facts of a narrative: a chronological order of events, descriptions of places, the plans for action, the actions themselves and their results, and the personal histories of significant characters (*de Orat.* 2.63). These may not be invented and must be included as known: “if a historian had reason to believe that his hard core was false, it seems that he was debarred from using it for the purposes of *exaedificatio*. If, on the other hand, an historian was faced with an awkward but true hard core, he was under an obligation not to omit it.”<sup>29</sup> In keeping with the laws of historiography set forth just a few statements earlier,

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26. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 269.

27. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

28. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 77.

29. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 271.

truth should be the essential quality of history; in fact, “the concept of a true hard core seems to have been the very thing which distinguished historiography from other types of literature.”<sup>30</sup>

But, Antonius maintains, Greco-Roman history must be more than simply a hard core, a list of facts (*de Orat.* 2.51-58). Rhetoric is what redeems history from the artistic depths of annals and makes it literature. For each category of known fact, then, Antonius also details what should and may be included as rhetorical elaboration: the historian’s personal opinions and analyses, the manner in which events occurred, the internal motivations and catalysts for events, and the language and style of the narrative voice (*de Orat.* 2.63-64).<sup>31</sup> If, as mentioned above, the hard core was true but unpleasant, the historian was at liberty “employ all his rhetorical skill to put a good interpretation upon it. Such a challenge was indeed the very essence of rhetoric.”<sup>32</sup>

Yet for all the potential and scope of Greco-Roman rhetoric, the list Antonius provides is surprisingly brief. One could argue that it is simply incomplete, but such a response fails to comprehend the significance of the context of Antonius’ list. His entire discussion of the *exaedificatio* occurs in the context of the laws of historiography, the first two of which are that the historian limit himself to the truth and the whole truth as he understands it.

There is some debate, however, whether the laws of historiography should be understood to rule over the *exaedificatio* or if they are instead subject to the historian’s use of rhetoric. Woodman argues that “since Antonius is concerned only with what is not familiar to his listeners . . . and since he twice explicitly says that the ‘first and second laws of historiography’ are familiar, . . . it follows that the foundations are not his principal concern at all.”<sup>33</sup> He concludes then that “the laws of historiography are subordinate to what is said

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30. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 92.

31. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 250.

32. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 271–72.



in the rest of the paragraph.”<sup>34</sup> Further, he argues that because *rerum ratio* heads the extended clause, all that follows is subsumed under that heading, including the list of rhetorical ornaments. In other words, the laws listed at the beginning of Antonius’ systematic breakdown of historiography are subject to rhetoric, and the “facts” that he mentions include rhetorical elaboration.<sup>35</sup>

However, Woodman’s logic is simply faulty. Cicero is a lawyer at heart: he defends the weak case, knowing that shared assumptions need no defense. His failure to focus on what is familiar to his readers does not indicate a lack of interest but a lawyer’s preference to focus his argument on the weak case. In *de Oratione*, Cicero focuses on the *exaedificatio* expressly because the extant rhetorical works do not provide any detailed guidance on how to build the story structure in history (*de Orat.* 2.64), not because it takes precedence over the laws of historiography. Finally, neither a lawyer nor an orator would take lightly any principles commonly known as “laws” (*legem*) governing a genre. It is simply irresponsible to dismiss Antonius’ comments on these laws merely because they are brief.

In addition, while Woodman is correct that *rerum ratio* begins the entire clause in question (*de Orat.* 2.62), he is mistaken in assuming that all within the clause is subsumed under the phrase. On the contrary, the clause is broken several times. First, chronology and topographical details are most closely associated with the *rerum ratio* (*de Orat.* 2.63). Then Antonius extends (*vult etiam*) the hard core to include plans, the events themselves, and finally their results. But next Antonius sets off each of these three categories with either adversative (*et de*) or explanatory (*sed etiam* or *ut*) clauses: it is in these subclauses that Antonius consistently places the types of rhetorical embellishment appropriate to that category of hard core fact. The relationship between the subclauses and category clauses is

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33. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 82.

34. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 257.

35. However, Woodman is not even consistent with himself, since elsewhere he claims that Antonius is here separating the hard core from its rhetorical elaboration. See Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 77.

not that of equivalent value (they are not both hard core) but of equivalent subject (they both address the same category of historical subject).

Antonius has separated the hard core and the embellishment just sufficiently grammatically that they should not be confused. Woodman's assumption that the lead phrase subsumes all else under the same heading simply does not match the grammar we observe in the rest of the extended clause. Finally, the last sentence of Antonius' systematic evaluation is completely separate from the *rerum ratio* and is wholly concerned with issues of style, not with the hard core. Woodman's claim that "the elaboration which Antonius has in mind has nothing to do with style"<sup>36</sup> is patently false when Antonius' list is compared to Cicero's systematic description of style across the various species in *De Partitionibus Oratoriae* (21), written only a year after *de Oratore*. The problem is simply that Antonius' list includes amplification, embellishment, and causes suitable to argumentation—all of which are issues of style.

Both grammatically and conceptually, Woodman is incorrect in claiming that the minimum requirement for the hard core is plausibility.<sup>37</sup> Instead, the laws of historiography form the boundaries; the hard core is built of known facts and events; and the *exaedificatio* builds out the story according to carefully identified and limited rhetorical categories. Yet the fact remains that what Antonius (and thus Cicero) consider to be truth and appropriate rhetorical embellishment quite probably do not match today's definitions.<sup>38</sup>

This is the crux of Woodman's complaint about Cicero's historiography: that "Antonius is talking about the elaboration of content by means of content."<sup>39</sup> In other words, what Cicero considers appropriate embellishment may actually be considered by today's standards to be adding fictional content to the historical narrative. Woodman

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36. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*.

37. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 289.

38. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 83.

39. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 78.

supports his argument with the observation that the rhetorical embellishments Antonius lists in *de Oratore* 2.62 are the same topics he included under *inuentio* several decades earlier.<sup>40</sup> In that much earlier monograph, Cicero defined *inuentio* as the composition of topics either true or likely that will make one's case more persuasive or probable (*Inu.* 1.7). Woodman concludes that "since *inuentio* makes no distinction between the true and the probable, but accords the same status to the latter as to the former (and sometimes even more), its prescriptions share no common ground at all with modern historiography."<sup>41</sup>

On the one hand, Woodman is certainly correct in the discrepancy he sees between Greco-Roman and modern historiography. But he is comparing a pre-modern society with post-Enlightenment, modern society. Of course there is a gap. It is unrealistic to expect the same standards of accuracy and precision across millennia and changing technology. However, it is not unrealistic to expect faithfulness in ancient as well as modern history. Cicero, through Antonius' voice, has presented the standards which apparently set history apart from every other genre: in short, impartial adherence to the whole known truth.

On the other hand, Woodman's accusation that Antonius prescribes elaborating "content by means of content" is highly problematic. The problem becomes not whether historians tell the truth, but whether the reader can tell the difference between the truth of events and their rhetorical window dressing. In fact, Woodman claims this dilemma is no different today than it was for the original audience: "the ancients saw a theoretical distinction between the core element and the superstructure of historiography in terms of truth, although in practice the distinction was usually impossible for them to make."<sup>42</sup>

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40. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 87.

41. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 265 Or even more strongly, "It will therefore be clear that . . . *inuentio* [is] a concept which is naturally the antithesis of the 'scientific'." (Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 199.) Woodman's conclusions are somewhat more suspect when he conflates methodology and standards of historiography applicable to history of antiquity (origin history) with contemporary history; see Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 92.

42. Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 274.

Oddly enough, it is Cicero himself who contradicts Woodman, for Cicero assumes that the educated elite (those most likely to read long volumes of history) are able to distinguish between rhetorical embellishment and the facts (*Brutus*, 187-188). Even when Cicero abuses the historical facts of Coriolanus' death, Atticus clearly finds the account funny; as Wiseman notes, "it indicates a sort of professional complicity—the knowledge of a subtlety recognized by the *cognoscenti* but which might well mislead the ignorant."<sup>43</sup> And Wiseman has very aptly caught the crux of the issue: *Cicero expects the educated elite to recognize aspects of persuasion or of ornamentation for what they are, while the vulgas (Brutus 187) naively accept these as fact.*

So contrary to Woodman's understanding, Cicero does expect his own audience "to be sophisticated enough to distinguish the *oratorium* genus from the *historicum*,"<sup>44</sup> but he seems also to gleefully leave the rest of the world in the dark. One cannot help pondering how much this includes the modern historian, particularly as it is impossible to ascertain how much of Cicero's thinking on this subject was common to his peers and how much of it unique to Cicero. We are left instead with the laws of historiography—assumed to be familiar to all of Cicero's readers—as well as Antonius' systematic description of what comprises the hard core versus the *exaedificatio*. Of these, the laws of historiography come closest to describing absolutes of the genre of history, simply in that Cicero assumes they are understood and accepted without fail by his audience, needing no defense and subject to no debate.

In short, it is clear that Cicero's concept of a good historian holds faithfully to the essential acts of the event as he knows them, and he aspires to tell the story faithfully according to the spirit of the events as he understands them. Yet Cicero's historian is an orator at heart, imbuing events with rhetorical color, emotional depth, vividness of action,

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43. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 34.

44. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 34.

and artistry sure to please the most demanding of audiences. And, it seems, it is our job to discover where the one begins and the other ends.

### **Arrangement: Cicero**

Arrangement occupies the dangerous shared space between the hard core and the *exaedificatio*, in that the order of events belongs to the hard core, but their interpretation and amplification belong decisively to the *exaedificatio*. The choice of arrangement may also be influenced by the historian's interpretation of events and their significance. At the most basic level, a historian—whether ancient or modern—writes history to fulfill a specific purpose, be that informing others of the truth of events or using events to teach others lessons of character and consequences (an approach more often linked to ancient history).

Depending on the historian's understanding of events or purpose in writing, events or accounts may included or excluded (if the author considers them insignificant). If events seem to conspire against the historian's interpretation of the past, those events must be explained (or interpreted) in such a way that they makes sense within the interpretive framework the author provides for the past. This does not indicate that ancient history is too biased to be trustworthy, but rather that all sources used to write history—both ancient and modern—are subject to the historian's understanding of the past and purpose for writing.<sup>45</sup>

Cicero's approach to arrangement in history follows the norm here. In the voice of Antonius, he advises historians to retain a proper chronological presentation of events yet ensure an interesting, lively account by including descriptions of the locations, peoples, and cultures involved (*de Orat.* 2.63). But Antonius does not stop with topographical digressions. He continues with a list of rhetorical embellishments particular to each of three phases of an event: the plan phase, the action, and the result. The historian should begin his account of an

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45. Contrary to the positivist leanings of a century ago, we understand today that it is impossible to completely shed our biases; instead, we seek to confront them in order to understand how they may shape or limit our perspectives, then attempting to correct or compensate for biases that attack the integrity of our final product.

event giving both the plans that led to the action and his own moral or ethical assessment of those plans.

Given that the predominant purpose of Greco-Roman history was to instill moral and ethical values in the audience,<sup>46</sup> the historian's own assessment—either positive or negative—had an important role in this teaching process. The actions themselves should be given not only in order but with rhetorical amplification regarding the manner in which the event unfolded. This involves not only the author's own understanding of the spirit of the event but also his rhetorical training, creating a *narratio* that is realistic and convincing to his audience.<sup>47</sup>

Now unlike *narratio* in forensic or deliberative rhetoric that is carefully composed to persuade the audience, *narratio* in history is intended to recount. This is also a reflection of Cicero's identification of history as akin to epideictic rhetoric in that the *narratio* of epideictic rhetoric does not attempt to persuade with argumentation but to gently lead the mind along a familiar path of culturally acceptable moral excellence (*Part. Orat.* 21). And as Wiseman notes, "When a historian writes rhetoric, he is allowed to invent as an orator invents, to add point or conviction to his story, but the reader is expected to be able to recognize what he is doing—with a laugh, perhaps, like Atticus—and assess it accordingly."<sup>48</sup>

The same may be said for the digressions specific to the results of actions, such as why the result unfolded as it did, and whether the result came about accidentally or by way of a personality's character—which itself deserves its own biographical excursus, complete with the historian's moral and ethical assessment. It is in these digressions that the line between truth and fiction becomes blurred for the modern reader, since most modern readers certainly qualify as Cicero's uneducated *vulgari*, without the elite training in Greco-Roman rhetoric that enables us to instinctively recognize what the author is doing. Our

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46. Marincola, "Speeches," 131.

47. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 34–35.

48. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 35.

reading of history must then be close, deliberate, and always keeping in mind the digressions and embellishments Antonius recommends for budding historians.

### **Style: Cicero**

It is the stylistic embellishments that, in Cicero's opinion, mark the difference between a simplistic narration of true events and a literary composition worth reading (*de Orat.* 2.51, 53-54, 56, 58). In fact, Cicero dismisses the Great Annals of Rome as little more than a public notice board because all they recorded was a year's public events and the major personalities leading at the time (*de Orat.* 2.52). Through the voice of Antonius, Cicero mourns the general state of Roman history and lack of erudite, literary orators willing to forego the public arena of politics and law for the honorable yet less public role of historian (*de Orat.* 2.56).

Unlike Polybius, who rails against historians adhering to a less rigorous methodology (*Histories* 12), Antonius is most pleased with those who demonstrate the most elegant eloquence. Timaeus—the historian who most earns Polybius' ire—receives Antonius' greatest approbation for his polished style and breadth of thought (*de Orat.* 2.58). In fact, the single greatest defense Antonius gives for his claim that history ought to be the business of the orator is the orator's ability to achieve a flow of thought and a style appropriate to his topic (*de Orat.* 2.62). The position Antonius is arguing is not by any means shared among the literary Roman elite, and for this reason he devotes little attention to the laws of historiography—which are shared as a generic absolute—and gives himself over to defending his thesis and describing how essential rhetoric is to what he would consider “good” history (*de Orat.* 2.63-64). And the last of the rhetorical arts he mentions is that of achieving a proper style: a smooth, unbroken narrative that bears no resemblance to forensic rhetoric with its sharp accusations and the highs and lows of arguments and pleas in the courtroom.

As noted earlier, elsewhere Cicero has explicitly tied epideictic rhetoric to history, and similarity of style is clearly part of his rationale (*Orat.* 20, 61). Of the three species,

Woodman notes, “elaborate narrative was particularly at home” in epideictic rhetoric.<sup>49</sup> The “elaborate narrative” Cicero describes for epideictic rhetoric in the *Orator* is neatly parallel to the style of writing he prescribes for history (*de Orat.* 2.63-64): a freely flowing style that is balanced and symmetric, with rounded, elegant periods and diverse vocabulary demonstrating erudition (*Orat.* 20, 36; *Part. Orat.* 21). For all that Woodman describes it as “elaborate,” though, Cicero considers it an appropriate example of the middle style of oration: not as grand as that used for persuasive speeches, nor as simple as that used in the plain style. Instead, its chief quality is the smoothness of its delivery: the middle style should flow easily and fluently, without the drama or punch of a forensic argument (*Orat.* 12.39, 19.65, 20.66, 57.92; see also *De Oratore* 2.64).

It is striking that the ornamentation Cicero prescribes involves descriptions, emphasis, vocabulary, tone, and emotional appeal but does not include the creation of events. It does, however, include using *iuventio* to add vividness and realism to an account, and as discussed above, *iuventio* involves imaginative reconstruction to fill in unknown details of an account.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, style is more than simply using elegant language and balanced sentences, yet Cicero’s prescriptions in *de Oratore* 2.62-64 do effectively limit the scope of *iuventio* in a historical narrative while simultaneously warning the modern reader to remain aware of rhetorical guidelines while reading ancient history.<sup>51</sup> The historian is to both adhere to the truth and also create a literary composition that will appeal to the educated elite. Style and rhetorical ornamentation should not, according to this schema, surpass the truth.<sup>52</sup> This is, however, a fine line to tread, and one easily missed today.<sup>53</sup> Clearly Cicero accepts a larger degree of *iuventio* in historical narrative than is comfortable for the modern

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49. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 279 See also *Part. Orat.* 21-22.

50. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 134-36.

51. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 290 See also *De legibus* 1.1, 5.

52. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 136.

53. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 137.



reader, yet does so with the expectation that a rhetorically trained audience will discern between embellishment and fact.

Without question, Cicero's perspective on historiography and the relationship of history to rhetoric within the narrative are complex and nuanced. Interpreting Cicero is made even more difficult by his own refusal to write history himself, thus giving the modern reader no practical application that might illuminate the gray areas of his own theories. For this reason, though Cicero's prescriptions and descriptions of appropriate use of rhetoric are undeniably useful in assessing and analyzing actual examples of history, we will not make the mistake of assuming without warrant that a given historian wrote according to Cicero's dictums.

Again and again we see that each historian must be assessed on his own merits. Cicero's theory and prescriptions—in particular, the three laws of historiography—established a strong foundation for assessing genre and literary relationships within the genre. A comparative analysis of contemporary histories along these same lines will reveal areas of similarity (and thus possibly influence) as well as differences (indicating areas of innovation) that will gradually map out the shape of contemporary history in the first century.

### **Lucian**

Writing nearly a century and a half after Cicero, Lucian of Samosata occupies nearly the opposite end of the spectrum from his predecessor. Where Cicero is primarily concerned with the use of rhetoric in history, Lucian devotes the majority of his attention to appropriate methodology for history. That does not mean, however, that Lucian is not concerned with issues of rhetoric. He does in fact address the general style appropriate for history (*Hist. Conscr.* 55-56), and considers arrangement an important part of the historian's narrative presentation (*Hist. Conscr.* 6). But Lucian clearly considers rhetorical elaboration and artistry a much lower priority than does Cicero. In fact, he claims that failures of

rhetorical skill such as poor usage of language and choice of wording (these are particulars of rhetorical style) are simply not sufficiently important to include in this, his essay on the essentials of historiography (*Hist. Conscr.* 6).

And Lucian defines and limits his subject quite clearly: like Cicero, he is specifically addressing contemporary history (*Hist. Conscr.* 1.2). Within that field he restricts himself to discussing arrangement, proportion, methodology, interpretation, how to choose which events to recount, and what errors he should avoid (1.6). And along the way, he carefully establishes the boundaries of the genre with brief references to his philosophy of history.<sup>54</sup>

#### Philosophy of History: Lucian

Lucian is quite clear on his concept of historiography, claiming that the purpose of history is not entertainment but rather to be useful. Further, the utility of history is wrapped up in telling the truth (9.12-13). But truth is not the end in itself, but rather a means of informing and educating the audience, guiding them toward an honorable moral code by providing examples of the past, both good and bad, for their consideration (42).

And here Lucian and Cicero find some common ground: both establish truth as the core or foundation of history, and both see bias as the single greatest threat to the historian's truth-telling (*Hist. Conscr.* 40, 61-62; *de Orat.* 2.62-64). Lucian goes even further, seeing the historian's desires for profit and a powerful patron as the greatest inducement to composing a biased account (11.16; 13). His heroes are historians like Thucydides and Xenophon, who restricted themselves to truth for the sake of truth and the public benefit instead of being swayed by friendship or enmity toward their subjects (39).

Thucydides in particular stands as Lucian's definitive historian. Thucydides defines history as a legacy for posterity (5, 42). He is the historian most imitated (15, 19) and most

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54. It is suggestive that the major fields we have so far examined for each historian include exactly these essentials that Lucian lists: philosophy of history, methodology, and arrangement. And although Lucian claims to avoid details of style, he nonetheless cannot prevent himself from at least setting down some philosophical guidelines for style as well (see *Hist. Conscr.* 20, 44-45).

challenged (26), making him the authority to whom historians appeal and his work the point of innovation for generations of historians. Thucydides also sets the standard for impartiality (here with Xenophon, 39) and for rhetorical restraint (57).

In fact, much of Lucian's philosophy of history is actually more his philosophy of the historian. It seems that for Lucian, having the right person to write history solves a lot of problems of what history should and should not look like.<sup>55</sup> In terms of ability, the historian should demonstrate insight and discernment, particularly in the political sphere, and he should be an adept communicator (34). He should be intelligent, quick to grasp what he hears, and have some experience with the military (so that he can accurately understand and relate tactics, strategy, and battles).

Even these, however, indicate that Lucian assumes certain social demographic: only men of the more elite classes of society who anticipate climbing the *cursus honorum* would have studied both politics and rhetoric, and these men would have to be in positions of leadership in the military in order to grasp the breadth of detail Lucian requires for military matters. Now admittedly Lucian specifically considers political discernment an inborn skill; however, only those raised in political households would reasonably have such a "natural gift."

Lucian's list of character traits is somewhat longer than his list of abilities. His ideal historian is independent, particularly of external pressures and influences (38). He fears no one, values direct and truthful speech, and refuses to be swayed from absolute justice for any reason, good or bad (41). Again, this list reveals more than Lucian may have intended: only a member of the most elite classes would have the luxury of true independence, either financially or politically. But what is most significant about this list is how carefully Lucian

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55. C. K. Barrett, "How History Should Be Written," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. Ben Witherington III; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 34–35.

safeguards his ideal historian from pressures that might threaten his ability or willingness to write only the truth.

Now one could argue (as some do regarding Cicero) that Lucian is defining truth in terms of bias, and that truth is then simply limited to the impartial and not necessarily restricted to what is actually factual. However, Lucian clearly presents his ideal historian as one who desires to tell the truth, is committed to the truth, and is in a position to disregard social pressures to the contrary (39). The truth is foremost, but the reality is that not all men have the luxury of impartiality; Lucian's historian is protected by position and protects himself by a committed impartiality driven by a devotion to truth and an honorable name (63).

#### Methodology: Lucian

In comparison to Cicero, Lucian seems to have little to say about his philosophy of history. However, he is deeply concerned with describing and even establishing a proper methodology for writing history. He expresses at length his disappointment that many contemporary historians seek to imitate Thucydides verbally while missing the real essence of Thucydides' approach to history (15). Instead, Lucian asserts, historians should not use verbal imitation or excessive descriptions to hide their ignorance of the truly essential elements of their subject (20). He finds even more offensive those historians who have invented the facts of their story (particularly quantifiable facts such as the number of soldiers involved in an altercation) because they failed to put forth the effort necessary for adequate research.<sup>56</sup>

In fact, Lucian's dismay demonstrates to us that while qualifiable details may be subject to the historian's interpretation, presentation, and even imagination, quantifiable details should be carefully established and faithfully included in the narrative. This reading

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56. Barrett, "How History Should Be Written," 35.

concurr with Lucian's earlier criticisms of Aristobulus, who invented new heroic deeds for Alexander in order to please his patron: while the manner of the deed, its motivations, and the assessment of its result would have been fair game for historian's creativity (according to Cicero, at least), inventing a new hard core of facts invalidated Aristobulus' entire history (12).<sup>57</sup>

It is, then, this process of establishing facts—as opposed to inventing them—that is Lucian's particular concern. His ideal historian first of all has discernment born of real life experience in the subjects on which he writes (37). He knows whether the memories or accounts he hears are realistic and likely to have happened. Further, he does not simply invite the stories of others but actively seeks out as sources individuals who have no reason to lie: the best informants, Lucian asserts, are eyewitnesses who have nothing to gain from bending their story one way or the other. But the process does not stop with simply recording these accounts. Lucian's historian is compelled to continue his investigation, always looking for another account, another reputable eyewitness to affirm or challenge his understanding of how events played out (47). And when two accounts given by equally reputable witnesses disagree, it is the historian's discernment that identifies not only how the stories may align from differing perspectives but—when they will not align—which account he will accept as true (that one being the more realistic and credible of the two).

Marincola notes that “Lucian has thus conflated what were two things in Thucydides, the necessity of ‘going through with accuracy’ each thing reported, and the difficulty that informants sometimes spoke with partiality.”<sup>58</sup> Like Cicero, Lucian immediately sees bias as the greatest danger to truth and for this reason emphasizes the role of impartiality in truth-telling. And Lucian's advice to the historian to use his own judgment to determine which account is more probable does not—in the Greco-Roman mind—contradict his expressed

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57. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 161–62.

58. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 76.

commitment to truth. Instead Lucian is simply appealing to the rhetorical rule that in a speech, the *narratio* must be believable. In the absence of modern records, an appeal to credibility based on long experience was more than just common sense; it was good historiography.

Finally, Lucian sets forth specific guidelines for speech composition in historical narratives. At best, this is a difficult gray area, since the lack of modern recording devices vastly decreases our confidence that a speech within a text is a verbatim reflection of the words actually said on a given occasion. It is here that Lucian's commitment to truth appears to falter. He institutes only two rules for speech-writing: first, the speech must fit the character of the speaker and the context of the speech, and second—after fit has been established—the historian is free to demonstrate his rhetorical skill (58).

Lucian's rules appear to reflect Thucydides' own methodology, as outlined in his preface (1.22.1). However, he conflates Thucydides' requirements in this instance as well, reducing them simply to the fit of the speech to speaker and situation. Dionysius of Halicarnassus suggests that this interpretation was by no means unique to Lucian,<sup>59</sup> and Kenneth Sacks notes that even the concept of fit was understood by other historians as a rhetorical requirement, not a matter of historical evidence.<sup>60</sup> In other words, speeches were required to be rhetorically suitable but not necessarily historically accurate. Charles Fornara even observes that “the impression one gains from Quintilian is that the historian's inventive powers ought not to be impeded by anything so crass as the words actually delivered by historical personages.”<sup>61</sup>

Lucian's instructions for speech composition appear to fly directly in the face of his injunctions on the character of the historian and primary goal of history. How does such

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59. Kenneth S. Sacks, “Rhetorical Approaches to Greek History Writing in the Hellenistic Period,” in *Society of Biblical Literature: 1984 Seminar Papers* (ed. Kent Harold Richards; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 127, 131.

60. Sacks, “Rhetorical Approaches,” 124.

61. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 152.

creative composition coexist with the historian's commitment to truth? There are two possible responses to this dilemma. First, the modern reader could assume that Lucian's directive undergirds everything he says about historiography, including speeches. In that case, Lucian himself would assume that the historian seeks the facts of what was said in the speech and then attempt to provide a rendition of that speech that remains faithful to his understanding of speech, speaker, and situation. This approach strongly resembles a traditional understanding of Thucydides' preface (*Hist.* 1.22.1). The second option leans heavily on the rhetorical nature of the Hellenistic world and assumes that, without modern recording technology, historians could not reliably recover speech contents and therefore were not expected to accurately reflect original speeches. Adhering to rhetorical requirements would be the obvious and only way to impose some controls on the historian's creativity: at least the composition must appear a legitimate response by the speaker to the situation.

Unfortunately, because Lucian (like Cicero) never actually wrote history, we do not have any examples of his theory in action in the historical process. There is just no way to know how he envisioned his ideals taking form in historical narratives. In addition, Lucian's *How to Write History* is at heart ironical, and should be interpreted as such. Thus, while the text self-presents as programmatic for the genre, it is in fact an ironical commentary on some of the failures of Greco-Roman histories and historiographies. As such, notes Rothschild, it is "neither indicative of the state of Hellenistic historiography nor a necessarily reliable gauge of the methodological practices of Hellenistic historians."<sup>62</sup>

We would be wise, then, to take our cue from his own complaints and assess each historian according to the evidence of his work. In other words, a demonstrated affinity with or deliberate *mimesis* of a particular historian does not necessarily indicate that the text actually applies that historian's methods or perspectives (*Conscr. Hist.* 15). Further, we must

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62. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts*, 82.

take seriously the rhetorical influence evident in his directives on speech composition. Though Lucian claims to avoid issues of rhetorical categories, it is clear that he cannot avoid rhetoric altogether. Rhetoric is far too powerful and pervasive a force to underestimate.

### Rhetoric: Lucian

Whether directly appealing to Cicero or not, Lucian uses Cicero's position on historiography as a very definite point of departure for his manual. While Cicero links history to panegyric (epideictic rhetoric) because it does not seek to persuade but is written for the enjoyment of the reader, Lucian strongly disagrees. The correct view of history—according to Lucian—is to consider it a unique class of composition, specifically identified with none of the three species of rhetoric.

Lucian's rationale for this extreme position is found in the tendencies of panegyric, or epideictic rhetoric. Unlike deliberative or forensic rhetoric, epideictic speeches do not seek to persuade the audience but to reinforce shared social and cultural constructs. Panegyric is uniquely suited, then, to occasions such as military successes and funerals that celebrate cultural identity or act as warning signs against deviating from cultural norms. These are occasions that naturally lend themselves to story-telling. Praise and blame become the most effective tools in fulfilling this identity-strengthening purpose. Artistry, ornamentation, and clever rhetorical ploys also create an enjoyable presentation that both relieves the speech of the dullness of reciting shared beliefs and wins the admiration and support of the audience. And thus entertainment or enjoyment are frequently seen as the hallmarks of epideictic rhetoric.

Because panegyric is traditionally considered the rhetoric of praise or blame, it is also particularly susceptible to bias, and this is the quarrel Lucian picks with those who consider history to be epideictic rhetoric. As noted earlier, Lucian claims that the purpose of history is to be useful, and the unspoken use of history is as an example for contemporary and future generations. In order to fulfill its purpose with integrity, the stories it tells must be



true (9, 61). Again, bias is the single greatest threat to truth in Hellenistic society, so for Lucian, history must be something other than the species of rhetoric most associated with bias. Lacking any other designation, the literature Lucian depicts may be best described as “an extended *narratio*”<sup>63</sup> (*Hist. Conscr.* 55) and one which need make no pretense toward beauty or even enjoyment (9). Disassociating history from the rhetoric of praise and blame can only protect it from the tendency of epideictic rhetoric toward shameless bias.

One may read this to indicate that Lucian does indeed see historical “truth” as equivalent to impartiality (and not in opposition to fiction but rather to bias). However, even as Lucian weights his theory in this uncomfortable direction, we must not read him out of his own context. His emphasis on the work of data-gathering and double-checking data must still be integrated with his position on truth and bias into a coherent whole. Seeking historical “truth” for Lucian is a process of attempting to uncover the real facts while relying heavily on one’s judgment of a source’s veracity—which is based in part on one’s judgment of a source’s impartiality (47). The two axes of truth and bias are not neat intersecting lines in this schema but tumbling vines, it seems, and Lucian’s historian does his best to paint a faithful picture of their intertwining intersections. Yet even Lucian’s description falls somewhat short of Polybius’ standard of experienced interrogation and his process of cross-examination that constantly seeks to confirm or deny the reliability of a witness.

### **Arrangement: Lucian**

In keeping with his professed disassociation with panegyric and its tendency toward rhetorical embellishment, Lucian asserts that historiography should not be treated as a demonstration of rhetorical skill but rather presented simply, clearly, and without pomp (51). In fact, he limits the rhetorical work of the historian to arrangement and style.<sup>64</sup>

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63. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 98.

64. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 162.

The first order of business for arrangement is the work's preface. Lucian is determined that a proper preface should be proportion to the length of the entire work (23, 55). While the preface does not have to be a full formal affair, it is essential to the body of the narrative because it orients the audience to its subject (23). A formal preface, though, must include the historian's appeal for his audience's attention and a demonstration that the work will cultivate the mind, if the audience is willing to learn. An appeal for attention could involve a claim that the history relates events that are significant (particularly to the audience). Further, providing a clear summary or preview of the subject demonstrates its viability as a teacher of historical events and moral virtues (53).

Balance is key to the arrangement of history. This is true not only in the balance of preface to narrative (23) but in the weight of events within the narrative. More significant events must receive weightier treatment, and nonessential facts should not receive extended descriptions (27). This requires discernment on the part of the historian: in his role as guide to the past, he must choose which events are significant and exercise brevity in those that are not, because his audience will lose sight of what is important if they must wade through reams of nonessential narrative and description (27-32). Even those aspects of his history that the author finds interesting must be subject to this directive (50).

Yet Lucian does not expect this process of judgment and weighing events to occur full-fledged in a stream-of-consciousness flow from the pen. He recommends creating a rough draft that simply relates events as the historian understands them. Once this is accomplished, the historian reviews his material, only at this point exercising discernment in first identifying significant events and then setting aside unimportant events and descriptions (48, 56). Lucian does not abandon the budding historian at this point, however. He provides a list to guide the neophyte historian in this process of discernment. At the top of his list are the significant leaders—military and political—that drive events (49). Next are the events core to the movement of the historical narrative (56). Having established the essentials of the account, the historian must excise or at least abbreviate what is immaterial

and then superimpose order on the events (51, 56). At this point the historian's work of arranging his narrative is for the most part complete.

### **Style: Lucian**

Once the task of arrangement is complete, Lucian's historian may begin the more creative, rhetorical work of style. He must compose smooth transitions between events and sections in his history, retaining the precious balance of the significant against the merely interesting (50). Finally, he begins the rhetorical ornamentation, making his language vivid, his phrasing balanced, and the rhythm appropriate to the subject (48). And all of this must be done while also ensuring that the narrative as a whole flows smoothly and evenly while retaining its clarity (51, 55).

Yet the ornamentation should never overwhelm the narrative, no matter how tempted the historian may be to distract his audience from areas of his own ignorance (20). Further, adding elements of style should never complicate the clear, easily understood style ideal for history-writing (43). In keeping with this clear style, the historian should resist using obscure language or figures of speech and should avoid popular cant: the tone of history should be educated and intelligent without being too elevated for public consumption (44). Where the subject matter is lofty, he should match his language, figures of speech, and tone to match, even incorporating poetical flights to match the spirit of the events. (45) Above all, the narrative must employ vivid language and images in order to bring the events before the eyes of his audience (49).<sup>65</sup>

One gets the impression that Lucian and Cicero prefer very different historians. Where Cicero faults Thucydides for his undignified style (*Orat.* 9), Lucian praises his brevity (*Hist. Conscr.* 58). Where Cicero praises Timaeus for his elegance of expression (*de Orat.* 58), Lucian instead values a straightforward style that is relatively light on ornamentation and

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65. Andrew D. Walker, "Enargeia and the Spectator in Greek Historiography," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993): 353.

elaboration (*Hist. Conscr.* 44). And where Cicero implies that a simpler style indicates a lack of education, (*Brutus* 187-188), Lucian's strictures indicate that shorter speeches with simpler language and structure may be an stylistic choice intended to appeal to a wider audience.<sup>66</sup>

### Conclusion

When it comes to writing about historiography, methodology and rhetoric clearly receive the most attention, and this focus particularly centers on the impact of these on the account's faithfulness to the actual events. Although Cicero has comparatively little to say about methodology, his analyses and asides regarding the appropriate use of rhetoric in history are illuminating and at times discomfiting. As a lawyer very aware of his reputation as a master of rhetoric, Cicero's concern is that history rise to a level of eloquence and erudition equal to its grand subject. He requires an ornamented and creative use of rhetoric that verges into fiction in the manner and details of events.

