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Lucian's Description of Herodotus in the *Herodotus*[1]

Yasuhiro Katsumata

Introduction

Lucian of Samosata (c. 120-180 CE), who visited many places in the territory of the Roman Empire and gave orations in front of numerous audiences, is fond of dealing with, and freely characterising, the great figures of the Greek past[2]. One of his favourite authors is Herodotus (c. 485-425 BCE), who wrote a multi-volume work on various historical events and customs of non-Greek areas[3].

The work I pick up in this paper is the *Herodotus*[4], an introductory speech (or προλαλιά)[5] delivered in Macedonia in order to gain favour from his audience. In this small piece Lucian relates an anecdote about Herodotus. The story goes as follows: Herodotus strongly desired to become reputable among Greeks. To reach the goal he participated in the Olympic festival and read his work aloud in front of the audience. Thanks to his successful recitation, his dream finally came true. This story of Herodotus is nowhere else attested and therefore it should not be taken at face value. Nevertheless no studies have ever tried to analyse the meaning of this episode[6]. In this paper, accordingly, I will take a close look at the passages where Herodotus is featured and discuss the effects Lucian's description of Herodotus might have had. In what follows, I will first scrutinise the

Herodotus episode, frequently referring to several works by Lucian and other authors, with which Lucian's Herodotus in the *Herodotus* will be compared. Next, I will explore what effects the story might have had in a performative context(7). The investigation will eventually lead to the conclusion that Herodotus in the work has many characteristics of ῥήτορες ('rhetors'), and that this description of Herodotus serves as Lucian's indirect and ironic criticism of the contemporary ῥήτορες as well as himself.

Lucian's Description of Herodotus

In this part I will examine how Herodotus is described in the work. Lucian speaks about him in the διήγημα (a short story which treats mythical, historical, or daily matters, and this is a typical component of προλαλιαί). The story of Herodotus is really compact but worth investigating in detail.

We should first notice that the Herodotus Lucian tells about is too much concerned about reputation. At the outset Lucian tells us that Herodotus became 'famous' (πολλοῦ ἄξιος (1)) among all Greeks. The speaker then begins to relate how Herodotus achieved this reputation. On the way to Greece Herodotus contemplated the way to become 'famed' (ἐπίσημος (1)) and 'reputable' (περιβόητος (1)). He thought that to win a 'reputation' (γνῶσιν (1)) little by little did not pay, and consequently considered taking part in the Olympic festival as a favourable opportunity. There he introduced his work to a resounding success, and the whole of Greece came to know him. This story, the narrator opines, shows a sure shortcut to 'reputation' (γνῶσιν (3)).

We should recall here Lucian's *Rhetorum Praeceptor* (henceforth *Rh.Pr.*), which informs us a great deal about

ῥήτορες. According to the narrator of this work, an *alter ego* of Lucian, to become a ῥήτωρ means to gain a reputation. The narrator, who explains to a boy how to become a ῥήτωρ, connects reputation with ῥήτορες. He knows the people who became 'famed' (ἔνδοξοι (2)) thanks to λόγοι. There is 'Fame' (δόξα (6), cf. δόξαν (6)) beside Ῥητορική. The sophisticated man, who is one of the two guides to Ῥητορική, the narrator says, makes the boy a 'renowned' (περίβλεπτος (11)) ῥήτωρ. The urbane man regards ῥήτορες as 'famous' (εὐδοκιμεῖν (22)) and 'renowned' (περίβλεπτον (22)). At the end of his teaching the narrator again corelates ῥήτορες with 'famousness' (εὐδοκιμεῖν (26)). The connection between ῥήτορες and reputation is clear.

We have another source which hints at this connection: a passage which suggests that Lucian himself became famous by virtue of ῥητορική. In the *Bis Accusatus*, Ῥητορική claims that she once made 'the Syrian' (Lucian's *alter ego*) 'illustrious and renowned' (κλεινὸν ... καὶ ἀοίδιμον (27)).

