

*The Poetics of Medicine**

Ineke Sluiter

One morning, a long time ago, Diogenes the Cynic woke up to an unusual noise outside the barrel in which he lived. When he popped out his head to find out what was going on, he saw people running to and fro, carrying arms, brandishing spears and bringing stones to reinforce the wall. The general buzz of activity told him that the Corinthians were obviously preparing for war. And all of a sudden, Diogenes felt very useless and left out of it all. To remedy this, he hoisted up his tunic and started with all his might to roll his barrel up and down Kraneion hill. When asked by one his friends what on earth he thought he was doing, he explained this remarkable display of psychological self-help *avant la lettre* as follows: 'I, too, am rolling my barrel; I do not want to give the impression that I am the only lazybody among so many hard workers!'

The anecdote can be found in Lucian's *On How to Write History* (§ 3) and applies directly both to the subject and the occasion of this paper. Obviously, I owe it to my teacher and mentor Dirk Schenkeveld at least to try my hand at rolling my barrel, if at nothing more constructive, in the field of ancient literary criticism. And fortunately, I find myself in good company: for the author who will be in the centre of attention in the following pages, Galen, was not averse to barrel-rolling in this area (or almost any other) either, even though we do not usually associate such interests with a doctor.

As a matter of fact, by Galen's time, philology had become firmly established as a legitimate activity for the more ambitious exponents of the medical profession. In the third century BCE, the Ptolemies had founded the Museum and the Library as a part of their cultural policy.

* Professor Geoffrey Lloyd kindly read and commented on an earlier draft of this paper.

The great literary heritage from the Greek past was studied there by philologists who enjoyed the support, financially and otherwise, of the monarchs. In this way, the Ptolemies gave off a clear signal that they claimed to be the legitimate heirs to Greek culture and Greek *paideia*, traditionally embodied in literature. As a result of the active interest shown by the Ptolemies, the social and intellectual status of philology rocketed and became something of an intellectual trend. Contemporary doctors, too, suddenly developed a taste for the lexicographical and exegetical study of the Hippocratic corpus, sometimes slightly to the detriment of their surgical and anatomical interests. The change occurred between the generation of Herophilus and that of Bacchius.¹ From this time onward, Hippocratic exegesis was definitely on the medical agenda. In that sense Galen stood in a clearly defined tradition when he devoted more than a little interest to the most authoritative source of the medical profession, Hippocrates.²

A language-oriented approach to an authoritative text in any field was also stimulated by the nature of ancient education at large. The language disciplines, grammar, rhetoric and logic,³ had always been the nucleus of the ancient school system, where they were applied to the study of the poets, Homer in particular. Homer's authority was approached through philology, so when people encountered an authoritative text in their later walk of life, linguistic analysis would impose itself as a natural approach to the study of such texts. This phenomenon may be labeled the 'philological paradigm' of Antiquity.

Moreover, Galen's interest in linguistic and literary matters also fit in very well with the general tendencies of his age, the second century CE, and especially with the interests of the 'movement', if that is the proper word, of the Second Sophistic.⁴ Although Galen was no sophist

¹ Cf. Von Staden 1989, 427 ff.; 454 ff.

² Cf. for Galen's strategy in using Hippocrates' authority, Lloyd 1991.

³ The ancient terms are not coextensive with the modern ones.

⁴ Cf. Bowersock 1969, 59 ff.; Kollesch 1981.

himself, his education, status and taste for travel corresponded to what we know of the acknowledged representatives of the Second Sophistic. Even if his Commentaries on Hippocrates reveal a Galen extremely critical of the exaggerated attention paid by his predecessors and contemporaries to form and style instead of content, it is still significant that he feels obliged to enter into the discussion at all. Galen himself was proud of the fact that he had had a thorough training in grammar and rhetoric. He is very much opposed to a trend he claims to discern in his own day, viz. to skip this educational basis and to proceed directly to philosophy and medicine. As he points out, this procedure produces the kind of ignoramuses who will uncritically believe that they have bought an authentic work by Galen, when anyone without any schooling in medicine, but with basic philological training would be able to undeceive them at the very first glance (*De libris propriis* 19.8 f. Kühn). His general philological interests stand out quite clearly from the list of his works (*De libris propriis*, 19 K.), which features, among other items, a commentary on Aristotle's *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*, works on the correctness of names, on homonyms, on the question whether philology is useful for ethics, and a number of lexicographical studies on Attic authors and the comedians.

The superman Hippocrates, the ultimate authority in medical matters, who emerges from Galen's work, is very much Galen's own construction, intended first and foremost to boost and bolster Galen's own reputation. A lot of exegetical and lexicographical work had been done already, as I just pointed out, but the sheer volume of Galen's work on Hippocrates tended to absorb all previous scholarship. The picture that emerges from Galen's work—and I will, of course, focus on the literary aspects in this paper—is the following: Hippocrates is a model of medical perfection *and* a remarkable author at the same time. In fact, Galen has to adapt the current grammatical and rhetorical ideals of his day to make Hippocrates fit, but he manages to do so without breaking the boundaries set by the philological paradigm: he never discards the norms imposed by grammar and rhetoric as irrelevant to a medical man. Galen rearranges the rhetorical virtues, stressing brevity and clarity while downgrading the importance of grammatical correctness. He connects this move with the concept of a

separate genre, namely the *ἐπιστημονικὴ διδασκαλία*, the genre of scientific (scholarly) instruction. In this genre, the effectiveness of the message is always more important than its linguistic form.⁵