On the other hand, Lucian of Samosata prefers a much more simple style that focuses more heavily on communicating what actually happened without exceeding truth in its ornamentation. He emphasizes the role of historian as researcher, always digging earnestly for more clues to reveal the truth of past events. Yet even Lucian considers speeches a matter mostly of the historian's composition. His guiding limitations rely on achieving the best fit of speech with what is known of speaker and situation; not once does he suggest omitting the speech if its contents are unknown. In these details, as for Cicero, the historian may exercise his rhetorical muscles for the enjoyment and edification of his audience.

As we continue to pursue the shape of the genre, the reflections and guidelines of both Cicero and Lucian offer insight into the theory and assumptions behind the text of first-century contemporary Greco-Roman history. Understanding what the text is doing as well as what it is saying adds another layer to our analysis of the genre and of the relationships

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66. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 142.

between texts within the genre. Outlining these relationships enables us to build a family tree, as it were, that defines the outer boundaries of the genre and just might show us where

Acts fits within—or without—the family.**Chapter 5**

## Contemporary History in the First Centuries BC-AD

It is difficult to overstate the influence of Hellenistic *agona*<sup>1</sup> on the development of history as a genre. No less than politicians, authors also engaged in the endless cultural struggle for honor. In history, this played out as a dynamic of competitive innovation under the aegis of appeals to the authority of tradition.<sup>2</sup> Just as poetry had Homer as epitome and father of the genre, history had its essential forebears as well, and later authors sought to co-opt these voices of authority as their own.

Yet perfect mimesis was not the goal, since slavish imitation only proved an ability to reflect a voice. Instead, an author's goal was to imitate a voice such as Thucydides' well enough to invoke his authority vicariously yet to do so with a creative twist or artistic flair that would earn the author a place of preeminence and honor among his peers.<sup>3</sup> In addition, historians were constantly vying with one another not only to be recognized as the most authoritative voice on events but also to discredit one another via polemical attacks on character, methodology, and accuracy (e.g., Polybius, *Histories* 12).<sup>4</sup>

It was this dynamic of competitive innovation and appeals to (at times conflicting) tradition that drove the development of classical history as a genre. And as authors jockey for placement among their peers, even the very appeals to authority become innovative in presentation and subtle in execution. In fact, by the time we reach the first centuries BC-AD, innovative appeals to authority made by second- or third-generation historians may themselves in turn be used innovatively by first-century historians.

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1. *Agona* refers to the cultural competition for honor that was so pervasive in Hellenistic cultures.

2. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 218.

3. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts*, 102-3.

4. See also Woodman, "Cicero and the Writing of History," 274.

Thus while the concept of an appeal to established past authorities would appear to give classical history a stable generic footprint, the role of innovation that continued to operate through generations of history writing means that the genre was, as Marincola observes, by no means a “static” known quantity but rather a fluid construct in which a text’s location in the genre and its hermeneutic depended on its recognizable relationships to other texts. The boundaries of the genre were not so much hard and fast rules about content but rather indeed the strategies and perspective the author employed to tell his story.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, this leaves the genre far too open to be truly comfortable for the modern reader. Instead of comparing a given text to an accepted canon of history or even to a dominant school, each text must be assessed on its own merits and in its own historical and literary context.<sup>6</sup> Identifying the place of a text within the genre of Greco-Roman history must be a matter of evaluating the relationships and, to the extent possible, the influences between texts. This calls for what Marincola deems “a process of comparison” between texts<sup>7</sup> in which we map out the dynamics of innovation and appeals to authority within each text to identify where the text stands within the genre.

Such a playful movement of creativity and tradition can make identifying the place of a text within the generic maelstrom challenging and even at times misleading. For example, an appeal to the authority of Thucydides may also imply to the modern reader adoption of the historian’s methodology, but a closer reading demonstrates that style and methodology were not necessarily a single unit to the ancient mind. At the opposite extreme, high innovation within a text may easily obscure strong mimesis in methodology, leading the modern reader to discount a historian’s faithfulness to events due to his creativity in style or arrangement.

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5. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 320–21.

6. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 13.

7. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 321.

It becomes apparent, then, that locating a text within the larger family of history is a matter of careful reading and of paying close attention to not only the very big-picture questions of genre (such as the five factors Marincola examines<sup>8</sup>) but also to key features of the text that appear to carry generic significance to the authors and their peers. In fact, modern historians have observed that the type of creative innovation typical of Greco-Roman historians may be found most frequently in verbal echoes of an authoritative historian (such as Thucydides), in the style of the narrative voice, in the arrangement of the narrative, or in the disposition of events within the story.<sup>9</sup> Observing how the text's audience received the narrative provides further clues into not only what these features communicated in their time and place but also how they functioned to enhance or detract from the text's reputation as legitimate history. Any assessment of genre and literary relationships, then, must include an analysis of these features.

Analyses of early, defining examples of history (such as the writings of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Polybius) and of later discussions about writing history (such as those penned by Cicero and Lucian of Samosata) have brought to light other key features that carried generic significance. These include the author's philosophy of history, his methodology—particularly regarding his research into and use of sources—and his use of rhetoric in ornamentation, elaboration, and speech composition. Thus as we attempt to trace the generic shape of Greco-Roman history in the first centuries (BCE to CE), we will appeal to both the bird's eye view that analysis along the lines of Marincola's factors gives us as well as the much more detailed perspective afforded by analysis of qualities and features that were clearly significant to the authors themselves. Continuing this assessment chronologically also allows us to trace possible lines of influence (both in terms of innovation away from and appeals to other authors) indicating literary relationships within the genre.

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8. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 302–8.

9. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts*, 86–87.



### Historians of the First Century BCE-CE

Returning to analyses of Greco-Roman history after a tangential—though significant—exploration of ancient historiography (as per Cicero and Lucian, at least) brings us once again to considerations of Marincola’s five factors of genre identification.<sup>10</sup> These provide a bird’s eye view of the text, intentionally sketching the largest boundaries possible in order to create a baseline generic profile. Further analysis along the lines of criteria contemporary to the text enables the modern reader to refine this profile and gain a more accurate sense of the shape of the genre.

The first of the five factors is narrativity, which simply indicates whether a text qualifies as a narrative. Focalization then identifies the perspective from which the author presents his work, and is usually discussed in terms of internal or external focalization that is objective or subjective; this often overlaps practically with narrative voice and point of view. Chronological delimitation identifies the historical beginning and ending points of the account, which in turn gives insight into what the narrator considers significant and provides clues toward how he intends the text to be interpreted. After all, the text must be interpreted in light of the beginning and ending provided by the narrator. In addition, the choice of time frame relative to the historian (contemporary vs non-contemporary history) carries implications for Greco-Roman history that extend far beyond arbitrary generic separation. In fact, “the choice of chronological limits was important,” Marincola observes, “not only for the investigative work required of the historian, but also for the imposition of meaning and the emplotment of the narrative.”<sup>11</sup>

Marincola limits the fourth factor, arrangement, to a simple identification of whether the account proceeds chronologically or uses some other schema to organize the subject. Marincola’s definition of arrangement is much more narrow than that of the ancient

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10. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 302–8.

11. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 305.

historians themselves, and for this reason we will assess the arrangement of the texts, first according to Marincola's concept and second, according to classical rhetoric. Subject, the final factor, is often the first facet of the text considered by modern historians. The most significant question this factor asks of the text is whether the historian treats proper historical subjects like war, politics, and leaders or lower subjects like religion, customs, or people groups (certainly this is the perspective for which Polybius argues; see *Histories* 1; 9.1-2)? The answer to this question situates the text decisively along very different branches of the family tree.

Marincola developed this five-fold assessment in order to, as he says, "look at the totality of an historical work before forming conclusions about its nature and purpose."<sup>12</sup> Analysis along these five vectors should by no means be used simply to assign a label, but should be seen rather as a first step to understanding what the historian sees as relevant to the portrait of the past that he is attempting to create, and how the inclusion of such material in his work attempts to mediate between that vision of the past and the present reality in which he finds himself. The form and content of the narrative cannot be divorced from the context in which it was produced, and the interplay of all of these factors must be considered in any final evaluation of any history. Such an approach, it seems to me, better reflects the way the ancients themselves viewed the materials and methods available for an inquiry into the past, and will make it much less likely that we force ancient works into modern categories.<sup>13</sup>

These factors have already proved useful in our analyses of the early Greek historians who were so influential to the genre as a whole, and their utility is due to the fact that the approach is not prescriptive but descriptive. Analyzing history from a prescriptive perspective automatically excludes any texts that do not meet pre-established conditions.

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12. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 302.

13. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 309.

But because innovation is such an essential aspect of Greco-Roman historiography, a descriptive approach is absolutely imperative. Description allows the genre to grow and change over time.

Finally, consistently appealing to the reception of a text provides a much-needed check on the process of genre identification. First, it indicates which texts were considered historical narratives at the time of their writing. Second, tracking text reception provides a means of tracing the changing shape of historiography over time while also enabling the modern historian to assess which features do not change and were considered essential to the genre. And perhaps most crucial, observing text reception serves as a check against our own, potentially modern analysis, because the earliest record we have of a text's reception is our best indication of where a text's first audiences placed it on the genre's family tree.

#### Julius Caesar

Of the contemporary historians we analyze here, Caesar's *commentarii* have been perhaps the most difficult to place within Greco-Roman history. They are quite simply unique. Presented as *commentarii*, their simple style and straightforward tone seems to confirm the traditional understanding that *commentarii* were raw records of events and meant to serve as the essential bones of a polished account.<sup>14</sup> Yet they demonstrate such skill in their arrangement and presentation that labeling them as simply raw records is clearly a misnomer. Even Cicero, who complains lightly that they lack rhetorical polish, admits that their elegance and simplicity makes further ornamentation absurd (*Brutus*, 262).

It is significant that Caesar's *commentarii* are the only extant example of the species: we have no other complete *commentarii* to compare them to, and thus cannot prove definitively whether the unique features we observe are due to Caesar or to the species. The drive within Greco-Roman historiography toward innovation, however, eradicates any

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14. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 181.

possibility of assuming that the *commentarii* always remained bare-bones accounts. Instead, we can with Marincola “assume that although a *commentarius* might at times be a sketch for some future historian, it could also be a full scale independent account, limited perhaps by its focus, but written with care and *ornatio*, and meant for the same audience, and with some of the same purposes, as a large-scale narrative history.”<sup>15</sup> And so we assess the *Bello Gallico*<sup>16</sup> carefully, recognizing from the outset that of all men, Caesar would not have been content to produce a *commentarius* that was in any way less innovative than his own perception of himself.

### Assessing the Genre: Caesar

Apparently discontent to produce anything like the early Roman annals that cast Cicero into such despair (*de Oratore* 2.51-53), Caesar does not stop at simply providing a list of dates, events, and people. *Bello Gallico* is a complex, carefully structured narrative. Caesar relates his account in the third person,<sup>17</sup> consistently maintaining external, objective focalization. His choice is decidedly unusual in that surviving quotations of other *commentarii* demonstrate that “there is no example before Caesar in which the writer of a *commentarius* uses the third person.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, before Caesar, “no Roman historian ever refers to himself in the third person.”<sup>19</sup> Marincola sees in this departure from tradition an external influence on

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15. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 182.

16. This analysis of Caesar’s historiography is primarily limited to his *Bello Gallico* simply for reasons of space. His approach, style of writing, and use of rhetoric in *Bello Civilis* is similar to the *Bello Gallico*; significant differences between the two narratives will be addressed, though briefly.

17. Howard M. Jackson, “Ancient Self-Referential Conventions and Their Implications for the Authorship and Integrity of the Gospel of John,” *JTS* 50, no. 1 (1999): 28.

18. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 196. Marincola continues his argument, rephrasing even more strongly: “For when we look at all the evidence from Roman historians (and memoirists before Caesar) we can state quite simply that no Roman historian ever refers to himself in the third person.” (Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 197), although he does allow the possibility that Cato may present an exception to this rule.

19. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 197. The only exception to this rule is where Caesar uses “*nostri*” to refer to Roman soldiers under his command. He never extends this inclusive language to Roman soldiers under the command of his opponents, though. See, e.g., *Bello Civilis* 1.18.2; 22.1; 40.6. Note that Marincola’s comments only apply to Roman historians. His appeal to Xenophon, a distinctly Greek historian, as the influential source loses some force in light of the use of the self-referential third person in other Greek historians such as Thucydides. As noted in the above paragraph, the link between Caesar and Xenophon

Caesar: Xenophon's *Anabasis* is very similar to the *Bello Gallico* in subject and in straightforwardness of style. Granted, Marincola's assessment is based on extant texts and so is subject to a certain margin of error. However, other similarities in subject, style, and arrangement (see below) suggest that Marincola's conclusion is in fact valid. Xenophon was likely the strongest influence on Caesar's *commentarii*, but not solely on the basis of his self-referential use of the third person.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, like the *Anabasis*, the *Bello Gallico* only includes the Gallic campaign (beginning around 61 BCE), though Caesar provides some background context from several years earlier, in 58 BCE. He proceeds chronologically, ending the *commentarius* in 52 BCE at the victory of the siege of Alesia, which he presents as the crucial point of his military influence and power. In fact, his account of the siege suggests quite strongly that the victory was entirely dependent on Caesar's personal presence: without his decisiveness and military acumen, the Gallic campaign would have failed.

In fact, while the subject of the account is ostensibly just the Gallic campaign, Caesar features so strongly within its events that one is tempted to retitile the work *Caesar and his Gallic War*. This undoubted focus on a single leader is typical of Greco-Roman biographies of famous military and political leaders, but is more unusual in *commentarii* and accounts of wars (such as Polybius' *Histories*), which are expected to apply more even-handed treatment of the various leaders that take part in moving the conflict forward.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps in this also Caesar took his cue from Xenophon.

Regardless of the various unique or surprising aspects of *Bello Gallico*, Caesar's audience had no difficulty accepting his account as history. While both *Bello Gallico* and *Bello Civili* were published for a public audience after Caesar's death,<sup>22</sup> Cicero either received a

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remains valid, but only on the basis of multiple points of intersection, with the use of the third person being only one point, and possibly the weakest.

20. Jackson, "Self-Referential Conventions," 27.

21. Andrew M. Riggsby, "Memoir and Autobiography in Republican Rome," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 273.

personal copy or a portion of a personal copy while Caesar lived (*Brutus* 262). Cicero's response to the *commentarii* indicates both that he considered the work within the bounds of history and also that he recognized aspects of Caesar's writing that were innovative and unexpected. And in Cicero's response we find again that the concept of genre was quite flexible enough to accept significant changes (such as a change in focalization and, apparently, style) in the presentation of the narrative while easily acknowledging that it contained the essential elements—such as, perhaps, a chronological narrative of past events—that made it history.

### **Philosophy of History: Caesar**

Unlike Thucydides or Polybius, Caesar offers no explanatory preface or helpful asides on his purpose or concept of historiography. His direct approach forces the modern reader to glean clues from the form and structure of the *Bello Gallico* that may indicate his assumptions and expectations regarding his philosophy of history and his methodology. The *commentarius* subgenre of Greco-Roman history was understood, as Cicero indicates (*Brutus* 262), to serve as an abbreviated, bare-bones record that could in turn be used as raw material for a fully fleshed-out historical narrative. In fact, in Cicero's letter to Luceius (*ad Familiares* 5.12), he offers to write a *commentarius* of his own life to serve as a source for Luceius if his friend is willing to write his biography. *Commentarii*, then, are intended to be the hard core of facts upon which the history builds the *exaedificatio*. While Caesar never explicitly presents his account as such, he clearly intends that the *Bello Gallico* be received as the true facts of his campaign. The *commentarius* form carries a sense of “insider information” that gives the work an inescapable sense of legitimacy.<sup>23</sup>

Yet while the form suggests that Caesar is a purist, intent on telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, a careful reading of the text reveals that the

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22. Riggsby, “Memoir and Autobiography,” 272.

23. Riggsby, “Memoir and Autobiography,” 273.

“unadorned” body (as Cicero describes it) is carefully structured to lead the reader in a very specific direction.<sup>24</sup> Caesar is the undoubted hero of every encounter, and the Germans are uncultured barbarians whose savagery makes them the perfect foil for the discipline and glory of a Rome personified in her army and general. This design does not inherently invalidate *Bello Gallico* as a true account, but it does encourage a second, closer look at the text.

For example, Caesar relates preparing for the invasion of Gergovia (6.9-10), then proceeds with an exploration of Germanic culture. He does not return to the situation at Gergovia until much later (6.29), when he simply informs the reader that the Suevi retreated due to food shortages and the legions returned to base across the bridge they had built for the invasion. Clearly the invasion never occurred, yet Caesar omits any account of precisely how events played out. Cassius Dio is not quite so shy: he states that Caesar failed to accomplish any of his goals and retreated in the face of overwhelming opposition (*Roman History* 40.32). Technically Caesar’s account communicates the upshot of events: Caesar made no headway, and left when the Suevi were distracted. Reading between the lines of Caesar’s account makes it plain that he failed in his own invasion and constructed towers only to guard against a retaliatory invasion he was otherwise sure to lose. Further, Aulus Hirtius, Caesar’s legate through the Gallic campaign,<sup>25</sup> provides another perspective on Caesar’s actions in his addendum to *Bello Gallico* (Book 8). Hirtius describes several events that Caesar avoids in his account: Roman initiatives that failed (e.g., 8.13, 16), victories won by other leaders (e.g., 8.36-37), and Caesar’s cruel treatment of prisoners and conquered lands (e.g., 8.24-25).

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24. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, “Caesar’s Account of the Battle of Massilia (BC 1.34–2.22): Some Historiographical and Narratological Approaches,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 371 While Kraus specifically addresses *Bello Civilis* here, her point spurred a more careful reading of *Bello Gallico*, which demonstrates the same careful design toward the glory and patriotism of Rome in Caesar.

25. Marc Mayer, “Caesar and the *Corpus Caesarianum*,” in *Political Autobiographies and Memoirs in Antiquity* (ed. Gabriele Marasco; Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011), 215.

While Caesar does not seem to invent military actions that did not occur, he is perfectly willing to offer interpretations and vastly abbreviated descriptions that put himself in the best light possible. He may tell the truth, but offers no guarantees that it is the whole truth, or that its presentation is in any impartial. He certainly fails to keep fully the laws of historiography outlined by Cicero's Antonius (*de Oratore* 2.62). Suetonius in fact relates criticism to that effect by Asinius Pollio, who claims that Caesar is at best careless and—at worst—not truthful, though he softens the criticism somewhat by opining that Caesar was too trusting of the reports he received and did not check the facts well enough before including them in his account (*Divi Iulius* 56.4). But we see no other condemnation of his bias in later works;<sup>26</sup> even Cassius Dio, who provides details on which Caesar remained silent, does not engage Caesar the historian but only relates his actions as military general and, later, dictator.

Clearly Caesar has run afoul of the demarcation so carefully instituted by Cicero and Lucian between truth and bias. We have already observed, however, that this line was rather more malleable than either author indicated, since patriotism was considered an acceptable form of bias in Greco-Roman history. Perhaps we should add to that observation the thought that a historian's preoccupation with his own actions and reputation should warn the reader of the possibility of personal bias with attending spin (or avoidance) of unflattering events.<sup>27</sup>

### **Methodology: Caesar**

Without any clear statement of methodology in *Bello Gallico*, the reader must, as with Caesar's philosophy of history, appeal to the narrative itself in order to develop a concept of the process Caesar engaged in to write his account. Conrad Gempf finds in Caesar's simple style a clue to his methodology:

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26. This considers, of course, only extant texts.

27. Not to mention how impolitic it would have been to criticize Caesar the dictator during his lifetime and highlight his less noble actions. Under later emperors, such criticism frequently proved fatal.



The accounts written by Julius Caesar seem to forsake rhetorical adornment and composition, despite the author's record as a public speaker. The speeches therein are bare and to-the-point. The impression is that he takes up a position directly opposed to the Isocratean principles. It seems a fair conclusion that Caesar purposely wrote as an adherent of an established school of historiographical thought, namely the tradition of Thucydides and Polybius.<sup>28</sup>

While it appears that Gempf is limiting the parallels he finds to the rhetorical ornamentation of the narrative, he addresses ornamentation within the same context as careful research and the historian's commitment to remain faithful to actual events. His implication is clear: he assumes that Caesar adheres to the investigative processes of Thucydides and Polybius simply because his writing style echoes theirs. In short, Gempf's conclusions are suspect. He has committed the fatal fallacy in Greco-Roman history: he has assumed that similarities in style indicate equivalence in other areas as well. In fact, the thrust of Gempf's argument appears to be that a simple style indicates greater faithfulness to actual events, while rhetorical ornamentation is a sign of creative composition. While the latter may be true, the former is not a given unless the historian's style is paired with other indications of methodology. Simply assuming methodology on the basis of style alone is deeply problematic.

In contrast to Gempf, Marincola appeals to evidence within the *Bello Gallico* itself. He notes that Caesar records his process of inquiry multiple times in the text "and their presence reveals that Caesar was well aware of the importance of validating events by autopsy or inquiry. It also demonstrates that his audience might expect them and consider them important in guaranteeing the reliability of the narrator."<sup>29</sup> And yet Asinius Pollio, a contemporary of Caesar, criticizes him for his failure to adequately vet his sources, going to

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28. Gempf, "Public Speaking," 282.

29. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 79.

far as to blame either Caesar's memory or his ethics for inaccuracies in his *commentarii* (Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 56). Further, Emma Dench finds Caesar's descriptions of the Gauls and Germans to be rife with ethnic stereotyping and missing the detailed knowledge of one who has made himself fully conversant with the land and culture he engages.<sup>30</sup>

Caesar's methodology thus falls far below Polybius' ideal. Caesar may have enjoyed the military experience Polybius deemed necessary to write accounts of battles and wars, but he demonstrates a distinct lack of the discernment that Polybius so prized. In fact, if one takes Pollio's word for it, Caesar's *commentarii* do not evidence the judgment necessary to identify faithful sources or the interrogation skills that would pierce through an eyewitness account to reveal the essential bare bones of fact within. Even more significant, the very fact that the only criticism Caesar's *commentarii* faced concerned his methodology simply demonstrates the degree to which eyewitness testimony and interrogation had become the expected standard for Greco-Roman contemporary history.

### **Rhetoric: Caesar**

In addition to the simplified style of the *commentarii*, one of the most striking aspects of Caesar's history—and one of the features that caught Gempf's attention in his analysis of Caesar's methodology—is the paucity of speeches in the narrative. In fact, not only are there few speeches, but what speeches one does find are much shorter and even simplified compared to speeches in other texts. Both style and speeches, though, are consistent with Caesar's presentation of his accounts as *commentarii*: the hard core upon which history is built would naturally focus more on action, particularly as speeches were, according to Lucian, the accepted place for the historian to display his creativity and rhetorical skill (provided the speech remained appropriate to both speaker and situation [*Hist. Conscr.* 58]). It is possible that adding rhetorical ornamentation and including fully developed speeches in

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30. Emma Dench, "Ethnography and History," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World.; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 501–2.

the *commentarii* would have crossed that nearly-invisible boundary between the *commentarius* species and general history. If so, the defining qualities that made the *commentarius* a recognizable subgenre within history were primarily rhetorical in nature.<sup>31</sup>

### **Arrangement: Caesar**

The lack of rhetorical ornamentation in *Bello Gallico* actually draws the reader's attention to Caesar's subtle use of the more basic rhetorical tools of arrangement and style. As a *commentarius*, there is no need for the formal preface Cicero and Lucian consider essential. Instead, Caesar begins *Bello Gallico* by filling in the historical background, the context of events that led up to his Gallic campaign (1.1-6). Once this overview is completed, Caesar moves directly into his carefully sequenced narrative. The seven books of *Bello Gallico* are primarily organized around the fighting season, ending with winter quarters and picking up with new military initiatives in early spring, leading many scholars to speculate that these were "annual dispatches or were published together after the fact."<sup>32</sup> If so, these dispatches were privately circulated, since the *commentarii* were not published publicly until after Caesar's death.

But each book is by no means simply a play-by-play account of Caesar's military actions. Instead, Caesar carefully reinforces Roman stereotypes of Gauls as prone to rebellion (3.10) yet dependent on Roman influence for their burgeoning sense of culture and on Roman military power for their continued security and orderly life (e.g., 1.11). In the same way, the German tribes are unilaterally savage, existing at the edges of world civilization (3.8) and unwilling to sacrifice their love of battle (mostly with each other) in order to cultivate domesticated animals and dependable agriculture (e.g., 4.1-3; 6.22). They are in many ways the stereotypical savages, showing childlike amazement at the wonders of

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31. Of course, lacking further examples of *commentarii* makes confirming the idea difficult, to say the least.

32. Riggsby, "Memoir and Autobiography," 272.

Roman engineering (1.30-31). Their savagery acts as a foil, showing the disciplined, civilized Roman army in a sharp chiaroscuro contrast.

And Caesar uses the stereotypes to reinforce the patriotic tone of *Bello Gallico*. Each book holds close to its opening a brief excursus on the culture, customs, and oddities of the foreigner, both Gaul and German. He sets the stage carefully, always ensuring that the enemy is held up to the reader's eye, and this view of the enemy colors all military action within each book. Just as the Gauls and Germans become nearly symbolic forces against the order and honor of Rome, the Roman forces with Caesar at their head become the symbol of Roman might and glory. Caesar subtly manipulates the arrangement of his materials toward one single theme: Caesar is Rome, personified and victorious. Even when Caesar patently fails his initiative (6.9-10, 29), he holds the customs and land of the Germans up as a screen between the reader and Rome's humiliating defeat (6.11-28), distracting reader until the scene changes and Rome (and Caesar) may be presented victorious once again (6.29-30).

### **Style: Caesar**

Again, while Caesar avoids the elaboration Cicero holds standard for good historiography, he more than makes up for the lack with his subtle use of style. As noted earlier, his *commentarii* are plainly written, and comparison with other histories written in the same time period only strengthens the impression that this simplicity is carefully and self-consciously orchestrated. In fact, Cicero finds Caesar's style the most notable aspect of his history (*Brutus*, 262). Caesar deliberately avoids the ornamentation and demonstrations of rhetorical cleverness so valued by historians such as Timaeus. Yet even Cicero recognizes that Caesar's style is not a demerit to the enterprise; on the contrary, he praises Caesar for presenting a complete literary work in the guise of a bare bones account, and written well enough to discourage other historians from seeking to improve upon it (*Brutus*, 262).<sup>33</sup>

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33. Riggsby, "Memoir and Autobiography," 273.

Caesar's style is part of the whole effect, and it is curious that Cicero's praise is in large part for Caesar's pretense of a bare-bones account when he sees that the *Bello Gallico* is in fact a carefully crafted whole.

That the *Bello Gallico* is in fact carefully crafted to appear as something it is not should spur the modern reader to dive a bit more deeply to discover what it is, instead. For example, Caesar's literary subterfuge may account for his use of the third person when describing his own actions. This use of the third person to account for the historian's own participation does not follow the established trend for Roman *commentarii*.<sup>34</sup> But his use of the third person also functions strategically to, as Campbell remarks, "increase the narrative's sense of historical objectivity."<sup>35</sup> The apparent objectivity of the third person pairs well with the feel of the *commentarius* as straightforward dispatches reporting from the battlefield. In addition, Caesar may be setting the stage for his troops and his campaign to echo the *Anabasis*: like Xenophon, Caesar leads his men against the noble savage from the ends of the world, overcoming great obstacles, winning heroic battles, and returning home triumphant.<sup>36</sup>

And this triumph may at the end be the key to Caesar's history. A member of the *populares* party, he depended on popular appeal for his political influence. And Caesar was an ambitious man, unwilling to simply be the next famous general (as *Bello Civilis* demonstrates). Certainly canny enough to recognize he needed overwhelming popular support for his ambition, Caesar could not have failed to see just how much the *Bello Gallico* could deliver, politically speaking. Written to capture the imagination of the least educated in Rome, at a level far below Cicero's literary elite, the *Bello Gallico* is a masterpiece of political propaganda in which Caesar is Rome, and Caesar's victories are Rome's victories.<sup>37</sup>

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34. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 196–97.

35. William Sanger Campbell, "The Narrator as 'He,' 'Me,' and 'We': Grammatical Person in Ancient Histories and in the Acts of the Apostles," *JBL* 129, no. 2 (2010): 391.

36. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 197.

37. Andrew M. Riggsby, *Caesar in Gaul and Rome: War in Words* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press,

And it is this sense of underlying propaganda that teaches the reader caution regarding the impact of bias on Caesar's faithfulness to actual events. In fact, Caesar teaches the reader to beware of historical accounts that demonstrate significant bias—particularly personal bias—as that bias may well indicate that something much less than the whole truth is being told.

### Sallust

A contemporary and supporter of Caesar, as a historian Sallust is very nearly his opposite. The *Conspiracy of Catiline* is not a military history, nor does it offer a hero for the Roman public to idolize. Instead Sallust paints a larger-than-life antihero whose greatest character quality is moral failure. Catiline's hunger for power and lack of personal self-control gives Sallust the ideal subject for his critique of Rome's moral excesses toward the end of the Republic. Sallust portrays himself as the bastion of traditional values, looking on the downfall of Rome's moral code with horror and sorrow. Yet Sallust's role is somewhat tainted by his mismanagement of the Roman territory of Numidia, which garnered him immense wealth and an awkward accusation of extortion. With this immense wealth he proceeded to build a fantastic mansion in Rome with vast gardens—an extravagance disconcertingly at odds with his criticism of Rome's debauched elite who insisted on building magnificent, self-indulgent homes that only fed their moral excesses (*Cat.* 12-13).

One of the most striking features of Sallust's writing is his archaic style. He delights in reviving words and forms that had fallen out of circulation, and his turns of phrase reflect his love for the complicated, flowery prose of Livy and Herodotus. In no way does he reflect Cicero's advice to maintain a middle style in tone and evenness of flow, but this should come as no surprise, as he opposed Cicero in nearly every way in both his personal and

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2006), 13 See also T. P. Wiseman, *The Roman Audience: Classical Literature as Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 94, 164.

professional life. Yet it in no way detracts from his work; rather, the very humanity of the author makes his tale of corruption, brilliance, and vice all the more compelling.

### Assessing the Genre: Sallust

Like the *Bello Gallico*, *Catiline* is a chronological narrative concerned with the actions of a single subject. Sallust, however, is entirely focused on the downward spiral of morality he sees taking control of Roman politics and policy; he is not concerned with her wars and generals. The conspiracy he describes takes place entirely in the year 63 BCE, when Catiline's power-hungry manipulations finally come to a very public head. And while Caesar's *Bello Gallico* offers carefully curated glimpses into Gaulic and Germanic tribes and customs, Sallust opens the curtain on the seamy side of the Roman elite. But while Caesar's account tumbles from action to action, Sallust takes the reader on a much more psychological journey, propelling action by character and motivation instead of by military campaign goals.

More than simply serving as a convenient contrast to *Bello Gallico*, *Catiline* introduces something new in Greco-Roman historiography. Unlike other historians who related epic, multi-volume stories of battles and wars that lasted years and featured famous leaders (often on both sides of the war),<sup>38</sup> Sallust chose single subjects with limited time frames (not multiple years), and published each history in a single volume.<sup>39</sup> In his discussion on the types of history, Polybius decries the historical monograph, complaining that such a short, circumscribed narrative places too much importance on relatively insignificant events and people (*Hist.* 7.7.1, 7.7.6). But in his preface to *Catiline*, Sallust defends his approach, describing his history as discrete segments relating events pertinent to every Roman that deserved to be remembered (*Cat.* 4).<sup>40</sup> Sallust defends his choice of subject—the conspiracy—on the grounds that its wickedness makes it worthy of memorial.

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38. Palmer, "Historical Monograph," 14.

39. Palmer, "Historical Monograph," 26–27.

40. See also Palmer, "Historical Monograph," 8–9, 11.

And here we see Sallust's motivation laid out: he is a highly self-conscious advocate of old Roman virtues—even a patriot of Old Rome—who is convinced that *historia* should be comprised not only of great wars but also of events significant to the character of a people. With Cicero and other Hellenistic historians, Sallust believes that *historia est magistra vitae*, and its primary goal is that it be useful, a teacher to the next generation (as suggested by *Cat.* 1, 3-4). Sallust's great concern for the moral state of his countrymen drives his choice of subject, structure, and form. He is the first of the Greco-Roman historians to publish a historical monograph successfully and earn the praise of his peers and literary descendants.

In other ways, however, Sallust retains a traditional approach, telling the tale of Catiline from an observer's distance.<sup>41</sup> Here the objective external focalization feels more like a natural reflection of how Sallust experienced the conspiracy as a young man, newly climbing the *cursus honorum*. His brief forays into an internal subjective, first-person narrative assert his personal voice for a variety of reasons. At times Sallust inserts himself as if to remind the reader that he is the narrator (*Cat.* 14, 16, 20, 26), perhaps in order to reinforce the authority of his voice. At other times he returns to the first person to personally guarantee the legitimacy of his claim or the accuracy of his information (4, 18, 48). But by far he most frequently drops into his own voice to offer his now-mature reflections on events and his conviction that the downward trend of Rome's fortunes is a direct consequence of her moral decay (e.g., 1-3, 53).

Sallust's focus on morality and virtue not only serves as a unifying theme but also governs the arrangement of the narrative. Where other historians provide the historical context of the events they narrate, Sallust describes the moral atmosphere of Rome and briefly discusses the meaning of a virtuous character. And in keeping with general conventions, Sallust ends his account with a victory in battle. But for Sallust, whose hero is virtue, the triumph is tainted with the grievous consequences of moral decay on society.

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41. Woodman, *Tacitus Reviewed*, 22.