Let us bear this connection in mind and return to the Herodotus story in the *Herodotus*. We saw that the episode was one concerning reputation among many people: Herodotus wishes to become famous and reaches the goal in the end. It can then be reasonably assumed that this reputable man is described as a ῥήτωρ.

Another important point in the description of Herodotus is that Lucian emphasises Herodotus' speed and effortlessness. At the beginning of the *Herodotus*, Lucian states that everyone can imitate Herodotus' 'immediate' (ἐν βραχεῖ (1)) way of becoming a distinguished person among Greeks. Further, according to Lucian, Herodotus contemplated how to become famous 'as instantly and easily as possible' (τάχιστα καὶ ἀπραγμονέστατα (1)). He thought that to introduce his work little by little in various places is 'toilsome' (ἐργῶδες (1)), 'long'

(μακρὸν (1)), and 'time-consuming' (τριβὴν οὐ μικρὰν (1)), and therefore planned to attract all Greeks 'at once' (ἀθρόους (1)). He took part in the Olympic festival and eventually 'in a single meeting he won the universal approbation of all Greece'[8] (ἐν μιᾷ συνόδῳ πάνδημόν τινα <καὶ> κοινὴν ψῆφον τῆς Ἑλλάδος λαβὼν (2)). After the διήγημα of Herodotus, Lucian summarises his action as a 'shortcut' (ἐπίτομόν ... ὁδὸν (3)) to a reputation. In this small episode Herodotus is successful with speed and facility.

This emphasis on speed and effortlessness reminds us of Lucian's ironical explanations in the *Rh.Pr*. The narrator stresses the speed and effortlessness throughout. At the beginning of a series of recommendations he confidently predicts that the boy will reach his goal 'instantly' (τάχιστα (1)). The path the boy will take is 'the best shortcut' (ἐπιτομωτάτην (3)). The senior ῥήτωρ predicts that the boy will obtain excellent things from ῥητορική 'immediately' (ἐν βραχεῖ (3)). What he intends to show is the 'easiest' (ῥᾷστα (8)) way to the top of the mountain where Ῥητορική awaits, and the way is 'short, easy, and direct' (ταχεῖα καὶ ἀπράγμων καὶ εἰς τὸ εὐθὺ (10)). At the middle of the lecture the narrator introduces a man who gives the boy detailed advice about how to become an eminent ῥήτωρ. The man wants the pupil to get to his goal 'instantly' (τάχιστα (15)). He tells that boldness, shamelessness, lies, and so on will make the boy a famous ῥήτωρ 'instantly' (ἐν βραχεῖ (22)). After several pieces of advice, he asserts that the boy will 'soon' (οὐκ εἰς μακράν (24)) become a ῥήτωρ and affirms the certainty of getting excellent things from ῥητορική 'immediately' (ἐν βραχεῖ (24)).

In this way, Lucian tells us again and again how one can become a ῥήτωρ speedily and easily. If we bear this idea in mind, we can assume that Lucian's Herodotus, who

accomplishes his aim immediately and effortlessly, is described as a ῥήτωρ.

Let us next turn to Herodotus' performance in the Olympic festival. That Herodotus chooses the place to introduce his work suggests that he is described as a ῥήτωρ. For ῥήτορες in Lucian's time often participated in big festivals and gave their orations there[9]. For example, according to Philostratus' (c. 170-249 CE) *Vitae Sophistarum* (henceforth *VS*), Herodes Atticus presented his oratorical piece in the Olympic festival and was praised by Greeks[10]. Although it is possible that Herodotus went to Olympia[11], the event described in the *Herodotus* is probably Lucian's fabrication. He makes his Herodotus take part in the Olympic festival to present him as a ῥήτωρ.