Now, Hippocrates was not the kind of author that would be studied by the 'real' literary critics in antiquity. There is, however, one remark in Demetrius *On Style* (§ 4) which quotes the beginning of Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* (without the name of the author) as an example of a so-called *ξηρὰ σύνθεσις*, an 'arid composition', the negative counterpart of the plain (*ισχνός*) style. Since Galen, too, has something to say (well actually, a lot) about this aphorism, let us compare their findings. Demetrius explains why exceedingly brief members are equally out of place in discourse as long ones: they produce the so-called 'arid' composition. He adds the following comment on his example *ὁ βίος βραχύς, ἡ τέχνη μακρά, ὁ καιρὸς ὀξύς* ('life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting', Hipp. *Aph.* 1.1; *Eloc.* 4):

κατακεκομμένη γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ σύνθεσις καὶ κεκερματισμένη, καὶ ἐγκαταφρόνητος διὰ τὸ μικρὰ σύμπαντα ἔχειν.

'The composition here seems to be minced fine, and may fail to impress because everything about it is so minute' (tr. W. Rhys Roberts).

Although here the overdose of *μικρά* is judged negatively, elsewhere in the same treatise Demetrius allows scope for brevity as a virtue, for instance in § 7 where he acknowledges the relationship between brevity and the forceful style (*δεινότης*).⁶ And he goes on to comment on brevity as follows (*Eloc.* 9):

⁵ Galen's views on Hippocrates' linguistic and rhetorical merits are discussed at length in Sluiter 1994 (forthc.); for a more general overview see Pearcy 1993.

⁶ *Eloc.* 7: τῶν δὲ μικρῶν κῶλων κἂν δεινότητι χρήσις ἐστι· δεινότερον γὰρ τὸ ἐν ὀλίγῳ πολὺ ἐμφαινόμενον καὶ σφοδρότερον, διὸ καὶ οἱ Λάκωνες βραχυλόγοι ὑπὸ δεινότητος: 'Short members may also be employed in vigorous passages. There is greater vigour and intensity when much meaning is conveyed in a few words. Accordingly it is just because of their vehemence that the Lacedaemonians are chary of speech' (tr. W. Rhys Roberts).

ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη βραχύτης κατὰ τὴν σύνθεσιν κόμμα ὀνομάζεται [cf. κατακεκομμένη, *ib.* § 4] ... ἔστι ... καὶ ἀποφθεγματικὸν ἢ βραχύτης καὶ γνωμολογικόν, καὶ σοφώτερον τὸ ἐν ὀλίγῳ πολλὴν διάνοιαν ἠθροῖσθαι, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς σπέρμασιν δένδρων ὄλων δυνάμεις· εἰ δ' ἐκτείνοντο τις τὴν γνώμην ἐν μακροῖς, διδασκαλία γίνεται τις καὶ ῥητορεία ἀντὶ γνώμης.

‘From the point of view of composition such brevity is termed a “phrase” ... brevity suits apophthegms and maxims; and it is a mark of superior skill to compress much thought in a little space, just as seeds potentially contain entire trees. Draw out the maxim at full length, and it becomes a lecture or a piece of rhetoric rather than a maxim’ (tr. W. Rhys Roberts, adapted).

In fact, what Galen does in his commentary on Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms* is just this, viz. to draw out the pithy sayings to full-length pieces of instruction. And he seems to react to those who draw a distinction between aphorisms and teaching in his very commentary on the first aphorism (17b.345-56 K.; esp. 351). In this part of his commentary—which stretches over eleven pages in Kühn’s edition—he analyses the first aphorism as the proem of the work (as had become traditional in ancient exegesis of *Aphorisms*; 17b.346 K.); this proem is then interpreted as a programmatic statement. The text of *Aphorisms* 1.1, which Galen treats as a single unit, reads:

ὁ βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ, ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὀξύς, ἡ δὲ πείρα σφαλερὴ, ἡ δὲ κρίσις χαλεπὴ. δεῖ δὲ οὐ μόνον ἑαυτὸν παρέχειν τὰ δέοντα ποιέοντα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν νοσέοντα καὶ τοὺς παρέοντα καὶ τὰ ἔξωθεν.

‘Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting, experiment tricky, judgement difficult. One should not only prepare oneself to do what one should, but also the patient and those present and the external circumstances.’

Galen reads this aphorism as a coherent whole: life is short only in comparison with the enormousness of art, which in turn is apparent from the fact that ‘opportunity is fleeting’: this means that it is fiendishly difficult to know exactly when to act, because bodies are in a state of constant flux. There are two procedures regulating medical action: one is experience, *πείρα*, which is tricky, because the material on which it

after ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὰ serves only as an explanation (17b.348 K.), while the second part of the aphorism is a piece of advice to the prospective readers. According to Galen, what this first aphorism⁷ tries to convey is the *τρόπος τῆς διδασκαλίας* and the *χρεία τῶν συγγραμμάτων*: the ‘method of teaching’ and the ‘use of Hippocrates’ writings’ (Gal. *in Hipp. Aph.* 1.1, 17b.351 f. K.):

Τό τε γὰρ ἀφοριστικὸν εἶδος τῆς διδασκαλίας ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ διὰ βραχυτάτων ἅπαντα τὰ τοῦ πράγματος ἰδία περιορίζειν, χρησιμώτατον τῷ βουλομένῳ μακρὰν τέχνην διδάξαι ἐν χρόνῳ βραχεί· τό τε ὅλως διὰ τοῦτο συγγράφειν ὅτι ὁ βίος βραχύς ἐστιν ὡς πρὸς τὸ τῆς τέχνης μέγεθος εὐλογώτατον.