Yet despite the fact that his *Catiline* reads almost like a morality play, Sallust has achieved a certain status as a well-respected historian. He receives praise from Tacitus (*Annals* 3.30), and Quintilian puts him on level with Thucydides and above even Livy (*Institutes* 10.1.32, 101). Later, Martial will rank him as *primus* in Roman history (*Epigrams* 14.191). Perhaps a closer look at those factors particularly critical to Hellenistic readers of history will explain this preference among his readers.

### **Philosophy of History: Sallust**

His subject matter alone demonstrates that Sallust takes a somewhat different approach to historiography. Yet his innovations in historiography appear limited almost exclusively to his subject and the length of his account. In other matters Sallust remains essentially traditional. Unlike Caesar, Sallust presents the reader with a formal preface indicating the context out of which he writes, his rationale for writing, and the authority of his narrative voice (*Cat.* 1-4). From the outset he places the entire account in the dichotomous context of man's moral decay and the benefit of an honorable life (1-2). In this context he then introduces himself as one newly recommitted to such an honorable path (3-4). Thus the authority of his narrative voice derives not only from his place as eyewitness but also as one bearing all the fervor of the newly converted and newly bereft of the bias and partisanship that threatens truth-telling (4).

Here we see again the inherent link—in the minds of Greco-Roman historians—between truth and bias, just as we first encountered it in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* (1.22.3). And once again this relationship challenges the modern reader because it is apparently understood without being fully defined by Greco-Roman authors. One could read the relationship as equivalence in that truth is defined in terms of impartiality. This view suggests the uncomfortable thought that truth was not thought of in opposition to fiction but to bias instead, giving rise to its inverse equation: that impartial fiction was equivalent to truth. Alternatively, the relationship between bias and truth could be one of consequence:

the presence of bias logically indicates a probable twisting of real facts to suit one's bias (such as one finds in Caesar's neat sidestepping of military defeats; see *Bello Gallico* 6.9-30). The claim of impartiality, then, offers the reader some guarantee against overt spin.

With this preface, Sallust places himself in the company of the traditional greats of history, particularly Thucydides.<sup>42</sup> And here Gempf is correct when he notes that this relationship is a deliberate choice on Sallust's part:<sup>43</sup> not only does Sallust evoke Thucydides in his prefatory remarks, but he also echoes Thucydides in his phrasing,<sup>44</sup> in his research methods, and in prioritizing faithfulness to his sources, although this last concerns methodology more than philosophy.<sup>45</sup> On the whole, Sallust uses these Thucydidean parallels to reassure his audience of the truth of his account and to evoke the authoritative voice of Thucydides for his own account.<sup>46</sup>

### **Methodology: Sallust**

Sallust himself gives little indication as to his own methodology. He simply conveys that, being at a point of life that disregards the potential influence of bias, he intends to communicate his narrative "*quam verisime potero*" (*Cat.* 4). The modern reader is left to consider external evidence before drawing any firm conclusions regarding how Sallust researched and put together his history.

The most significant clue is Cicero's own account of the Catiline conspiracy. Both Cicero (*Cat.* 3.5.12) and Sallust (*Cat.* 44.4-5) include a letter from Lentulus to Catiline, and while the wording often differs, the letters are point for point identical.<sup>47</sup> This is the extent

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42. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 160.

43. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, eds., *Graeco-Roman Setting* (The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 282-83.

44. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127.

45. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 158-59 See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127.

46. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 12-13, 263-64.

47. Given the stylistic approaches of both men, it comes as no surprise that Sallust's version of the letter is brief, even abrupt, while Cicero's flows smoothly with sophistication.

of the external evidence we find regarding Sallust's methodology. In it, though, Sallust demonstrates the same principles we have found elsewhere<sup>48</sup>: the essential message of the communiqué faithfully reflects the original (as we know it), but the wording reflects the rhetorical bent of the historian.

A single example by no means provides sufficient data to draw firm conclusions regarding Sallust's methodology. However, the faithfulness with which he reproduces the essential points of the letter does provide another point of contact in his rather consistent *mimesis* of Thucydides.<sup>49</sup> Together, these features build a strong argument that Sallust intentionally followed a thoroughly Thucydidean model of historiography, including in his methodology. If so, his very favorable reception in the centuries following his death may well have been well earned. Sallust was clever, well-educated, and thoroughly grounded in tradition. He would have hit every mark of good Greco-Roman history: his account is impartial, faithful to his sources, echoes with the authoritative voice of Thucydides, and was innovative in form, concept, and rhetoric.

### **Rhetoric: Sallust**

Sallust's rhetoric is yet another blend of the innovative and traditional. His phrasing and vocabulary is often archaic, in an age when archaism had not yet become popular (Gellius, *Attic Nights* 10.26). Combined with his concern for moral leadership, this archaism evoked a strong sense of traditionalism in his work. Yet because no one else wrote like Sallust, he was simultaneously traditional and innovative. He was unique among his contemporaries, and perhaps because of this felt individuality, he leaned heavily on his Thucydidean roots to establish himself as a true child of the great Roman historical heritage.<sup>50</sup>

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48. For example, Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* 1.22.1 and Lucian of Samosata's *How to Write History* 58. Although these actually reference speech, letters were seen as an extension of speech (see Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], 33–34. The added benefit of letters, of course, for the historian is their use as primary sources.

## Arrangement: Sallust

Sallust follows a fairly traditional arrangement in his *Conspiracy of Catiline*. He begins with a preface, eases into the historical context of his subject, proceeds chronologically, and diverts onto brief tangents that highlight his concerns and interpretation of events (see, e.g., *Cat.* 25, 36-37, 55). Many of these tangents comprise character analyses, which Sallust uses as a secondary strategy of arrangement. In this, Sallust follows a rather segmented approach like Thucydides, except that where Thucydides orders events by region within his chronology, Sallust orders events by character analysis (again, within his chronology).

While short, the preface still qualifies as a formal preface if one measures by Lucian's standard (*Hist. Conscr.* 53-55). Its length is in keeping with the brevity of the work overall, and in it Sallust describes his reasons for writing on the subject and why he is convinced the subject is worth the attention of his audience (*Catiline* 4). Further, he provides the historical context of the conspiracy (5-10) as well as appropriate cues to indicate to his audience how he intends to proceed in his account (4).<sup>51</sup>

What is unusual about the preface, though, is Sallust's defense of himself and his *ethos*, not only as narrator but as interpreter of events (1-4). He explores his own character even before presenting his rationale for writing, as if concerned that some element of his character might disqualify him as a moral guide through the lessons of history, much less as an authoritative interpreter of events.<sup>52</sup> He may have had good reason for this concern: his youth was apparently spent enjoying the very lifestyle he decries in the *Conspiracy*, in a culture and time in which one's character was believed to be set nearly from birth and did not change in

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49. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127.

50. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 236 See also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127.

51. See Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 160.

52. Luce, "Ancient Views," 299.

the eyes of the public.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps his misspent youth explains why Sallust takes such pains to establish his own, freshly minted good character, his impartiality, and secures the goodwill of his audience.

Sallust's concern with character does not stop with himself. Particularly among Roman historians, Sallust breaks ground in the depth of his character analysis and in the careful connections he draws between character and action (see, e.g., *Cat.* 5, 14, 18-19). For Sallust, the character of a man drove his actions, and to understand the action one must look to the character. Thus his analysis of Catiline's character (5, 14) is balanced later by his descriptions of Caesar and Cato (54): while Catiline plays the villain and Sallust's primary negative example, Caesar and Cato are the heroes of the old virtues. In the same way, whereas Catiline's vices propel the story forward through the conspiracy, the virtues of Caesar and Cato triumph and bring about the resolution of the story and a triumph of moral virtue for Rome (55-61).

Style: Sallust

Sallust's archaic style was and continues to be perhaps the most striking feature of his history for both modern and ancient readers. This is clearly not a coincidental achievement on Sallust's part; Quintilian notes that his works bear clear evidence that Sallust worked and re-worked his texts until they met with his satisfaction (*Inst. Orat.* 10.3.7-8). Again, he consciously echoes Thucydides in his phrasing. Such archaizing language functions to further the reader's impression of history written fully in the spirit of the best historiography.<sup>54</sup> Sallust's deliberate use of extinct words and phrases also further supports his carefully crafted impression of a history well-seated in ancient tradition (thus bolstering the authority of his narrative voice).

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53. Bruce J. Malina, "Understanding New Testament Persons," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 53.

54. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127 Again, see also Gempf, "Public Speaking," 282-83,

In keeping with Sallust's famously terse style, he includes relatively little in the way of direct speech (see *Cat.* 33-34 for a brief exception). When Sallust does insert speech into the *Conspiracy*, he does so in major, formal speeches (*Cat.* 20, 51-52, 58). Craig Keener notes that oddly, of the formal speeches in the *Conspiracy*, Sallust gives more space to speeches from the opposition than he does to his heroes, Caesar and Cato.<sup>55</sup>

Sallust's love for brevity and obscurity sometimes brought him mixed results, though. Asinius Pollio criticizes Sallust for misusing words to achieve the feel of antiquity: he complains, for example, that Sallust uses *transgressus* to refer to crossing the sea, while *tranfretatio* is the correct term (Gellius, *Attic Nights* 10.26). Aulus Gellius (who records Pollio's criticism) immediately rises to Sallust's defense, however, pointing to related words that support an extended semantic range for Sallust's *transgressus*. And even Quintilian warns his students not to imitate him in the courtroom, since the obscurity that pleases readers and scholars is only confusing and distracting to a judge looking for clarity, truth, and plausibility (*Institutes* 4.44-45; 10.1.32). Yet Quintilian's criticism is couched in praise for suiting his style to his form and subject, and Pollio's criticism is only recorded in the context of Gellius' defense of Sallust.

Clearly, even a century after its publication, Sallust's histories were influencing new generations of would-be historians and orators. Yet Quintilian counted none of them peers of the original, noting that those who sought to imitate Sallust mimicked his brevity and abruptness—and even his famous obscurity—without quite achieving Sallust's flair with words or duplicating the power of his writing (*Inst. Orat.* 10.2.17). Though many attempted to imitate him, none have managed to surpass—or even equal—Sallust in writing in his infamously idiosyncratic style.

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55. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 290–91.

## Tacitus

Toward the end of the first century CE, Tacitus would take the historical monograph a step further by mixing genres in his *Agricola*. As a young man he married Julia Agricola and grew to admire his father-in-law profoundly. During Domitian's reign, Gnaeus Julius Agricola led Rome's invasion and expansion into Britain. Tacitus recounts Agricola's role in the conquest, praising his hero's character and virtues while using the general and even the native Britons as a foil to highlight the greed of Roman bureaucracy. In this, Tacitus shares Sallust's dismay in Rome's moral decay, but possibly not his understated hope in the redeeming value of a few good leaders of high character. For Tacitus, there is no Caesar or Cato to bring justice to greed and violence. There remains only the challenge of living an honorable life without submitting to a despotic government in servility.

### Assessing the Genre: Tacitus

In keeping with other examples of Greco-Roman contemporary history, Tacitus' *Agricola* is a historical narrative arranged chronologically. As with Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline*, Tacitus primarily maintains an external objective focalization, though occasionally his narrative voice slips into an internal subjective perspective. In this slip from impersonal to personal, Tacitus at times uses a first person plural as though he is voicing the thoughts and shared opinions of a sympathetic (or perhaps ideal) Roman audience (e.g., *Agricola* 2, 3). Otherwise, he speaks in his own voice, commenting on his research process or offering a personal interpretation (*Agricola* 1, 3, 12).

Also in keeping with Sallust's example of historical monograph, the *Agricola* proper covers a discrete span of just a few years (roughly 77/78-83/84 CE), and tells the tale in only one short volume. But where Sallust writes a historical monograph covering only a few critical years of Catiline's life, Tacitus presents us with an abbreviated biography of Agricola's life and death. Both the beginning and end of the *Agricola* identify it as *bios*, since Tacitus relates Agricola's birth as well as his death, but because the real events of the

narrative occur within Tacitus' lifetime,<sup>56</sup> the history may be cross-classified as contemporary history as well. The honorable character of his family at his birth parallels Agricola's honorable death, creating a complete cycle of virtue that Tacitus celebrates and mourns in the funeral eulogy that concludes the narrative.

And while the *Agricola* is a biography, Tacitus manages to nestle bits of other genres in the account as well. Thus the *Agricola* focuses on his father-in-law's life, but Tacitus also includes brief cultural asides (e.g., 10-11), histories of Agricola's campaigns, and a short epideictic section summarizing the general's life and praising his character (44-46). But as Marincola notes,

although biography and history are present, the two genres are not amalgamated nor does the work ever abandon its biographical form—even the annual campaigns are mined for what they reveal about Agricola's character. But biography and history do confront each other in the work, in the conflict engendered by autocratic government and the matrix of relationships that developed from it.<sup>57</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not have evidence of the near reception history of the *Agricola*. The text was lost and not rediscovered until the 14th century. Copies of the codex that were made in the 15th century ensured the account's survival to the modern era. However, since the Renaissance Tacitus has been read widely<sup>58</sup> and praised as the greatest of Rome's historians, particularly for his analyses of political theory and the role of morality in politics.<sup>59</sup>

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56. Of course, Tacitus does describe the circumstances of his father-in-law's birth and his family, but these events serve more as context for Agricola's adult life and military service than they do as events significant to the body of the narrative itself.

57. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 320.

58. Clarence W. Mendell, *Tacitus: The Man and Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957).

59. Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus' Annals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.



## Philosophy of History: Tacitus

While Sallust breathed new life into the genre with his introduction of the historian's monologue and broke rhetorical ground with his unique combination of brevity and obscurity, Tacitus may yet prove the most "experimental" of the Roman historians in terms of his willingness to play with genre.<sup>60</sup> This is particularly true, Momigliano observes, of his shorter works. The *Germania*, he says, is an "ethnography with a political message;" the *De Oratoribus* "combines an attempt to describe the subjective reactions of various persons to the political regime under which they live with an attempt to clarify the causes of the decline of eloquence;" and "the *Agricola* is biography with an ethnographic-historical background: the combination cannot have been common."<sup>61</sup>

Outside of *De Oratoribus*, which itself addresses the intersection of rhetoric with historical context, each of these works is historically focused, narratively driven, and incorporates subgenres that hold long-standing places in the Greco-Roman tradition of history. Topographic and ethnographic asides in particular were early incorporated into the much longer world histories of Herodotus (e.g., *Hist.* 2) and Thucydides (*Hist.* 2.95-101), and later historians would follow their example (e.g., Caesar, *Bello Gallico* 6.11-28).<sup>62</sup>

Yet only Tacitus weaves all of these together toward a single end: a constant exploration of what it means to be free versus the struggle to live honorably and achieve excellence under tyranny. Tacitus' themes communicate a more complex concept of historiography and its purpose. Without doubt Tacitus concurs that *historia est magistra vitae*, but his concept of the usefulness of history is heavily weighted toward not just Sallust's

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60. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 113.

61. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 113-14.

62. Kostas Vlassopoulos, "The Stories of the Others: Storytelling and Intercultural Communication in the Herodotean Mediterranean," in *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* (eds. Eran Almagor and Joseph Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 49-50. See also Jacek Rzepka, "Monstrous Aetolians and Aetolian Monsters—a Politics of Ethnography?" in *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* (eds. Eran Almagor and Joseph Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 117-18 and Emma Dench, "The Scope of Ancient Ethnography," in *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* (eds. Eran Almagor and Joseph Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 261.

morality but toward learning how to live an honorable life, regardless of context or politics. In this sense, history is a teacher only insofar as it successfully becomes a witness, “preserving and transmitting memory” so that the lessons of the past are never forgotten.<sup>63</sup> The historian is both *magister* and philosopher, leading the audience toward that witness and then offering the interpretation and analysis that makes sense of the past and moves the audience toward a specific future.<sup>64</sup>

To this end it is even more important that Tacitus establish his authoritative voice as historian: his audience must not only believe that he communicates events faithfully but must also be persuaded to follow his leading in their moral code.<sup>65</sup> In order to establish authority, a historian may imitate the narrative voice of an ancient historian already considered an authority, as Sallust does Thucydides. Alternatively, one may decry the account, style, or method of a competing historian in order to bolster one’s own reputation, as Polybius does to Timaeus. This level of polemic is less common within the Roman side of the Hellenistic tradition, and particularly among the contemporary historians, who tend to establish authority via “linking their works to illustrious predecessors, as a way of portraying themselves as heir to the tradition of Roman historiography.”<sup>66</sup> The overtly moral tone of Tacitus’ history strongly suggests deliberate *mimesis* of Sallust, though Tacitus’ deep pessimism far outstrips the small ray of hope Sallust extends for the future.<sup>67</sup>

Dylan Sailor lists several other strategies historians used to substantiate their authority, including that of authenticity, which he notes “implies autonomy: you say what you think and you write your own material because you are not subject to, or do not acknowledge, the power that would cause you to reproduce its account.”<sup>68</sup> In other words,

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63. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 25.

64. Sailor, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus*, 119.

65. Sailor, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus*, 36.

66. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 236.

67. Woodman, *Tacitus Reviewed*, 22. See also Woodman, *Tacitus Reviewed*, 22 Tacitus’ divergences from Sallust may be explained by his tendency to experiment and innovate ways to more deeply integrate his subject, theme, and the form of the genre.

establishing that neither love, hate, nor fear compel the historian in writing his account bolsters the authority of his narrative voice. This is simply another way of addressing the complex dynamic of truth and bias in Greco-Roman historiography, and one that correctly, I believe, grasps the consequential nature of this relationship. Bias is not truth's opposite but its greatest threat, and establishing one's impartiality does not guarantee the truth but permits its presence.

And we find this strategic path toward authority most clearly in Tacitus' famous claim to impartiality at the outset of his *Annales* (1.1). But in the *Agricola*, Tacitus fails to provide us with such a conveniently explicit statement. Instead, he praises the examples of historians in antiquity who wrote without bias of events and people still living at the time of writing (*Agricola* 1). Drawing attention to *Agricola*'s death serves to implicitly claim impartiality, since no favor could be gained from the dead. This is admittedly terrifically implicit. Tacitus' approach in his other works (*Ann.* 1.1; *Hist.* 1.1, 2.101) is consistent, however, which adds some legitimacy to this interpretation of his statement in the *Agricola*.

And yet a close reading of Tacitus' work suggests that he does not live up to his claims of impartiality.<sup>69</sup> Although writing about those already dead should, according to Tacitus' rhetoric, ensure a lack of bias (reflecting a common mortuary aphorism, *de mortuis nihil nisi bonum*),<sup>70</sup> there is nonetheless evidence of definite bias in his accounts, particularly against Tiberius (e.g., *Ann.* 4.59, 62, 68).<sup>71</sup> Tacitus' antipathy toward Tiberius is particularly striking, since his claim to write *sine ira et studio* is strategically placed directly before the account (*Ann.* 1.1.3). T. J. Luce offers an explanation for this apparent contradiction in the pattern he sees regarding what Hellenists considered acceptable bias. Tacitus writes as a patriotic Roman—like Sallust—who champions the old virtues, including freedom and an honorable

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68. Sailor, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus*, 42.

69. Luce, "Ancient Views," 292.

70. Luce, "Ancient Views," 294.

71. Luce, "Ancient Views," 310.

life. And he writes to an audience sympathetic to these ideals. They share his biases, and thus “when Tacitus declares that he will write of Tiberius and his successors *sine ira et studio*,” says Luce, “he can be taken to speak with full conviction; his declaration conforms wholly to the view on the causes of bias that the men of his time accepted.”<sup>72</sup> When writing to a sympathetic audience, biases shared by the in-group do not seem to count in a claim to impartiality. The greater concern seems to be personal bias as a result of fear or favor.

Tacitus’ biases in *Agricola* appear to be located primarily in two camps. First, he is predisposed toward his father-in-law, finding in *Agricola* the model of honorable living needed in a time of tyranny. Second, he is biased against that tyranny, which is best represented by its head, Domitian (*Agricola* 42-43).<sup>73</sup> The first bias is family, and the second contradicts the virtues most sacred to him, so it would seem that again, Luce’s pattern of partiality would excuse Tacitus’ bias. It is curious, however, that while Tacitus’ partiality toward his father-in-law is expressed in the arrangement of the account, in the styles of rhetoric employed, and of course in its subject, he expresses his bias against Domitian primarily in his interpretation of events and his mention of unsavory and unsubstantiated rumors about the emperor (which Tacitus freely admits are uncertain) (see particularly *Agricola* 42-43). This sense of transparency may be what has gained him the praise of so many modern historians: while he is by no means perfectly objective, his open admissions of uncertainty (*Hist.* 11.42.1; *Ann.* 1.5.3) suggest that he values faithfulness to the sources and events over a reputation for omniscience.

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72. Luce, “Ancient Views,” 310.

73. It is to some extent ridiculous to speak of bias against tyranny, since even the most objective account of a tyrant’s reign demonstrates the injustice and oppression of the state, but Tacitus’ negative emotional response to Domitian is clearly evident and influential in his historiography. It is the emotion present in his historical assessment of events and Tacitus’ willingness to record unsubstantiated reports that indicates the degree to which Tacitus’ normally even-handed judgment is impacted by his hatred of Domitian. To that extent, Tacitus’ response to tyranny functions in much the same way as bias, particularly as described by Luce, “Ancient Views”.

## Methodology: Tacitus

This freely admitted uncertainty suggests not only a level of transparent honesty in Tacitus' presentation but also implies a research-based methodology behind the finished product. He remains at a distance from the events personally,<sup>74</sup> much as he claims for the *Ann.* (1.1), but offers possibilities for motivations, interpretations, or even for events occurring behind the scenes while noting that he has been unable to confirm these as fact. Marincola finds this intersection of transparency and uncertainty a reflection of Tacitus' historical context:

One can see that this entire approach is the reaction of history to a society where truth was concealed or unknown: in this way Tacitus' approach, in which uncertainty abounds, and in which truth itself is ambiguous or twisted, mirrors perfectly the closed society it narrates.<sup>75</sup>

But as Marincola points out, sometimes the whole truth is an elusive thing for Tacitus. And contrary to the impression Tacitus' transparency gives, Momigliano points out that Tacitus in his *Annals* makes no overt claims of methodology or prioritization of sources. Instead, Tacitus failed to access even the most basic sources, such as the *acta senatus*.<sup>76</sup> This failure, however, is particular to Tacitus' accounts of the past; in his histories of contemporary events (such as the *Agricola*) he relied on observation and eyewitnesses, in keeping with the conventions established by Thucydides and Polybius.<sup>77</sup> And by making the standard Greco-Roman claim to write *sine ira et studio* (*Hist.* 1.1), he does imply his commitment to the first two laws of historiography: truth and impartiality. When compared

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74. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 22.

75. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 95.

76. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 110–11.

77. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 44.

to accounts written by other ancient historians, Tacitus proves faithful to the events insofar as his research revealed them, and consistently writes with an impartiality (or lack thereof) acceptable to his peers and appropriate to the conventions of the genre.<sup>78</sup>

But Greco-Roman history includes both events and speeches. And it is Tacitus' speeches that have received renewed attention, particularly regarding their implications on his methodology and source theory. Rhetorical conventions encouraged historians to compose the speeches themselves according to their perceptions of the speaker's character and situation (Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 58). Yet because of the limitations of pre-modern societies, neither the author nor the modern readers have access to the original content of the speeches. In fact, for the most part we do not have multiple versions of any given speech that we could use to compare with any particular historian's account of it. The Claudian speech is, however, a notable exception (*Ann.* 11.24).<sup>79</sup> Not only do we have another account of the speech, but the Lyon Tablet provides its official transcription. Comparison of Tacitus' version to the Lyon Tablet reveals telling differences between the accounts as well as suggestive parallels.

Comparison of the two accounts proves that the details of the arguments put forth by Claudius according to the Lyon Tablet are not the same as those recorded in Tacitus' account. They do, however, make essentially the same points: that at one time even those now well-respected due to their long history of inclusion in the *cursus honorum* in the Empire were once new to inclusion in the offices, and Rome has only benefitted from their addition. Claudius names Gaulic individuals known to his Gaulic audience; Tacitus names peoples known to his Roman audience. Both the Lyon Tablet and Tacitus note that while Gaul's long history includes its war with Caesar, the century of peace following that war should be taken

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78. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 112–13.

79. See also previous discussion of Tacitus' account of this speech by Claudius in chapter 2, Source Theory: Process and Methods.

as indicative of their full assimilation into Roman culture and values, and thus prove that they deserve full assimilation into Roman politics as well.<sup>80</sup>

For those who primarily see the differences between the speeches, this is evidence of Tacitus' poor methodology. For example, Frank Walbank opines that these differences reflect Tacitus' failure to remain faithful to the speech event as it actually occurred. Instead, Tacitus freely composed the speech for insertion into his narrative.<sup>81</sup> At best, Woodman claims that Tacitus has "misrepresented" Claudius;<sup>82</sup> at worst, Kraus and Woodman conclude that "Tacitus has recast the words and arguments of the decree to make an entirely different (and almost opposite) point."<sup>83</sup> Considering that both the Lyon Tablet and Tacitus' account argue for the inclusion of Gauls in the full *cursus honorum*, it is difficult to see how Kraus and Woodman make this last argument.

Other modern historians view the differences within the context of similarities between speeches, though. To this end, Padilla considers Tacitus' version as one written using his own words but essentially remaining "a faithful summary of what the emperor actually said."<sup>84</sup> Both Gempf and Marincola concur with Padilla, observing that Tacitus' version retains the general import of Claudius' speech yet is worded as the historian prefers, based on his perception of the situation and audience as well as on his own rhetorical ability.<sup>85</sup> Even more interesting, Gempf finds in Tacitus' account distinct traces of Claudius' pedantry and general personality,<sup>86</sup> while Marincola attributes many of the differences to Tacitus' desire to present "a stylistically superior speech, [while keeping] the general point and even some of the arguments used in the inscription."<sup>87</sup>

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80. For a fuller discussion, see Ronald Syme, *The Provincial at Rome and Rome and the Balkans* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1999), 98–113.

81. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 261.

82. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 13–14.

83. C.S. Kraus and A.J. Woodman, *Latin Historians* (Greece & Rome, New Surveys in the Classics; Oxford: Oxford University, 1997), 100.

84. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 137.

85. Gempf, "Public Speaking," 284.

86. Gempf, "Public Speaking," 284–85.

One important methodological implication of this unique situation is often overlooked. The irrefutable evidence of the speech's existence as a real event suggests that speeches were not inserted according to the historian's arbitrary choice but did actually reflect the fact that real speech events delivered by specific personalities did actually occur at the time and in the context indicated by the historian.<sup>88</sup> In addition, even the differences between accounts offer a real-life demonstration of the practice of source theory in Greco-Roman history. Cicero's "hard core" and the *exaedificatio* built upon it show up in high contrast in the Lyon Tablet and Tacitus' version of the speech. The hard core of the speech event and its essential import—and even the nature of the arguments involved—are carefully maintained in Tacitus' account, though the details of wording change dramatically.<sup>89</sup> This same practice may be seen in Pliny's expectation of Tacitus to provide the *exaedificatio* to the hard core which Pliny has provided."<sup>90</sup> But this edges into the gray space where methodology intersects with rhetoric.

### **Rhetoric: Tacitus**

Because historians were as much interpreters as reporters of the past, Greco-Roman history by nature required strategies of persuasion to accomplish the historian's goal. Selection, arrangement, and style are just a few of the large-scale tools used toward this end. And this is, of course, one of the complaints of modern historians: that ancient historical narratives "are indeed rhetorical in the sense that they manipulate factual truths for dramatic purposes."<sup>91</sup> And thus every choice of event, perspective, phrasing, arrangement,

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87. John Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World.; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 129.

88. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 137.

89. For a discussion of the hard core versus the *exaedificatio*, see Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

90. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 90.

91. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 199.



and style becomes a conscious choice by the historian, leading his audience toward one specific interpretation of events.

#### Arrangement: Tacitus

The large-scale arrangement of the *Agricola* is surprisingly straightforward. Tacitus opens with a formal preface (1-3), continues with a brief section establishing the context for Agricola's life (4-9), then focuses primarily on his governorship of Britain (10-39) before relating his quiet retirement (40-41) and death (42-43). Tacitus closes with an epideictic section framing Agricola's life and death in terms of the struggle for virtue and honor in the face of tyranny (44-45).

Tacitus' preface would have received Lucian's approbation (*Hist. Conscr.* 53). It is brief (1-3), in keeping with the length of the work overall, and Tacitus quickly claims the attention of his audience by placing his work in the context of the struggle of virtue against tyranny, a struggle all the more pertinent given the overwhelming evil Tacitus attributes to the era in which Agricola lived (1). Further, placing morality and virtue front and center from the outset indicates to the audience the direction of Tacitus' interpretation of events. The final two sections of the preface provide the particular historical and moral context of Agricola's life and frame his rise through the *cursus honorum* in terms of the increasing slavery of all Romans under despotic rule (2-3; cf. 30).

Following the preface, Tacitus moves quickly into Agricola's political and military life, only briefly describing his life up to his appointment as governor of Britain (4-9). It is a lopsided biography, carefully arranged to meet Tacitus' Sallustian moral agenda. And like Sallust, Tacitus sets action in the context of character. Tacitus creates an ironic contrast between the virtuous yet politically bound Agricola (7-8) and the free yet doomed Britons (13, 15, 30), and the actions of each, though historically pitted against one another, in a very real sense enact the struggle of the free and honorable Roman citizen against the corrupt

imperium. The pathos of the doomed Britons foreshadows Agricola's quiet retirement and death under the looming shadow of imperial corruption and envy (40-42).

Having reached the focus of his narrative, Tacitus builds the entire account up to one climactic day: Agricola's decisive victory over the Britons. Of particular interest is Tacitus' use of direct speech in this climax. Having avoided direct speech almost entirely,<sup>92</sup> Tacitus now gives as much space to the speeches given as to the actions taken on that day. In this, Tacitus follows the general trend we have seen, particularly in Sallust, toward less direct speech in the narrative, the exception being formal speeches.<sup>93</sup> In another nod to Sallust, the speech of the opposition (30-32) is noticeably longer than that of Agricola himself (33-34). And in keeping with speeches in his *Histories*, Tacitus uses morality as a strategic argument in a way that suggests "the moral issue as something that is (or should be) independently effective" and particularly distinct from arguments of advantage.<sup>94</sup> Morality (or virtue) is its own end for Tacitus: in the *Agricola*, freedom (for the Britons) and courage (for the Romans) are sufficient motivation in themselves and require no other advantage to tip the scales of action on their behalf.

It comes as no surprise, then, that virtue prefaces and concludes the *Agricola*, highlighting again Tacitus' ongoing struggle to live honorably and achieve excellence under tyranny. The core virtues of courage, honor, freedom, and glory (or their opposites) take center stage at each transition of Tacitus' account. They are the catalyst for action, the linchpin for narrative flow, and the interpretive framework for understanding past events.<sup>95</sup> Unlike Caesar or Xenophon, Tacitus is not concerned with national patriotism or the glory of Rome. Instead, his heroes achieve honor and maintain personal integrity in spite of the

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92. A possible exception being a representative list of complaints that catalyzed the rebellion led by Boadicea (15-16).

93. Pervo, "Direct Speech," 291-92.

94. D. S. Levene, "Tacitus' *Histories* and the Theory of Deliberative Oratory," in *The Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts* (ed. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus; Boston: Brill, 1999), 207.

95. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 315.

tarnished glory and twisted cruelty of Rome's despots. Tacitus reinvents triumph, moving it out of the political sphere and into the personal sphere of family, personal honor, and *virtus*.

In turn, these become the primary motivators for Tacitus himself as historian: "The historian is witness of the *virtus* of Agricola and it is his own *pietas* that is the most intimate justification for the work he has undertaken."<sup>96</sup> Character once again drives action, but now within the historian, not the history. The arrangement of the *Agricola* in fact suggests an endless cycle, begun in the historian, repeated in the history, and given as a cautionary tale to the audience: virtuous character begets virtuous action and virtuous life, which in turn should influence further virtuous character, yet all of it amounts to nothing without freedom.

Style: Tacitus

Stylistically, Tacitus does not exactly meet Cicero's requirements for history (*Orator* 37-38). Instead of the fluid, balanced, and rounded periods characteristic of encomiastic rhetoric, Tacitus prefers a much more Sallustian style with its brevity and criticism of Rome's leadership.<sup>97</sup> Following the example of other contemporary historians, Tacitus feels no need to establish his authoritative voice via polemic against other historians (as Polybius did against Timaeus; see *Hist.* 12) or even via overt praise. His *mimesis* of Sallust is enough to situate him as a legitimate heir, carrying on the tradition of the disenchanted yet trustworthy historian.<sup>98</sup>

But Tacitus is not content to simply replicate Sallust. His context is different and, in his mind, darker than were the last days of the Republic, and his more pessimistic style reflects this conviction. Ernst Breisach notes that Tacitus "often used conditional sentences and indirect questions while Sallust had still used, even more frequently, causal statements

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96. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 25.

97. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 168.

98. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 236.

and those indicating order in time. Between Sallust and Tacitus Romans seemed to have lost much confidence in their ability to explain events.”<sup>99</sup> Tacitus is in fact a fascinating study of the impact of social change on literary style, and while Sallust may have provided the original exemplar for Tacitus’ history, there can be no doubt that Tacitus’ context—and his response to it—forced Tacitus to innovate in remarkable and perhaps unconscious ways from the original.<sup>100</sup> Emerging from the dark days of Domitian, Tacitus has developed a voice uniquely his own, and “when we read Tacitus,” notes Momigliano, “we immediately feel that he gives us something different from the other historians. His analysis of human behaviour is deeper, his attention to the social traditions, to the precise circumstances, is far more vigorous. He conveys his interpretation by a subtle and accurate choice of details which are expressed in an entirely personal language. The picture which sticks in our mind is his own.”<sup>101</sup> And that is the goal of Greco-Roman history, after all: to recreate in the audience the historian’s own interpretation of the past.

### Josephus

Josephus is a historian unlike any other contemporary historian surveyed thus far. Like Polybius, he is a member of a subjugated people addressing the victorious Roman Empire, but unlike Polybius, his obsession is not understanding the rise of Rome but rather explaining and defending his people despite their doomed rebellion against Rome. Having embraced Hellenism as an adult, he nonetheless still evidences the loyalties and education of the patriotic and conservative Jewish Pharisee he was before the revolt. He is notorious for his biases yet consistently proved accurate in many details, including military tactics, geography, and people. Both disparaged and praised, Josephus is never simply dismissed.