What does Herodotus do at the festival? Lucian tells us as follows:

> He waited for a packed audience to assemble (πλήθουσαν τηρήσας τὴν πανήγυριν) ... he appeared in the temple chamber, presenting himself as a competitor for an Olympic honour, not as a spectator; then he sang (ᾄδων) his *Histories* and ... bewitched his audience (κηλῶν τοὺς παρόντας)[12] (*Herodotus* 1)

Close analysis of the scene will reveal that Lucian describes Herodotus as a ῥήτωρ. First, we notice that Herodotus enters the temple chamber after the audience. This action should not be overlooked. In the *Rh.Pr.*, the narrator advises the would-be ῥήτωρ to go onto the stage after the audience (ἐν ταῖς ἀκροάσεσι μετὰ πάντας εἰσιέναι χρή (22)) so that he can be conspicuous. In Philostratus' *VS*, the narrator relates a story of Herodes Atticus' late appearance in front of the audience, and we can suppose from the word 'trick'

(τέχνην)[13] that his behaviour is described as an intentional stratagem. As these examples show, deliberate late appearances were a common skill among ῥήτορες, and therefore Herodotus is described as a ῥήτωρ here.

It is also noteworthy that Herodotus 'sang' and 'bewitched his audience'. This action implies a characteristic of ῥήτορες. We can find an interesting parallel in Philostratus' *VS*. Favorinus, relates Philostratus, 'enchanted' (ἔθελγε) his audience by 'the tones of his voice' (τῇ ... ἠχῇ τοῦ φθέγματος), 'the rhythm of his speech' (τῷ ῥυθμῷ τῆς γλώττης), and 'the epilogue of his orations' (τοῦ λόγου ... τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν), which the audience called 'The Song' (ᾠδὴν)[14]. Philostratus tells us about other singing ῥήτορες as well. Isaeus of Assyria rebuked his pupil Dionysius of Miletus when he delivered his declamations 'in a sing-song' (ξὺν ᾠδῇ)[15]. The audience of Hadrian of Phoenicia 'was struck' (ἐκπεπληγμένοι) by 'his facile tongue, his well-modulated and flexible voice, and his rhythms, whether in prose or when he sang in recitative' (τὴν εὐγλωττίαν ... καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ εὔστροφον τοῦ φθέγματος καὶ τοὺς πεζῇ τε καὶ ξὺν ᾠδῇ ῥυθμούς)[16]. Dio Chrysostom (c. 40/50-110 CE) also mentions singing ῥήτορες (and σοφισταί) (πάντες ... ᾄδουσι καὶ ῥήτορες καὶ σοφισταί)[17]. Moreover, Lucian himself provides us with information about the relationship between ῥήτορες and singing. The narrator of *Rh.Pr.* orders the would-be ῥήτωρ to 'sing anytime and intone' (πάντα σοι ᾀδέσθω καὶ μέλος γιγνέσθω) whenever it seems an opportune time to sing (19). These passages clearly testify to the unseparable connection between ῥήτορες and singing[18]. Accordingly, Lucian's Herodotus, who 'sang' his work, is a ῥήτωρ.

Following the description of the Olympic festival, Lucian tells us how people came to see Herodotus after his performance:

> By this time he was much better known than the Olympic victors themselves. There was no one who had not heard the name of Herodotus ... He had only to appear and he was pointed out (ἐδείκνυτο ... τῷ δακτύλῳ): "That is that Herodotus (Οὗτος ἐκεῖνος Ἡρόδοτός ἐστιν) who wrote the tale of the Persian Wars in Ionic and celebrated our victories."[19] (*Herodotus* 2)

This finger pointing and acclaim are described in almost the same wording in Lucian's other works as characteristic of ῥήτορες. In the *Somnium sive Vita Luciani*, 'Paideia', who tries to help Lucian become a splendid ῥήτωρ, tells him that if he obeys her, fingers will be pointed at him and he will achieve some renown (τῶν ὁρώντων ἕκαστος τὸν πλησίον κινήσας δείξει σε τῷ δακτύλῳ, Οὗτος ἐκεῖνος, λέγων (11)). In the *Rh.Pr.*, the narrator, who is a ῥήτωρ, thinks it honourable to be pointed at by a finger and talked about (τὸ δείκνυσθαι τῷ δακτύλῳ τοῦτον ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀκρότατον ἐν πάσῃ κακίᾳ λεγόμενον (25)). The similarity of these expressions cannot be incidental[20]. Lucian employs the phrasing intentionally to represent Herodotus as a ῥήτωρ.