‘For the aphoristic type of instruction, i.e. defining as briefly as possible everything essential to the matter in hand, is the most useful type for someone wishing to teach a long art in a short time. And, generally, it stands to reason that one’s motivation for writing treatises is the fact that life is short in comparison with art’s magnitude.’

Galen expatiates on this latter point explaining that each individual can only hope to contribute a little bit to the perfection of medicine over a single lifetime. And at the end of his extensive discussion, he summarises his interpretation of the first aphorism as follows (17b.355 K.):

Ἡ μὲν τέχνη μακρὰ γίνεται ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου παραμετρομένη βίῳ. χρήσιμον δὲ τὸ καταλιπεῖν συγγράμματα καὶ μάλιστα τὰ σύντομά τε καὶ ἀφοριστικά. εἷς τε γὰρ αὐτὴν τὴν πρώτην μάθησιν καὶ εἷς τὴν ὧν ἔμαθέ τις [ὠφελήθηται] μνήμην καὶ εἷς τὴν ὧν ἐπελάθετό τις μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνάμνησιν ὁ τοιοῦτος *τρόπος τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐπιτήδειος*.

‘Art is long when measured against the life of an individual human being. And it is useful to leave behind writings and especially brief and aphoristic ones. [NB this phrase has nothing whatsoever in the aphorism of which it could be considered a paraphrase; however, it is essential to Galen’s view of function and purpose of the aphorisms.] For such a style of teaching is suitable for the very first introduction

⁷ It is Galen’s belief that this first aphorism must necessarily fit in with what follows (17b.351 K.).

to a subject, and in order to remember what one has learned, and to bring back to mind afterwards what one has forgotten.’

In this way, the first aphorism becomes a *leçon par exemple*: it is a programmatic statement explaining that, and how, aphorisms fulfill their didactic task, and the explanation itself takes the form of an aphorism. There is no true difference between aphorisms and teaching, as in Demetrius’ observation, nor does Galen share the negative view of the first aphorism advocated by Demetrius. On the contrary, he qualifies the production of treatises necessary to counter the negative effects of the shortness of life as (17b.352 K.):

ὅσα τις ἔγνω τοῖς μετέπειτα καταλιπεῖν ἐν συγγράμμασιν, ἀκριβῶς τε ἅμα καὶ ταχέως καὶ σαφῶς ἄπασαν τὴν τῶν διδασκομένων πραγμάτων φύσιν ἐρμηνεύοντα.

‘leaving all one’s knowledge behind for the next generations, expressing the nature of what needs to be taught with precision, brevity and clarity’.

There is nothing *εὐκαταφρόνητος*, nothing of Demetrius’ *quantité négligeable*, about this kind of work.

As far as I know, the passage from Demetrius is the only example of ‘official’ literary criticism being extended to include Hippocrates. So in a sense, Galen was left a free hand to demarcate Hippocrates’ position among the acknowledged literary classics and to establish the genre of the *ἐπιστημονικὴ διδασκαλία*; the exclusion of scholarly writing from the domain of literature, which had become tradition ever since Aristotle’s verdict on Empedocles’ ‘poetry’, did not bother him.⁸

The genres that Galen uses as a foil for Hippocrates are poetry, especially Homer,⁹ and historiography. Both the poets and the historians of the classical period may also be quoted as linguistic parallels to

⁸ Ar. *PO.* 1, 1447b17 f. Οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὅμηρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον.

⁹ Galen’s views on and use of the poets have been studied before by DeLacy 1966 and Moraux 1987.

Hippocrates, in matters of vocabulary, idiom or syntax.¹⁰ But even in these linguistic matters, Galen sometimes differentiates quite subtly between poetic work and Hippocrates, for example when he insists that the theory of the *epitheta ornantia* should not be extended to Hippocratic texts:¹¹ in explaining Hippocrates, Galen says, it is not acceptable to deny an adjective its full force and to put it on a par with a phrase like γάλα λευκόν in Homer. Generally speaking, however, the poets' and historians' status of παλαιοί guarantees the legitimacy of using them as sources of linguistic comparison. But when it comes to their use as sources of knowledge, it is a different story altogether.

Not surprisingly, the age-old criterion of adherence to truth, or reality versus fiction, was especially important to Galen. In Hellenistic and Roman doctrine, literary forms could be distinguished in accordance

¹⁰ Parallels from Herodotus: σφακελίξεσθαι, in *Hipp. Aph.* 50 (18a.156 K.); μετεξετέρην, in *Hipp. Art. comm.* 3 (18a.599 K.); from Homer: e.g. in *Hipp. Aph.* 43 (18a.147 K.), see further Moraux 1987, 26 ff.; from Pindar: e.g. in *Hipp. Prorrh.* I *comm.* 3.118 (16.763 K.); from Thucydides: e.g. in *Hipp. Epid.* VI 12 (17b.167 f. K.); from Demosthenes and the orators: e.g. in *Hipp. de art.* 1.50 (18a.384 K.), cf. in *Hipp. Prognost.* 3.2 (18b.237 K.).