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99. Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), 69.

100. These differences in fact convince Woodman that modern historians cannot find in Sallust Tacitus’ “main model.” I would argue that the constant dynamic of innovation and tradition make that literary influence possible while also accounting for the differences. See Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 167.

101. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 116.

## Assessing the Genre: Josephus

While the *Jewish War* is not wholly contemporary history, beginning as it does with Antiochus Epiphanes (164 BCE), the majority of the seven-volume work focuses on the altercations and eventual Roman victory of the first century (70 CE), much of which Josephus experienced personally. Following a highly conventional structure, Josephus begins his account with a description of the historical and political context that sets the stage for his analysis of the origins and catalysts of the Jewish rebellion (*War* 1.19). And while he states from the outset that the conclusion of the tale is Titus' triumph (1.29), for Josephus the real conclusion is the final defeat of the Sicarii movement, which Josephus holds responsible for the rebellion and its devastation of his people (7.437-453).

Apart from a few asides focusing on the culture and practices of Palestinian Jews in the first century, Josephus presents the *Jewish War* as a chronological narrative written with a primarily external objective focalization, even when he relates events in which he was a key participant. Maintaining this third person narrative voice even when speaking of himself places the account squarely in the middle of the Greco-Roman tradition of historiography. Following Sallust and Tacitus, however, Josephus uses the first person to draw attention to his voice as historian and interpreter (e.g., 5.3), or as a sympathetic representative of the Jewish nation (e.g., 5.20).

Marincola attributes this distinction to Josephus' deeply-felt distance from his Roman audience.<sup>102</sup> However, Josephus' use of the first person is rather more complex than this, as may be seen in his third-person treatment of the Jewish military forces. Caesar's example in his *Bello Civilis* may offer a better explanation. Caesar frequently refers to Rome and her military in the first person plural, but when he describes battles involving opposing Roman forces, only those allied with Caesar receive the *nostri* pronoun (e.g., 1.18.2; 22.1; 40.6).<sup>103</sup>

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102. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 288.

103. See also Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 287.

Caesar's example suggests that the choice of pronoun indicates the distance felt by the historian relative his subject. In other words, when discussing Jews as an ethnic or cultural entity, Josephus continues to identify himself as Jewish and thus claims them as his in-group. Yet because of his *de facto* defection from the rebellion, he must use the distancing third person to refer to Jewish troops: he may no longer claim membership in that social group.<sup>104</sup> Thus Josephus does use the first person to indicate social proximity, but his focus is on his identity relative to the Jewish people and not so much on his distance from his Roman audience.

Overall, early reception of Josephus' *Jewish War* was exceptionally positive. Church fathers such as Theophilus of Antioch (*Against Autolycus* 3), and Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.5.6, 2.6.4<sup>105</sup>) reference the work positively, and the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry knew and praised it in the third century (*De Abstinencia* 4.11).<sup>106</sup> Since the Middle Ages, Josephus has become the primary source for our modern understanding of the Jewish-Roman war of the first century.

### Philosophy of History: Josephus

Because the *Jewish War* begins nearly a century before Josephus' life, the work crosses the generic divide between non-contemporary and contemporary history. This makes assessing Josephus' philosophy of contemporary history particularly difficult. In fact, one could argue that assuming a different philosophy for the two types of history is speculative at best. For this reason, we will assess Josephus' own general statements about

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104. As for Josephus' use of the first person to indicate distance from or identification with social groups, the *Wars* do not follow Caesar's *commentarii* style, nor do they show evidence that Josephus was influenced by Caesar's innovations in contemporary historiography.

105. Eusebius references Josephus rather frequently in the *Historia Ecclesia*. See 3.11–13, 149.20–151.4, 151.11–13, 176.3–6, 187.5–10, 188.9–19, 198.8–12, 203.1–9, 204.3–13, 212.11–14, 239.4–6, 492.16–494.18, 504.11–505.15, 511.16–21, 538.6–541.2, 551.1–553.13, 554.14–15, and 566.26–567.6. 234. See the *Demonstratio Evangelica*; p. 187.5–8 and 552.11–14.

106. For a list of ancient authors who reference *The Jewish War*, see Benedict Niese, *The Works of Flavius Josephus: Prefatory Material*, Vol. 6 (David C. Noe and Laura A. Marshall; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2008, Original Latin published in Berlin by Weidmanns, 1887.), 57–60.

historiography while focusing, where possible, on any evidence remaining in the text that is clearly and specifically focused on contemporary history.

For example, in his defense of Judaism in general and of his histories in particular, Josephus makes some very specific claims regarding the contemporary sections of the *Jewish War* (*Against Apion* 1.56). First, he defends the historicity of his account on the grounds that he himself was an eyewitness to the events. Josephus clearly considers his role as eyewitness a primary factor in the legitimacy and faithfulness of his work, indicating his assumption of at least this much of the Greco-Roman model of historiography.<sup>107</sup>

His use of ἀκρίβεια in the preface of the *Jewish War* (1.9) also supports this implicit claim to write according to the Greco-Roman tradition, echoing as it does Thucydides' programmatic language in his own preface (*War* 1.22.2-3). And Josephus further demonstrates his assumption of Greco-Roman conventions when he frames his mourning for his devastated people in terms of "a *captatio benevolentiae* in which Josephus manages to express himself with full emotion, while at the same time indicating his knowledge of the genre's conventions" (see 1.9-12 and 5.18-20).<sup>108</sup>

Finally, Josephus demonstrates the same complex dynamic between truth and bias in his works that we find in other Greco-Roman historians. For example, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, he is clearly at a loss as to why bias would be an issue at all when the personalities involved are dead (20.154-155).<sup>109</sup> In the same way, in his preface to the *Jewish War*, Josephus defends himself against possible charges of bias toward the Jews by claiming his eyewitness status and appealing to the historical virtue of ἀκρίβεια (1.6-9). In other words, Josephus demonstrates a strong conviction that eyewitness testimony and impartiality are essential to achieving a historical faithful account.

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107. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 79.

108. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 168.

109. Luce, "Ancient Views," 304.

This perspective is in keeping with the theory put forward earlier that impartiality and truth are not equivalent in the mind of the Hellenist historian but are rather related consequentially: that is, that bias is the greatest enemy of truth in history and thus a claim to impartiality consequentially implies that the account is historically fair and faithful insofar as the historian's ability and sources allow. In fact, in his *Life*, Josephus combines again these essential ingredients of eyewitness testimony and bias, this time accusing Justus of biased treatment in his works while simultaneously defending the faithfulness of his own by pointing out that not only was he an eyewitness but he also published his *Jewish War* while participants were still alive and able to rebut his account (357-367). For Josephus, accusations of bias would find their own response in the reception of his history, particularly among those who experienced the historical events themselves.<sup>110</sup> Writing and publishing contemporary history was thus a double-edged sword, because only with contemporary history could the participants themselves either condemn the work or acquit it of all charges.<sup>111</sup> Thus while claims of impartiality do not guarantee truth, but they do invite the audience to give the work a fair hearing and judge it on its own merits, including its reception history.

While Josephus makes no claims to imitate any particular Greco-Roman historian, his language and assumptions demonstrate that he shares the same philosophy of history, at least in its general points, as do the other contemporary Greco-Roman historians of the first centuries BCE and CE. He values eyewitness testimony above any secondary source, he presents bias as the greatest threat to legitimate, faithful history-writing, and he assumes that these qualities are particular to contemporary history.

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110. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 306 See also Momigliano, *Essays*, 163.

111. Non-contemporary historiography could be proved wrong, of course, if other reliable accounts bear witness to an alternate, more faithful report of events. In this case, bias regarding past events could certainly have motivated such a false account.



## Methodology: Josephus

While Josephus' claims regarding his philosophy of history suggest a Thucydidean methodology in which the historian searches for and prioritizes eyewitness sources, Josephus only actually claims himself as an eyewitness (e.g., *Against Apion* 1.55). While the historian's testimony is privileged in the Greco-Roman tradition, the absence of any claim to have consulted other eyewitnesses is unusual in contemporary historians who emphasize the role of eyewitness testimony in their work (e.g., Polybius *Histories* 1.15.9; 12.25e-25h).

Further, once Josephus enters his own stage, he becomes the main character in his theater (2.568). On the one hand, Josephus' role in the military theater in Galilee validates his claim to be an authentic and knowledgeable eyewitness. On the other hand, Josephus always presents himself in a sympathetic light, even becoming a heroic character in the Roman army and recounting how he miraculously earned Vespasian's favor (3.399-408). This level of personal interest is reminiscent of Caesar's *Gallic War*: even otherwise unsavory actions receive the best possible spin, and the reader realizes that where personal bias is so obvious there is no guarantee of whole, unfiltered truth in accounts involving the historian himself. Curiously enough, Josephus' claims to impartiality deal wholly with his attachment to his Jewish people; he actually makes no claims to avoid partiality on his own behalf, and perhaps that is where he is most honest.

Because many of the speeches in the *Jewish War* do not have convenient alternative sources (such as we observed earlier in the case of Claudius' speech at Lugdunum/Lyon), it is difficult to assess exactly how faithful Josephus remained to the original speech events. Although not part of his contemporary history, Josephus' treatment of Herod's speech to his army near Philadelphia may offer the best insights regarding his working concept of source theory. Josephus offers the event twice, once in his *Antiquities* (15.127-146) and once in the *War* (1.373-379).

The speeches are noticeably different from one another, yet—like Tacitus’ reworking of Claudius’ speech—echo with the same types of arguments toward fear of God, courage, and both national and personal honor. If Josephus actually had access to any record (eyewitness or otherwise) of the speech, the hard core of facts was clearly slim, yet he adhered to them, building an elaborate *exaedificatio* with each recounting of the event.<sup>112</sup> Josephus is clearly not imitating Polybius or Tacitus with their general tendency to decrease both the quantity and length of speeches. Instead, Josephus is intent on proving that he can meet the rhetorical standards and conventions of the day, while holding perhaps not as tightly as we would prefer to the essential historical facts of the event.

It is worth noting in this context that Josephus wrote the *War* years before he published his *Antiquities*. Thus his presentation of events in the final books of the *Antiquities* carries the advantage, as Witherington notes, “of a longer time to assess the matter” as well as advance knowledge of the outcome of the war and its effects on Judaism.<sup>113</sup> This gap also helps explain the distance Josephus develops between himself and Roman politics in the *Antiquities*. And as Josephus distances himself from Rome, he identifies once again with the Jewish people, becoming the Jewish historian familiar today. Josephus’ accounts of various political and religious entities, agendas, and movements in pre-revolutionary Palestine should be read with this phenomenon in mind: his later account of these in the *Antiquities* may well be more accurate, since Josephus had an opportunity to consider the events both more fully and outside the immediate influence of imperial patronage.<sup>114</sup>

### **Rhetoric: Josephus**

Josephus admits that he is by no means a native speaker of Greek but defends his

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112. Alternatively, the themes are so general and so obviously placed within the context of the historical events that one wonders if Josephus simply followed the established *topos* for the situation and, as Lucian describes, composed a speech fitted to both speaker and situation to the best of his (or his scribe’s) rhetorical ability (see *Conscr. Hist.* 53)

113. Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 82.

114. Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus*, 83–84.

command of the language by recounting the effort he has extended to master both Greek education and the Greek language (*Ag. Ap.* 1.50; *Antiquities* 20.263). The role of his teachers in producing Josephus' histories remains somewhat obscure, with opinions ranging from complete translation<sup>115</sup> to simply skill-based education, both in terms of language and rhetoric.<sup>116</sup> Josephus' own testimony suggests that he made use of Greek teachers simply to develop the linguistic and rhetorical skills needed to produce respectable historical narratives. In fact, his defense functions more rhetorically than practically.<sup>117</sup> And analyses of Josephus' Greek indicate that far from limping along, Josephus "had a perfect knowledge of Greek, both in the koine and Attic levels."<sup>118</sup> His self-deprecation disarms the audience, preparing them for a barbarian and instead proving himself one of the literary elite. Given that Josephus' purpose in writing the *Jewish War* was to defend his people, their character, and their culture, this bait-and-switch strategy would have served a strategic purpose, proving the ability of the Jewish people to function as equals with anyone, even the Roman elite.

#### Arrangement: Josephus

In terms of arrangement, Josephus follows Lucian's advice, providing us with a full formal preface that explains his choice of topic and his own qualifications as historian (1.1-30). Clearly Josephus does not expect a sympathetic audience: he gives more space in his preface to a defense of his work than to any claims of his methodology. Further, Josephus indulges far more in polemic (1.7-8, 13-16) than have any of the other first-century contemporary historians. He uses the contrast created by polemic to legitimate his claim as historian and as the most qualified interpreter of these events.

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115. Niese, *The Works of Flavius Josephus: Prefatory Material*, Vol. 6, 3.

116. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 26-33.

117. Jordi Redondo, "The Greek Literary Language of the Hebrew Historian Josephus," *Hermes* (2000): 424.

118. Redondo, "Josephus," 427.

Following this extended formal preface (1.1-30), Josephus moves directly into his account, beginning with the background history that explains (for him) the Jews' rebellion against Rome. From here, his account moves steadily toward Rome's victory, the action broken only by informative asides. These emphasize the nobility of the Jewish people and culture, glorify Rome as the deserving victors, or place the events within the context of Roman history and of events significant to the empire as a whole. For example, early in his account of the Roman response to the Jewish rebellion, Josephus devotes a significant section to the discipline of the Roman army (3.59-69), apparently with a view toward encouraging its conquered peoples: defeat at the hands of an impressive, nearly inhumanly disciplined machine is a less shameful defeat for a people to suffer.

In addition, before relating the final fall of Jerusalem, Josephus gives an extended description of Jerusalem (5.136-183) and of the Temple (5.184-247) in a clear bid to impress his readers and gain their sympathy for when he paints the final details of the tragedy and destruction. Josephus also provides details of Claudius' reign and its intersection with that of Agrippa and Herod (2.204-222), producing details of character that would explain Claudius' largesse toward Agrippa and the Herodian rulers' loyalty to the emperor. Finally, toward the end of the *War*, Josephus recontextualizes his account in the grand scheme of imperial history, this time praising his patron's family for the successful defeat of both the Germanic rebellion (7.75-88) and the Scythian uprising (7.81-95).

Again, there is no hint of impartiality here, and Josephus' own boasting of his clientage under the Flavian dynasty turns his claim of impartiality from the preface on its head (1.30). Only the most favorable interpretation is given any action by Vespasian and his sons, much as it is to Josephus' own actions. In fact, while undoubtedly Josephus' leadership of the revolt in Galilee was certainly part of the events leading up to the defeat of Jerusalem, it is doubtful that his role was as critical to the rebellion as the space which he devoted to it suggests: the final three chapters of Book 2 are wholly focused on Josephus, as are significant portions of the following book. One could argue that Josephus is simply establishing his role

as eyewitness and legitimate interpreter of events, but the heroic spin makes Josephus' own objectivity questionable (e.g., 4.624-629).

Josephus ends his account with a final story of the last rebels of Judea, the Sicarii (7.407-453). The conclusion of the rebellion is divine judgment on those who falsely accused Jews of rebellion in order to claim their wealth (7.443-453). Josephus' message is clear: God is still the Jewish God of justice, working on behalf of his people. In every aspect of his arrangement—preface, action, asides, and conclusion—Josephus is offering a defense of his people, using every strategy he can to decrease their shame and increase their honor and the sympathy of their conquerors toward them. His obvious adulation of the Flavian dynasty and his role as Jew-turned-Roman only further support his goal by making him a bridge between his people and his audience, a trustworthy interpreter whose choices let his audience identify with him as Roman so that they hear what he has to say. And in his final statements, Josephus reiterates his claim to truth and accuracy, putting one more argument before his audience in a last strategic move to persuade them of his *apologia*.

Style: Josephus

Due to Josephus' Jewish background and Greek education, the rhetorical style of his histories is an interesting *mélange* of cultures and literary influences. For example, he seems particularly fond of unusual words, particularly ones usually limited to poetic use. In addition, Josephus often uses figurative language, especially to create vivid verbal images and gnomisms. He is prone to transforming direct discourse into indirect discourse, reflecting perhaps a shared influence with 1 Maccabees, one of the most popular of the Second Temple historiographies.<sup>119</sup> In his speech compositions he frequently uses emotional language to bring force to the speech. Yet aside from these clear indications of rhetorical

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119. Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, 171.

effort, Henry Cadbury notes that Josephus is consistent in his use of stock tropes, particularly in speeches. This much may directly reflect Josephus' personal style.<sup>120</sup>

But these elements of style are all highly detailed stylistic features. As far as the larger issues of overall writing style, one cannot claim, for example, that Josephus writes using one of the accepted styles for history—such as Cicero's preferred middle style for history—because his style of writing fluctuates so noticeably. Colin Hemer follows Raymond Brown in theorizing that the different styles even within a single work by Josephus may be explained as reflecting the different sources Josephus used. He applies this particularly to the speeches, noting that “speeches may be detailed but condensed, or brief summaries where the evidence is more limited.”<sup>121</sup> If so, Josephus may in fact be attempting to follow Polybius' example of staying close to a source, even in speeches, and even when that source is rhetorically inferior to the historian's own pen.

Given the realities of the research and composition process as well as Greco-Roman conventions that encourage imitating the voice of the original source (particularly in speeches), it is reasonable to attribute Josephus' uneven style to an indefinable mix of both his own pen and the voice of his source. The best that may be said of Josephus' own rhetorical style is that he loves rhetorical elaboration, vivid and picturesque imagery, and poetic words. He is certainly no Sallust, nor would his emotional appeals pass muster for Cicero, yet he has become the primary source for the Jewish rebellion of the first century and, regardless of his obvious biases, has been proved consistently accurate in matters of geography and military tactics. In fact, in his concluding statement Josephus admits to his weaknesses in matters of style but defends his account on the grounds that he has

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120. Niese, *The Works of Flavius Josephus: Prefatory Material*, Vol. 6, 4.

121. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 78 See also Raymond E Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 46, where Brown explores the theory and applies it specifically to the Gospel of John.

scrupulously sought the truth of past events and his narrative remains completely faithful to that truth.

### **Conclusion**

With Josephus' publication of the *Jewish War* toward the end of the first century, we come to the end of our survey of Greco-Roman contemporary historians. It is clear that the genre of contemporary history had a very specific essential footprint yet accepted and even celebrated a surprisingly wide range of variation within that footprint. The shape of the genre requires that the historian follow only a few absolutely essential conventions while inviting him to play with a number of trends and innovations introduced by previous historians. In the following chapter we will finally assess the real shape of the genre and examine both the conventions that created it and remain absolute as well as the influences and trends that shaped recognizable branches of the family tree. Finally, we will assess the book of Acts using the same factors applied to the other contemporary histories, see where Acts truly fits in this family tree, and consider some of the hermeneutical implications of what it means to read Acts according to its place in the Greco-Roman historical tradition.

## Chapter 6

### Reading Acts as Greco-Roman Contemporary History

Innovation and tradition have proven powerful forces in Greco-Roman contemporary history, driving the development of the genre over the course of centuries. They have also complicated the process of establishing the essential shape of the genre: what was it that made contemporary history recognizable as such for its Hellenistic audience? Further, innovation in particular has blurred the boundaries of the genre, complicating the critical question of hermeneutics: how do we, the modern the readers, understand and interpret the text when its rules seem to be in constant flux?

Tracing lines of influence has proven helpful in resolving this dilemma. Recognizing not only who a given historian appeals to but also who that historian innovates from pieces together likely avenues of interpretation that guide the modern reader away from her modern hermeneutic, opening up more historically appropriate readings of the text. Reception history once again steps in as a historical boundary to these potential readings, pointing the modern interpreter toward the more historically realistic options.

The analyses of previous chapters act much as pieces to this genre puzzle: each text is an example of the tradition-innovation dynamic at work within contemporary history. Assessing their similarities builds a baseline for the essential footprint of the genre, while their differences point to avenues of innovation. When innovation is repeated from one historian to another, we may identify branches of influence. Noting these allows us to build a tentative family tree of literary relationships connecting historians (and their texts). When we compare these results to a similar analysis of the book of Acts, we see similar lines of potential influence that in turn identify the place of Acts in the genre and open historically appropriate avenues of interpretation.



## The Changing Shape of Greco-Roman History?

But if innovation is such a strong dynamic in the development of contemporary history, how is identifying the core, essential elements of the genre helpful when its boundaries are so blurry? Genre serves as “a set of expectations,”<sup>1</sup> a pact between author and reader in which the reader agrees that the meaning and the intent of the author may best be understood when the genre cued by the author is in fact used to guide the reader's interpretation of the text.<sup>2</sup> Generic cues are the textual elements that signal the genre of the text and guide the reader toward an appropriate reading strategy and away from inappropriate interpretations of the text.

Identifying these cues, then, not only enable the modern reader to accurately identify texts within a given genre but also indicate the most basic reading strategy for that genre. Innovative elements in these texts provide further cues toward specific reading strategies for specific texts. In fact, it is because contemporary history has its own unique and definite conventions and expectations that authors like Caesar, Sallust, and Tacitus can innovate so freely on its boundaries and yet remain within the essential footprint of the genre. When the essentials are easy to recognize, innovation in non-essentials is no threat to genre identification.<sup>3</sup>

Identifying these essentials is a straightforward task at this point. We will first combine the results of our analyses of the contemporary historians using Marincola's five factors—narrativity, focalization, chronological delimitation, arrangement, and subject—as well as the historical factors of reception history, philosophy of history, methodology, and rhetoric. Similarities shared between analyses indicate the essential elements of the genre, while differences indicate areas of innovation that may require further analysis. And both

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1. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* 53.

2. See Chapter 1, footnote 12 regarding the intentional fallacy.

3. A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, OR: Areopagitica Press, 1988), 185.

similarities and innovations move us forward in this ongoing task of understanding the texts themselves, in that “only by a process of comparison and an attempt to find the fluid border between convention and innovation will we come closer to an understanding of genre and the individual work that both comprehends and challenges it.”<sup>4</sup>

We will test the basic generic footprint that we have developed on one of the last contemporary Hellenistic historians, Ammianus Marcellinus. Ammianus wrote his *Res Gestae* nearly two centuries after Tacitus and Josephus penned their accounts. In fact, he picks up the history of the Roman Empire where Tacitus leaves off. Beginning in Book 15, however, he recounts contemporary events, some of which he personally witnessed. Ammianus’ work, then, offers us a unique opportunity to check the final development of contemporary history: where the *Res Gestae* shares similarities in these factors with the other contemporary historians, we may be confident that we have accurately identified the essential footprint of the genre. And where the *Res Gestae* imitates the innovations of other contemporary historians, we discover ways in which lines of influence have developed into branches and families of texts.

#### Using Marincola’s Five Factors to Identify the Essential Core

Gathering threads of research that have been scattered throughout the previous several chapters may appear to be a daunting and complicated task, but the final footprint that emerges is fairly straightforward (though not without a few small surprises).

#### **Narrativity**

The first of Marincola’s factors—narrativity—is by far the easiest to assess. It is clear that in the Greco-Roman mind, history (including contemporary history) was meant to be a story. All of the contemporary historians wrote complete narratives, each with a definite beginning, plot, and conclusion. Asides within the narrative, however, were written as

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4. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 321.

direct descriptive prose and focused primarily on issues of topography or ethnography. Ammianus, our test case for the final development of the genre, is no exception. His *Res Gestae* is also a complete narrative with occasional asides giving insight into other lands or cultures he did not expect his audience to know well (e.g., *Res Gestae* 15.4). We may confidently expect that any potential examples of Greco-Roman history would also be narrative accounts with possible descriptive asides.

### **Focalization**

The question of an established pattern of focalization demands a somewhat more complex answer, though. While the general tendency of contemporary historians is to tell the story using an external objective focalization, there is a very strong line of influence toward alternating the external objective with an internal subjective focalization when addressing events in which the author participated personally. Using the traditional language of point of view, these historians use the third person to indicate events which they observed or received from another source, but use the first person when relating events in which they participated (particularly when they held key roles in the ensuing action) or to interject their opinions or interpretations as official narrator. Of the seven contemporary historians surveyed in the previous chapters, four use the first person in their narratives.

As the original innovator, Polybius defends his occasional use of the first person with two arguments. First, his role in some events was central enough (particularly since he was his own eyewitness source for these) that continually referring to himself in the third person would have created an unappealing repetition in the account. Second, he argues that his name is so unusual that alternating between the first and third persons could not compromise the clarity of his story: there could be only one “Polybius,” so alternating his self-references between third and first persons would not confuse the reader into assuming the presence of another Polybius in the account (*Histories* 36.12.1-5). If, however, his parents

had given him a more common name, like Curtius or Lucius (for example), he would have been forced to employ a different strategy to maintain clarity in the account.

Finally, although Polybius does not explicitly number it in his rationale, there is a strong undercurrent of the primacy of eyewitness testimony in contemporary history. Although Polybius is officially defending his use of the first person, his emphasis on personal involvement is so marked that it is impossible to believe he has overlooked the implicit authority his role as eyewitness gives his narrative. In other words, his use of the first person directly impacts the authority of his narrative voice.

Sallust follows Polybius in using the first person, yet unlike Polybius, he did not participate in the events of his narrative. Instead, Sallust uses the first person to express his narrative voice, offering his own commentary and interpretation of events. Tacitus, too, uses the first person to strategically interject his interpretation (*Agricola* 1, 3, 12), though he branches out into the first person plural as a way of identifying with his Roman audience (e.g., *Agricola* 2, 3). Josephus follows Sallust and Tacitus, using the first person to offer his interpretations and responses to events (*War* 5.3, 20), while referring to himself in the third person when he relates events in which he was a key participant (*War* 2.556-654).

It is revealing that Josephus responds to the traditions and tragedies of Jews in the first person, yet switches to the third person when discussing military action. Like Caesar in his *Bello Civilis* (1.18.2; 22.1; 40.6), Josephus seems to be using person (first or third) to alternately distance himself from or identify with the action and actors. It seems that in ethnic and religious matters, Josephus still considers himself very much a Jew, yet because of his defection from the Jewish rebellion feels compelled to distance himself from their political and military affairs.

Our test case, Ammianus, follows Polybius in using the first person to indicate his own actions within the story, without ever reverting to the third person, and particularly never referring to himself by name (15.5.22-23). This may indicate a desire, shared by Polybius, to ensure clarity, or may reflect some conventions of specifically Roman

historiography.<sup>5</sup> Like Sallust and those who followed Sallust's influence, Ammianus also expresses his narrative voice in the first person, most frequently to point out his own research and methodology (15.1.1; 15.6.4; 15.9.2; 15.10.2). Thus while the strong tradition from antiquity is to maintain that objective external focalization—the third person narrator—within the narrative, even in referring to oneself, the innovations of both Polybius and Sallust have proved extremely influential. When it comes to possible examples of contemporary history, we may expect to find authorial comments made in the first person, and possibly may also see the historian use the first person when he was a participant of events which he describes.

### **Arrangement**

Unlike the Greco-Roman concept of arrangement, Marincola primarily defines arrangement in terms of chronology. All of the histories surveyed to this point have been essentially chronological, with the exception of treatment of concurrent events. Nikos Miltisios observes two strategies authors usually employ to address the problem of concurrent events: first, the author may halt or regress the narrative chronology and choose to relate events in blocks, or second, the author may “interlace” the accounts by alternating between them until both are resolved.<sup>6</sup> For example, when faced with concurrent events, Thucydides frequently proceeds thematically, finishing a theme before addressing the concurrent events.<sup>7</sup> Polybius follows Thucydides in this, preferring to narrate chronological events linked by geography..<sup>8</sup> This preference for recounting thematically linked events together develops as a consistent trend among contemporary historians.

In addition, all historians surveyed have included digressions within their narratives. These asides vary in length but their purpose is consistent: ethnographic and topographical

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5. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 201.

6. Miltisios, *The Shaping of Narrative in Polybius*, 59.

7. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 69–75.

8. Drews, “*Kata Genos*,” 55.

digressions add interest and context that enable the audience to identify with and understand later events. Ammianus is no exception to this tradition, reporting cultural and geographic details pertaining to the Gauls before he relates events involving them (e.g., *Res Gestae* 15.9-12).

The pattern here is quite clear. We may expect any example of Greco-Roman contemporary history to proceed chronologically, with the possible exception of concurrent events being organized by a different schema. Also, ethnographic and topographic digressions continue to be standard for contemporary history, though there is no standard length for these asides.

### **Chronological Delimitations**

In essence, chronological delimitation concerns the beginning and end of a historical narrative and addresses the relationship of these to the historian and to the narrative as a whole. Identifying the beginning and end of the account first addresses whether the historian relates events contemporary to his life or not. Because of the nature of this investigation, all of the historians surveyed have written contemporary accounts with the exception of Herodotus, who has been included in this survey as “the father of history” and an essential baseline to the genre. However, assessing chronological delimitation involves more than simply ascertaining whether an account qualifies as contemporary history. Identifying the beginning and end of an account also allows the reader to assess the relationship of these to the narrative as a whole, since the first and last elements of an account offer important clues regarding what the narrator values and how he intends that the text be interpreted.

Each account surveyed—whether Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War* or Josephus’ *Jewish War*—begins by providing historical and cultural context that will help members of the audience orient themselves to the events to come as well as provide cues foreshadowing the historian’s interpretation. And so Thucydides frames his account with the events leading up

to the war, couched in terms of the motivational forces of power and fear (1.23.5-6). And Polybius sets up the victory of the Roman Empire with a comparison of empires preceding the *Pax Romana* (*Histories* 1.2; Polybius claims to begin where Timaeus ends; see 39.19). Caesar begins his account by establishing the Gauls and, even more so, the Germanic tribes as the noble savages who are worthy and fierce opponents of the Empire. This is a calculated stereotyping, because when Caesar becomes Gaul's opponent, the stereotyping enables him to stand in for the Empire.

For his morality play, Sallust provides a moral history of Rome's decay, and for his account of Agricola's nobility and honor, Tacitus relates the dignity of his birth and upbringing. Josephus relates the events that led to the Jewish uprising, emphasizing the suffering of his people and their loyal piety. And Ammianus, centuries later, takes up his narrative where Tacitus left off in his *Histories*. Each historian has chosen a starting point that balances sufficient explanation with brevity, providing clues in the context to guide the reader toward a final interpretation of the historian's choosing.

The endings of the narratives share clear similarities as well. Frequently, the ending of the history is dictated by the conclusion of the historical events. Thucydides is an exception; his account ends abruptly with the 21st year of the war (*War* 8.109.2). Neither does Herodotus provide the expected narrative resolution—military victory—for the Greco-Persian wars, though he does present his audience with a significant ideological resolution: the victory of freedom (*Histories* 9.122.4). Polybius, however, not only extends his account to relate the end of all of Rome's significant enemies in his lifetime, but also provides a formal conclusion summarizing his work and praising the power of triumphant Rome (*Histories* 39.19).

Caesar, of course, ends in personal and patriotic triumph, yet foreshadowing the coming civil war in terms of senatorial opposition (*Bello Gallico* 8.55); he is the virtuous Roman, prioritizing the *populus* while hoping the coming war could be avoided. Sallust's narrative ends with the triumph of virtuous Romans over the moral decay of senatorial bad

apples, while Tacitus mourns the triumph of imperial oppression over the nobility and honor of the true Roman, and Josephus mourns the triumph of the Roman machine over his people even while holding a few bad apples among the Jews responsible for the tragedy. Following Tacitus' *Histories*, Ammianus centers his account on the emperors and their deeds, and so ends his account with the death of Valens in the Battle of Adrianople, adding a brief, nearly postscript conclusion restating the bounds of his work and offering some defense of his rhetorical skill and historical faithfulness (*Res Gestae* 31.16.9).

While each account is unique in its conclusion, each historian has chosen a final event, a final story that will both resolve his account and subtly remind his audience how to interpret the narrative as a whole. Some interpretations, like that of Sallust, are self-consciously individualistic, while others (like Thucydides and Caesar) present their interpretations as part and parcel of the narrative. Yet both the first and last words are carefully chosen to frame the work as a whole and offer insight into what the historian hoped to accomplish with his history. Texts that fit the essential footprint of contemporary history should approach introductions and conclusions in similar ways: we may expect to find contextualization and interpretive clues in the introductions, while the conclusions may be formal prose, separate from the narrative, or may include concluding comments in the final events of the narrative. While the observable trends allow for significant variety, the introduction and conclusion should reflect the functions established by other, earlier historians and should provide context and an interpretive frame within which to read the story.

## **Subject**

The subject matter of contemporary history remains consistent through the centuries as well, focusing on the acts of public figures and on military history (which for the victor meant military expansion). Even Sallust's concern with virtue and moral decay functions as an interpretive lens for Catiline and other participants in events Sallust



narrates. And Josephus, who tells the story of events on the other side of the Mediterranean, finds himself telling the tale of Rome's triumph even there, even though his sympathies lie firmly with his people (at least, with the Jews who know better than to rise up against Rome). Ammianus, of course, is well in line with tradition at this point, continuing as he does Tacitus' history of the Roman emperors. We can expect, then, that any text claiming to be contemporary history would focus on the acts of a significant leader or on wars and the military expansion of a major world power.

### **Reception History**

How a text is received by contemporaries and by later readers is somewhat difficult to predict. To some extent, the work of historians surveyed here remains extant because it was received well, while others have been lost because their work was not deemed trustworthy. However, even those whose works have successfully survived the intervening centuries face some reception issues. For example, both Caesar and Josephus are blatantly biased in favor of themselves, and in consequence their version of events that particularly focus on themselves are often viewed with some suspicion. And while Caesar has been proven inaccurate in matters of both geography and culture,<sup>9</sup> the overall shape of his account has been well-accepted. In the same way, Josephus may not be trustworthy when talking about himself but has been proven quite accurate in matters of geography, military tactics, and ancient monuments. The failure of a historian in one area does not necessarily indicate a failure of the entire history. Josephus and Caesar are in fact special examples of how personal bias throws suspicion on the faithfulness of an account (and rightly so). Yet despite any failures or weaknesses, all of the works surveyed have been received, and continue to be received, as contemporary history.

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9. Dench, "Ethnography and History," 502-3.

