CHAPTER 1

The historian's plupast
Introductory remarks on its forms and functions

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> pluperfect, *adj.* and *n.* A. *adj.*
> 1. *Grammar.* Designating or relating to a verbal tense which denotes an action completed prior to some past point of time, specified or implied; past perfect.[1]

Historians deal with the past. But the past is not only 'a foreign country';[2] it is also a huge territory, stretching from the archaic to the most recent, and one of the historian's first decisions is where *his* past is to begin. Like Polybius or Dionysius, however, he might quickly come to realize that an account or at least mention of the past prior to his narrative's proper past is necessary for an adequate understanding of later (past) events; or, like all ancient historians studied in this volume, he might feel the need to embed in his account a past evoked from within the narrative (by, for example, a historical character). Since this past denotes a past completed prior to the past that the narrator focuses on, we suggest dubbing it the 'historian's plupast'.

Some cases of the plupast have already been discussed under the headings of intertextuality and exemplarity. Yet, as we shall see, these theoretical frameworks are not sufficient to elucidate fully the temporal complexity of ancient historical narratives. In the first part of this introductory chapter we will therefore briefly outline the various forms of embedded images of the past and show in what way the concept of the plupast, while drawing on established approaches, opens a novel perspective (section I). We will then discuss two points that make the plupast particularly interesting for classicists as well as ancient historians: it can shed light on the past in manifold ways and thereby become an important tool for the creation of historical meaning (II). Moreover, not only does the plupast serve as a foil to the past, but also the acts of memory embedded in the historical narrative parallel to some degree the historian's activity of recording the

[1] *OED*, *s.v.* 'pluperfect'. [2] Lowenthal 1985.

past. The plupast thereby allows Greek and Roman historians to reflect on how (not) to write history and gains metahistorical significance (III). While throughout the introduction we will draw on examples from the studies collected in this volume to illustrate the forms and functions of the plupast, a final section will present summaries of the individual chapters (IV).

I CLASSIFYING THE HISTORIAN'S PLUPAST

Three categories help to classify individual instances of the plupast: the first two (time and voice) are indebted to narratology, whereas the third (form of reference) lies outside the narratological framework.[3]

In terms of **time**, the plupast is a reference to events that precede the narrated action and can therefore be classified as a case of *analepsis*.[4] In absolute terms, *analepseis* can refer to any moment in the past ranging from the most recent to the mythically distant. This temporal extension of the retrospective, which Genette calls the 'reach',[5] is a significant aspect of the plupast as well: in Herodotus' account of the battle at Plataea the Tegeans and Athenians argue over the honour of leading the left wing (9.26–7).[6] While the former invoke their mythical king Echemus to buttress their claim, the latter riposte, cataloguing their own mythical deeds, but only to cast doubt on the value of such archaic *exempla* and foreground their most recent merits at Marathon. Both contemporary history and myths can be invoked as a plupast, and the 'reach' itself can become subject to negotiation: the Athenians, upon closer inspection, reflect a historical awareness when dealing with different (plu)pasts much as the historian does (Hdt. 1.5);[7] and their scepticism can be read metahistorically (an interpretation of the plupast to which we will return under section III).

This temporal extension can be typified further in relation to the narrative. For when the Athenians invoke Marathon, they refer to an event which is included in the narrative; by analogy with narratology, it could be called an internal plupast. In contrast, the duel between Echemus and

[3] Although, as Hornblower 1994: 131 notes, historiography did not figure in Genette 1980, Genette later explicitly justified the application of his categories to factual texts, including historiography. See, e.g., Rood 1998a for an application of narratology to ancient historiography.

[4] We follow Genette's terminology. For other narratological approaches to time, see, e.g., Rimon-Kenan 1983: 43–58; Bal 1985: 80–99. Obviously, while every case of the plupast forms an *analepsis*, not every *analepsis* counts as a case of plupast; if the main narrative takes place in the present, *analepseis* refer to the simple past.

[5] Genette 1980: 49. [6] Cf. Boedeker, below, pp. 18–21; Baragwanath, below, pp. 41–3.

[7] Cf. Baragwanath, below, p. 36; Boedecker, below, p. 22.

Hyllus, on which the Tegeans rest their claim, lies outside the scope of the *Histories* and constitutes an external plupast.[8] The 'reach' of the latter need not be long. When A. Caecina, finding himself face to face with attacking Germanic tribes, recalls Varus' disaster (Tac. *Ann*. 1.65), he thinks of an event which occurred recently but nevertheless lies before the starting point of the *Annals*. The external plupast allows the historian to extend the scope of his narrative, while his particular choice of one among many alternative plupasts supplies the past with an additional layer of meaning. The internal form, on the other hand, has the potential for discrepancy and historical destabilization, as we will see in section III.