¹¹ In *De Comate sec. Hipp.* 3 (7.656 K.), Galen wonders what Hippocrates means by καταφορὰ νωθρά. He thinks it imperative to find an explanation: οὐ γὰρ ἦν τῶν ματαιίως τὰ ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθέντων οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ οὐτ' ἀνοήτως πρόσκειται τῇ καταφορᾷ τὸ νωθρά, οὔτε φησιν ὡσπερ Ὁμηρος, ὕγρον ἔλαιον καὶ γάλα λευκὸν μηδενὸς ἔνεκα διορισμοῦ. καὶ γὰρ πᾶν γάλα λευκὸν καὶ ἔλαιον ὕγρον· ἀλλ' ἐκάστη λέξις καὶ συλλαβὴ πᾶσα πρῶγμά τι σημαίνει παρ' αὐτοῦ. Cf. *ib.* 657 ἐπιμέλειαν περὶ τὰς λέξεις. Galen concludes that the νωθρὰ καταφορὰ is a subtype of the ἄγρυπνος καταφορὰ, the attack of κῶμα that comes on without sleep being one of the symptoms.

The second text which discusses this phenomenon is *In Hipp. Epid.* VI 6 (17b.339 f.): τὸ δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ σπληνὸς εἰρημένον "ἀριστερὸς σπλὴν μέγας", οἱ μὲν οὕτως προσκείσθαι νομίζουσιν ὡς τῷ γάλα τὸ λευκὸν ὁ ποιητῆς προσέθηκε καὶ τῷ σύες τὸ χαμαιευνάδες, οὐκ ὄντος οὔτε γαλακτός τινος ὃ μὴ λευκὸν ἐστίν, οὔτε σῶν αἰ μὴ χαμαιευνάδες εἰσίν. τάχα δὲ κτλ. (Galen then proposes an emendation: he submits that ἀριστερός forms part of the previous aphorism, 'there comes no blood from the left nostril', thus eliminating the combination ἀριστερὸς σπλήν.)

with their assumed degree of factual truth.¹² Roughly speaking, there was a threefold division: in declining order of truthfulness they were *ιστορία* (*fama, verum*); *πλάσμα* (*fictum argumentum, verisimile*); and *μῦθος* (*fabula, falsum*). There was some variation in the application of this triad: Asclepiades of Myrlea, for instance, takes the three degrees of truthfulness as subspecies of *ιστορία*, with *ἀληθῆς ιστορία* coming out ‘on top’.¹³ Of course, it was precisely Hippocrates’ superior command of the facts, his insight into reality, that was to make us forgive him his minor flaws in expression. The truth criterion separates Hippocrates’ work from poetry. That is not to say that the poets can never be right in medical matters. But the nature of their work makes truth an entirely accidental feature. This is why Galen is so fiercely opposed to Chrysippus in *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*: Chrysippus used the authority of the poets as an argument, that is to say, he replaced scholarly argument with quotations from the poets, instead of using the poets merely as additional illustrative material. In Galen’s eyes, this was unacceptable. In his ranking of types of argument there is only one scientific type, and three unscientific ones.¹⁴ Among these latter types, the one based on authority takes second position, after the dialectical type; it is styled ‘rhetorical’, and just barely precedes the sophistic type, that degrades itself even to the point of using worthless etymologies. According to Galen, quotations from the poets are in order only when one’s position has already been proven to be correct by other means, or when one is proposing a generally accepted statement.

Let me give two practical illustrations of this attitude to the relevance of poetry, both dealing with fantasy figures: Centaurs and the Cyclops. In the third book of *De usu partium*, Galen discusses the functionality of hands, a virtually unique feature of human beings that explains why we

¹² See Brink’s commentary on Hor. *Ars* 338-42; Meijering 1987, 76 ff.; 84 ff.

¹³ See Sextus Empiricus *M.* 1.252 f.

¹⁴ DeLacy 1966; for Galen’s epistemology, see Frede 1981.

walk on only two legs. We can do without the speed that four legs would have given us, and use our hands to execute clever things that we have thought out (3.169 K.). Then Galen stops and wonders whether a combination of four legs *plus* two hands, like the Centaurs have, would not have been even better, but rejects the idea as an impossible combination of two types of bodies. Even if human beings and horses could couple, it is unthinkable that a viable embryo could result from it. And then Galen chides Pindar for describing exactly this (Gal. *De usu partium* 3.1, 3.169 K.):

Πίνδαρος δ' εἰ μὲν ὡς ποιητῆς προσίεται τὸ τῶν Κενταύρων μυθολόγημα, συγχωρητέον αὐτῷ· εἰ δ' ὡς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ τι περιττότερον τῶν πολλῶν ἐπίστασθαι προσποιούμενος ἐτόλμα γράφειν

... ὅς

ἵπποισιν Μαγνητίδεσσιν ἐμίγνυτ' ἐν Παλίου

σφυροῖς· ἐκ δ' ἐγένοντο στρατὸς

θαυμαστός, ἀμφοτέροις

ὅμοιοι τοκεῦσι, τὰ μα-

τρόθεν μὲν κάτω, τὰ δ' ὑπερθε πατρός

ἐπιτιμητέον αὐτῷ τῇ προσποιήσει τῆς σοφίας.