Ammianus has also been well-received through the centuries, though his unusual focus on the individual and the average soldier in battle often leaves the reader somewhat mystified as to the movement and tactics of the army as a whole.<sup>10</sup> It is fair to expect that a text which fits as Greco-Roman contemporary history will have been received as such by its earliest audiences.

### Identifying the Essential Core: Historical Factors

The final factors we are using to identify the essential shape of contemporary history are elements of the text that ancient authors and readers recognized as significant to that genre. These are the elements that, in a manner of speaking, have received the most press in both histories and in works discussing historiography (such as Cicero's *de Oratore* and Lucian's *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*). Authors have singled out these elements for further definition, to argue over their practical application, and to prove the veracity or quality of one account over another.

### Philosophy of History

Although we have seen some diversity in the approaches of various contemporary historians, they do seem to have shared some very basic, key ideas about history and historiography. First, history for the average Greco-Roman is not an esoteric interest but is a teacher for life, instructing apt pupils in moral, honorable, and socially responsible behavior. History demonstrates the rewards and consequences of virtue and vice, and stories of the successes of leaders inspire the current generation ascending the *cursus honorum*.

The historian, in turn, acts as guide and interpreter. He is the definitive witness<sup>11</sup> who decides which events are significant and should be included in his historiography, and which are not pertinent and can be ignored for the purposes of clarity and narrative flow. As

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10. Kimberly Kagan, *The Eye of Command* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 27–29.

11. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 25.

interpreter, the historian creates a framework that organizes events, making sense of the past and placing its lessons within reach of his audience. In short, history should be useful, and the role of a historian is to make it so.

And his role works only when he establishes his authority as witness and guide. This authority derives from his credentials as an impartial author of trustworthy *ethos* and good judgment. Because pre-modern societies did not have access to the recording technology available today, memory was by far the most significant resource for the historian. And the personal memory of an eyewitness was the best possible memory resource. Yet because memory is subjective and limited, the goal of a Greco-Roman historian is to discover the essential facts of events, the hard core of history that stands up to cross-checking and remains consistent across multiple reports. Once the hard core is established and verified, historians use the laws of rhetorical elaboration to build a full narrative around the basic facts. This *exaedificatio*, as Cicero names it, should be based on what is plausible and appropriate given the personality, situation, and context. The hard core of facts should remain inviolate, guaranteeing that the events themselves within the narrative remain historically faithful.

Yet there was one other threat to a historian's faithfulness to the events. In the agonistic world of Hellenism, bias was considered the most pervasive and subtle threat to the truth of history. Bias could be ethnic, national, familial, or personal, and was a particular threat to contemporary history, since so many of the participants still lived and could either benefit or destroy the historian, his reputation, and his family. Yet in the Greco-Roman world, ethnic and national (patriotic) biases were completely acceptable, even praised, while any personal bias that emerged in a historical narrative cast doubt on its truthfulness. Caesar and Josephus are excellent examples of the impact of personal bias on history, while Tacitus demonstrates how acceptable—even laudable—patriotism and familial partiality were to his Roman audience. Patriotic bias is by far the most common form of partiality and

was apparently completely ignored by contemporary critics: there is no Greco-Roman author who criticizes the patriotic bias in history.

Clearly, there remains a lot of space for diversity of perspective and application both within these points and on their edges. We could expect that a text that could potentially be identified as Greco-Roman contemporary history would follow these trends in its understanding of history, concept of the role of the historian, preference for memory and eyewitness testimony, use of an *exaedificatio* over a hard core, and acceptance of certain types of bias. We could expect that personal bias in such an account would be unfavorably received by its earliest audience.

## **Methodology**

The practical application of a philosophy of history is the actual methodology. This was by no means uniform, as the previous chapters attest. Some historians (like Polybius) emphasized their research methodology and worked hard to ascertain the hard core from eyewitness testimony, then elaborating carefully within the data they have collected. Other historians relied at times more on written records (e.g., Ammianus, *Res Gest.* 15.9.2) or apparently failed to double-check their sources (such as Caesar; see Suetonius, *Divi Iulius* 56.4).

Thucydides established a standard in historiography that relied first on eyewitness testimony to establish the hard core, then on plausibility and fit for the *exaedificatio*. Polybius expanded his methodology based on Thucydides' example, creating a more stringent research process based on cross-interrogation of witnesses, military experience, and extensive world travel to develop a thoroughly vetted, more expansive hard core that would allow the historian to follow the actual speech quite closely. In fact, Polybius may have retained much of the original report in his final composition, even when the rhetoric of the report was of demonstrably lesser quality than his own.<sup>12</sup> Yet such a rigorous commitment to

the original report does not seem to have exerted a strong influence on later contemporary historians, since, as Walbank notes, “the criterion by which the literary critics judge speeches in histories continues to be, not their accuracy, but their appropriateness, not ἀλήθεια but πιθανότης and τὸ πρέπον.”<sup>13</sup>

Later historians such as Sallust, Tacitus, and Josephus would use language that echoes Thucydides’ preface and style of writing, bringing their own work under the auspices of this original innovator. However, appealing to Thucydides as a voice of authority constitutes a claim to follow in his steps, not a guarantee of methodology. For example, while Josephus echoes Thucydides in his preface to the *Jewish War*, his highly rhetorical approach to speeches and lack of appeal to any but himself as eyewitness throws some doubt on how strictly he followed Thucydides’ methodology. But what such an appeal proves is that Thucydides set a trustworthy standard in methodology, and later historians wanted to claim that trustworthiness for their own work. Each text must be evaluated on its own terms: claims to follow a specific methodology should be confirmed by evidence within the text.

The most challenging issue in methodology is that of speeches. Given the limitations of pre-modern societies, it is unrealistic to expect word-for-word transcriptions of speeches. Instead, it may be helpful to think of speeches as events themselves. They, too, would have a historical hard core that would be built into an entire speech using the rules of rhetorical composition and elaboration. The hard core available to the historian would be entirely dependent on the quality of eyewitness available to him. Because memory was so highly prized in Hellenistic cultures, many individuals in the first century could claim what would be prodigious memories today. Yet very few could remember a speech word-for-word, possibly years after hearing it.

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12. See chapter 3, Polybius: Methodology.

13. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 260.

Because it is so rare to find multiple reports of a single speech, it is difficult to assess the historical faithfulness of a given speech. However, two trends emerged by the end of the first century: one highly rhetorical (e.g., Curtius Rufus), and one characterized by brief and even infrequent speeches. Sallust, Tacitus, and, later, Ammianus would follow this second trend.<sup>14</sup> The brevity of the speeches suggests that these historians preferred to stay closer to the hard core they received, though this is of course a methodological conclusion based on a stylistic impression. Yet the reverse is certainly true: more rhetorical speeches (such as those composed by Josephus, for example) offer significantly more scope for expansion from the original, even when comparison to other reports demonstrates the existence of a consistent hard core (compare Herod's speeches: *Ant.* 15.127-146 // *War* 1.373-379).

It is telling that our test case, Ammianus, sets himself firmly within the influence of Thucydides and Polybius with both his preface to Book 15 and his final conclusion (31.16.9). He very self-consciously describes his methodology in terms of personal research, interrogating eyewitnesses, and evaluating reports.<sup>15</sup> According to Schepens, Ammianus' conclusion "is a strikingly 'classic' formulation of the method of personal inquiry in history: it envisages *veritas* as the result of a process of research and evaluation (*scrutari*) through autopsy or the careful interrogation of participants in the events."<sup>16</sup> There is no question that Ammianus considers this description of his methodology the best defense of his work and guarantee of its trustworthiness. And there is no reason to suspect that he misrepresents himself: there is no internal evidence contrary to his methodological claims here, even though he does at times appeal to written sources (*Res Gest.* 15.9.2).

Alanna Nobbs compares the accounts of Ammianus and Julian himself regarding Julian's appointments, first as Caesar in Gaul and next as Augustus. The accounts are clearly written from different perspectives, yet both communicate Julian's success in carrying out

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14. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 152–53.

15. Schepens, "History and Historia," 39.

16. Schepens, "History and Historia," 39.

his directive as well as his belief that he was “guided by the gods” in both appointments. Ammianus’ account provides more analysis of Julian’s character and motivations (*Res Gest.* 20.4.17-18). Yet Julian’s letters (*Ep. ad. Ath.* 284A) confirm much of Ammianus’ analysis, suggesting that Ammianus built his *exaedificatio* of personality and motivation squarely on his own personal knowledge of the emperor.<sup>17</sup> The evidence suggests that Ammianus’ practice is consistent with his methodological claims to searching out the factual hard core and prioritizing eyewitness testimony.

We can expect that any possible example of contemporary history will make claims, either explicitly or implicitly, to follow a particular methodology. Given the influence of Thucydides, it would not be surprising if that text were to appeal to Thucydidean methodology through echoes in similar language or style. Internal evidence would be essential to ascertaining whether the historian followed that methodology in practice. Specific methodology regarding speeches could be difficult to assess unless multiple reports of the same or similar speeches could be found.

## Rhetoric

The single greatest issue challenging modern readers of Greco-Roman histories is the role of rhetoric in Hellenistic history. Rhetorical conventions demanded that facts and rhetorical elaboration blend nearly seamlessly. Only those trained in oratory or those who were eyewitnesses of the events described were able to easily discern the line between the hard core and the *exaedificatio* (Cicero, *Brutus* 187-188). The vast majority of modern readers simply lack this essential and assumed shared background. Even if a first-century audience was able to discern between rhetoric and hard fact when hearing a text, we are nearly deaf to these dynamics today when encountering these same narratives. At least that is our fear,

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17. Alanna Nobbs, “Julian and Ammianus Marcellinus,” in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, vol. 1 (eds. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 210–12.

and so we are hesitant to claim what could be elaboration as hard fact, or what could be hard fact as elaboration. But there was no writing without rhetoric in the first century. Rhetoric may be used to present an event, to cast its interpretation, or to compose creative material within a narrative, but it was never absent.

Yet where we have multiple reports on events (including speeches), we have seen that there is shared hard core that remains consistent between accounts. The broad strokes of events are the same, and details shared between reports show evidence of belonging to that hard core. Further, rhetorical elaboration followed conventions and rules in the first century. When we find authors following those conventions, we may be confident that we are walking through the *exaedificatio* built around the hard core. Lack of ornamentation and of conventional *topos* in common situations may indicate a historian who consciously stays quite close to the hard core. Internal clues within the text may further affirm a deliberate link between less ornamentation and a higher proportion of hard core relative to rhetorical elaboration. What is significant is that those who wrote in a simple style frequently enjoyed reputations among their peers as historians particularly faithful to the actual events (e.g., Sallust, Tacitus). Whether sleight of hand or truth, it seems that less rhetorical elaboration suggested higher prioritization of the hard core to first-century audiences.

Regardless of the degree to which rhetoric impacts the text, there are two aspects of rhetorical elaboration that no history could be without. Arrangement considers the organization of a text. Style refers to the rhetorical tone of the work as a whole. These both receive consistent attention from (and mention by) both historians and those who wrote about historiography.

Arrangement:

While the classical rhetorical concept of arrangement includes much more than the order of the narrative, its structure, and the placement of the various pieces that make up the text, a thorough examination of the arrangement of each of the texts surveyed would



extend far beyond the limits of this project. Instead, only the most essential aspects of arrangements have been examined. These include the presence and content of prefaces and conclusions, the use of digressions, and the general organization and structure of the narrative.

All contemporary historians begin their narratives with a preface. According to Lucian, the essential function of a preface for history is to claim the attention and sympathetic receptivity of the audience (*Quo. Conscr.* 53). To this end, historians should demonstrate that the events are significant, beneficial, or useful to the audience (these are standard rhetorical *topoi* for rhetorical inventions and would have been recognized as such; see Cicero, *Top.* 1.2). The audience's openness and receptivity could be secured simply with a clear summary of the narrative and a brief explanation of the events that served as catalysts for the main action of the narrative.

Two of the contemporary historians surveyed provide the bare minimum in their narratives. Both Xenophon and Julius Caesar only present the historical background that provides context and an explanation for the events to come. And neither of these historians end their narratives with a significant formal conclusion. Xenophon's concluding remarks are a single sentence noting the length of the journey in both distance and time; Caesar's final remarks are a personal commentary on his own patriotism and the inevitability of Senatorial military opposition.

Outside of these two outliers, contemporary historians found their prefaces to be the ideal location to explain and defend either key or weak elements of their philosophy or—more particularly—their methodology. Of course, Thucydides sets the bar with his programmatic preface (*War* 1.1-23), covering not only historical background and explanation but also remarks on historiography, proper methodology, and his proposed presentation of events. It is Thucydides who emphasizes the role of eye-witness testimony and introduces the claims of cross-examination, accuracy, and impartiality. His influence runs strongly through the rest of the contemporary historians, who often imitate or echo his language in

their own prefaces.<sup>18</sup> These prefaces, however, are not all of uniform length. Instead, as Lucian advises, the length of prefaces in contemporary history are relative to the length of the overall work.

Ammianus demonstrates that this influence was still alive well centuries after even Josephus wrote. In his brief preface linking his non-contemporary history to his account of events from his own life, Ammianus, too, echoes Thucydides' language. He carefully describes his narrative as an ordered account, well-researched and cross-examined, that tells with accuracy and impartiality the story of the later empire (15.1.1).

The values Thucydides set in place centuries before have clearly defined a very strong branch of contemporary history. It is imperative, however, to remember that echoes of language do not necessarily indicate equivalence in methodology but rather an author's desire to place himself within an authoritative tradition, evoking the authority of Thucydides for his own narrative. The actual methodology of an author must be assessed on its own merits, based on internal clues and external verification, where possible. Further examples of first-century contemporary history would most likely boast of a preface that is suitable to the length of the work as a whole, that contains some allusions to an authoritative voice (such as that of Thucydides), provides essential context for the events to come, and presents the audience with a summary of the contents of the narrative.

The narrative contents of contemporary history are quite consistent. As noted earlier, the accounts are chronological, with the occasional exception of concurrent events that may be presents thematically in order to more clearly communicate their interpretive significance. This chronological arrangement is frequently further broken by occasional digressions that provide useful background context (especially topographical or ethnological) that helps the audience understand events to follow. These digressions also add interest by bringing the audience briefly out of the smoothly flowing narrative and

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18. E.g, Polybius, Sallust 4, Tacitus, Josephus.

providing vivid imagery to enhance the audience's experience of the story. We may expect to find both a chronological narrative and the occasional digression into geography, religion, or culture in any example of Greco-Roman contemporary history.

Style:

We find the greatest variation among the contemporary historians in matters of style. Cicero strongly advocates a smoothly flowing, even style of narrative for history that may be broken by occasional digressions that ensure such an even style does not put the audience to sleep (*de Orat.* 2.62-65). Yet Thucydides introduces a very idiosyncratic style of narrative characterized by obscure words and even awkward phrasing that Cicero criticizes freely (*Cicero, Orat.* 9).<sup>19</sup> Further, Thucydides' tone is deeply analytical<sup>20</sup> and at times strongly emotional.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Dionysius of Halicarnassus criticizes Thucydides for his lack of rhetorical style, complaining that he does not employ the arts of rhetoric as fully as the narrative deserves (*Letter to Pompey* 3).<sup>22</sup> Much later, Sallust deliberately echoes Thucydides' brevity, obscurity, and at times even his awkwardness in his bid to evoke the higher moral tone he imputed to antiquity.<sup>23</sup> In turn, Tacitus follows a Sallustian model in his brevity, his concern for morality, and his less elaborate rhetorical tone.<sup>24</sup> In addition, historians strongly influenced by Thucydides tend to minimize speeches within the narrative: they write fewer speeches (relying more on indirect discourse), or the speeches they include are noticeably shorter than those of other historians (or both).

In contrast, Xenophon writes in a clear, straightforward style that implies the author's complete transparency regarding the reality of the events he relates.<sup>25</sup> It perhaps

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19. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127.

20. Dewald, "Construction of Meaning," 98.

21. Rood, "Persian Wars," 152.

22. In terms of rhetorical style, Josephus shares more in common with Dionysius of Halicarnassus than with Thucydides, despite his brief nod to Thucydidean methodology (see Josephus: Methodology).

23. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 127.

24. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies*, 128, 167-68.

25. Carolyn Dewald, "The Construction of Meaning in the First Three Historians," in *A Companion to*

comes as no surprise that Caesar's style seems to mimic Xenophon's tone quite deliberately: the tone of "what you see is what you get" would fit the *commentarii* format perfectly as well as implicitly affirming Caesar's own transparency regarding his actions in the Gallic War. In both arrangement and style, Caesar patterns his *Bello Gallico* closely on Xenophon's *Anabasis*.<sup>26</sup>

This *mimesis* is par for the course for contemporary history. Historians retelling ancient history often faced significant competition from other accounts of the same events and thus strongly felt the need to assert the preeminence of their account. Unlike non-contemporary historians, contemporary historians often had no—or at least few—competing accounts to defend against simply because their account was the first, or at least the first written by an eyewitness. For this reason contemporary historians "do not use polemic as an element of self-definition in the way that the non-contemporary historians, such as Herodotus, Dionysius, and Arrian, do."<sup>27</sup>

Instead, contemporary historians assert their authoritative voice by establishing their affiliation with reputable historians from previous generations. They are, as Marincola describes, essentially "portraying themselves as heir to the tradition of Roman historiography."<sup>28</sup> And style is one significant way to accomplish this affiliation. But imitated style is not equivalent to following the same methodology. Methodology is often indicated by the historian in prefatory comments but must be confirmed using internal clues and external verification, where possible. Josephus is a good example of this. He uses language that puts him within the influence of Thucydides (e.g., *War* 1.9), yet his account is noticeably more rhetorical than those of Sallust or Tacitus, and his speeches are lengthy and rhetorically elaborate.

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*Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 98.

26. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 197.

27. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 224.

28. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 236.

Style is thus predominantly a personal choice that gives the historian access to his audience's predisposition toward an established authoritative voice. A simple style of narrative that evokes highly respected historians such as Thucydides and Sallust implies that the author presents a narrative as historically faithful as the accounts of those giants of historiography. A highly rhetorical style suggests that rhetorical models and concerns influence the historian, possibly complicating the process of discerning between the historical hard core and the rhetorical *exaedificatio*.

In short, there is no single style common to the contemporary historians. We may instead expect a contemporary historian to provide some clues to his model and influences via style, arrangement, or similarities of language. Such clues indicate the authoritative voice and tradition the historian wishes to be affiliated with. Again, internal clues and external validation (where possible) provide the best confirmation of methodology and assessment of the historical faithfulness of the account.

### Acts

Now that we have sketched the basic shape of the genre and traced some influential branches within the family tree, we may finally turn our attention to the book of Acts. In keeping with the approach thus far, we will assess Acts according to Marincola's five factors and those essential elements emphasized by the Greco-Roman authors themselves. This assessment will first demonstrate whether Acts should be identified as contemporary history. If so, tracing lines of influence and trends within the text will also indicate where Acts fits within the literary family and what kind of contemporary history it proves to be.

Finally, identifying the place of Acts within Greco-Roman literature also enables us to develop a historically appropriate reading of the text. Interpreting Acts is complicated because it is both a historical and a religious text. Developing a reading of the text that is historically appropriate opens our eyes to the cues and boundaries the author set in place to

guide and limit the interpretation of his narrative, which in turn informs the interpretation of the book as a religious text as well.

Because of Acts' unusual nature as both religious and historical, the role of innovation in Greco-Roman historiography is particularly significant. "Part of the art of historiography," Clare Rothschild reminds us, "was to blend correspondences in hybrid formulations, the elements of which are familiar, the combination, new."<sup>29</sup> And Acts' unusual combination of historical narrative and deep religious significance requires an approach that will communicate meaning successfully on multiple levels of hearing. We should expect to find unusual innovations in such a text.

In fact, we have seen this dynamic worked out already in Sallust. His unusual moralistic agenda gave rise to unexpected innovations in style, tone, and subject. Expecting the unexpected, then, means that we must, as Nicolai urges, "leave open the borders of the historiographical genre, distinguishing from time to time the goals of individual authors and judging their works not in terms of a canon, either Thucydidean or modern as it may be, but in the context that produced them and that they served."<sup>30</sup> And this judgment comes as a critical assessment of both internal cues and external validation that together indicate the real, *de facto* goals of the author and the quality of his work, particularly in terms of its historical faithfulness.

#### Reassessing Generic Cues

Because the goal of this process of survey and comparison is to develop a historically nuanced reading of Acts, our analysis of Acts will of necessity be more in-depth and in more detail than the analyses performed of the various examples of contemporary history up to this point. Where possible, parallels and contrasts will be drawn between these texts and the book of Acts in order to better understand not only Acts' place in the literary family but also

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29. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts*, 102-3.

30. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 13.

because readings of similar texts will prove invaluable analogies in our quest to build a reading that is internally consistent, externally informed, and simply makes the best sense of Acts as historical literature.

### **Narrativity**

In its most basic form, narrativity is simply a measure of whether an account tells a story in narrative form as opposed to poetry or informational prose. If narrativity is a matter of creating a full storyline with a beginning, plot, denouement, and resolution, Acts is most firmly a narrative. The beginning of the text foreshadows the direction the story will take (Acts 1.8), the plot works its way through various internal and external conflicts that culminate in an apparent stand-off with Rome (Acts 26-28), and the conclusion is brief and offers an incomplete resolution to the story. Acts fits the essential footprint of contemporary history in this story arc, indicating that like other examples of contemporary history, the various elements of Acts must be interpreted within that arc, keeping in mind the narrative relationships of various story elements with one another.

In one way Acts does not follow the general trend: where many of the contemporary historians insert digressions to inform and entertain their audience, Acts does not offer topographical or ethnological asides to break the flow of the narrative. Instead, Luke avoids monotony by breaking the smooth flow with discrete summaries of the action that often offer some small foreshadowing of events to come (e.g., 2.42-46; 4.32-35; 5.12-16).<sup>31</sup>

Summaries are unusual for contemporary history, but they in no way impact the narrativity of the text.

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31. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Acts," in *The Acts of the Apostles* (The Anchor Yale Bible; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 98. Fitzmyer notes that summaries like those in Acts may also be found in Philostratus and Iamblichus, but both of these philosophers wrote significantly after Acts was published and thus provide no contemporary analogies or influences on the text.

## Focalization

We have seen two major trends in contemporary history, one following the influence of Polybius and the other following Xenophon and the general pattern of ancient historiography. Polybius alternates internal with external focalization for aesthetic effect, particularly when he has participated in or personally witnessed the events narrated, while Xenophon maintains an external focalization, even consistently referring to himself in the third person. In Acts we find Polybius' influence extending through the second half of the text, where we find Luke moving from external to internal focalization when he narrates events in which he participated personally (Acts 16.10-17; 20.5-15; 21.1-18; 27.1-28.16).

The tradition of understanding the we-sections to indicate eyewitness testimony dates back to Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 3.1.1; 3.14.1-3), though the convention of course dates back centuries earlier to Polybius. Interpreting the we-sections as a fictional element meant to convince the audience of the narrator's participation in events<sup>32</sup> or as a literary block of testimony imported from another eyewitness<sup>33</sup> is completely inconsistent with the historical literary record, in fact presenting a modern literary solution to a question both posed and answered by ancient contemporary historiography.<sup>34</sup> The reading that makes the most sense historically is the reading that finds its best analogies in texts antecedent to or contemporary with the book of Acts. The only reading that makes historical literary sense is accepting the text as it is presented,<sup>35</sup> as we accept similar accounts in ancient contemporary history: the we-sections of Acts reflect the author's personal eyewitness testimony of the events narrated.<sup>36</sup>

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32. Vernon K. Robbins, "The We-Passages in Acts and Ancient Sea Voyages," *BR* 20 (1975): 6, 17.

33. Dibelius, *Studies*, 5, 196-97 See also Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 123 and discussion in Fitzmyer, "Acts," 99. For a more modern re-telling of this interpretation but from an oral tradition perspective, see Samuel Byrskog, "History or Story in Acts—A Middle Way? The 'We' Passages, Historical Intertexture, and Oral History," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (eds. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; vol. 20 of *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*; Society of Biblical Literature Symposium; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 257-84.

34. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 63, 74.



Yet using internal versus external focalization is also clearly a deliberate rhetorical choice, especially given the strength of both trends in contemporary history. If Luke had chosen to maintain external focalization and referred to himself in the third person, his audience would be neither surprised nor confused. His narrative would not have suffered; in fact, the element of personal disinterest implied by the use of the third person<sup>37</sup> would be perfectly suitable, given how important impartiality (and particularly personal impartiality) was in creating a strong and authoritative narrative voice.<sup>38</sup> So what strategic purpose might the we-sections serve?

In order to answer the question, we first appeal to the historians whose influence on Luke is clear. For example, Polybius lays out an extensive rationale for alternating between internal and external focalization:

It should cause no surprise if at times I use my proper name in speaking of myself, and elsewhere use general expressions such “after I had said this” or again, “and when I agreed to this.” For as I was personally much involved in the events I am now about to chronicle, I am compelled to change the phrases when alluding to myself, so that I may neither offend by the frequent repetition of my name, nor again by constantly saying “when I” or “for me” fall unintentionally into an ill-mannered habit of speech. What I wish is by using these modes of expression alternately and in their proper place to avoid as far as possible the offence [sic] that lies in speaking constantly about oneself, as such personal references are naturally unwelcome, but are often necessary when the matter cannot be stated clearly without them. Luckily I have been assisted in this matter by the fortuitous fact that no one as far as I know, up to the time in which I live at least, has received from his parents the same proper

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35. As Walbank comments regarding Polybius indicate as well; see Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 259–60.

36. Fitzmyer, “Acts,” 103.

37. Campbell, “Narrator,” 391 See also Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 10.

38. See, for example, chapter 3, Polybius: Methodology.

name as my own.<sup>39</sup>

Polybius clearly considers his use of internal focalization to communicate his personal involvement and eyewitness guarantee of the faithfulness of his account. He also defends his use of the first person on the basis of literary aesthetics: constant repetition of his own name would obscure the clarity of his account, while repeated use of the first person would be impolitely egotistical, implying strong personal bias.<sup>40</sup>

Another strategic use of the first person is found in the accounts of Caesar and Josephus, who use internal and external focalization to a very specific end: to indicate affiliations of social identity. Caesar clearly demarcates those Roman soldiers allied to his cause versus those opposing him by using the first person plural to refer to those under his command, assigning his countrymen who opposed him out-group status via the third person (*Bello Civilis* 1.18.2; 22.1; 40.6). In a similar vein, Josephus uses the first person plural to identify himself ethnically with other Jews in matters of religion and culture, but falls back to the third person in military matters, making clear his social distance from the Jewish rebellion (e.g., *War* 5.3, 20).<sup>41</sup>

While other later contemporary historians who use internal focalization do not provide such a clear rationale for their choice, our survey and assessment of their use of focalization strongly suggests a similar rationale. Using the first person, whether referring to one's own participation in events or in order to draw attention to one's narrative voice, is consistently a strategic move intended to strengthen the authority of the account, particularly when that account relates what Marincola terms "exceptional events."<sup>42</sup> While Luke could have chosen to maintain external focalization, the sudden intrusion of his

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39. *Histories* 36.12.1-5.

40. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 174.

41. See further the discussions in chapter 5, *Assessing the Genre: Caesar*, as well as *Assessing the Genre: Josephus*.

42. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 86.

narrative voice draws the audience's attention to his implicit claim. Reading Acts in light of its historiographical peers suggests that Luke's choice of internal focalization is a strategic move to claim autopsy, affirm his authoritative voice as narrator, and guarantee the faithfulness of his account to his audience, especially in light of the supernatural events of the shipwreck account (Acts 27.1-28.10).<sup>43</sup>

Maintaining external focalization in his account would also have meant not only missing a clear opportunity to strengthen his narrative voice, but may well have damaged the clarity and authority of the account as well. If we take Polybius' rationale further, we see that he relies on the uniqueness of his name to ensure his audience always recognizes him and his actions within the narrative (*Histories* 36.12.1-5.). Luke (or Λουκάς, to give him his Greek name) simply did not have that advantage. In order to guard the authority of his account, it was essential that his audience understand that his was the voice speaking. Unfortunately for Luke, his name was quite common and by no means unique enough to guarantee that he could not be confused with another Λουκάς.<sup>44</sup>

Functionally, Luke's use of internal focalization also gives him a social identity that, like that created by Caesar and Josephus, indicates his loyalties and ensures a sympathetic hearing from his audience (which, given Luke's address to Theophilus in the preface [Acts 1.1-2<sup>45</sup>], is fully sympathetic to the new Christ movement). However, unlike the accounts of Caesar and Josephus, Luke's we-sections do not focus on him personally. Both Caesar and Josephus are preoccupied with their presentations of themselves, giving some validation to charges of personal bias within their accounts.<sup>46</sup> Luke, however, focuses entirely on Paul and the growth of this small Christ-movement. From a literary perspective, he is incidental to the story. In fact, he is so far erased from the narrative that modern readers struggle to find him at all.<sup>47</sup>

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43. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 63–74.

44. See, for example, the discussion and tables in Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 67–92.

45. Witherington III, *Acts*, 4–12.

Luke's use of internal focalization within Acts manages to walk a fine line, avoiding charges of personal bias while communicating his own role as eyewitness and guarantor of the account. While his presentation is unusual, it answers strategic goals, including the most important goal of contemporary history: ensuring an authoritative narrative voice. His use of focalization is fully in line with the conventions and trends we have observed at work in other contemporary histories. In fact, reading Acts in light of these trends and conventions suggests that Luke uses focalization as a significant element of his authorial *ethos* and narrative strategy.

### **Arrangement**

In keeping with the pattern we have consistently observed in other examples of Greco-Roman contemporary histories we have explored, Acts is arranged in broad chronological strokes. Or to be more specific, Acts is chronological with the exception of concurrent events. And following the influence of Thucydides, Luke organizes concurrent events thematically, using strategic placement to draw out a particular interpretation of those events. The clearest example of this occurs in Acts 18.23-19.1, where Luke introduces Apollos.

It is clear that Luke includes Apollos' story because the evangelist became so well known in the church, because aside from this mention, Apollos plays no other part in the Acts narrative. Yet his role in the church was prominent enough to warrant this tangential account. Luke places the introduction at the end of Paul's second missionary journey, a convenient place to halt the main timeline of the narrative, since the momentum had already drawn to a brief close. And since Apollos plays no other role in Acts, there is no reason to interrupt the gathering speed of the narrative moving into the third missionary

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46. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 174.

47. As evidenced by the search for the source of the we-passages not so long ago, or the quest to discern how much of Acts Luke claims to have witnessed himself; see Fitzmyer, "Acts," 98-103.

journey. For an evangelist as apparently popular as Apollos (1 Cor. 3.1-9), Luke's introduction of him de-emphasizes his influence almost to the point of caricature.

This strategic avoidance makes more sense in light of Acts 1.8, which sets Luke's interpretive schema for the growth of the Christ movement. Apollos was apparently concerned with the conversion of the Jewish people (18.26-28), while Luke's focus was on the continuation and success of the Gentile mission. Having resolved Apollos' story, Luke returns to the main timeline of Acts and to Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. His treatment of this small concurrence is completely in line with continuing trends in contemporary history: he addresses the simultaneous event within the proper chronology without rupturing the flow of the narrative or departing from his theme. In addition, his brief treatment of an event so distant from his focus strongly suggests that Apollos was both significant to the church at large as well as part of the hard core of facts Luke received from his sources. If so, the very act of incorporating elements of the hard core that do not fit well with his focus speaks rather highly of his commitment to that hard core and his unwillingness to disregard facts from the hard core that do not substantially support his presentation of the direction of events or his interpretation of the significance of events.

### **Chronological Delimitation**

As noted earlier, the question of chronological delimitation addresses issues regarding the beginning and end of the narrative. First, of course, is whether the narrative occurs within the historian's lifetime, making it contemporary history. In the case of Acts, the specific dates for both beginning and end are unknown. However, assuming that the we-sections indicate that Luke is an adult contemporary of Paul, the entire chronology of Acts—under three decades—fits easily within Luke's lifetime.<sup>48</sup> Acts clearly qualifies as contemporary history in that regard.

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48. Fitzmyer, "Acts," 139-41.

Chronological delimitation also addresses the narrative significance of the beginning and end of the story, since these provide insight into what the narrator considers significant and how he intends that the text be interpreted. In the case of Acts, the narrative begins with a preface, which will be analyzed later according to the conventions of rhetorical arrangement. However, the first events of Acts reveal a great deal regarding Luke's priorities, focus, and the major interpretive themes of the narrative.

The preface and prologue extend from 1.1-14,<sup>49</sup> which means that the first event of Acts is Peter's speech urging the eleven disciples to replace Judas, thereby symbolically forming again the complete twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>50</sup> This is a deliberative speech that demonstrates Peter's leadership within the new movement,<sup>51</sup> setting up the following ten chapters that chronicle Peter's leadership as the church expands through the Acts 1.8 spheres of influence, beginning here in Jerusalem with Peter. However, both the speech and the disciples' response to it indicate that prayer (1.14, 24), the word of God in Scripture (1.16-20), led by the moving of the Spirit (1.26)<sup>52</sup> drive the forward movement of the gospel and thus the church. These three elements will remain consistent throughout Luke's narrative, and particularly the work of the Spirit in propelling the church from its small beginnings in an upper room in Jerusalem to the court of the Roman emperor. It is clear that Luke wants his audience to realize from the beginning of the narrative that the inception of the church and its continued growth are due to these factors.

The ending of Acts is somewhat more problematic. There is no glorious, victorious finish, no full resolution to the story. Paul's house arrest is frankly a bit of a letdown. In some ways Luke's ending (Acts 28.30-31) feels like the ending to Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* (8.109.2), listing the number of years the war had dragged on up to that point of the

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49. Witherington III, *Acts*, 105-6.