The second important aspect of the plupast is **focus/voice**.[9] Most instances of the plupast mentioned so far were viewed and voiced by historical characters. Sallust's African excursus in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, however, affords an example of a plupast viewed from the narrator's perspective and presented in his own voice. We find an extended and pervasive case of the narratorial (or authorial) plupast at the beginning of Polybius' *Histories*. Polybius announces the 140th Olympiad (220–216 BCE) as his starting point, but first presents a two-book digression, the so-called *prokataskeuē*, which begins nearly half a century earlier.[10]

The Polybian *prokataskeuē* as well as Sallust's African excursus also reveal that the concept of the plupast goes beyond the notion of exemplarity.[11] Neither qualifies as an *exemplum*, yet they nonetheless hark back to a completed past. The plupast can be exemplary, but it can also be invoked to trace traditions or merely outline developments prior to the main action of the narrative. While *exempla* have proved to be a very fruitful subject in classical studies, the concept of the plupast is broader and allows for a fuller grasp of the temporal complexity of historical narratives.

[8] For a discussion of these two (and other) forms of *analepsis*, cf. Genette 1980: 48–58.

[9] Readers may be surprised that we mention 'voice' in addition to 'focus'. De Jong's works (1987 and 1991) have made Bal's rather wide definition of 'focus' a common currency among classicists, and the term 'focalization' is applied to a great range of phenomena including the narratorial instance. However, Bal's model has been shown to suffer serious shortcomings (cf. Nelles 1990 and, within classics, Rood 1998a: 294–6). In Genette's system, on the other hand, 'focalization' (1980: 185–211) is a narrower category, referring to perception ('qui voit'), while 'voice' (212–62) signifies the instance of utterance ('qui dit'). Although speeches form the bulk of our instances of plupast, it seems reasonable to use the category of focalization in order to grasp those references to the plupast that are not voiced (but still present a particular focus).

[10] Dionysius of Halicarnassus' extended narratorial plupast is discussed in Schultze's chapter, esp. pp. 115ff. For a list of Tacitus' narratorial plupasts see Joseph, p. 156.

[11] On *exempla* as a mode of memory, see Brémond and Le Goff 1982, Rüsen 1982, Stierle 1983, von Moos 1996; on *exempla* in ancient orators, see Jost 1936, Stemmler 2000, Gotteland 2001. For Livy's *exempla*, see Chaplin 2000.

The references to the plupast discussed in this volume take four **forms**, which may, but need not, involve intertextuality, as exemplified in several speeches discussed in this volume. The Athenian envoy of the Syracusan embassy defends the claim to command the navy with a quotation from Homer:[12] 'And he was one of them [i.e. the Athenians], the one whom even the epic poet Homer declared came to Ilion as the best to deploy and marshall troops' (Hdt. 7.161.3).[13] Before him, the Spartan Syagrus had not named Homer, but his nearly perfect hexameter along with linguistic details such as the Aeolic *ke* make his Homeric quotation unmistakable: 'Surely, he would groan, aloud, Peleus, the aged horseman.' In other cases the pretext is even less pronounced and more arguable: Xenophon has the Athenians worry that after the defeat at Aegospotami they might suffer what they themselves had inflicted on the Melians and others. The marked reference to the Melians, the prominence of the pretext, and the importance of Thucydides to Xenophon make it likely that the latter here has the Athenians evoke the former's dialogue between the Melians and Athenians, as Tim Rood argues.[14]

Yet the plupast does not need to be mediated by means of another text. In the duel of speeches at Plataea the Tegeans mention the *monomachia* between Echemus and Hyllus without alluding to a source. Neither do the Athenians in their reply, when they pit their deeds against the Tegeans' record. A mere intertextualist approach would therefore ignore this passage; the concept of the plupast, on the other hand, allows for a comparison between the historical arguments presented in this debate with the similar usage of the past in the Homeric references of the Spartan and Athenian envoys in the Sicilian embassy scene. Once again, the framework of the plupast offers a fuller view of the dynamic play of historical narratives with different levels of the past.