'If Pindar accepts the story of the Centaurs in his capacity of a poet, he should be forgiven for it. But if he dared to write the following as a knowledgeable person, claiming to know more than the masses, he should be taken to task for his pretension to knowledge: "... and he coupled with the Magnesian mares on the spurs of Pelion; and a weird breed was engendered, in the favor of either parent: the mare's likeness in the parts below, and the manlike father above [Pi. *P.* 2.46 ff., tr. Lattimore]".

And after some further discussion of the problem, Galen continues (*De usu partium* 3.1, 3.170 f. K.):

ἀλλ', ὦ Πίνδαρε, σοὶ μὲν ἄδειν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν ἐπιτρέπομεν εἰδότες τὴν ποιητικὴν μούσαν οὐχ ἡκιστα τῶν ἄλλων τῶν οἰκείων κόσμων καὶ τοῦ θαύματος δεομένην· ἐκπλήξαι γὰρ οἶμαι καὶ κηλήσαι τοὺς ἀκροατὰς, οὐ διδάξαι βούλεσθαι, ἡμεῖς δ', οἷς ἀληθείας, οὐ μυθολογίας μέλει, σαφῶς ἴσμεν οὐσίαν ἀνθρώπου τε καὶ ἵππου παντάπασιν ἄμικτον ὑπάρχουσαν.

‘But, Pindar, we will leave the singing and story-telling to you. For we know that the Muse of poetry needs her own apparel and wonder as much as any of the Muses. I think she wants to astonish and entrance her audience, not to instruct them. We, however, who are concerned with truth, not story-telling, know very well that the natures of human beings and horses do not allow crossing in any way.’

In the first passage quoted, the poet is opposed to the σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, but his poetic license, alluded to by συγχωρητέον, is respected; in the second, the functions of ἐκπληξῆσαι and κηλῆσαι are opposed to διδάξαι, as μυθολογία is to ἀλήθεια. It goes without saying that this terminology has a long-standing pedigree in literary criticism.¹⁵

So, as we saw, Centaurs were relegated to the world of poetical fiction, but the story of the Cyclops is used very differently in the next book of *De usu partium* (4.14, 3.313 K.). There, Galen has just described the position of the liver and the importance of the vena cava. A wound in these parts is always lethal. And to corroborate this point Galen adduces the story of Odysseus’ vengeance on the Cyclops: if it had not been for the fact that Odysseus and his companions could never have escaped from the cave by themselves, Odysseus would surely have executed his original plan: to stab the Cyclops in the area of the liver and the vena cava, thus ensuring his instantaneous death. It was only because the entrance to the cave was blocked by an enormous boulder that Odysseus had to resort to burning out Polyphemus’ eye: the Cyclops had to remain alive to remove the blockade.¹⁶

The mythological character of the narrative is completely discounted here, and the story is, for once, taken at face value. On the other hand, Galen does stick to his own principles. Homer is not put forth as proof of how vital this part of the human body is, but rather to the contrary: the vulnerability of the liver area explains the relevance of Odysseus’ deliberations. Galen’s views on the relevance of poetry to scientific work are

¹⁵ Cf. Meijering 1987, 62 ff. (on poetic license); 6 ff. (ψυχαγωγία), cf. the table of opposites 10 f. (from Polybius).

¹⁶ Galen quotes *Od.* 9.361 (ὄθι φρένες ἥπαρ ἔχουσιν).

fairly traditional; the passages just quoted may be compared with the discussion between Strabo and Eratosthenes as reflected in the first book of Strabo's *Geographica*.¹⁷

Obviously, claiming a position for the genre of the scholarly treatise distinct and autonomous from *poetry* was not the main challenge Galen had to face. The real problem was to differentiate the genre from the only serious competitor as a literary prose genre, historiography. The need for differentiation may have been reinforced by the name *ιστορία* itself: for 'history', the results of previous research, had always been one of the epistemological pillars of medicine. And as a literary genre, it was historiography that ever since Aristotle derived its uniqueness as a genre precisely from its particular claim to truthfulness and correspondence to reality.¹⁸ In the period between Thucydides and the second century CE, the notion of the usefulness of history had changed: Thucydides considered history useful because of the rational insight it provided into the mechanisms of past events, but he did not claim that history had a predictive value.¹⁹ He realised that the absence of fiction may make the genre less entertaining, but accepted this consequence. On the other hand, Polybius did stress the prognostic possibilities provided by history²⁰ (and, incidentally, the connection of prognosis with history brought the genre into even closer proximity to medicine). Thus, usefulness for theoretical purposes gave way to usefulness in given situations. And

¹⁷ Cf. Schenkeveld 1976.

¹⁸ Arist. *Po.* 9, 1451a36 ff.; see Brink 1960, 17 for the incidental role of history in this section of Arist. *Po.*

¹⁹ See Th. 1.22; the absence of τὸ μυθῶδες is considered ἀτερπέστερον there. Thucydides aims at τὸ σαφές and τέρψις.—While Thucydides at least acknowledges that a lack of τὸ μυθῶδες may diminish the entertainment aspects of historiography, he still thinks this effect entirely secondary. Cf. for the interpretation of the use of history, de Romilly 1954.

²⁰ See Verdin 1973, 548 n. 28 for references. E.g. 6.57.4 προειπεῖν ὑπὲρ τοῦ μέλλοντος; 3.31.13. Note that Polybius is not the first to express this thought. It had been voiced before by orators, see Walbank 1967, 392.

where the entertainment aspect of historiography is concerned, Polybius states that its absence is what distinguishes historiography from tragedy.²¹ In the second century CE, however, historiography underwent a decisive change, at least if we may believe Lucian.