So much for the investigation of Lucian's description of Herodotus. I want to bring an end to this section by suggesting that Lucian hints at his awareness of 'Herodotus the ῥήτωρ'. Just after Lucian relates the Herodotus episode, he enumerates the names of men who, like Herodotus, became famous for their performance in front of a large group of people:

> Hippias the sophist, a native of the place, and Prodicus from Ceos and Anaximenes from Chios and Polus from Acragas and scores of others always gave recitations (λόγους ἔλεγον) in

person before the assembled spectators and by this means soon won reputations.[21] (*Herodotus* 3)

Aside from the problematic name Anaximenes[22], the other three, Hippias, Prodicus, and Polus, are so-called σοφισταί in the fifth or fourth century BCE, and, as Lucian says, they 'gave recitations'. If we neglect the Platonic derogative title σοφισταί, we can safely state that they were basically ῥήτορες. What we should observe here is that Lucian juxtaposes these ῥήτορες with Herodotus. This arrangement seems to imply that Lucian attempts to bind the three men and Herodotus together as ῥήτορες. Lucian was conscious of his presentation of Herodotus as a ῥήτωρ.

Possible Effects of the Herodotus Episode

Thus far we have seen how Lucian describes Herodotus in the διήγημα, and as a result found that Lucian's Herodotus had a lot of features of ῥήτορες. That said, however, we may well wonder whether this description of Herodotus has some significance or not.

The important point to note is that in most works of distinguished authors who flourished in the period of the Roman Principate, in which Lucian lived as well, Herodotus is referred to not as a ῥήτωρ but as a συγγραφεύς ('prose-writer' or more specifically 'historian'). Diodorus Siculus (late first century BCE)[23], Dionysius of Halicarnassus (late first century BCE)[24], Strabo (late first century BCE)[25], and Plutarch (c. 50-120 CE)[26] all label Herodotus as a συγγραφεύς. Furthermore, Lucian himself presents Herodotus as a συγγραφεύς in his other works[27].

Judging from the fact that people in the Roman imperial

age thought of Herodotus as a συγγραφεύς in general, we can reasonably assume that Lucian's description of Herodotus as a ῥήτωρ in the *Herodotus* was surprising for the people who attended his performance. When the audience heard the word Ἡροδότου, the very first word of the work, they probably expected that this was 'Herodotus the συγγραφεύς'. As the oration proceeded they would gradually notice that the Herodotus Lucian presented to them was nothing but a ῥήτωρ.

What, then, did Lucian aim to do with this extraordinary characterisation, or, in other words, what effects did this image of Herodotus bring about within the performative space that Lucian and his audience shared? In the first place, I want to emphasise the importance of Lucian's apparent exaggeration in describing Herodotus as a ῥήτωρ. We should look carefully at the way in which Lucian constructs the figure of Herodotus. From what has been pointed out, it is clear that Lucian consciously accumulates some common features of ῥήτορες so that no one can fail to notice that his Herodotus is a ῥήτωρ. Everyone who gathered in Lucian's performative place probably realised that the figure which had been presented to them was that of a ῥήτωρ.

What does Lucian's exaggeration imply? In my view, he seems to satirise his contemporary ῥήτορες. He did not like their pretentious nature. We have his *Rhetorum Praeceptor*, whose aim is evidently to scoff at such a kind of ῥήτορες. In the work Lucian indirectly attacks ῥήτορες by listing their evil characteristics as ideal ones. Also in the *Herodotus*, Lucian disparages sham ῥήτορες by exaggerating their common features.