50. Fitzmyer, "Acts," 220-21.

51. Witherington III, *Acts*, 115-16.

52. Fitzmyer, "Acts," 228.

narrative. Yet while there is a strong tradition that Luke, like Thucydides, ended his narrative where he did simply because events had caught up to the present day of his writing,<sup>53</sup> the historical evidence suggests otherwise. As Ben Witherington notes, the final verses of Acts suggest that Luke knows something about Paul's future (within the narrative timeline) that the audience does not, which may include his moment of foreshadowing in 27.24 regarding Paul's appearance before the emperor in Rome. Finally, the two-volume set of Luke's Gospel and Acts suggests a period of some time, probably years, between the accounts. If Markan priority is assumed, Acts was certainly written far later than the timeline of Acts 28 may suggest.<sup>54</sup>

Assuming, then, that the abrupt ending of Acts is intentional, what does it communicate about the narrative and Luke's themes and interpretation of events? Other contemporary historiographies end when the events comprising their subject resolve. Luke indicates clearly in his preface that his subject is the continuation of Jesus' work on earth (1.1), expanding in spheres of influence through Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and ultimately the ends of the earth (1.8). We have seen that Luke has remained consistent in relating the church's progression through each of these. It should come as no surprise, then, that Luke ends his narrative by placing Paul in Rome, the center of the empire and on the cusp of the final mission to the ends of the earth. As Witherington notes, Rome was "the heart and hub of the empire,"<sup>55</sup> from which all ideas flowed to the ends of empire. Paul's imprisonment is a triumph of the Spirit in that the gospel was preached freely to all with boldness and without limitations.

The ending of Acts may feel abrupt, but comparison to other examples of contemporary history demonstrate that abrupt endings are not outside the bounds of the genre. Xenophon's *Anabasis* is even more abrupt, simply concluding with a calculation of the

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53. Harnack and Bruce, *Acts* (NICNT), p. 536 n. 49, but also Munck, *Acts*, p. 260.

54. Witherington III, *Acts*, 807.

55. Witherington III, *Acts*, 809.

duration (similar to Luke's calculation of Paul's house arrest) and distance of the epic journey, while Josephus gives a formal conclusion that is not much longer and only slightly less rhetorically abrupt. Acts' abrupt ending actually evokes Herodotus' conclusion to his *Histories* (9.122.4), in which he presents the audience with an ideological if not narrative resolution. In short, the chronological delimitations fit remarkably well with the established trends of Greco-Roman contemporary history. Both beginning and end are suitable to the scope of events promised in the preface, and both contribute significantly toward the particular interpretation of events Luke advocates.

### Subject

Without fail, every contemporary historical narrative surveyed thus far in this project concerns historical personalities engaged in political or military leadership, major events of state, or wars.<sup>56</sup> Even Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* addresses issues of political leadership in the last days of the Republic, though his focus is the moral atmosphere, not military expansion, of Rome. And Sallust, even more overtly than other historians, presents history as the *magistra vitae*, useful for teaching the following generations valuable lessons about wisdom, honor, and consequences.

Because Luke's protagonists are neither political nor military leaders, their historical reality is frankly obscure. Yet unlike novels, which existed outside of the historical timeline (e.g., *Leucippe and Clitophon*, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*), Luke seeks to overcome this obscurity by carefully seating his account within historically identified parameters such as the death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12.20-23), the famine during Claudius' reign (Acts 11.28), and again Claudius' edict expelling Jews from Rome (Acts 18.2). He further hinges his narrative on the lives and positions of public figures such as Gallio in Achaia (Acts 18.12), Antonius Felix (Acts 24.3), and Porcius Festus (Acts 25.9-12).<sup>57</sup>

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56. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 306-8.

57. Fitzmyer, "Acts," 138-39.



But name-dropping historical figures in no way fully compensates for Luke's apparent failure to comply with the basic historiographical convention of writing about events and people of worldwide significance (where, in this case, the world is the Roman Empire). Focusing a work of contemporary history on the growth of a religious movement would be unusual, even unique in the first century, and a major departure from the unanimous code shaping the genre. In addition, none of the contemporary historians include supernatural events within their narratives, though Herodotus does include the supernatural. In fact, Cicero criticizes him sharply for this, describing these accounts as "*fabulae*" (*On the Laws* 1.5).<sup>58</sup> Yet Luke unapologetically includes numerous accounts of the divine, even hinging major turns of the plot on acts attributed to the Spirit of God (Acts 10.44-48; 11.15-18).

Perhaps a closer look at the actual subject of Acts will reveal whether Luke transgresses a boundary or simply innovates within it. Luke frames his account in terms of his previous account of "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1.1). However, the one aspect of Jesus' teaching that Luke actually mentions here at the very beginning of Acts is Jesus' redefinition of Israel's political hopes. Instead of political power, he promises the Spirit and spiritual power; instead of ruling, he promises testimony (Acts 1.6-8). This is no coincidence; rather Luke is creating an interpretive lens for the story of Acts—a lens in which the Spirit presses the expansion of his kingdom forward, sealing its victory through the testimony of believers.

Luke restates this link between the growth of the church and the expansion of God's kingdom at critical points of the Acts account: when the gospel crosses that first great barrier between Jews and non-Jews (Acts 8.12), as a summary of Paul's missionary journeys (Acts 20.25), and at the close of Acts, reinforcing Luke's interpretation of events in terms of the expanding kingdom of God (Acts 28.31).<sup>59</sup> The overt organization of Acts into spheres of

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58. Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 184.

geographical expansion through witness<sup>60</sup> clues the reader in to Luke's actual subject: Acts tells the story not of the expansion of the Roman Empire, but of a spiritual empire that transcends the *Pax Romana*.<sup>61</sup> It is no surprise, then, that Luke finishes his account in Rome, with Jesus' promised kingdom expanding triumphantly in the very seat of Roman power (Acts 28.31).

This level of symbolic reality, however, finds no parallels in Greco-Roman contemporary history. In fact, it appears to constitute a blatant transgression of one of the core conventions governing the genre, casting some doubt on whether the book of Acts should actually be identified as contemporary history. Yet thus far, Acts has fallen well within the boundaries of the genre, and the realities of innovation—not only in shaping the genre but also in creating narratives that are appealing to their Greco-Roman audience—suggest that more may be involved in this text's composition than simply flouting authoritative traditions.

In this case, Josephus illuminates a path forward. Both his *Antiquities* and his *War* amply bear witness to the powerful influence of the centuries-long Jewish literary tradition. In fact, like his Second Temple peers, Josephus perceives no inconsistency in combining the traditions, interweaving Jewish faith and philosophical thought with Hellenistic rhetoric and conventions. Luke, whatever his own ethnic background, tells the story of a movement deeply influenced by that same Jewish literary tradition. In fact, the OT language of Acts, its themes, and even its rhetoric place Acts firmly within the Second Temple literary tradition as well.<sup>62</sup> For Daniel Marguerat, Acts is not so much an *apologia* to an external world as an extended answer to the question of internal self-definition, developing both the voice of the

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59. The phrase "kingdom of God" also occurs in specifically Jewish contexts, when Paul is reasoning within the synagogue or with Jewish leaders (Acts 19.8; 28.23).

60. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 575–76 See also Fitzmyer, "Acts," 119.

61. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Acts of the Apostles* (vol. 2 of *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 14.

62. Alexander, *Acts*, 42.

young church and its understanding of itself within the Greco-Roman world.<sup>63</sup> To accomplish this goal Luke straddles both the Jewish and Greco-Roman historiographic conventions, moving stylistically and structurally from a Jewish toward a more fully Hellenistic text as the church also moves from its roots in Jerusalem through the whole known Hellenistic world.<sup>64</sup>

Marguerat reaches his conclusions based on a predominantly thematic and theological reading of Acts, yet Darryl Palmer—approaching from a very different perspective—affirms Marguerat's essential argument that Acts exists in the liminal space between Jewish and Greco-Roman literary traditions.<sup>65</sup> He finds that 1 Esdras and the first two books of the Maccabees all demonstrate features described by Polybius, Sallust, and Cicero: subject matter (politics and war), length (a single volume), and chronological scope (limited) stand out as the most significant cues. The addition of religion as a major theme is common to all three texts yet is uncommon in Greco-Roman historical texts. Palmer finds this additional theme (particularly in 1 Esdras<sup>66</sup>) a telling feature that “anticipates the Acts of the Apostles.”<sup>67</sup> Further, Palmer finds the preface to 2 Maccabees, in its retrospective and prospective summaries, to “provide a link between this double background in the past and the future composition of Acts.”<sup>68</sup> Although Palmer does not draw out the comparison fully, it is clear that the features common to both these texts and Acts reveal a line of influence extending from Second Temple histories to the book of Acts. This line of influence, which extends back through history in the LXX, includes the belief in God’s personal activity within historical events.

Marion Soards draws similar conclusions regarding the subject of Acts in his definitive exploration of the rhetoric of Acts' speeches.<sup>69</sup> In addition to Semitic linguistic

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63. Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (trans. Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham; SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34.

64. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 24.

65. Palmer, “Historical Monograph.”

66. Palmer, “Historical Monograph,” 19.

67. Palmer, “Historical Monograph,” 19.

68. Palmer, “Historical Monograph,” 27.

features, Soards observes similarities of Acts' theology with Second Temple literature. He concludes that Acts follows in the footsteps of the Second Temple historiographies in assuming a Greco-Roman generic form to communicate a Jewish subject; in this case, the defense of religious beliefs<sup>70</sup> (much as we also see in Josephus' *Jewish War*). The structure—the framework of the text—thus belongs with the Greco-Roman histories, while the content is most at home with the LXX and with Second Temple history.<sup>71</sup>

Approaching the subject from a classical perspective, Loveday Alexander concurs with Palmer's thesis, observing that “the process of locating Luke's work on the map of Greco-Roman culture is not just a matter of identifying broad cultural patterns . . . but also of differentiating the particular social or sectarian threads that make up the broader picture.”<sup>72</sup> The sectarian threads picked up by Acts certainly include both this Hellenistic Jewish literary influence as well as the more purely Greco-Roman tradition of historiography, which explains why Alexander finds that elements of Acts—such as its preface—indicate that it “falls outside” the “formally defined” conventions of historiography and rhetoric.<sup>73</sup> In fact, Alexander goes so far as to say that the preface of Acts places it within the “continued Scripture” forum.<sup>74</sup>

Samson Uytanlet takes up the gauntlet thrown by Marguerat, Palmer, and—to a lesser extent—Alexander, reading Acts in the context of Jewish historiography.<sup>75</sup> Uytanlet's study

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69. Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

70. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 160.

71. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 160–61.

72. Alexander, *Acts*, 15.

73. Alexander, *Acts*, 18 Alexander cites the abrupt change from recapitulation to narrative as yet another sign that Acts does not feel bound to standard historiographical conventions (32). She suggests that technical manuals such as those written by Archimedes and Galen (although she also mentions Diodorus and Josephus) provide a better parallel to Acts' preface (38).

74. Alexander, *Acts*, 36 Although Alexander does not pick up this thread of genre study later in her work, it is significant that her conclusion cites the religious content of Acts as the primary reason Acts does not fit comfortably within the literary family of Greco-Roman historiography (156).

75. Samson Uytanlet, *Luke-Acts and Jewish Historiography: A Study on the Theology, Literature, and Ideology of Luke-Acts* (WUNT 2. Reihe 366; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

focuses primarily on literary and thematic elements characteristic of Jewish history, finding that Acts parallels their perspectives on issues such as divine rule, land, and divine involvement in history. In addition, he compares the ideology and themes of succession narratives in both Jewish and Greco-Roman texts, concluding that Acts consistently reflects uniquely Jewish perspectives and literary presentation of successors.<sup>76</sup>

As we have discovered, the social pressure of the agonistic Mediterranean world forced constant innovation within traditionally defined genres. Clever side-slip between genres was praised, not censured, and the liminal spaces between genre types and conventions were celebrated and shamelessly taken advantage of in the endless quest to distinguish one's work from one's competitors.<sup>77</sup> It is true that the subject of Acts technically falls within the genre's conventions as a story of empire expansion. However, the symbolic and spiritual facets of Luke's interpretation of his subject reveal that he has innovated heavily within and even across these boundaries.<sup>78</sup> Even this brief review of Jewish influences on the text of Acts confirms that Luke innovates along Jewish lines of thought. He draws on centuries of Jewish philosophy and faith to tell the story of the young church movement as the Spirit-driven expansion of a heavenly King and kingdom that transcends and triumphs over even the Roman Empire. By its subject alone, Acts proves to be both Greco-Roman and not, a creative interweaving of centuries of literary influences on either side of the Mediterranean.

As Clare Rothschild notes, "part of the art of historiography was to blend correspondences in hybrid formulations, the elements of which are familiar, the combination, new."<sup>79</sup> Given that Luke's subject involves a movement birthed in Judaism and poised to transcend the Greco-Roman world, his combination of Jewish-influenced content

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76. Uytanlet, *Luke-Acts and Jewish Historiography*, 76–80.

77. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 281–82.

78. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 205.

79. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts*, 102–3.

presented according to primarily Greco-Roman conventions is precisely the type of clever innovation that Greco-Roman historiography celebrates.

### Reception History

Unfortunately, we do not have contemporary commentary on the book of Acts that is as overt as Cicero's remarks on Caesar's *commentarii* (*Brutus*, 262). In fact, the first author to quote Acts explicitly is Irenaeus in the second century, and he does so in quantity.<sup>80</sup> However, we do find extensive evidence of shared traditions from much earlier. For examples, 2 Tim 3.11 describes persecutions suffered by Paul that are also related in Acts 13-14. 1 Clement 2:1 echoes a saying of Jesus spoken by Paul in Acts 20.35, while both 1 Clement 18:1 and Acts 13.22 combine Ps 89.21 with 1 Sam 13.14 (although Clement applies the Scripture in a somewhat different manner). The *Didache* describes apostles travelling from village to village (10:7; 11:3-12; 12:1-3), much as we see in Acts (e.g., 8.25). Polycarp in particular is noted for language that reflects Acts and may, according to C. K. Barrett, "supply a terminus ante quem for Acts" around 135 CE.<sup>81</sup>

A few decades later, Justin Martyr strongly echoes the first chapter of Acts in his *First Apology* (50.12), also alluding to other sections of Acts in his other works.<sup>82</sup> Much later (early in the fourth century), Eusebius places Acts firmly within the new canon as a historical account of the birth of the Christian movement (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.4.1). It is striking that he describes the account in terms of eyewitness testimony, first that of those personalities involved in the events, and second, that of Luke as one who observed events himself (and this last specific to the book of Acts).

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80. See C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 45.

81. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 36 For a much more complete discussion of shared traditions, allusions to, and quotations of Acts, see 16, 30, 34-45, particularly pp. 34-36.

82. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 41-43 See also Witherington III, *Acts*, 62.

The contexts of each of these post-biblical quotations of, references to, and echoes of Acts indicate the various authors' acceptance of the tradition they received (whether written or oral). There is no record of any criticism of Acts (excluding modern criticisms, of course) like that of Asinius Pollio's critique of Caesar's failure to adequately fact-check his sources (*Divi Iulius* 56.4). Instead, the clearer the link to Acts (particularly regarding quotations of the text), the more obviously these echoes and quotations function as appeals to authority, much as those we have observed in the contemporary historiographies we have surveyed.

The mixed nature of Acts as both religious and historical may seem to complicate matters, giving rise to the question of whether Acts was accepted as historical because it was accepted as religious and divinely inspired. However, the textual evidence we find in the earliest manuscripts suggests instead that Acts stands its historical ground independently of its canonical status. The various manuscripts of Acts represent a strong diversity of witnesses, and the tendency of the Western text to present more variants than other text families suggests to Barrett that scribes felt a freedom to "paraphrase and to enhance" because Acts does not relate the stories of Jesus or the apostles' written words.<sup>83</sup>

In other words, the issue at stake involves authority. Luke was neither a disciple nor a called apostle, and while he relates a historical narrative about the apostles, it cannot carry the authority of apostolic authorship. Yet early church fathers appealed to Acts as authoritative. If this authority was not derived from apostolic authorship, and textual evidence suggests that the church as a whole felt somewhat more free with its text, the authority of Acts most likely derives from its status as trusted history. Both actions and speech events are quoted and alluded to, indicating that the church fathers trusted that Luke's account was faithful to the actual historical events (including speech events<sup>84</sup>).

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83. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 28.

84. Though what faithfulness to speech events actually looked like is a matter for methodology, below.

Although the exact publication date of Acts is unknown, accepting the we-sections as the author's strategic use of internal focalization means that we must accept a publication date sometime within the first generation of the church, during Luke's lifetime.<sup>85</sup> There is no question, then, that some of Luke's contemporaries—including other eyewitnesses of events related in Acts—would still be alive at this point and would certainly be willing and able to criticize inconsistencies and failures in Luke's account. The cultural forces of honor and shame were alive and well in the church—as they were in the rest of society—and Luke's reputation (and that of the Acts account) would be dependent on his audience's perception of its faithfulness. The complete lack of criticism of Acts as a historical narrative, combined with the quantity and diversity of allusions to and quotations of text, together strongly affirm that these appeals to authority reflect Acts' reputation as faithful contemporary history.

Though the young church may not have known in the beginning exactly where to place Acts in relation to its other religious texts, it never had any question of where Acts was located in terms of its secular genre. From its publication, Acts has been accepted as contemporary history, and has apparently enjoyed a strongly authoritative reputation despite its equally strongly innovative qualities.

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85. Some argue for an early date, such as the early to mid-60s, because the ending of Acts seems unresolved to the modern reader: for example, Luke does not relate Paul's trial before Caesar or his death, and the continued relationship of Judaism with the Jesus movement does not seem to reflect the post-70 reality. See Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 365–410. For an earlier, definitive introduction to this view, see A. Harnack, *New Testament Studies, IV: The Date of Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911). However, assuming that Luke wrote his Gospel first (as indicated in Acts 1.1-2) strongly suggests a later, even post-70 date. This allows time for the publication of the first volume and may also explain the tone of the “optimistic legal apologetic” for a church that has successfully survived Nero's persecution (Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Vol. 1* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 400). For an expanded list of reasons for this view, see Fitzmyer, “Acts,” 54–55. Witherington also notes that the primitive Christology and ecclesiology of Acts, including the “lack of a developed theology of the cross,” combined with Luke's silence on significant issues facing the second-century church (including Gnosticism and Montanism), suggest that the text was published between the late 70s and early 80s (Witherington III, *Acts*, 62).



## Identifying Literary Influences and Relationships

While the above analysis of Acts based on Marincola's factors unquestionably identifies the account as contemporary history, the following assessment based on standards and conventions held by Luke's literary peers will reveal even more of its influences and thus its specific location within the genre. As we begin to more definitively identify the literary forces that shaped Acts, we will also see specific cues and boundaries for reading emerge from the text. These expectations and limitations carry implications for developing a hermeneutic sensitive to Acts as a historical document, shaped and limited by its historical-literary reality.

### Philosophy of History

Assessing Luke's philosophy of history involves answering questions of his understanding of the purpose of history and historiography as well as of his own role as historian. Historically, the issue of truth versus bias plays a significant role in a contemporary historian's concept of historiography as well. Unlike Caesar, Luke at least provides us with a preface to indicate the general direction we should proceed. But assessing his philosophy of history involves much more than simply reading his preface(s). The account as a whole must remain consistent with what he indicates in his purpose statement, or his preface simply serves as a red herring for naive readers.

The histories we have surveyed demonstrate that Cicero's claim still holds sway: *Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis* (*De Orat.* 2.36). In other words, history is at heart useful. It is useful as a testimony of real events too significant to fade out of memory, and it functions as guide to later generations. This is particularly the case in Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline*, where Catiline serves as the perfect example of what *not* to do as a citizen upholding the *virtus* and *moralia* of Roman society. Sallust himself is the witness whose authoritative and persuasive testimony calls his reader to the old Roman morality that values personal honor and virtue, even within the *agona* of

the *cursus honorum*.<sup>86</sup> We see Tacitus performing the same role in his *Agricola* as he bears witness to “the *virtus* of *Agricola* and it is his own *pietas* that is the most intimate justification for the work he has undertaken.”<sup>87</sup> The function of the witness, then, is to instruct the reader on the reality of past events or, perhaps more appropriately, on a particular interpretation of those events. In this sense, Nicolai argues, “The role of historiography acquires a profound ethical dimension that is not limited to traditional moral judgment, but in difficult times takes for itself the task of preserving and transmitting memory.”<sup>88</sup>

And it is that “ethical dimension” we see so very strongly in the Acts account, which not only bears witness to the growth of the Christ movement<sup>89</sup> but also communicates a coherent ethical and spiritual interpretation that unifies and drives the narrative. According to his preface to his Gospel,<sup>90</sup> Luke writes his histories in order to confirm what Theophilus has already been taught (Luke 1.4). There is no question for Luke that history is useful and a *magistra vitae*, as Cicero says. As the one who has compiled eyewitness accounts and arranged them into an accurate or orderly account,<sup>91</sup> Luke takes on the conventional role of historian as guide and interpreter. He establishes an authoritative narrative voice from the beginning of his account, describing not only his work in researching and compiling eyewitness accounts but also his own role as an eyewitness. His interpretation carries authority because he is immersed in the memories of those involved in the events, and his narratives are testimony of their (and his) voices as witnesses. This statement of affairs carries over into

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86. Callan argues that the criteria of usefulness had fallen by the wayside in favor of claims to truthfulness by the first century. However, the examples Callan provides all claim truth in the context of claims of impartiality or as a defense against accusations of over-embellishment (i.e., accusations of abandoning the hard core of facts for the sake of rhetorical elaboration). These texts by no means indicate that history’s role as a useful guide had been abandoned itself, but rather a renewed awareness of the dangers both bias and embellishment posed to historical faithfulness. See Callan, “Preface”.

87. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 25.

88. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 25.

89. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 25.

90. Which, as noted earlier, serves as the prequel to Acts; see Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 651.

91. Here using ἀκριβῶς, echoing in this context Thucydides’ prefatory remarks; see comments below on Luke’s methodology.

Acts with Luke's brief reminder to Theophilus of his previous account (Acts 1.1), thus linking not only the narratives but also Luke's authority and claims regarding their composition.<sup>92</sup>

Up to this point, Luke is fully in line with standard conventions regarding the purpose and nature of history and the role of the historian. Yet almost immediately he makes a sharp departure from convention: he begins his account unapologetically with the supernatural (Acts 1.2). In fact, throughout Acts, the Spirit of God is the driving force behind the growth of the church (e.g., 8.26; 13.2, 4; 16.7-10). But Greco-Roman contemporary history is without exception secular. It simply does not give credence to divine intervention.<sup>93</sup> Even where Thucydides is unable to avoid mentioning omens or oracles that influenced personalities or the outcome of events, he derides those who put faith in such things (as opposed to Herodotus, who occasionally affirms local superstition or stories of divine intervention).<sup>94</sup>

This trend only gained strength after Thucydides, reflecting a growing skepticism regarding the pantheon.<sup>95</sup> For the average Hellenistic reader, Luke's inclusion of the Spirit's involvement and especially of miracle stories (e.g., Acts 2.1-13; 3.1-10; 5.12-16) would definitely strain the plausibility of Luke's narrative. Conventionally, miracle stories tended to be taken as indications of mendacity in history.<sup>96</sup> In fact, including such accounts would give rise to accusations of abandoning the hard core of facts for the sake of effect and

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92. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 651 See also Witherington III, *Acts*, 9. In support of his argument, Witherington footnotes Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 331: "The reference back to the 'former book' and summary of its contents are the clear signs of a secondary preface ... which presupposes an earlier proemium."

93. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 21.

94. Gregory, *The Presocratics and the Supernatural*, 120 Cicero also sharply criticizes Herodotus for his gullibility in including such accounts of the supernatural; see Brunt, *Greek History and Thought*, 184.

95. Brad Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (New York: Cambridge University, 2003), 177 See also Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (vol. 1 of *Judaism and Hellenism*; Martin Hengel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 248. Wiseman argues that the historians' refusal to entertain stories of the supernatural reflects their philosophical conclusions regarding the divine, not their commitment to historical reliability. See Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics*, 158-59.

96. T. P. Wiseman, "Lying Historians: Seven Types of Mendacity," in *Greek and Roman Historians* (ed. John Marincola; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 319-21; Wiseman, "Lying Historians," 319-21.

rhetorical elaboration.<sup>97</sup> From a historical standpoint, Luke seems to undermine his own assertions of personal inquiry and eyewitness testimony by including these stories of the supernatural. Why, then, does he place such immediate and continued emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts?

One explanation of Luke's inclusion of the work of the Spirit is the influence of Jewish thought. First-century Judaism inherited a strong tradition of a God who works on behalf of his people. Yet not even Second Temple literature features the degree of personal, direct intervention observable in Acts. The distant providence of God, particularly for those who remain faithful to him, is a frequent theme of Second Temple literature (e.g., *Joseph and Asenath*, *Letter of Aristeas*, *Judith*, *Bel and the Dragon*). But Acts moves far beyond providence and rewards for faithfulness with its accounts of believers receiving the Spirit (e.g., Acts 2, 10) and of the Spirit's direct activity in the lives of those believers (e.g., Acts 8.26-40; 16.7-10). While the influence of Jewish literature and thought is undeniable, Luke's account echoes the activity of the Spirit we see among the prophets in the LXX, particularly Joel. In fact, Peter's quotation of Joel 2.28-32 in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2.17-20) finally clues the reader into the full picture of Luke's philosophy of history.

By placing the work of the Spirit front and center in Acts, Luke is communicating a definite shift in his philosophy of history: *his is a post-Pentecost concept of history in which real history includes the real-time, historical activity of a personal God deeply invested in expanding his kingdom to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8).*<sup>98</sup> And Luke, in his role as guide and interpreter, is equally deeply invested in drawing attention to God's role in the historical growth of his kingdom. There is no conventional philosophy of history, says Luke, that can account for Pentecost apart from the real, historical intervention of a personal God. And his consistent portrayal throughout Acts of the Spirit as catalyst in the expansion of the kingdom<sup>99</sup>

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97. Wiseman, "Lying Historians," 327.

98. See, from a slightly different perspective, Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, particularly pp. 42-52.

challenges the reader to come face to face with Pentecost. By the end of Acts, either Paul sits a prisoner in Rome, bound to a failing movement birthed in a vanquished state, or Paul is a herald of a transcendent new kingdom, God's kingdom, poised to triumph over the highest power in the first century.

It is surprising that Luke makes no overt claim to relate his account truthfully. Nor does he express the standard denial of bias. Instead, he claims to present testimony that will affirm things already taught (Luke 1.1-4). The implication, of course, is that his account bears a true witness to events, a true interpretation of the church's birth. However, he does not make this claim explicit. Luke's challenge is to see the world through the eyes of Pentecost, and his philosophy of history forces the modern reader, in particular, to grapple with his or her own eyes to experience the work of the Spirit through the testimony of the narrative and so prove its truth both directly and personally.<sup>100</sup>

## Methodology

Lucian of Samosata instructs would-be historians to use a preface to appeal for open, attentive minds in their audiences (*Hist. Conscr.* 53). Thucydides uses a description of his methodology to achieve this end (*Histories* 1.21-22), clearly assuming that his methodology would be a powerful argument in favor of the quality and legitimacy of the final composition. Ammianus follows suit in his introduction to the contemporary portions of his history (Ammianus, *Res Gest.* 15.1), and Luke sits neatly in the chronological middle of this path of influence. His references to composing a carefully ordered account (ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς,<sup>101</sup> Luke 1.3) based on eyewitness testimony (οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται, Luke 1.2)<sup>102</sup> echoes language from both Thucydides and Ammianus, claiming a methodology that

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99. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 520.

100. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 56.

101. This could also be translated as "accurately ordered."

102. Some of which, of course, is his own testimony of his personal experiences. See 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16.

prioritizes eyewitness testimony in the research phase but also relies on the historian's judgment in the faithful arrangement of the account.<sup>103</sup> Further, Luke describes the eyewitness reports as accounts that were “handed down” (παρέδοσαν, Luke 1.2), likely evoking “the technical language of traditioning.”<sup>104</sup>

The other historian so very influential along this branch of contemporary history is Polybius, and Luke's priorities parallel those of Polybius quite neatly. Of the contemporary historians, it is doubtful any put quite so much emphasis on personal autopsy and eyewitness testimony as Polybius (*Histories* 1.15.9; 12.25e-25h). Further, Polybius' emphasis on the role of experience extended beyond the task of autopsy into that of arrangement and interpretation when he argues that only historians with experience of their subject are fully capable to both interview witnesses effectively and interpret events accurately (*Histories* 12.25h.10).

Luke presents his methodology, then, according to the very highest standards available. In so doing he both layers Thucydides' authoritative voice atop his own and also clearly appeals to the branch of contemporary history that consistently retains the highest reputation. The methodology Luke claims is of the highest caliber. When faced with such strong claims, though, it is essential to assess the evidence of Luke's practice, not just his claims about his work. In keeping with the process used to assess the methodology of other contemporary historians, we will examine both the internal and external evidence of Luke's

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103. Loveday Alexander observes that Luke's preface also uses terms common to scientific treatises. Marincola explores the similarities as well, concluding that the empiricism that developed into prioritizing autopsy in history emerged out of philosophy and medicine. He notes that Polybius also relates historical inquiry to medical practice in that the trained skill of observation is most effectively combined with practical experience. This integration of observation and experience fits Polybius' own ideal historian perfectly (see *Histories* 12.25d.2-7). In effect, the scientific qualities Alexander sees in Luke's preface emerge out of this well-established relationship between empirical sciences and historiography. See Loveday C.A. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 44-101 and Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 74-75.

104. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 660.

methodology in practice. The results of these analyses will indicate how closely Luke appears to follow his hard core of facts, particularly in comparison to other contemporary historians.

#### Internal Evidence: The Events of Acts

The internal evidence in the book of Acts includes not only the narrative of the events themselves, but the speech-events as well. Examining events as internal evidence involves looking for obvious examples of bias within the narrative where Luke obviously skips events to retain face or narrates events with obvious spin. For example, when reading Caesar's *Gallic War*, it is apparent that Caesar skips over his ignominious defeat at the hands of the Germans, instead distracting his audience with an ethnographic aside (*Bello Gallico* 6.11-28) and effectively blaming his retreat on the onset of winter. Instead of Caesar's clear personal bias, we find instead Luke's willingness to narrate uncomfortable episodes in the growth of the young movement. In fact, these episodes are by and large narrated simply, without the expected spin to demonstrate the virtues of the infant movement.

The best example of this is found in Acts 5.1-11, the account of Ananias and Saphira. This is an odd story, at best: after recounting the success of the early church in Jerusalem, Luke relates the deception of two believers and the subsequent instantaneous death of both husband and wife upon Peter's accusation. The account ends with a summary statement describing the respect ("fear") of believers for the work of God's Spirit (Acts 5.11). This is not an account that shows the church in a good light. In fact, the entire episode is an embarrassment: there is familial deceit that dishonors the entire social group, followed by disciplinary action that seems shockingly harsh, particularly to the modern reader. The forgiveness and compassion that characterizes the grace of Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2) appears completely absent.

And there is no speech by Ananias, explaining his rationale for deception, nor is there a neatly structured speech by Peter, explaining the situation and theology of the deaths, possibly softening the harshness of the episode. In fact, the drama of the event nearly

demands for a speech, according to the example of other contemporary histories. But instead, the account is narrated simply, and Peter's conversational direct speech by no means fits the expectation of a rhetorical moment. There is no apology, nor does Luke insert his narrative voice giving the proper interpretation of events.

Luke's inclusion of the story, the simplicity of his style, and the use of names (Ananias and Saphira) suggest that the account was well-known in the Jerusalem church and formed part of the hard core of facts Luke received from eyewitnesses. Richard Bauckham, in his study of eyewitness testimony in the Gospels, argues that the use of names (outside of publicly recognized individuals such as rulers) in contemporary history frequently indicates individuals known to the audience, most of whom are eyewitnesses of the events in which they are mentioned.<sup>105</sup> In this case, Ananias and Saphira are likely known by the church but not, of course, as witnesses. Rather they are bywords, examples inspiring believers to virtuous behavior: *historia est magistra vitae*.

Further, if—as Woodman notes—“an historian was faced with an awkward but true hard core, he was under an obligation not to omit it: on the contrary, he should employ all his rhetorical skill to put a good interpretation upon it.”<sup>106</sup> And it is telling that Luke neither capitalizes on the supernatural drama within the account nor uses it overtly to enhance the reputations of key participants. There is no rhetorical elaboration describing the role of God's Spirit in the two deaths; in fact, the very lack of elaboration gives the account drama and plausibility that a miracle-story rhetorical approach would overwhelm. In addition, Peter is nearly brusque and certainly a little terrifying in his unexpected omniscience, and the audience witnesses a very different side to his character than that seen at Pentecost.

Instead, Luke allows the understated approach to draw all eyes to the honor of God's Spirit in the account: the issue is dishonoring God, and God responds directly, upholding his

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105. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 39–55.

106. Woodman, “Cicero and the Writing of History,” 271–72.



own honor. The reputation of the church benefits only in terms of respect by the public due to the terrifyingly swift response of the Spirit of God. In a similar way, Luke fails to take advantage of his we-sections to benefit his own reputation as anything other than an eyewitness of events, and Luke's participation is nearly lost as he downplays himself in order to focus on the movement of God's Spirit and Paul's response to God's invitation (see particularly Acts 16.6-10).

Luke's inclusion of awkward episodes and his failure to promote individuals (including himself) above the work of the Spirit suggests a strong degree of faithfulness to his received hard core. This is, of course, in keeping with Greco-Roman conventions. His clear lack of personal bias would suggest to his audience that he has no agenda which would motivate him to depart from the truth as he received it. And Luke's interpretation of the Ananias and Saphira episode is fully within historiographical conventions and in line with his stated methodology: he includes the hard core, but arranges and interprets it in keeping with his role as historian and guide to past events. The events Luke is willing to include and his failure to take advantage of opportunities to praise or blame personalities participating in the events of Acts would strongly suggest to Luke's audience that his methodological praxis—particularly in research and arrangement—supports his claims in his prefaces.