Lucian—a slightly younger contemporary of Galen’s—is the author of the only ancient monograph dedicated exclusively to the theory of historiography, *On How to Write History*—as one will see, it was no coincidence that my opening anecdote was derived from this treatise. In it he complains about the incompetent historians that were mushrooming in Rome at the time. Instead of devoting themselves to writing useful histories—to Lucian, τὸ χρήσιμον is the only legitimate purpose of writing history at all, while τέρψις is secondary at best²²—they utterly confuse the genre of historiography with encomiastic literature and poetry. Lucian tries to redress this uncalled-for striving after amusement by stressing the traditional relationship between historiography and usefulness and truthfulness.²³ As far as I know, Galen nowhere refers to contemporary developments in historiography, nor does he need to. For him, the only relevant material for comparison with Hippocrates lies in the classical historians, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon. But his approach to historiography is necessarily the very opposite of Lucian’s: in order to make the criterion of ἀλήθεια more exclusively relevant for the genre of the scholarly treatise, Galen had to downgrade its relevance for the genre of historiography.

²¹ Plb. 2.56.11-2: τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἱστορίας καὶ τραγωδίας οὐ ταυτόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον. ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ δεῖ διὰ τῶν πιθανωτάτων λόγων ἐκπλήξαι καὶ ψυχαγωγῆσαι κατὰ τὸ παρὸν τοὺς ἀκούοντας, ἐνθάδε δὲ διὰ τῶν ἀληθινῶν ἔργων καὶ λόγων εἰς τὸν πάντα χρόνον διδάξαι καὶ πείσαι τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας· ἐπειδὴ περ ἐν ἐκείνοις μὲν ἡγείται τὸ πιθανόν, κἂν ἢ ψεῦδος, διὰ τὴν ἀπάτην τῶν θεωμένων, ἐν δὲ τούτοις τάληθές διὰ τὴν ὠφέλειαν τῶν φιλομαθοῦντων. Meijering 1987, 10; 46.

²² Lucian. *Hist. Conscr.* 9; 13; 42. Cf. Schmitt 1984; Korus 1986, 35. Lucian also stresses the prognostic value of history, cf. Verdin 1973, 547.

²³ Cf. Kessler 1982, 50 ff.

This explains why he stresses on various occasions that historians (especially Herodotus) are read for pleasure only, but that the students of medicine should display a different attitude towards their reading (*In Hipp. Epid. VI Comm. 3, 17b.33 K.*):

... ἐάν τέ τις μὴ καθάπερ Ἡροδότου καὶ Κτησίου μόνον ὡς ἱστορίαν ἀναγινώσκη τὰ βιβλία τῶν παλαιῶν ἰατρῶν, ἀλλ' ἔνεκα τοῦ πλείον τι ἔχειν εἰς τὰ τῆς τέχνης ἔργα.

'... at least if one does not read the books by the ancient doctors just like those by Herodotus and Ktesias, merely as history, but in order to become more proficient in the exercise of one's art.'²⁴

Herodotus' companion in this text is significant: Ctesias, a contemporary of Thucydides, was 'popular precisely for the story-telling element' in his work (τὸ μυθῶδες). His work 'is full of fanciful details, pathetic episodes elaborately narrated, elements of biography and romance side by side with political and military narrative' (Connor 1985, 459).

In the case of Thucydides there is an extra complication, for this historian actually ventured into the field of medicine in his description of the plague. Here, Galen has to resort to another tactic to show Hippocrates' superiority. He adduces the criterion of the audience, something he also did to defend the need for writing his own commentaries: Hippocrates wrote for specialists, Galen explained his work for students.²⁵ In the case of the plague, the argument runs that Thucydides wrote as a layman for laymen, while Hippocrates wrote as a specialist for his colleagues. This explains why Thucydides' account is flawed in its selection of details: since Thucydides did not have a clue as to which details were relevant and which were not, he just presented everything

²⁴ Cf. *De anatom. adm.* 3.9 (2.393 K.), where Galen claims that the histories of Herodotus are read ἔνεκα τέρψεως only.

²⁵ Cf. Sluiter 1994 (forthc.).

pell-mell. Hippocrates, on the other hand, eliminates everything that is not strictly relevant to the medical side of the story.²⁶

Seriousness and usefulness, reliability of the facts and an intelligent account of the underlying causes: it would seem that Hippocrates' literary virtues were all on the side of *docere* and τὸ χρήσιμον, with nothing to balance them on the side of *delectare* and *τέρψις*.²⁷ However, Galen manages to make Hippocrates score even on this latter count. In fact, the story from Hippocrates' *Epidemics* that I am referring to so appealed to his fancy that he quotes from it on four different occasions.²⁸ Here, I will discuss the most extensive version (*De semine* 1.4, 4.524 K.). The issue is the membrane that is said to encompass the embryo right from the moment of conception. Its presence could be demonstrated by dissecting animals. However, says Galen,

Ἄμεινον δὲ Ἱπποκράτους ἀκούσαι περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγοντος ἐν τῷ περὶ φύσεως παιδίου γράμματι· ποιιδεύσει τε γὰρ ἡμᾶς τῷ τῆς θεωρίας ἀκριβεῖ, καὶ τέρψει, κεράσας οἷα δὴ λέξει τὴν διήγησιν, ὥστ' ἐπαιέναι τε βραχὺ τὸ σφοδρὸν τοῦ λόγου, καὶ διαναπαύεσθαι σὺν ὠφελείᾳ τερπόμενον, ἵν' ἐξῆς νεανικώτεροι γενόμενοι συντείνωμεν ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀκμαιότερον ἐπὶ τὸ κατὰ λοιπὸν τοῦ λόγου. καὶ τοῖνυν ἤδη ἀκούσωμεν τοῦ Ἱπποκράτους.