Even though speeches, or – as Tim Joseph shows – Tacitean rumours, are most likely to contain a plupast, it is also to be found embedded in material objects, literary *topoi*, and the historian's language. In Appian's account of Caesar's triumph, tablets represent past events (such as the suicides of Petreius and Cato).[15] In Thucydides, the Plataeans call upon the tripod at Delphi and the tombs at Plataea to testify to their past services in the Persian Wars, in order to avoid annihilation at the hands of the Spartans.[16]

[12] Cf. Boedeker, below, pp. 19–20. See also Grethlein 2006b.
[13] It is difficult to say whether the Athenian's quotation is a reference to epic verses that have not been transmitted or a slightly modified reference to the mentioning of Menestheus in the Catalogue of the Ships (*Il.* 2.552–3). In either case, the Athenian names a source.
[14] Cf. Rood, below, pp. 78–9.
[15] Cf. Pitcher, below, pp. 201–2.
[16] Cf. Grethlein, below, pp. 61–2.

As in the Homeric epics, material objects may carry memories;[17] embedded in an historical account, they materialize the plupast.

There are even more subtle forms of reference with regard to content as well as form, which lie outside the scope of narratological enquiry. *Topoi* can call to mind a background of past significance, as when Caesar evokes the Scythian *topos* in his depiction of *Germania* as a vast, undifferentiated, and thus disorienting landscape, in which the *Germani* live their nomadic lives and pursue a corresponding strategy. This recalls Dareius' well-known Scythian disaster, to which Caesar (perhaps mediated through Herodotus) alludes in order to justify his speedy return across the Rhine and to solidify his reputation as *summus imperator*.[18] Another example of a 'topic' plupast is discussed by Zadorojnyi: in the *Life of Pompey*, Plutarch implicitly evokes the Persian camp after Plataea as a backdrop for the Pompeian camp after Pharsalus, making readers compare Caesar with Pausanias.[19]

Even formal aspects may extend the frame of temporal reference: though Herodotus' presentation of Xerxes' troops (7.61–99) does not contain any particular quotation, the list itself is reminiscent of the epic catalogue and evokes the heroic world.[20] Linguistically, the plupast can be buried in metaphors: the persistent use of metaphors of height in the episode of the downfall of M. Manlius Capitolinus cannot fail to recall his previous glorious defence of the Capitolium, as Christopher Krebs shows.[21]

To sum up this brief survey of the plupast's many forms, we suggest that three questions can help in examining the past embedded within an account of the past:

– To which time does the plupast refer (in absolute terms and in relation to the narrative)?
– Who focalizes and narrates the plupast?
– How is the plupast evoked?

As discussed above and implied by these three questions, the concept of the plupast, while intersecting with narratology and the concepts of exemplarity and intertextuality, transcends them. Its focus on the embedded past in all its forms draws our attention to the temporal complexity of historical narratives. Moreover, the prominence and richness of the historical characters' references to the past not only signify the past's many layers but also testify to the 'grip of the past' on Greek and Roman culture that

[17] See Grethlein 2008. [18] See Krebs 2006. [19] See Zadorojnyi, below, pp. 194–5.
[20] Cf. Erbse 1992: 125–7. [21] Cf. Krebs, below, pp. 145–8.

has received much scholarly attention lately.[22] While this volume aims to explore many, if not all, forms and references of the plupast, the following two usages make this approach particularly interesting.

II THE HISTORIAN'S PLUPAST WITHIN HISTORICAL SEMANTICS

As the historian Reinhart Koselleck has demonstrated, the *topos* of 'historia magistra vitae' became increasingly implausible by the end of the eighteenth century.[23] When the notion of development started to dominate historical thinking in the wake of Historicism, the viability of direct comparison across ages was called into question. In antiquity, on the other hand, the past was less of a foreign country: past and present, plupast and past were frequently juxtaposed, as when the Persian Wars were conceived of, in a wide array of media, as a repetition of the Trojan War.[24] This exemplary mode of memory also comes to the fore in the historian's plupast. For the embedded past, as evoked by historical characters or the narrator himself, may shed additional light on the past and thereby reveal additional layers of historical meaning.

While poems such as the 'New Simonides' or paintings such as those in the Stoa Poikile set the Persian and the Trojan Wars side by side for the sake of glorification, the historian's plupast tends to be less contiguous and more complex. When Thucydides evokes the Persian Wars as a backdrop of the Peloponnesian War,[25] the unity against the Persians forcefully contrasts with the misery of Hellenic infighting. Moreover, the term *attikismos*, signifying the support of Athens, evokes the notion of *medismos*, the betrayal of Greece in favour of the Persians, and thereby aligns Athenian with Persian imperialism. In a similar vein, Xenophon's *Hellenica* uses the Persian Wars to set in relief Greek history after the Peloponnesian War, in particular, as Tim Rood argues, to contextualize the shifting relations between the Spartans, the Athenians and the Thebans.[26] In both historical works the plupast loads the past with significance through similarities, contrasts and refractions. It prompts readers to reflect further and deepens their historical understanding.