In Greco-Roman history, speech also functions as a type of event, particularly methodologically. For both speech and event, the role of the historian is to research the hard core of facts, then arrange and elaborate it according to rhetorical conventions, yet without abandoning that hard core of facts. Modern expectations of recording speeches create vastly unrealistic expectations for reported ancient speeches: while ancient memories were often uncannily superb, verbatim reports of speeches were unusual and are almost impossible for

modern readers to ascertain. James Dunn reflects this view when he asserts that Luke's audience would not expect more than Luke's summaries of speeches.<sup>107</sup>

For this reason, assessing the speeches of Acts for Luke's methodological praxis is a matter of examining the degree of rhetorical elaboration, their fit to historical context, and to some extent their fit to the speaker. In other words, speeches in contemporary history that evidence a high degree of rhetorical elaboration, particularly elaboration that demonstrates a better fit to the historian's narrative voice than to that of the speaker suggests that the hard core of facts may be less evident than speeches that do not demonstrate these qualities. On the other hand, uneven styles between speeches, differences in length, and elaboration in keeping with the speaker's level of education may suggest less rhetorical ornamentation over the hard core.<sup>108</sup>

For example, Josephus' speeches echo his own language as narrator throughout his history,<sup>109</sup> making the hard core of facts underlying the speeches difficult to discern. When faced with two versions of the same speech (Herod's speech near Philadelphia; see *Antiquities* 15.127-146 and *War* 1.373-379), it is clear that the two speeches share the same essential hard core, yet the *exaedificatio* is elaborate—and different—for both. Identifying the hard core on the basis of one alone would be truly impossible. In the same way, identifying the exact hard core underlying an individual speech in Acts is impossible.<sup>110</sup> However, assessing the potential likelihood of a greater or lesser degree of hard core based on conventional factors accepted by the Greco-Roman contemporary historians themselves is by no means implausible.<sup>111</sup> Comparison to the author's treatment of sources elsewhere in the text (or in

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107. James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth, 1996), xvii-xviii.

108. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 78.

109. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 77.

110. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 280.

111. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 76-78.

another text by the same author) could, however, suggest likely aspects of both speech and event that adhere more closely to the author's received hard core.

The length of speeches (on average) in Acts is striking when compared with other examples of contemporary history.<sup>112</sup> It is possible that the shorter speeches reflect a lower level of education on Luke's part in comparison with other historians,<sup>113</sup> but actually reading the speeches of Acts also demonstrates that they evidence far less rhetorical elaboration on average than other speeches in contemporary history, such as Catiline's address to his troops (*Cat.* 58) or Agricola's speech to his critics (*Agr.* 33-34). This is striking, considering that both Sallust and Tacitus are known for their stylistic brevity. While of course less rhetorical elaboration may point further to a lack of education, Luke demonstrates a level of rhetorical skill in Paul's forensic speeches (before fellow Jews, Acts 22.1-22; Felix, Acts 24.10-21; before Agrippa, Acts 26.2-23) that suggests his brevity in previous speeches is a deliberate, even strategic decision and not simply lack of ability.<sup>114</sup>

In addition, the speeches by Catiline and Agricola (mentioned above) evidence a common feature in forensic speeches: each are paired with speeches by their opposition. "A historian of the Greco-Roman tradition," notes Osvaldo Padilla, "should capitalize on any opportunity to bring out the polemical culture of rhetoric, and putting opposing speeches side by side was a preferred method."<sup>115</sup> Yet Stephen's speech (Acts 7.2-53) and Paul's defense speeches feature no such paired speeches, even when Stephen faces accusers in court (Acts 6.11-14) and Paul is clearly pitted against a professional orator, Tertullus (Acts 24.1-8). Given the rhetorical skill evident in these speeches,<sup>116</sup> Luke's reticence to pair speeches in forensic contexts again suggests that Luke prefers to remain faithful to the hard core of facts he has received instead of inventing speeches for the sake of rhetorical effect.<sup>117</sup>

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112. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 141.

113. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*.

114. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 142-43, 147; Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 259-61, 282.

115. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 144.

116. Witherington III, *Acts*, 260-65 See also Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 260-61.

In fact, both Stephen's and Paul's forensic speeches bear evidence of very different styles of rhetoric. Stephen's speech in particular does not reflect Luke in either style or arrangement, instead echoing to a remarkable degree the LXX in both quotation and style,<sup>118</sup> with strong parallels also reflecting the Samaritan Pentateuch.<sup>119</sup> *While it is the longest of the speeches in Acts, it is also the least Lukan rhetorically, suggesting again that Luke prefers to adhere faithfully to his sources.*

Paul's defense before his fellow Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 22.1-22) also features Jewish content, but is otherwise very Greco-Roman in both style and arrangement, even using the technical forensic term ἀπολογία, which cues the audience to prepare for a formal defense.<sup>120</sup> This speech offers a unique opportunity to assess Luke's internal coherence: this is the second retelling of Paul's conversion, and is specifically oriented for his Jewish audience. The entire experience is cast in terms of the divine call on the prophet,<sup>121</sup> and the conversion of the persecutor of Acts 9 becomes Paul's prophetic vocation as a witness of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, to both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>122</sup> Yet while the speech is clearly rhetorically cast to evoke a particular interpretation for the Jewish leaders, the events related within the speech are consistent with the events of Acts 9, as are the events related in Paul's defense speech before Agrippa.<sup>123</sup>

Other speeches given in the context of the Jewish church offer a different type of case study in our quest to examine Luke's methodology via internal evidence. For example, Acts reflects the use of more primitive titles for Christ, including "the Nazarene" (Acts 3.6; 4.10),

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117. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 144, 147.

118. J. B. Lightfoot, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The Acts of the Apostles: A Newly Discovered Commentary* (eds. Ben Witherington III and Todd Still; The Lightfoot Legacy; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 111-12, 132-33.

119. Witherington III, *Acts*, 265.

120. Witherington III, *Acts*, 66-668.

121. Odile Flichy, *La Figure de Paul dans les Acts Des Apotres: Un Phenomene de Reception de la Tradition Paulinienne a la Fin Du Premier Siecle* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2008), 116, 121.

122. Flichy, *La Figure de Paul*, 122.

123. For a useful table comparing the three accounts, see Witherington III, *Acts*, 305.

in speeches from the early days of the church.<sup>124</sup> Retaining these early titles is useful only if they reflect Luke's sources: his audience belongs to the later days of the early church and would not use these titles nor notice their absence. Peter's speeches also evidence Semitisms that occur nowhere else in Luke's writing, suggesting that Luke is composing these speeches based on a strong tradition he prefers to follow closely.<sup>125</sup> A comparison of Peter's speeches with those of Paul further demonstrates that Luke's grasp of Jewish hermeneutics is excellent and historically accurate, yet elsewhere Luke does not demonstrate this same facility.<sup>126</sup>

We observed a similar phenomenon in Polybius' *Histories*, where the speeches appear to be lacking in rhetorical polish to the extent that Walbank concludes Polybius is deliberately following his source at the expense of the narrative's erudition and style.<sup>127</sup> In the same way, either Luke is—again—closely following his received hard core, or he had received a tradition regarding the type of hermeneutics used by both Peter and Paul when addressing fellow Jews. It is true that these may all be understood as Luke's deliberate attempts to adapt his rhetoric to the Jewish context. However, these essentially rhetorical features also imply Luke's understanding as a historian that, as Keener observes, "the preaching in Jerusalem differed from Paul's preaching, pointing in the direction of tradition (at least concerning the language and ideas of the earlier church)."<sup>128</sup> Thus even if one assumes that Luke received a minimal hard core, he clearly preferred to follow it as closely as possible.

Although the speeches vary stylistically from the beginning to the end of Acts, their differences are not as striking as are their similarities. It is these similarities that prompts Keener to observe that "the apologetic themes and the ways the speeches develop them

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124. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 313.

125. Gasque, "The Speeches of Acts," 249.

126. Gasque, "The Speeches of Acts," 248.

127. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 256, 259–60.

128. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 313.

reflect more similarity among the speeches themselves than with literature outside Luke-Acts.”<sup>129</sup> The consistency of the themes brings home even more profoundly Luke’s emphasis on testimony: the speeches bear witness, as does the narrative, to the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.<sup>130</sup>

In fact, the speeches so clearly carry on the movement of the narrative<sup>131</sup> that it is impossible not to see the influence of Polybius on Luke’s strategic use of this event-speech dynamic to move the narrative forward.<sup>132</sup> The thematic similarities between speeches may indicate that Luke includes only the elements he considers essential to this forward movement,<sup>133</sup> but given Luke’s tendency to hold fast to his sources, these similarities also strongly imply the reality of a very strong, consistent hard core of fact acting as the bare bones of Acts’ speeches. In other words, the reason the speeches sound so similar, regardless of any changes in argument due to context, is simply that from the very beginning, the church was astonishingly clear on precisely what the gospel message was, and then never wavered from that essential message.

#### External Evidence: The Historical and Canonical Witness

Examining the external evidence of Luke’s methodological praxis is essentially a matter of comparing the Acts account both to known historical figures and events as well as to parallel accounts in other texts. The goal of this exercise, of course, is to assess how closely Luke’s account coheres with these other sources.<sup>134</sup> The more closely Acts dovetails with known historical facts and shared traditions, the more likely that Luke intentionally remains faithful to his received hard core.

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129. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 306.

130. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 199–204.

131. Aune, *New Testament*, 125.

132. Witherington III, *Acts*, 33.

133. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 306.

134. These will be of necessity somewhat abbreviated; much of this work has been done, and done well over the past several decades of Acts scholarship. See in particular Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, and (earlier) Hemer, *Book of Acts*.

In the wider world of Greco-Roman history, it is somewhat common to provide the appropriate annals to establish the historical context of the narrative to follow.<sup>135</sup> This is not as common among the contemporary historiographers, possibly because their subject is known to the audience; there is no need to provide dates for events that the audience remembers clearly.<sup>136</sup> Instead, Luke anchors his account with strategic name-dropping.

For example, linking Annas and Caiaphas in Acts 4.6 establishes a *terminus ante quem* of 36 CE (when Caiaphas was deposed). Gamaliel (Acts 5.34) is a well-known rabbinic teacher of the mid-first century, and Herod (here Herod Agrippa, Acts 12) is of course well-documented. Gallio is one of the most famous names Luke mentions (Acts 18.12); he is also mentioned in a letter from Claudius, and his time in office may be narrowed down to 51 or 52 CE.<sup>137</sup> The high priest Ananias (Acts 23.2) was appointed by Herod of Chalsis around 47 CE (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.5.2.103), and Drusilla's marriage to Felix (soon after her first marriage in 53 CE; see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.7.138-9) is accurately noted in Acts 24.24.

In addition, Luke accurately places major events in the empirical timeline. In Acts 11.28, he mentions a famine during Claudius' reign; Suetonius provides external corroboration for multiple famines dating from 41-54 CE (*Claudius* 18.2).<sup>138</sup> Within the same time period we also find Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth due to Claudius' edict forcing Jews out of Rome (Acts 18.2). Multiple external sources date such an edict to either 41 or 49 CE,<sup>139</sup> which is consistent with Luke's account (see Orosius, *Hist. adv. Paganos* 7.6.15, who possibly follows Julius Africanus; see also Cassius Dio, 60.6.6 and Suetonius, *Claudius* 25). The historical record indicates Claudius made multiple edicts against Jews and their practice of Judaism, and publishing an edict ejecting Jews from Rome would be consistent with this

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135. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 95.

136. Richard Bauckham notes particularly that accounts based on eyewitness testimony tend to exclude dates in the final composition. See Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 333.

137. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 252.

138. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 164.

139. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 167.

tendency. In addition, these external sources emerge out of a different yet parallel tradition than that of Acts, making a compelling argument for Luke's historical accuracy.<sup>140</sup>

Luke's shipwreck account is also particularly rich in historical detail. In fact, the account is so detailed that the narrative slows to a dramatic crawl in order to fit all of the action into the episode. The nautical details reflect a thorough understanding not only of travel by sea in the first century, but also of standard procedure in the face of an overwhelming storm and unavoidable disaster.<sup>141</sup> Shipwreck was a common literary disaster used by authors to add drama to an account, so the *topos* of disaster at sea would have been readily available to Luke. However, Luke's detailed knowledge of nautical procedures and his accurate account of the winds, the speed of the ship, and of geography (including the relatively unknown beach that was their final destination) together create a compelling argument that Luke is instead following a very detailed hard core behind the composition. In addition, although Luke himself seems to disappear in the shipwreck account proper, he clearly indicates that he was present for the entire voyage (Acts 27.1-8; 28.1). His presence would help explain the dramatic shift in narrative speed, since his own memories would provide the wealth of detail needed to fully flesh out the drama of the episode.

Yet Luke's attention to detail and his faithful rendering of the hard core is not limited to his own eyewitness testimony. Although we do not have parallel accounts of Acts we may use to assess Luke's use of sources, we do have that luxury with Luke's Gospel. Luke's use of the Synoptic tradition demonstrates that while he freely adapted some material, "much of the Gospel is tightly bound to its sources in depicting events, sayings, and even many of the details of these events."<sup>142</sup> It stands to reason that we may expect Luke to treat his sources for the book of Acts in the same way.<sup>143</sup>

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140. Witherington III, *Acts*, 539–44 See also Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 2705–8.

141. Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 3605–53 See also Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 331–33 and J. Smith, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 124–27.



While Luke's Gospel allows us to compare Luke's methodology in general, the Pauline letters offer us a unique opportunity to compare both events and speeches with the Pauline tradition. For example, Keener notes that the Acts account of Paul's missionary journeys, the evidence of the Pauline letters, and the claims of the churches themselves are all consistent with one another, indicating that Luke's account of these journeys is based on a strong hard core.<sup>144</sup> Further, in his first letter to Timothy, Paul uses a précis of his conversion as a proof of the grace of God's gospel (1 Tim 1.12-15). Both the events he relates and his interpretation of them are consistent with Luke's account in Acts 9.

In addition, Paul boasts tongue-in-cheek (2 Cor. 11.16-33) of his qualifications and various persecutions that together seem to materially legitimize his claim to apostleship. His claims regarding his birth and education are consistent with his pre-conversion character in Acts (Acts 7.58-8.3; 9.1-2): an educated Jew, zealous for the Law (a description frequently applied to Pharisees; see Josephus, *War* 2.162), with contacts in high places, determined to eradicate the new sect of the Nazarenes.<sup>145</sup> Further, Paul's list of persecutions suffered are echoed in Acts, including being beaten (2 Cor 11.25 // Acts 16.22), stoned (2 Cor 15.24 // Acts 14.19), and shipwrecked (2 Cor 15.25 // Acts 27). Finally, Paul's dramatic escape in a basket down the wall of Damascus is related in Acts 9.24-25, while his preference to support himself financially is echoed in Acts 18.3.

Paul's letter to the Galatians provides even more insight into Paul's personality and early post-conversion experiences. Galatians 1 recounts these years in Paul's own words, but the outline of events is consistent with Luke's account in Acts 9.<sup>146</sup> Paul's account in

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142. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 178.

143. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 139.

144. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 242 Keener also provides a helpful table listing individuals mentioned in both Acts account and in Paul's letters. It is striking that individuals mentioned in Paul's letters frequently reflect not only the Acts context in which we first encounter them but also continue in similar roles when we next encounter them in the Pauline letters. See Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 243.

145. The tradition of Saul's role in the early persecution of the church is undeniable and completely consistent with the evidence from Acts 8-9: see 1 Cor. 15.9; Gal. 1.13-14; and Phil. 3.6.

146. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 241-42 Also, see the helpful discussion in Witherington III, *Acts*, 88-90.

Galatians 2 of his experiences—particularly his journeys to Jerusalem—have proven somewhat more problematic, however. It is important to recall that Paul is not composing a historical account in Galatians; his account of his life is apologetic in focus. Thus his emphasis is not on providing a chronological account of his experiences, but on developing a thematically coherent and compelling argument.<sup>147</sup> The basic events correspond: Paul journeys to Jerusalem with Barnabas in response to a “revelation” (possibly that of Acts 11.27-29?), to confer with the leaders of the church, and essentially to receive validation of the gospel he has to this point been preaching (Gal 2.1-2). There is no need to reckon the fourteen years mentioned by Paul according to modern standards; instead, using the less precise but more historically appropriate reckoning we find in other Greco-Roman texts, these fourteen years may refer roughly to the elapsed time between Paul’s first (Acts 9.26-29) and second visits (Acts 11.30) to Jerusalem, around 37 and 48 CE, respectively.<sup>148</sup>

This interpretation of Galatians 1.18 and 2.1 is straightforward and has the added benefit of somewhat clarifying the sticky chronology of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). If the Jerusalem Council had already been held when Paul wrote Galatians, he would be responding to issues technically already resolved by church leadership.<sup>149</sup> Thus the two visits Paul mentions are only the first two visits recorded by Luke. The purposes of the second visit complicate the issue, though: according to Luke, Paul’s second visit was intended as famine relief (11.30), while Paul clearly considers clarifying the gospel to be the significant point of the visit (Gal 2.1-2). Witherington does point out, however, that the “revelation” that motivates Paul’s visit is not necessarily directly from God: this could legitimately refer to Agabus’ prophecy of the famine.<sup>150</sup> Even more to the point, the motivating (and public) factor of Paul’s second visit does not have to coincide exactly with Paul’s retrospective

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147. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 232.

148. Witherington III, *Acts*, 89.

149. Witherington III, *Acts*, 92.

150. Witherington III, *Acts*, 92.

assessment of the visit's significance (particularly when he notes that his visit with the Jerusalem leadership was at that point still a private matter; see Gal 2.2).

Thus we can see that the chronological account set forth by Luke is consistent with Paul's account in Galatians not because the issues may be twisted to fit Luke's chronology, but because this is a straightforward interpretation of the account that also fits the earlier chronology. In addition, both the incidental details and even the entire subject of Galatians make more sense when the visits Paul describes in Galatians are the first two related by Luke in Acts.<sup>151</sup>

It is much more difficult to assess the speeches via external evidence than it is to assess events. Simply put, an author may refer to an event in another text, but rarely does an author refer to a speech outside of a historical narrative. However, we do have the advantage of comparing Paul's patterns of thought to those evidenced in Paul's speeches in Acts. Because these speeches are related by Luke and essentially pass through Luke's rhetorical filter, any such comparison must be along the lines of broad strokes, not detailed comparisons. Finding external evidence against which to read Paul's speeches is further complicated by the fact that almost all of Paul's speeches are intended to persuade his audience to believe in the gospel of Jesus. All of Paul's letters, on the other hand, are written to an audience of believers. Paul's concerns are completely different in these two contexts, and we can expect that his purposes, arguments, language, and general subject will also be vastly different.

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151. Alternatively, Keener argues that Galatians 2 relates the events of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. He notes that the two accounts demonstrate strong parallels in subject matter, in the meeting's result, in the parties involved, and the council's recognition of Paul's mission to the Gentiles (see Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 244). Although approaching the text from a different perspective, this reading also requires no ungainly contortions of the chronology and accurately reflects the concerns of the letter as a whole. There is clearly no need to assume an inherent failure of historicity in either Acts or Paul's letter to the Galatians: as historical documents, they merge quite well to describe the same historical event faithfully, but from different perspectives.

However, there are two exceptions that may prove to be fruitful avenues of exploration. First, we may compare Paul's own concept of his gospel proclamation with Luke's account of his preaching. Second, Luke does record one small speech given to believers. Before his final journey to Jerusalem, Paul call the elders of Ephesus to meet him in Miletus for one final address (Acts 20.13-38). We will examine this farewell address in comparison with another text focusing on final things, and see what the Miletus speech and 1 Thessalonians reveal of Paul's themes and Luke's interpretation of Paul's concerns for believers.<sup>152</sup>

In his examination of the Miletus speech, Steve Walton identifies four significant themes: suffering, a healthy perspective on work and wealth, faithful leadership, and the death of Jesus.<sup>153</sup> A comparison with 1 Thessalonians demonstrates the same four major themes structuring the letter, as well as a shared emphasis on the roles of service, testimony, and the gospel of Jesus.<sup>154</sup> However, differences in style and theology (the Miletus speech reflects none of the eschatological concerns of 1 Thessalonians) strongly suggest that Luke had no knowledge of Paul's letter when he wrote Acts.<sup>155</sup> The shared themes, though, are evidence that Luke was deeply familiar with Paul's pastoral concerns, meaning not only that Luke's Paul is not so very far away from the Paul of the letters<sup>156</sup> (particularly when the audience is the same), but also that even though Luke may not have had specific testimony of each Pauline speech, he was in a unique position to replicate Paul's farewell address plausibly, simply because he knew Paul's concerns so well.

Luke's familiarity with Paul's themes comes through even more clearly in his accounts of Paul's gospel proclamation. Because of the differences in audience and Paul's

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152. This comparison will largely follow that of Steve Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

153. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 98–107.

154. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 184–86.

155. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 211.

156. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 213.

concerns, none of Paul's letters are an adequate *in toto* parallel to the Pauline evangelistic speeches in Acts. However, in 1 Cor 15.1-8, Paul summarizes his gospel proclamation as part of his affirmation of Jesus' resurrection and its implications for believers. In vv. 4-8 he emphasizes the resurrection appearances of Jesus as proofs of his bodily resurrection, but 15.1-3 contain the essential core of the gospel Paul preached: Christ died for the sins of all, fulfilling prophecies of redemption, and was buried and raised on the third day, thus also fulfilling Scripture in his resurrection. The very first Pauline gospel proclamation Luke recounts reflects this précis exactly: Paul demonstrates how Jesus fulfills Scripture as the Christ (Acts 13.16-26), describes Jesus' death (13.27-29), and relates Jesus' resurrection, particularly in terms of the fulfillment of Scripture (13.30-37). Paul ends his speech with the emotional call to response typical of deliberative rhetoric (13.38-41).

In a very different setting, Paul addresses pagan Greeks in the Areopagus. Though he cannot appeal to Scripture with this audience, he nonetheless appeals to Greek philosophy to demonstrate humanity's need for a Way back to true knowledge of God (Acts 17.22-29). It is in fact a very clever philosophical framing of humanity's need for a Savior. And once Paul has made his argument for humanity's need, he obliquely introduces Jesus as God's solution to ignorance, proved via resurrection from the dead (17.30-31). Even in this very different context, Paul manages to communicate an intrinsically Jewish concept of humanity's need and God's solution, yet in Greek terms—and faithfully adhering to the same essential core he describes in 1 Cor 15.1-3.<sup>157</sup>

E. P. Sanders is correct that it is unwise to attempt to use Luke's account of Paul as a source for Pauline thought, in particular because there exists a Lukan rhetorical filter between the reader and Luke's hard core of facts. However, the clear consistency between Paul's summary of the gospel and Luke's presentation of Paul's gospel proclamation

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157. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 432.

indicates that it is nonetheless true that Luke's Pauline speeches do indeed reflect the real Paul.<sup>158</sup> It is important not to overlook the early church's consistency as a whole in the proclamation of the gospel: Peter's proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2) and to Cornelius (Acts 10) also echo these same major themes. Luke demonstrates a thorough knowledge of this early gospel proclamation, even to the point of a change of rhetorical register between Peter's more Septuagintalized style and Paul's much more polished Hellenistic rhetoric, though this could simply reflect Luke's own rhetorical ability.<sup>159</sup> However, Luke's otherwise faithful rendering of his hard core, even in the details,<sup>160</sup> makes a compelling argument that both his knowledge of early gospel proclamation and the changes in style between speakers are drawn from the hard core of facts he has received from eyewitnesses. At the very least, Luke has received a strong tradition of the early preaching of the church, and he follows this tradition closely.

In fact, the correspondences between Luke's account of Paul's gospel proclamation in particular and his own summary of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 are closer than perhaps any other external comparisons possible for other examples of contemporary history. A close parallel case may be found in Ammianus' account of Julian's investiture as Caesar (and later as Augustus; see *Res Gest.* 20.4.17-18) and Julian's own account of the events (*Ep. ad. Ath.* 284A). The accounts relate the same events, but from different perspectives,<sup>161</sup> much as Luke's account of Paul's preaching and Paul's own summary.

But what is particularly interesting in Ammianus' account is his addition of what Nobbs terms "subtle judgements based on his first hand knowledge of the figure concerned

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158. Stanley Porter, *The Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology* (WUNT; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 118, 170 also considers Acts an unreliable witness of Pauline tradition, but he clearly overlooks the consistency of the gospel proclamation pattern. Porter does, however, consider Acts as a whole historically reliable.

159. Witherington III, *Acts*, 137-39, 407.

160. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 31 See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 11-12.

161. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, "Ancient Literary Parallels," 208-9.

and of his life and times.”<sup>162</sup> It is quite possible that we see the same dynamic at work in Luke’s presentation of Paul the missionary: he has colored his account with his own knowledge of Paul. And even though Luke may not have had specific testimony of each Pauline speech, he was in a unique position to replicate Paul’s gospel proclamation faithfully because he knew the proclaimer so well.

Individually, these various arguments from internal and external evidence by no means prove Luke’s methodological praxis one way or the other. Together, though, they form a coherent whole, a compelling picture of Luke as a careful historian who consistently prioritizes the hard core of facts and in his composition of the narrative remains close to the tradition and testimony he has received.

## **Rhetoric**

The past few generations of a scholarship have seen a growing tendency to dismiss or depreciate Greco-Roman histories as faithful accounts due to the rhetorical conventions that guided their composition. It is certainly true that Hellenistic historians rely on rhetoric to structure, frame, and interpret history. However, modern readers should not simply assume that the use of rhetoric makes history inherently unreliable. Instead, we must recognize with Nicolai that the “models and narrative techniques that derive from rhetoric [are] valuable when analyzing the works of historians and distinguishing various levels of elaboration.”<sup>163</sup>

We have thus far examined multiple examples of contemporary history and assessed the models, techniques, structures, and styles used in their composition as well as identified the core conventions that define the genre. With these in mind, we are now equipped to turn our attention to the book of Acts and assess Luke’s use of rhetoric, particularly in his arrangement of the account and his use of style.

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162. Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, “Ancient Literary Parallels,” 210.

163. Nicolai, “The Place of History,” 21.

### *Arrangement*

Although it functions as a formal aspect of classical rhetoric, arrangement in its most basic sense is present in all types of writing. In fact, even outside of its classical use, arrangement functions rhetorically in that the structure given to a composition inherently influences its interpretation.<sup>164</sup> In history-writing, arrangement also carries the added implication that the historian must choose which events are included in the account and which are excluded.<sup>165</sup>

Regardless of whether the account is modern or ancient, the reader relies on the historian to make sense of the past, and this process of interpretation demands that the historian select and emphasize what is significant, and “put into the background those facts that do not fit into his reconstruction.”<sup>166</sup> The arrangement of the historical narrative, then, reveals the hermeneutic proposed by the historian, and does so in a much more systematic way than does any other factor we have examined. Appealing to the ancient techniques and strategies we have observed at work in other examples of contemporary history ensures that our analysis of Acts will follow the lines of influence and convention actually in play at the time of Luke’s composition of the text.

The most obvious literary structures of any historical narrative are the preface and the conclusion. Not all Greco-Roman historiographies boast a preface, but those that do tend to follow Lucian’s advice to secure the attentive, open minds of their audiences (*Hist. Consc.* 53). Luke’s preface to Acts does not appear to follow this convention, but in this case, appearances are deceiving. Luke does include a formal preface, but he locates it at the beginning of the first volume of history, his Gospel (Luke 1.1-4). The preface of Acts is what Witherington terms “resumptive,” indicating a sequel that continues under the same auspices as the first volume (e.g., Philo, *Quod Omn. Prob. Lib.* 1).<sup>167</sup>

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164. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 49.

165. Marincola, “Genre, Convention, and Innovation,” 314.



The Lukan preface does, in fact, follow Lucian's advice closely. It is an appropriate length for the relatively short monographs Luke composes (Lucian of Samosata, *Hist. Conscr.* 55), and Luke relies on the arguments that Lucian suggests in his appeal for an open and attentive mind in his reader. Lucian suggests that in order to draw the audience's attention, the historian should either demonstrate the significance of events for the present or future or should prove their applicability to the audience (*Hist. Conscr.* 53). Luke first proves the applicability of his account to Theophilus by referring the value of history as a teacher: in this case, the Gospel account will confirm to Theophilus the traditions he has already be taught orally (Luke 1.4).

It is striking that Luke resists making the nearly-obligatory claim to write a history of great events (see Josephus, *War* 1.6; Sallust, *Cat.* 4.2-3). He may avoid this claim simply because conventional claims to describe events of great consequence refer without fail to political and military events, and Luke's account of Jesus makes clear that these are not aspirations for the kingdom of God. Yet a case may still be made for a strong yet unspoken declaration of significant events, given the strategic use of foreshadowing terms such as πληρόω and λόγος that indicate significance of a completely different order than politics and war.

Lucian also prescribes a strategic appeal for an open mind: in order to foster a willingness to learn in his audience, the historian should present a clear summary of events that includes some beginning comments on the causes of events (*Hist. Conscr.* 53). Luke follows this prescription exactly, promising a carefully (or accurately) ordered account of events that have been "fulfilled" in the sight of witnesses. He eventually develops this term into a shorthand reference to the divine action that accomplishes the prophetic promise of redemption. He thus obliquely introduces God as the cause of events, of this gospel of

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166. Nicolai, "The Place of History," 22.

167. Witherington III, *Acts*, 9.

salvation, and Luke's narrative is his testimony of God enacting this plan for the expansion of his kingdom.<sup>168</sup> In his brief preface to Acts, Luke expresses this view of events even more clearly, describing the causes of events as originating with the actions of Jesus (and by implication, continuing through the work of the Spirit after Jesus' departure; see Acts 1.1, 4-5).

Luke also builds his authoritative voice quite carefully. First, he describes his methodology in language that suggests the highest standards in contemporary history, echoing Thucydides' language and evoking the authoritative voice of the most well-respected tradition of Greco-Roman history (Luke 1.2-3).<sup>169</sup> Second, Luke establishes his *ethos* as a trustworthy guide to past events by reminding Theophilus not only of his research but also of his own participation in events and personal concern for Theophilus' certainty in his faith (Luke 1.2-3). As noted earlier, Luke makes no overt claim to truth, but there can be no doubt that such a claim is implicit within this concern for certainty.<sup>170</sup>

The similarities between Ammianus' preface to the contemporary sections of his *Res Gestae* and Luke's preface are remarkable. Like Luke, Ammianus rests his authoritative voice on the centrality of eyewitness testimony to his research and on his claim to carefully order the events within his account (15.1.1). In addition, Ammianus claims that his greatest concern is to faithfully relate each episode in order to ensure his audience's understanding of events. Unlike Luke, though, Ammianus adds the common disclaimer from bias and his defense of the length of his account. It is clear that the purpose, arguments, and strategy Luke employs would feel utterly familiar to his audience.

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168. Witherington III, *Acts*, 14 See also David P. Moessner, "Dionysius' Narrative 'Arrangement' (Οἰκονομία) as the Hermeneutical Key to Luke's Re-Vision of the 'Many,'" in *Paul, Luke, and the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Alf et al. Christopherson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 163-64.

169. For a more in-depth analysis of the methodological implications of Luke's preface, see the above discussion on the internal evidence of Luke's methodology.

170. Callan, "Preface," 580.

As for Luke’s prefatory dedication of both the Gospel and Acts to Theophilus, though, we find few parallels in contemporary histories. Josephus dedicates his *Antiquities* to Epaphroditus in the preface (*Ant.* 1.8) and restates this dedication in later apologetic volumes (*Ag. Ap.* 1.1; 2.96). Outside of contemporary history we find a few instances of dedications inserted in prefaces,<sup>171</sup> particularly the prefaces of subsequent volumes (e.g., Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.pref.; see also the historical work of Vellius Paterculus, *Comp. of Rom. Hist.* 1.13.5; 2.7.5; 2.49.1<sup>172</sup>). On the whole, dedications are somewhat rarely seen in histories, especially in comparison to other genres of writing.<sup>173</sup> Cicero offers some cross-genre insight into the practice, though: a dedication honored the dedicatee and usually indicates that the first copy would go to him (or her) before the work was published publicly (Cicero, *Att.* 13.12, 21). Luke’s dedication of these volumes to Theophilus suggests a relationship of respect and friendship—and quite probably patronage<sup>174</sup>—but by no means restricts the audience Luke had in mind when he composed the accounts.

The very brief preface in Acts simply reinforces the dedication and Acts’ link to the Gospel. As a resumptive preface, it appeals to the Lukan preface and has no need to repeat any of Luke’s strategic arguments or proofs.<sup>175</sup> Instead, Luke seamlessly moves from preface into prologue, almost instantly communicating the differences between the Gospel and Acts. Where the Gospel may best be read as *bios*,<sup>176</sup> Acts is contemporary history structured according to a geographical expansion as well as chronological progression. Acts 1.8 sets the geographic outline of the account, moving from Jerusalem (Acts 1-6.7) to Judea and Samaria (Acts 6.8-9.31), to the Gentile ends of the earth (9.32-28.31).<sup>177</sup>

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171. Such as that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *1 Amm.* 2.

172. For a more complete listing of dedications, see Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 654.

173. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 53.

174. Witherington III, *Acts*, 6, 13, 27, 42.

175. Alexander, *Acts*, 38.

176. Burrige, *What Are the Gospels?*

177. This outline reflects Luke’s use of summary statements that specifically identify the geographic stage defining the church at that point. See Witherington III, *Acts*, 74.

The summary passages Luke employs underscore the expansion of the church and, though not all of the passages are geographical in focus, they do highlight the triumph of the gospel through various social groups identified by ethnicity, geography, or metropolis.<sup>178</sup> Shorter summary statements (6.7; 9.31; 12.24; 16.5; 19.20) also serve to link major narrative episodes in Acts,<sup>179</sup> unifying events thematically and creating narrative flow between otherwise disjointed episodes. We have seen similar linking strategies in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, though Luke's use of summary statements to perform this function is innovative.

Like Polybius, Luke also uses synchronisms to draw together seemingly unrelated events, particularly events occurring within the very different spheres of Rome, Jerusalem, and the Jesus movement. And by doing so, David Moessner observes, Luke guides the audience of his Gospel toward the profound realization that God's plan involves Israel's rejection of their Messiah despite even divine testimony in his support.<sup>180</sup> In the same way, in Acts Luke links the rejection of Jewish religious and secular leaders with that of Roman leaders, culminating in the final phrases of the narrative to demonstrate that God's plan for his kingdom is enacted through the testimony of his Spirit and his people, continuing to expand despite the rejection of his gospel and people by the leaders of the known world.<sup>181</sup>

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178. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 574.

