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Parce que l'histoire ne se fait qu'en se racontant, une critique de l'histoire ne peut être exercée qu'en racontant comment l'histoire, en se narrant, se produit.

J.P. Faye

PREFACE*

This book again tackles the problem of historiography and biography in the light of the various theories elaborated by the Greek thinkers on the structure of communication. This perspective also allows us to reexamine the earliest Roman historiography in its constant relationship with the historiographical doctrines of the Greek and with their narrative techniques. Such an angle has naturally led to an analysis of historical and biographical narrative viewed in relation to the readers or listeners for whom it was intended.

We are grateful to Prof. A. Momigliano¹ who read the previous edition of the first chapter of this volume and amply documented the practice of that public reading of historical works which is also abundantly attested by inscriptions of the Hellenistic-Roman period². This practice explains still further the historiographical theories we have identified. They thus become even more intelligible since they were aimed not only at the reading public but also at the audience of these occasional recitals. We have never, of course, wished to deny that the principal means of diffusion to historical works in the ancient world, at least after the late fifth century B.C., was the book. Our purpose has been to throw light on the opposition between

* With the exception of chapter I, which has been translated by David Murray, this book (*Storia e biografia nel pensiero antico*, Roma-Bari 1983) has been translated into English by Leonard Murray under the supervision of Prof. A. Hamilton, G. Giangrande and Daniele Guardamagna, to whom we would like to express our deepest thanks.

1) 'The Historians of the Classical World and their Audiences: Some Suggestions', *Ann. Scuola Norm. Sup. Pisa*, Class. Lett. Filos. Serie III 8, 1978, p.59 ff.

2) Cf. M. Guarducci, 'Poeti vaganti dell'età ellenistica', *Atti R. Accad. Lincei*, Cl. Sc. mor. st. fil. s.VI 2, 1927-1929, pp.629-665.

various historiographical tendencies which presupposed different narrative structures according to the various ways of conceiving and creating a relationship with the public, be it of readers or of listeners. The coexistence of the two types of communication is confirmed moreover by the continuous alternation in Polybius of the terms 'reader' and 'listener'.

A last preliminary clarification: the notion of orality which recurs in this book exclusively applies to the *orality of the communication* or the *aural dimension of reception*. To avoid possible misunderstanding we must emphasize that a correct usage of the term should be based on a rigorous distinction between three different forms of orality which may coexist simultaneously or which can exist on their own: 1) orality of composition (or extemporaneousness); 2) orality of communication; 3) orality of transmission assigned to memory³. In our analysis of ancient historiography only the second of these forms is considered.

3) Cf. R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, Cambridge 1977, p.16 ff.

ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Arrighetti 1977 | G. Arrighetti, 'Fra erudizione e biografia', <i>Studi class. or.</i> 26, 1977, pp.13-67. |
| Bömer 1953 | F. Bömer, 'Thematik und Krise der römischen Geschichtsschreibung im 2. Jahrhundert v. Chr.', <i>Historia</i> 2, 1953, pp.189-209. |
| Canfora 1971 | L. Canfora, 'Il 'ciclo' storico', <i>Belfagor</i> 26, 1971, pp. 653-670 |
| Cantarelli 1898 | L. Cantarelli, 'Origine degli Annales Maximi', <i>Riv. filol. class.</i> 26, 1898, p.209-229. |
| De Sanctis 1953 | G. De Sanctis, <i>Storia dei Romani</i> IV 2,1, Firenze 1953. |
| De Sanctis 1956 | G. De Sanctis, <i>Storia dei Romani</i> I, Firenze 1956 ² . |
| Dihle 1956 | A. Dihle, <i>Studien zur griechischen Biographie</i> , <i>Abhandl. Akad. Göttingen</i> 3, 37, 1956. |
| Finley 1976 | M.I. Finley, 'In Lieblicher Bläue', <i>Arion</i> n.s.3/1, 1976, pp.79-95. |
| <i>F. Gr. Hist.</i> | F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , Leiden 1954-1969. |
| Fraccaro 1957 | P. Fraccaro, 'The History of Rome in the Regal Period', <i>Journ. Rom. Stud.</i> 47, 1957, pp. 59-65. |
| von Fritz 1956 | K. von Fritz, 'Die Bedeutung des Aristoteles für die Geschichtsschreibung', in <i>Histoire et historiens dans l'antiquité</i> , <i>Entret. Hardt</i> IV, Vandoeuvres-Genève 1956, pp.83-145. |
| Gabba 1966 | E. Gabba, 'Considerazioni sulla tradizione letteraria sulle origini della Repubblica', in |

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- pp.1-18.
Walbank 1957 F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius I*, Oxford 1957.
Walbank 1967 F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius II*, Oxford 1967.

CHAPTER I

THEORIES OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

It has been observed that the discovery of the historical dimension of man was, for the Greeks, a poetic one¹: as early as the seventh century B.C. the elegiac poet Mimnermus of Colophon, narrating the colonization of his native town and the wars which followed it, interpreted the misadventures of the present as expiation of ancient guilt, according to a principle of divinely imposed causality which tended to re-establish order in human affairs². More generally, a recurrent element in archaic Greek poetry was the recounting of remote history together with recent and even contemporary events (the colonization of cities, wars, civil and political strife) in which, at times, the poet himself had been protagonist with a strongly partisan spirit. This was a pragmatic poetry, directly involved in the real problems of its own society but, at the same time, seeking to indicate its political-historical antecedents by recalling the past³. The sense of difference and the awareness of continuity — the two basic components of historical thought — were in fact, as the poetry of Homer and Hesiod clearly shows, already an acquired element of archaic Greek culture in its bi-polar conception of the two great epochs of mankind — that of heroes or demi-gods and that of men⁴ — a division according to which the

1. Cf. Mazarino 1966, I p. 38 ff.

2. Fr. 3 Gent.-Pr.: cf. Mazarino 1966, *loc. cit.*

3. For a fuller treatment see Gentili 1972, p. 57 ff. A survey of elements of historical narrative in archaic poetry has been attempted by F. Lasserre, 'L' historiographie grecque à l'époque archaïque', *Quad. d. storia* 4, 1976, p. 113 ff.

4. Hom. *Il.* 12,23; Hes. *Op.* 160; fr. 1; 204, 97 ff. Merk.-West. Cf. Latte 1956, p. 3 f.

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