In light of this exaggerated presentation, let us consider what effects the image of Herodotus might have had in

Lucian's performative space. It is highly likely that the image of Herodotus gave rise to a joyful atmosphere. For one thing, Lucian himself was a ῥήτωρ. He seems to ridicule himself by exhibiting the typical characteristics of a ῥήτωρ. His derision of ῥήτορες seems to be targeting Lucian himself. The audience might have laughed at Herodotus' odd behaviour, but at the same time they would notice that Lucian himself could not avoid being the butt of his own satirical attack. There is no doubt that Lucian was also aware of the fact. As is often the case with him, he seems to enjoy self-deprecation. We should also note that Lucian's audience are ῥήτορες as well(28). They must have observed that Lucian's Herodotus was a ῥήτωρ, because they knew well how ῥήτορες tended to behave.

As Korenjak emphasises, in a performative space of sophistry a ῥήτωρ and his audience influenced each other during the performance(29). We can assume that in the space where the *Herodotus* was performed Lucian and his audience influenced each other. What Lucian related affected his audience and reactions of his audience affected Lucian, and this process continued until the very end of his oration. Lucian, well aware of his inability to escape from the scorn he directs against ῥήτορες, satirised ῥήτορες in front of ῥήτορες, and in turn his audience noticed his self-deprecating game and enjoyed his derisive description of the ῥήτωρ Herodotus. This continuous interaction between Lucian and his audience originated a cheerful atmosphere.

We should also notice that the work was composed as a προλαλιά. In this type of oration a ῥήτωρ aimed to create an informal, comfortable, and friendly relationship with his audience. Ῥήτορες must have paid attention to their wording or gestures so that their audience did not feel hostility towards them. If we take this convention into consideration,

it is safe to say that Lucian also desired to produce a peaceful atmosphere. Even if it appears that Lucian ridiculed ῥήτορες, we should not regard his attitude as serious. For had he been in earnest, he could not have formed a good relationship with his audience. Indeed, he even flatters his audience at the last part of the work(30). He just tried to entertain his audience with the somewhat comical picture of a ῥήτωρ.

Conclusion

How is Herodotus described in the *Herodotus*? As has been demonstrated, he is delineated as a ῥήτωρ. Lucian, who is perversely iconoclastic towards everything, does not adopt the common image of Herodotus as a συγγραφεύς, but instead presents him as a ῥήτωρ. His configuration is so exaggerated that the audience would not miss his Herodotus' peculiarity.

What effects could this presentation of Herodotus bring about in the performative space that Lucian has created? He might have entertained his fellow πεπαιδευμένοι by describing a typical ῥήτωρ of his time. On the surface Lucian presents Herodotus the ῥήτωρ as an imitable exemplum (καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ σὺ καὶ ἄλλος ἂν μιμησαίμεθα (1)), but when we remember what a masked trickster Lucian is, it will soon become clear that he offers the ῥήτωρ as an object of mockery. We can find him ridiculing the behaviour of ῥήτορες ironically in various places. However, it is a fatal mistake to think of Lucian's attitude as serious. What he aimed at in the προλαλιά is to make fun of the ῥήτωρ in a light-hearted way and to laugh with his audience(31). He was perfectly aware that he himself was also a ῥήτωρ. Even if it is true that he hated ostentatious ῥήτορες, he did not have an intention to exclude all ῥήτορες from the society. He was surely proud of his own profession as a

wandering ῥήτωρ, but at the same time he had a skill of criticising the profession objectively and self-ironically.

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Notes

(1) I wish to express my gratitude to Tsugunobu Uchida for valuable comments and criticisms, and to Martin Ciesko for correcting my English.