²⁶ Gal. *De diff. resp.* (7.854 K.): Θουκυδίδης μὲν γὰρ τὰ συμβάντα τοῖς νοσοῦσιν ὡς ιδιώτης ιδιώταις ἔγραψεν, Ἱπποκράτης δὲ τεχνίτης τεχνίταις. Thucydides himself also envisages a select audience, cf. Th. 1.22.4 and Montanari 1984, 116 (comparing Lucian, Polybius and Strabo).

²⁷ Combining instruction and entertainment becomes a characteristic feature of great literature at least from the second century BCE onwards (Neoptolemus of Parium *apud* Phld. *Po.* V, col. xiii 8-15 Jensen); Hor. *Ars* 343; Strabo 1.2.9, cf. Meijering 1987, 6.

²⁸ Complete: *Sem.* 1.4 (4.524 ff. K.); incomplete: *In foet. form.* 1 (4.653 ff. K.); *Nat. fac.* 2.3 (2.86 K.); *Adv. Lycum* 7.3 (18a.236 K.). The original story is in Hipp. *Nat. puer.* 13.1-4 (7.488 ff. Littré). A good paraphrase plus discussion in Weisser 1983, 194 f.; cf. further Lonie 1977 and 1981.

‘It is better to listen to Hippocrates when he discusses these same issues in his *‘On the Nature of the Child’*.²⁹ For he will instruct us by the precision of his theory, and amuse us by mixing his narrative with a certain quality of speech.³⁰ This entails a brief relaxation of the power of his style, and resting awhile, and entertainment accompanied by profit, in order that we may subsequently be rejuvenated and exert ourselves even more energetically in absorbing the rest of his argument. Well now then, let us listen to Hippocrates’.

The relevant opposition is the one between *παιδεύειν* and *τέρπειν*, to educate and to entertain. The value of the instruction is guaranteed by Hippocrates’ precision (*τὸ ἀκριβές*), and his ability to entertain by his style (*λέξις*). The relaxation of his usual forcefulness does not, however, lead to mere amusement, but to a combination of entertainment and instruction: *σὺν ὠφελείᾳ τερπόμενον*, which influences the attitude of his audience in a positive and stimulating way. Horace would approve!

Although strictly speaking the story itself is irrelevant here, it would be unfair to deprive you of it, if only because that would also mean denying you the opportunity to judge Hippocrates’ *λέξις* for yourselves. So here it is, in Galen’s version (*De semine* 1.4, 4.525 f. K.): Hippocrates reports how he came to see a six-day old embryo, a *γονή* ‘seed’!³¹

Ὡς δὲ εἶδον τὴν γονὴν ἐκταίην ἐούσαν, ἐγὼ διηγήσομαι. γυναικὸς οἰκέτις μουσουργὸς πολύτιμος ἦν, παρὰ ἀνδρας φοιτέουσα, ἣν οὐκ ἔδει λαβεῖν ἐν γαστρὶ, ὅπως μὴ ἀτιμοτέρη ἔη.

²⁹ For the construction *ἀκούω τινος λέγοντος*, cf. Schenkeveld 1992.

³⁰ Or: ‘by the kind of speech with which he mixes his narrative’. Cf. Strohmaier 1981, 192 f., who mentions Benedict Einarson’s emendation *ἠδείει* for *οἶα δὴ*, which seems to be confirmed by the Arabic version: ‘because he mixed it with a talk which contains a lovely story’. However, as Strohmaier rightly stresses, this translation is by Hunayn, who had a solid knowledge of Greek, knew his Homer, and had enjoyed thorough philological training at Constantinople. Therefore, the possibility cannot be excluded that Einarson and Hunayn arrived at the same conjectural emendation independently.

³¹ Cf. Weisser 1983, 167 f.: in the Arabic tradition, too, the embryo could be called ‘a seed’ during the first couple of days after the conception.

ἡκηκόει δὲ ἡ μουσουργὸς, οἷα γυναῖκες πρὸς ἀλλήλας λέγουσιν, ὅτι, ἐπὶ γυνὴ μέλλη λήψεσθαι ἐν γαστρὶ, οὐκ ἐξέρχεται ἡ γονή, ἀλλ' ἔνδον μένει. ταῦτα ἀκούσασα συνήκε, καὶ τοῦτο ἐφύλασσε ἀεί. καὶ κως ὡς ἤσθετο οὐκ ἐξιούσαν τὴν γονήν, ἔφρασε τῇ δεσποίνῃ. καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦλθεν ὡς ἐμέ. κάγω ἀκούσας ἐκελευσάμην αὐτὴν πρὸς τὴν γῆν πηδῆσαι. καὶ ἐπτάκις ἐπειδὴ ἐπεπήδητο, ἡ γονὴ κατερρύη ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ ψόφος ἐγένετο, κάκεινη ἰδοῦσα ἐθεῶτο αὐτὴν καὶ ἐθαύμαζεν. ὁκοῖον δ' ἦν, ἐγὼ ἐρέω· οἷον εἴ τις ὤου ὠμοῦ τὸ ἔξω λεπύριον περιέλοι, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἔνδον ὑμένι τὸ ἔνδον ὑγρὸν διεφαίνετο. ταυτὶ μὲν Ἴπποκράτης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ τοῦ μένειν ἔνδον τὴν γονήν καὶ ἔχειν ὑμένα.