179. Witherington III, *Acts*, 158.

180. David P. Moessner, *Luke the Historian of Israel's Legacy, Theologian of Israel's Christ* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 136 Moessner has compared the arrangement and style of Luke's Gospel and of Acts extensively with that of other Greco-Roman historians such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus (e.g., David P. Moessner, "The Triadic Synergy of Hellenistic Poetics in the Narrative Epistemology of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Authorial Intent of the Evangelist Luke [Luke 1:104; Acts 1:1-8]," *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 2 [2008]: 289-303) and Diodorus Siculus (David P. Moessner, "'Managing' the Audience: Diodorus Siculus and Luke the Evangelist on Designing Authorial Intent," in *Luke and His Readers: Festschrift A. Denaux* [eds. reimund bieringer, Gilbert Van Belle, and Joseph Verheyden; BETL 182; Leuven: Peeters/University of Leuven Press, 2005], 61-80). However, this project is primarily concerned to describe the family of texts most nearly related to Acts in order to assess influences and conventions that may carry implications on developing a historical hermeneutic appropriate for the narrative. For this reason, comparisons to Acts have been intentionally limited here to those histories that, like Acts, may be most appropriately identified as contemporary histories. This is not to suggest that Moessner's comparisons are in any way invalid: conventions of arrangement and style do not seem limited to any particular subgenre of history to the degree we have observed in matters of methodology. Further studies like Moessner's can only contribute to our understanding of Luke's composition and strategy in his narratives.

And the known world continues to define the parameters of Luke's narrative. We find geographically oriented arrangement first in the universal history of Ephorus.<sup>182</sup> Ephorus generally privileges geography over chronology in his arrangement, relating the chronological history of a geographical area in full before moving to the history of another area, instead of relating events across regions in a fully chronological manner.<sup>183</sup> And though Luke applies this basic strategy of arrangement, he does, with Polybius, privilege the chronology of his account over its geographic expansion.<sup>184</sup>

Thus we find that while the geographic expansion continues inexorably through Acts, we return at times to the home church in Jerusalem for significant developments in the church as a whole (e.g., Acts 15). And Paul's missionary journeys take him out to the wider Mediterranean world but always return him briefly to his home base in Antioch (Acts 14.21-28; 18.18-22), though his last journey brings him full circle back to Jerusalem (Acts 21.17). It is no accident that the geographic arrangement of Acts echoes the expansion of the Roman empire in Polybius (*History* 1.2-3). Luke's structure reminds the reader that God's kingdom is on a mission of conquest through the known world, and though its nature is spiritual, not military, its gospel and the change this effects are as real as the *Pax Romana*.

The conclusion of Acts draws these themes together into a formal closure, depicting Paul the prisoner as the herald of the kingdom of God, which is poised to expand beyond the heart of the Roman empire by the work of the Spirit of God and the testimony of believers (Acts 28.20-31). Sallust, Caesar, and Josephus each provide final events that parallel Acts 28.17-31 in length, and we find some similarities even between Thucydides' formal concluding statements and the absolute yet stylistically simple feel of Acts' conclusion.<sup>185</sup>

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181. Moessner, *Luke the Historian*, 150-52.

182. Witherington III, *Acts*, 34.

183. Drews, "Kata Genos."

184. Drews, "Kata Genos," 55.

185. Don Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 255.

In addition to using geographical expansion as a strategy of arrangement, Luke also appeals to a form of arrangement that finds its roots in Jewish historical tradition. Depending on how one reads the text, there are between eight and fifteen parallel accounts linking the experiences of Peter and Paul.<sup>186</sup> The details of the accounts are different, but the themes and significance of the events are equivalent. For example, both apostles are described as being filled with the Spirit (Peter, Acts 4.8; Paul, Acts 13.9), Luke includes the paradigmatic sermon of each (Peter, Acts 2.22-39; Paul, Acts 13.26-41), and experience a miraculous escape from prison (Peter, Acts 5.19 and 12.6-11; Paul, Acts 16.25-34).

Parallels such as these tend to function within a narrative primarily as authentication. In the case of two individuals, one who follows the other, the parallels serve to authenticate the role of the later individual in light of the former. For example, the carefully highlighted parallels between Elijah and Elisha clearly portray Elisha as Elijah's divinely appointed successor (e.g., 1 Kings 17.9-16 // 2 Kings 4.1-7 or 1 Kings 17.17-24 // 2 Kings 4.23-37).<sup>187</sup> From this perspective, Luke is presenting proofs of the work of the Spirit, proofs that authenticate Paul's apostleship in light of Peter's ministry, which was divinely validated at Pentecost.

In the case of Elijah and Elisha, one ministry ended and another began. But Luke is very clear in his account this is not the case with Peter and Paul. Instead, Peter's ministry to the Jews and leadership of the Jerusalem continues at the same time as Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. In fact, the events surrounding the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) make Luke's point quite clear: Peter legitimizes Paul's ministry, and both men *continue in their ministries*, Peter to the Jews and in leadership of the Jerusalem church, and Paul to the Gentiles. Unlike Elijah and Elisha, there is no replacement of one ministry with another. And there is no

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186. Witherington notes eight pairs of parallels (see Witherington III, *Acts*, 72); Keener notes fifteen, but includes texts that imply the participation of either Peter or Paul (i.e., where the text refers to the "disciples," it may be assumed that Peter was present [e.g., Acts 6.1-6]) (see Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 562).

187. Nachman Levine, "Twice as Much of Your Spirit: Pattern, Parallel and Paronomasia in the Miracles of Elijah and Elisha," *JSOT* 85 (1999): 25-46.

replacement of Jew with Gentile in the kingdom of God. Instead, Luke presents Paul's ministry as the equivalent of Peter's ministry, and the two apostles are united in their goal of preaching the gospel and fulfilling the mandate given in Acts 1.8. As Witherington insightfully notes, "Luke is then trying to show that Jew and Gentile united in Christ is the true Israel, not the new Israel."<sup>188</sup> Luke may use a literary pattern well-known from Jewish Scripture, but he freely innovates from it to accomplish his goals and communicate his message.

His use of recognized literary patterns, even those as artificial as linked parallels, does not necessarily reflect poorly on his faithfulness to his sources. It is, however, strong indication that Luke arranged the Acts account very carefully. It means that the process of selection and of ordering events was no trivial pursuit but rather that each episode, each piece of the hard core of facts, was weighed for its significance to the narrative, to Luke's themes, and to his interpretation of the birth of the Jesus movement.<sup>189</sup>

Of course, events are by no means all that Luke considers in his arrangement of the Acts account. Luke also uses speeches to highlight and reinforce the major themes of his narrative. The repetition of a distinctive gospel proclamation through all of the evangelistic speeches in Acts gives living voice to the ever-present role of testimony in the work of the Spirit, the expansion of the church, and even in Acts as contemporary history. As Moessner notes, from the very point of the Lukan preface with its emphasis on eyewitness testimony, continued with Peter's Pentecost witness (with its own emphasis on the testimony of the prophets) to the final phrases of Acts, describing the continued and successful witness of Paul, the very concept of witness and testimony to the gospel of the kingdom drives the arrangement of Acts as it moves through the plan of God for the salvation of the world.<sup>190</sup>

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188. Witherington III, *Acts*, 73.

189. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts*, 105.

190. Moessner, "Narrative 'Arrangement'," 160-64.

But Luke also arranges speeches to flow into and propel the surrounding narrative as though the speeches are themselves more events than words. Thucydides, on the other hand, uses speeches to comment on and explain events leading up to or following the speech.<sup>191</sup> For Luke, “speeches are an essential feature of the action itself,”<sup>192</sup> which is the expansion of the gospel of the kingdom of God. In this sense, Luke’s arrangement of speeches within the narrative echoes Lucian’s advice on arranging events into a seamless, interwoven account (*Hist. Conscr.* 55). Where usually a speech in a historical narrative is a complete, rhetorically polished unit, Luke is infamous for his interrupted speeches. Several of the speeches of Acts simply end before reaching the final formal sections of an oration, the *peroratio* that should contain concluding remarks such as the summary and final emotional appeal (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.13-19). David Aune provides an explanation of Luke’s tendency, suggesting that an intentional interruption dramatizes the narrative as a whole, while a postscript truncating the speech indicates that more was said but saves valuable space.<sup>193</sup> But a closer look at several of these speeches reveals that when speakers are interrupted by external interaction, either positive or negative, the action of the crowd not only adds drama but in fact propels the narrative into the next series of events (e.g., Acts 7; 10.34-48; 22.1-22), creating the interwoven, seamless narration Lucian praises.

Yet examining these speech-and-event accounts from the perspective of the speech (not of the surrounding events) in fact reveals even more subtle links between speech and narrative: not only does the speech cause the action, but the action itself resolves the interruption of the speech. For example in the case of Peter’s speech to the household of Cornelius, as Peter moves out of the *narratio* of the speech in Acts 10.36-42, he sets forth his *propositio*, the heart of his message, in 10.43. Next should come the *partitio*, but here is where

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191. Witherington III, *Acts*, 46.

192. Aune, *New Testament*, 125.

193. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989), 127.



Peter is interrupted, and by no less than the Spirit of God. Where we would expect (based on the outline of gospel proclamations throughout Acts) Peter to make his final evangelistic appeal, the action of the Holy Spirit resolves the speech, functioning in the text as a divine *confirmatio* of Peter's gospel proclamation. The proofs expected of a *confirmatio* are presented as a subtle allusion to the Pentecost experience of the disciples in Acts 2.

A *refutatio* may even be found in Peter's response (10:47), where he gives voice to the complaint of an imaginary opponent. But the proof against such a complaint is evident before them, leading the narrative directly into the conclusion. The argument is then summed up and the emotional appeal of the *peroratio* emerges in 10:48, where Peter orders their baptism “in the name of Jesus” a phrase that summarizes Peter's message of belief “in him” and forgiveness “through his name” (10:43). The independent speech unit of 10:34-43 is interrupted at its beginning and truncated at its end. There is no conclusion. But the speech as part of the larger narrative flow contains a proper *exordium* and a vivid, dramatic conclusion that serves a specific purpose in both speech and event, propelling the movement of the Acts narrative forward into the Gentile mission.

Similar dynamics may be seen in Stephen's speech (Acts 7) and Paul's first defense (Acts 22.1-22), as the action of the interruption resolves the speech and moves the narrative forward. In these cases, though, the interruption is deeply negative. Yet as the narrative moves forward, Luke demonstrates that the kingdom of God continues to expand despite these obstacles (Acts 8.1-5; 23.11). Luke's selection and arrangement is multi-layered, not only instructing and modelling the nature of testimony but also proving again and again the inexorable triumph of the gospel and the kingdom of God.

We see similar dynamics of speech and narrative in Ammianus' account of Julian's investiture as Caesar (*Res Gest.* 15.8.9). Constantius presents Julian to the military to receive their affirmation and support in the post. When he reaches the *propositio* of the speech, in which he declares Julian for Caesar and appeals to the army, the soldiers standing around spontaneously interrupt Constantius with their “gentle” support, in effect resolving the

speech itself. Constantius responds by immediately investing Julian as Caesar. The correspondences between this and Peter's speech are of course not exact, but the nature of the interruption and the dynamics of speech with the event—in which the speech moves the narrative forward, and the narrative resolves the speech—together offer compelling parallels that suggest Luke's arrangement of speeches may find a shared tradition with Ammianus somewhere in the genre's family tree.

So very much more could be said about Luke's arrangement of the Acts account, but these few examples demonstrate not only Luke's care in selecting and ordering the narrative but also his thorough immersion in the conventions of Greco-Roman historiography. This does not, of course, overlook the influence of Jewish Scripture and thought on Luke and on the traditions of the early church. Yet reading Acts in light of conventions of Greco-Roman rhetorical arrangement—particularly those conventions that found a home in historiography—enables us to identify how Luke uses arrangement to communicate his themes and interpretation of events. Discerning Luke's use of arrangement also represents a significant step toward identifying the various levels of rhetorical strategy and elaboration on the text of Acts.

### *Style*

In classical rhetoric, the question of style is a combination of register, tone, and degree of ornamentation. So, for example, what Cicero terms a high style of narrative is rhetorically complex, with grand, rounded periods, featuring emotional language and a high degree of sophisticated ornamentation; this is the style for political deliberative oratory and forensic battles (*Orat.* 6). The low style, on the other hand, is deliberately disjointed, simple, careless, and does not consider the language's natural rhythms; Cicero's disdain for this style is palpable. The middle style is the smooth, flowing, well-rounded and sophisticated style Cicero recommends for history (*Orat.* 20, 36; *Part. Orat.* 21; see also 12.39; 19.65; 20.66; 57.92).

In addition to these general descriptions of styles, there is also the issue of *enargeia* (or Latin, *evidentia*). Because ancient historians relied on memory, common patterns in events became invaluable ways of remembering by analogy, and then of describing by analogy. And thus *topos*, a common scenario, becomes a way to express an event. In addition, because memory inevitably fails to capture the entire event (either due to perspective, a change in participation, or even a change in observer focus), plausibility emerged as a valid way to fill in the blanks of memory. “With *evidentia*,” observes Wiseman, “there was no need for argument: you could simply see the thing was true. And you achieved that end by making explicit ‘all the circumstances which it is reasonable to imagine must have occurred’.

That is, the invention of circumstantial detail was a way to reach the truth.”<sup>194</sup> What was plausible or vividly self-evident was not considered fiction but rather a reasoned approximation of the truth of the event. Even more jarring for the modern reader, this strategic function of elaboration became expected in historical narrative, to the point that its absence suggested mendacity within the account. In fact, this was the precise response of many cultured Romans as late as the third century CE to what Wiseman terms “the simple literature and unsophisticated doctrine of the Christians.”<sup>195</sup> In other words, the Christian historical narratives were considered too rhetorically simple to be true.

Luke’s account of the birth of Christianity is narrated in a smooth, evenly-flowing style Cicero would have appreciated. Cicero would have been disappointed, however, in the paucity of sophisticated rhetorical elaboration and ornamentation in Acts. The speeches in particular are not sufficiently varied, nor are they as emotionally evocative as Cicero’s high style demands. The level of detail in the account grows noticeably as Luke becomes more involved in the account. In fact, the narrative pacing slows to a crawl for the shipwreck account, which Luke makes clear he experienced with Paul (Acts 27.1-28.1).

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194. Wiseman, “Lying Historians,” 335–36.

195. Wiseman, “Lying Historians,” 336.

This shift is dramatic when compared to Luke's account of the infant church in Jerusalem (Acts 1-6). In these first chapters of his account, details are primarily reserved for character assessment (Acts 6.5, 8), miracle stories (5.12-16), and speeches. It is easy to see how character and miracles remain embedded in memory. Believing that Luke's sources accurately remember the speeches is more difficult, yet the repetitive nature of the gospel proclamation and Luke's reminder that this proclamation was occurring daily (Acts 5.42) make the memory of the kerygma form much more plausible, even to the modern reader.

When compared to, for example, Tacitus or especially Josephus, the Acts account feels straightforward and simple. Luke's style is closer to that of Polybius, which Witherington interprets as a strategic move for Luke in establishing his authoritative voice: "Luke's style suggests that he wishes to be heard as a serious Hellenistic historian would be heard, like a Polybius."<sup>196</sup> But no one takes Polybius' straightforward style as indicative of rhetorical naiveté. In the same way, Luke's avoidance of overt ornamentation does not indicate that the Acts account is itself simple; analyzing Luke's multi-layer arrangement of Acts demonstrates that the complexity of Acts is not in the rhetorical elaboration he applies to events but rather in the subtlety of his arrangement and interweaving of events and of speeches.

The speeches themselves impact the rhetorical style of Acts as well. Richard Pervo argues that the proportion of direct speech to prose in Acts is higher than any other Greco-Roman history.<sup>197</sup> However, Keener clarifies this claim, noting that the issue is more that of "set speeches" than simply instances of direct speech, and a comparative reading of Sallust indicates a proportion closer to that of Acts than Pervo's claims suggest.<sup>198</sup> Luke's emphasis on speeches effectively underscores the basic premise of Acts itself: that the expansion of God's kingdom progresses through the work of the Spirit but also through the testimony of

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196. Witherington III, *Acts*, 43.

197. Pervo, "Direct Speech" See also Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 415-16.

198. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 93.

believers. Acts itself is a testimony, and it is structured around the testimony of its earliest leaders. Both Pervo and Keener also find that Luke's emphasis on direct speech strongly argues that Luke writes for a more popular level of audience, particularly in comparison to the works of other contemporary historians.<sup>199</sup> As noted earlier, even the longest speeches in Acts are demonstrably shorter than most speeches in Greco-Roman contemporary histories.<sup>200</sup>

But as is consistent with Luke, Greco-Roman literary conventions are not the only influences on his text. Keener also notes the strong influence of the Septuagint, particularly in Luke's account of the infant church in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7).<sup>201</sup> Luke's intentional echo of Septuagint language is an innovative parallel to Sallust's archaizing language,<sup>202</sup> though here appealing to an audience familiar with the very Jewish Septuagint, not with Attic Greek.

In addition, the Semitic qualities of Acts would seriously detract from its appeal to Roman literati and leave the story itself open to ridicule by the elite. Witherington follows this train of thought in his assessment of Luke's intended audience, for while the Semitic influence traceable within Acts may open it to ridicule from a literary Hellenist, that same touch would appeal to a Jewish or proselyte Gentile audience, subtly communicating a sense of belonging to "a listener who knew and appreciated the cadences and substance of the LXX."<sup>203</sup>

The Semitic influence on both language and rhetoric is even more apparent in the early speeches, particularly Peter's Pentecost speech (Acts 2) and Stephen's defense speech (Acts 7). Yet there are even noticeable differences between Peter's speech and Stephen's defense. While both appeal to the Septuagint in linguistic register and in terms of allusions and quotations,<sup>204</sup> Stephen's speech reflects arguments and theology that are distinct from

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199. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 93 See also Pervo, "Direct Speech," 303.

200. Padilla, *Acts of the Apostles*, 141.

201. Craig Keener, *Acts, Vol. 1*, 96.

202. Witherington III, *Acts*, 44.

203. Witherington III, *Acts*, 17 See also Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 44.

any other figure in Acts.<sup>205</sup> When read next to both Peter and Paul, it becomes evident that Luke received strong traditions and testimony about these men and these occasions, down even to the manner in which each spoke. Either Luke relied on the tradition he received to compose these speeches according to his knowledge of the speaker,<sup>206</sup> or his accounts of the speeches follow a more detailed hard core of facts quite closely, and the unique voice of each speaker emerges as a faithful reflection of the historical event.<sup>207</sup>

Luke's use of style in the Acts account demonstrates his familiarity with Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, particularly those used in history. The influence of Jewish Scripture complicates any thorough assessment of Lukan style simply because Second Temple Judaism was already a literary melting pot of Jewish and Greco-Roman philosophy, rhetoric, and literature. However, the gradual movement in Acts from a more Semitic style (in accounts of the Jerusalem church) to a thoroughly Greco-Roman style in Paul's ministry and especially his defense speeches indicates both an accurate reflection of the characters and contexts as well as deliberate, strategic use of rhetorical skill. And in keeping with convention, this skill is employed to create an enjoyable, well-developed narrative. But even in Luke's enjoyable, straightforward style there remains a constant reminder in the speeches—in the recognizable voices of eyewitnesses—that the Acts account is itself testimony of the expansion of God's kingdom through the work of the Spirit and, again, the testimony of believers.

### Conclusion

Reading Acts in the context of Greco-Roman contemporary history clearly demonstrates that Luke's account does follow the essential conventions of the genre. In fact, this comparative analysis further indicates specific lines of influence extending from

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204. Witherington III, *Acts*, 168, 261.

205. Witherington III, *Acts*, 264.

206. Craig Keener, *Acts*, Vol. 1, 286.

207. Witherington III, *Acts*, 265.

significant innovations of past historians to the book of Acts. Thucydides' programmatic methodology, followed in turn by Polybius, exerts clear influence on Luke the historian, not only in his methodological claims but also in his praxis. Luke's use of focalization echoes that of Polybius in both his use of the first person narrator and in its functional affirmation of his authoritative narrative voice. We also find Polybius' geographical arrangement (borrowed originally from Ephorus) reflected in Acts, as well as similarities of style between Luke and Polybius.

The cumulative evidence strongly suggests that Luke deliberately chose to model his account after the most rhetorically conservative and methodologically rigorous branch of contemporary historiography. And where Luke chooses to innovate from this well-established tradition, we find at work the further influence of Second Temple Judaism on Luke and the young Christian movement. The most significant of Luke's innovations, however, he reserves for those aspects of composition that best yield themselves to constructing meaning on multiple levels, particularly those of direct communication, textual function, and philosophical foundations. These have in turn proved the most fruitful areas for analyzing Luke's own hermeneutic and developing a historically and textually apposite hermeneutic for the modern reader.

**Chapter 7**  
**Reading with Integrity**  
**Acts as History, Acts as Canon**

The dual nature of Acts as both a religious and historical document has created tension throughout the history of its interpretation, particularly in modern readings of the text. As a religious document—specifically, as a divinely inspired document—the text is pertinent to readers of all levels, backgrounds, cultures, and times. As a historical document, Acts is best understood within its historical literary milieu. The tension in the book’s interpretation occurs when its historical nature is overlooked or forgotten in favor of its immediate accessibility as a religious text. This study of Greco-Roman history and the book of Acts has sought in part to mitigate that tension by demonstrating that its very nature as history opens avenues of interpretation lost to the modern reader unfamiliar with ancient literary conventions. And those avenues of interpretation carry significant implications for our modern understanding of the meaning of Acts as a religious document. Reading Acts as Greco-Roman contemporary history deepens our understanding of Acts as canon.

However, a vast chasm lies between the modern readers of Acts and the text’s historical literary milieu. For this reason, it is essential to recover and, in fact, rediscover the expectations, standards, and context a first-century audience would bring to the book of Acts. Luke’s audience did not carry the literary shadows of the NT canon and two millennia of ecclesiastical tradition. Instead, they heard voices cued by the text itself, voices of Greek and Roman literary giants whose examples and innovations shaped how Hellenistic readers generations later would read and interpret literature. These are the voices that define the genre, dictate its limitations, and guide the interpretation of its literature. If we are to read Acts as the historical document it is, we must hear those voices ourselves and identify the expectations and reading strategies they cued within Luke’s audience.



## Reading Retrospectively

To this end we first tentatively identified Acts as contemporary history based on the text's self-presentation: the preface (including the programmatic preface in Luke 1.1-4) specifically mentions eyewitnesses, and the so-called "we-sections" (Acts 16.10-17; 20.5-15; 21.1-18; 27.1-28.16) indicate the author's own role as an eyewitness. And as an eyewitness recounting events that occurred within his lifetime and the lives of his contemporaries, Luke's narrative certainly identifies itself as contemporary history.

Yet continuing to treat this identification as tentative, we then surveyed a corpus of contemporary historiographies extending over 500 years.<sup>1</sup> This survey analyzed texts of each contemporary historian as well as key historiographical texts. Five general factors posited by John Marincola as essential to genre description<sup>2</sup> have proved invaluable in revealing the essential conventions that define Greco-Roman historiography. In addition, the ancient historians themselves (as well as Lucian and Cicero, who wrote about historiography) identified in their own texts four features of the text—philosophy of history, methodology, and rhetorical arrangement and style—that provided essential cues to their ancient audiences regarding accurate genre identification. We performed this survey in an effort to identify the essential footprint of contemporary history and understand what core conventions define the genre, in hope of affirming (or denying) our original identification of Acts as contemporary history.

In the course of this survey, methodology has emerged as perhaps the most distinctive feature of contemporary history that sets it apart from non-contemporary history. In particular, the standards of research are very different. Non-contemporary

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1. Including Ammianus, this survey extends over 700 years, from Herodotus to Ammianus.

2. Marincola, "Genre, Convention, and Innovation," 302-8 The five factors are: narrativity, focalization, arrangement, chronological delimitations, and subject. The current study has added reception history as a critical sixth factor due to the significance of determining the response of the historian's peers to his narrative in developing a truly historical reading of the text.

historians relate events that occurred in the far past and thus must rely on written records or on their own judgment of the most plausible reconstruction of events. Contemporary historians, on the other hands, consistently demonstrate their awareness of a standard of research that depended on eyewitnesses as sources. Not only was autopsy the standard of research, but interrogation of eyewitnesses was considered an essential skill in the historian's quest to discover the reality of past events.

Centuries earlier, Ephorus assessed the trustworthiness of detail in historical narratives based on whether that narrative was contemporary or non-contemporary history: more detail in contemporary history suggested a more trustworthy account, while more detail in non-contemporary history increased his suspicion of invented material in the narrative (*FrGrHist* 70 F 9). Ephorus based his rule on the standard of autopsy that is unique to contemporary history, indicating that the difference in critical standards between types of history was recognized and played a key role in the audience's reception of the narrative and their assessment of its faithfulness to actual past events.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the reality is that not every contemporary historian achieved this standard, as our investigation of Caesar's *Bello Gallico* demonstrated. Yet it is telling that Pollio's criticism of Caesar is wholly concerned with Caesar's failure to adequately vet and question his sources (*Divi Iulius* 56.4). Modern readers must depend on both internal and external evidence to assess a given historian's actual praxis in terms of methodology and source theory, but always understanding that the standard did exist, even if only in theory for some historians.

The implication is obvious: we cannot read contemporary histories according to the same hermeneutic we apply to non-contemporary histories. The differences in terms of audience expectation (if not in actual historical praxis, depending on the historian) demand a hermeneutic that fits the unique shape of Greco-Roman contemporary history. This conclusion is particularly significant in our reading of speeches in contemporary histories.

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3. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 70.

While we cannot assume the standards of autopsy were always followed, or that the historian prioritized autopsy over rhetorical polish, we must continually be aware that the standard existed. Appealing to internal and external evidence enables the modern reader to assess the historian's actual methodological praxis, which in turn clarifies the hermeneutic that is more appropriate for that text. Frank Walbank's assessment of Polybius strongly suggests that thorough analysis of the evidence of the text carries significant implications even for our reading of the speeches, particularly regarding our evaluation of the speeches' faithfulness to the actual speech event.<sup>4</sup>

Further, the continuing dynamic relationship of innovation and authoritative tradition create a unique opportunity to trace lines of influence from one historian to another. Many ancient cultures valued tradition as an arbiter of quality and value; Hellenistic cultures were no different, and rooting one's narrative in the literature of previous generations brought authority to the account. However, the added pressure of competition in an honor-based society demanded innovation within these authoritative traditions, because clever innovation set the work apart and brought honor to both the publication and its author.

This dynamic of authoritative tradition and innovation gradually shaped the conventions guiding and limiting contemporary history. In fact, the shape of the genre changed over time in response to those innovations and the continued influences of key historians. And when a historian appeals to a particular authoritative tradition, he indicates its influence on his concept of historiography. In the same way, when a historian repeats the innovation of an earlier author in his own work, he again reveals the influence of that author on his own text.

Reading such texts together demonstrates that texts related in this way frequently share strategies of composition, which in turn carries implications for their interpretation.

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4. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, 256, 259–60.

For this reason, locating a text properly within its literary family is a significant step in developing an appropriate hermeneutic for that text.

### **Reading Acts with Integrity**

Assessing Acts within this context has demonstrated first that Acts fits the genre profile of contemporary history. It meets each of the essential conventions guiding the genre. One of the significant implications of identifying Acts as contemporary history is that Acts cannot legitimately be compared methodologically to non-contemporary histories: the critical approach and source theory underlying Acts' composition are simply too different from the conventional methodology of non-contemporary history.

However, comparative analysis of Acts to other contemporary histories not only affirms identifying Acts as contemporary history but also indicates specific lines of influence extending from significant innovations of past historians to the book of Acts. Thucydides' programmatic methodology, followed in turn by Polybius, exerts clear influence on Luke the historian, not only in his methodological claims but also in his praxis. Luke's use of focalization echoes that of Polybius in both his use of the first person narrator (the so-called "we-sections") and in its functional affirmation of his authoritative narrative voice. We also find Polybius' geographical arrangement (borrowed originally from Ephorus) reflected in Acts, as well as similarities of style between Luke and Polybius. The cumulative evidence strongly suggests that Luke deliberately chose to model his account after the most rhetorically conservative and methodologically rigorous branch of contemporary history.

However, Acts also demonstrates unusual innovations that stem not only from its heritage within both Greco-Roman and Second Temple literary traditions but also from its unusual combination of historical narrative and deep religious significance. These innovations, however, function within the parameters of the genre. We find that Luke has innovated particularly dramatically with strategies of composition that have enabled him to communicate meaning on multiple levels, including direct speech, textual function and

arrangement, and even the philosophical foundations of historiography. In turn, these have proved the most fruitful areas for analyzing Luke's own hermeneutic and developing a historically and textually apposite hermeneutic for the modern reader.

Thus, recovering that first-century perspective enables us to read Acts according to the same literary model used to compose the narrative. And with this renewed perspective we are positioned to grasp the full meaning and artistry of Luke's account. Reading Acts according to the conventions Luke's audience relied on to understand the text further deepens our understanding of the first few centuries of the Christ movement, its self-identification, and its self-perception.

This study, then, has been a first step toward building a bridge over a two-millennia chasm. We have examined the literary family in which Acts is located in order to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how to read Greco-Roman contemporary history. Then we have read Luke's narrative in the company of his fellow contemporary historians. All of the generic cues in Acts point toward a historical narrative, not a novelization or a dramatized, fictionalized account. Reading Acts in this literary context has also demonstrated that Luke is a serious historian comparable in method and philosophy to Polybius, one of the most highly respected Greco-Roman historians, noted particularly for his rigorous commitment to discovering and communicating the actual events of the past to the best of his ability.

In addition, both the internal and external evidence of the text and literary world affirm that Luke's personal testimony should be taken at face value as an eyewitness account of events. Thus his testimony is not only trustworthy when he reports the eyewitness accounts of others, but he is a reliable source himself, particularly for the events in which he also participated. Finally, internal and external evidence regarding the speeches of Acts indicate that these follow not only the general conventions outlined by Lucian but also the more rigorous guidelines described by Thucydides: that a historian should recount the exact

wording when known and always follow the essence of the speech (which in practice proves to be the type or form of the arguments used).

We may also see Polybius' influence extend to Luke's treatment of the speeches. The stylistic differences observable between the speeches of Peter, Stephen, and Paul (and between those speeches, particularly Stephen's, and the narrative sections of Acts) suggest that Luke—like Polybius—stayed close to his sources, even reflecting in the speeches the style of speaking he either witnessed or received from his eyewitness sources. The implications of this degree of historical faithfulness within the speeches are tremendous, particularly regarding our understanding and analysis of Luke's presentation of Peter, Stephen, and Paul.

In other words, we may have confidence that Luke faithfully recounts not only the content of the speech but the character of the speaker, to the extent that his own sources recalled the events faithfully. Considering that Luke relied on his own memory for the latter chapters of Acts, and probably relied on Paul's testimony for the events of Acts 7-15, we may assign Luke's description of Stephen (and his speech) and of Paul himself a rather high degree of historical probability. Even Luke's description of Peter and of the events of Acts 1-6 would be subject also to Luke's demonstrated standard of autopsy and investigation. For example, doubtless Luke found numerous witnesses to cross-examine regarding Peter's Pentecost speech.

And it is telling that here we find the unique context which transformed Luke's own interpretation of events. For Luke, the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of Pentecost changed history and, by necessity, changed the very nature of history itself by the transforming presence and activity of God in human experience. *Luke's post-Pentecost hermeneutic is the single greatest innovation that sets the book of Acts apart from other Greco-Roman contemporary histories, and it touches all aspects of its composition.* For Luke, there is nothing more true and historical than the message of Pentecost.

### Further Hermeneutical Implications

Reading Acts as Greco-Roman contemporary history transforms our understanding of the text, and the current project has by no means exhausted the hermeneutical possibilities and implications of such a reading. For example, a more detailed examination of Luke's rhetorical style and strategies of arrangement will shed much-needed light on Luke's hermeneutic, the particular interpretation he presents to his audience, and the strategies he employs to do so. Moessner's analysis of Luke's use of arrangement according to the criteria Dionysius of Halicarnassus sets out in his analytical essay *On Thucydides* does just this.<sup>5</sup> Both Cicero (in his *Orator*) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus have a great deal to say about style, as well, and could clarify how Luke's use of style functions in communicating his interpretation of events.

In addition, Sallust's emphasis on character, *ethos*, and characterization in his *Conspiracy* offer useful parallels to Luke's concern for the transformation of believers through the gospel and gift of the Spirit. In addition, Luke's use of characterization holds implications for understanding his concept of moral character in the kingdom of God. Also, Luke's treatment of concurrent events parallels some strategies used by Thucydides. A more in-depth examination of Thucydides and other contemporary historians would shed light on the function of Luke's strategy and on the meaning Luke intends to communicate through his presentation of these events.

But even more significant are the implications of this project on our understanding of the speeches and personalities of Acts. Considering that the speeches of Acts comprise 74% of the text,<sup>6</sup> understanding how genre shapes our interpretation of its speeches will invariably also shape our interpretation of the narrative as a whole as well. Luke's rigorous

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5. Moessner, "Narrative 'Arrangement'."

6. David E. Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament & Early Christian Literature & Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 286.

standards of source theory (see above) also justify reading the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters in light of one another. While the differences between audiences and the very different motivations behind the speeches and letters complicate the comparison, literary parallels<sup>7</sup> could bring new perspectives and depth to our understanding of both Luke's account of Paul and of Paul himself. Reading Acts in the context of other Greco-Roman contemporary histories only affirms Luke's historical integrity, and reading the themes, concerns and theology of each in light of the other becomes a valid enterprise. If indeed Luke's Paul is as historical as the Paul of the letters, then it is time for some cross-pollination in our interpretation of each.

Reading Acts as contemporary history changes our understanding of the text. Having recovered some small part of the perspective and hermeneutic Luke's first-century audience brought to the text leaves us with a new appreciation for and understanding of Luke's composition. With Acts, Luke presents the reader with an engraved invitation to see the expansion of God's kingdom as a triumphal procession through the very heart of this world's power. Victory is not a matter of appearances in Luke's world, but of the Spirit and the Word of God. But more than that, when we accept his invitation, we find ourselves also transformed in our reading, in our own historical encounter with the gift of the Spirit and Luke's post-Pentecost hermeneutic.

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7. For example, the parallels discussed in the previous chapter regarding Ammianus' account and Julian's letter, both describing Julian's investiture as Caesar.





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