(2) It goes without saying that frequent appearances of past Greek authors in Lucian's works indicate his affection of Greek past. This feeling was shared among the elite in the age of the Second Sophistic when reflecting on the problem of 'Greekness'. The issue of the 'Greekness' related to the

past occupies a central position in recent scholarship on the Second Sophistic. See esp. Bowie (1974), the seminal study. Also indispensable are Swain (1996), Goldhill ed. (2001), and Whitmarsh (2001).

(3) Lucian refers to Herodotus in the following places (except the *Herod.*, which I will look at closely in this paper): *VH* 2.5; ibid. 2.31; *Philops.* 2; *Hist.Conscr.* 2; ibid. 18; ibid. 42; ibid. 54; *Salt.* 78; *Dom.* 20; [*Macr.*] 10.

(4) The text I use is Macleod's OCT (Macleod ed. (1980)).

(5) On this genre in general, see Mras (1949a). Lucian's works are discussed in: Mras (1949b); Bompaire (1958), 286-8; Reardon (1971), 165-6; Anderson (1977); id. (1993), 53-5; Branham (1985); id. (1989), 38-46; and Nesselrath (1990).

(6) This work itself has been neglected among scholars and close studies can hardly be found. As far as I know, the most detailed study ever is Nesselrath (1990), 117-20.

(7) I use the word 'performative' because it is assumed that sophists in Lucian's time were engaged in a kind of 'performance'. On the space sophists and their audience shared, see Russell (1983), 74-86; Anderson (1989), 89-104; Korenjak (2000), 20-40; Whitmarsh (2005), 23-40.

(8) Translation from Kilburn ed. (1959).

(9) Korenjak (2000), 26-7.

(10) *VS* 539.

(11) Nesselrath (1990), 117-8.

(12) Translation from Kilburn ed. (1959) with a slight modification.

(13) *VS* 571-572. Regarding the translations of the *VS*, I owe much to those of Wright ed. (1921).

(14) *VS* 491-492 (on this episode, see Gleason (1995), 129). cf. Luc. *Demon.* 12.

(15) *VS* 513.

(16) *VS* 589.

(17) *Or.* 32.68.

(18) See Zweimüller (2008), 360-4, for a full account of singing ῥήτορες.

(19) Translation from Kilburn ed. (1959).

(20) Cf. Gera (1995), 247-8.

(21) Translation from Kilburn ed. (1959) with slight modifications.

(22) Difference of reading among codices makes it impossible to identify this man. I follow Macleod's reading. Cf. Nesselrath (1990), 118 n. 13.

(23) 11.37.

(24) *Comp.* 24.

(25) 14.2.16.

(26) *De Herod. Malig.* 857b; 859f; 860e; 865a; 865e; 869d.

(27) *VH* 2.5; *Hist.Conscr.* 54.

(28) Lucian calls them 'most famed ῥήτορες' (ῥητόρων ... οἱ δοκιμώτατοι (8)).

(29) Korenjak (2000).

(30) *Herod.* 8: Αὐτοί τε οὖν ἤδη συνεληλύθατε, ὅ τι περ ὄφελος ἐξ ἑκάστης πόλεως,

αὐτὸ δὴ τὸ κεφάλαιον ἁπάντων Μακεδόνων, καὶ ὑποδέχεται πόλις ἡ ἀρίστη οὖσα οὐ κατὰ Πίσαν μὰ Δί' οὐδὲ τὴν κεῖθι στενοχωρίαν καὶ σκηνὰς καὶ καλύβας καὶ πνῖγος. Flattering the audience is a common feature of προλαλιαί. Lucian employs the same strategy in the *Dipsades*, the *Harmonides*, and the *Scytha*.

(31) Lucian's statement on Herodotus at the closing part of the work (οἵ τε αὖ πανηγυρισταὶ οὐ συρφετώδης ὄχλος, ἀθλητῶν μᾶλλον φιλοθεάμονες, ἐν παρέργῳ οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν Ἡρόδοτον τιθέμενοι (8)) is significant. He might praise ῥήτορες implicitly.