'How I came to see a six-day-old seed, I will recount. A lady acquaintance had a valuable slave, a singing girl, who served the gentlemen. On no account should she become pregnant, lest it diminish her value. The singing girl had listened to the kind of talk women have among each other, namely that when a woman is about to conceive, the seed does not leave again, but remains inside. She had understood this well and was always checking whether this happened. When she somehow noticed that the seed did not leave again, she informed her mistress. And word was given to me. When I had heard what was the matter, I ordered her to jump to the ground. And when she had jumped seven times, the seed flowed down to the earth, and there was a sound. She saw it and looked at it intently and with wonder. I will say what it was like: it was as if someone had peeled off the outer shell of a raw egg and the moisture inside was shining through the inner membrane. This is Hippocrates' testimony on the fact that the seed remains inside and that it has a membrane.'³²

³² The story is reported only this far because it is the point about the membrane that Galen is interested in here. Note how an egg-like object is being observed, simply because that is what the 'seed' was expected to look like. Note the number seven. The story has been trivialised in that in Hippocrates' version the girl is made to jump *πρὸς πυγῆν*. She hits her buttocks with her heels while jumping. This is related to some kind of Laconic dance, which fits in with the girl's profession, but it also accounts for the abortive effect in a better way than does the reading *γῆν*. Is *γῆν* an intrusion from p. 526?; cf. Weisser 1983, 194 f.

I suppose a male doctor in the second century may well have been charmed by this story.

Now, where stylistic theory was concerned, Galen had demonstrated that Hippocrates' style coincided with the ideal style, *and*—not by coincidence—with that of Galen himself.³³ Galen is not in the habit of calling attention to the entertaining aspects of Hippocrates, and neither does he stress his own frivolous side. Nevertheless, he can parallel Hippocrates on this point too: In his *Ad Pisonem de theriaca* 8 he recounts the story of the death of Cleopatra, who killed herself by means of a poisonous snake, after having tried out the effectiveness of the poison on her two faithful lady-servants. It worked. Whatever one may think of this, I will restrict myself to noting Galen's comment on his own performance (*Ad Pisonem de theriaca* 8, 14.237 K.):

Ἄλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἀτερπῶς ιστορεῖσθω διὰ τὴν σὴν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λόγοις φιλοτιμίαν, καὶ ἵνα διὰ τούτου τὴν ὀξύτητα πρὸς τὸ ἀποκτεῖναι τούτων τῶν θηρίων ὤμεν εἰδότες.

'But let this not unamusing account be reported because of your eager interest in all manner of stories, and in order that it may make us knowledgeable about how quickly these creatures can kill.'

Here, too, the serious part of the work is not forgotten. The story is told at least as much to serve a didactic purpose as to please Galen's addressee. Sheer amusement plays no part in an *ἐπιστημονικὴ διδασκαλία*.³⁴

It is time to sum up. In this paper I have drawn attention to one aspect of what may be called 'the philological paradigm' in Galen, namely his use of poetical theory in delineating Hippocrates' position as an author and in

³³ Cf. Sluiter 1994 (forthc.).

³⁴ On the other hand, Galen does at times get carried away by his own sense of humour, although a modern (and possibly an ancient) audience may fail to be equally impressed by it. The long digression about the problems Centaurs may encounter in living the life of an ordinary human being (*De usu partium* 3.1, 3.171 ff. K.) is a case in point. I can find no didactic or instructive point in the digression whatsoever.

and in conquering a place for the *ἐπιστημονικὴ διδασκαλία* as a literary genre. The literary critics of the first centuries BCE and CE had paid little, if any, attention to Hippocrates. This left Galen a more or less free hand to create his own self-constructed super author and super authority, conveniently labeled 'Hippocrates'.

We have seen how Galen applied the criterion of truth or fiction to distinguish scholarly work from poetry. For Galen to think it at all necessary to define the relationship between medicine and poetry is, in itself, revealing. Historiography, medicine's main competitor as a serious prose genre, was traditionally opposed to poetry by this very truth criterion. In order to create a clear distinction between historiography and scholarly writing, the relevance of the truth criterion to the former had to be watered down, while its entertainment value and the lack of erudition in its intended audience were stressed. This went against the grain of contemporary theory about historiography, that tended to keep it strictly separated from encomiastic and poetical works by applying this very truth criterion. However, Galen may have felt justified in taking this attitude by contemporary historical practice.

On the other hand, Galen did not go so far as to deny outright that Hippocrates, too, could be entertaining. On the contrary, there is at least one occasion on which he explicitly ascribes this characteristic to Hippocrates. And it is particularly relevant to our concept of the philological paradigm that in the story concerned he is especially charmed by Hippocrates' *style*.

As a result, Galen has earned himself a place in a symposium on Ancient Literary Criticism: this is what comes from rolling your barrel.

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