[22] For recent studies on ancient *memoria*, see, e.g., Alcock 2002 on the 'archaeology of the past', Walter 2004 on memory in the Roman republic, Gowing 2005 on memory in the empire, Jung 2006 on Marathon and Plataea as *lieux de mémoire*, Grethlein 2006a on Homer and 2010 on the fifth century BCE, Flower 2006 on the art of forgetting. The phrase 'in the grip of the past' is taken from van Groningen's classic 1953 study.

[23] Koselleck 1985: 3–69. [24] See, e.g., Boedeker 1998 and Baragwanath, p. 47.

[25] Cf. Grethlein, below, pp. 74–5. [26] Cf. Rood, below, pp. 79–80.

The plupast not only sheds light on the past but is also illuminated itself by the juxtaposition with it. When Herodotus lists the rape of Helen as one of the first hostile encounters between East and West that would culminate in the Persian Wars (1.3), Paris and the Trojans appear as barbarians, a concept that is absent from the *Iliad*. The temporal dynamic triggered by the plupast can be even more complex. Consider a famous anecdote from Polybius that is only partially transmitted in a collection of excerpts but told more fully by Appian and Diodorus:[27] facing the flames of Carthage, Scipio weeps and meditates on the fall of Troy and other empires, quoting from the *Iliad* the verses in which Hector predicts the end of Troy. The plupast evoked through the quotation contains a *prolepsis* to what is already past for Polybius and his ancient readers, the capture of Troy. At the same time, Scipio makes this event adumbrate something that is future not only for him, but also for the historian: the downfall of Rome. Besides interacting with the past, the shadow of the plupast here extends to what is not yet history, but still future. The eyes of the Greek historian envisage history as a space in which plupast, past, present and future mirror one another as in a kaleidoscope.

Such juxtaposition can destabilize a historical narrative; for a character's recall of a plupast event may carry varying and vacillating significance: the understanding of the historian's (external) audience might differ from the one intended by the historical character for his internal audience. Or, in the case of an internal plupast, it might even contradict the historian's own earlier account. Both can be observed in Livy's Manlian episode. Manlius as well as his followers recall Cassius and Maelius as defenders of the plebs (*defensores suos*), who paid with their lives for their popular efforts. But for Livy's external audience, these two *populares* (along with Manlius) stand for ultimately fatal attempts at kingly reign. At the end of the episode Livy narrates that there were those who believed 'that the gods had not been pleased that the man who had rescued their temples from enemy hands should be punished almost under their very eyes' (6.20.16). The historian declares that Manlius was not a *memorabilis vir* but then narrates how, soon after his execution, he is remembered within the narrative for his memorable defence of the *Capitolium*.

As these examples indicate and as will be evident in the chapters of this volume, the plupast is a potent tool in the hands of ancient historians for creating extra layers of meaning and for inviting the reader's critical

[27] Polyb. 38.21 transmitted in *Excerpta historica* (Boissevain 1906); App. *Pun.* 132, printed by Büttner-Wobst as Polyb. 38.22; Diod. Sic. 32.24. On the relation between the different versions of the anecdote to one another, see Walbank ad 21.1–3.

reflection on the nature of history. It highlights the central role of narrative for the construction of historical meaning in ancient historiography.

III THE HISTORIAN'S PLUPAST AS METAHISTORY

In the *Odyssey* Demodocus and Phemius perform at banquets, performances which modern scholars have read as metapoetic.[28] Of course, the rhapsodes in the epics sing and play the lyre, while the performances of the Homeric epics seem to have been mere recitations, but, in spite of such differences, the interpretation of the songs as representative of the epic tradition has been fruitful. The *Odyssey* itself is what it calls Demodocus' song: 'a tale whose fame was reaching then the sky' (8.73–4).

The historian's plupast, if recalled by historical characters, is analogous to the epic song-within-song: historical agents refer to the past within a narrative about the past. Though *writing* history differs from *recalling* the past, both the historian's narrative and his characters' recall constitute acts of memory, which hardly differ from one another. In the theory of history the claim to scientific objectivity, as posed by positivist historians, has been challenged, and the defining borderline between historiography and other commemorative media has been blurred.[29] Within ancient historiography the methodological distance from (other) rhetorical uses of the past has long been known to be considerably smaller than in modern historiography: scholarship of the last quarter of the twentieth century has emphatically stated that history was considered part of the rhetorical system and that the genre of historiography was pervasively influenced by rhetoric: Clio liked makeup.[30] And while modern historians are assumed to make their enquiry into the past as independent of the present as possible, many ancient historians stressed the pragmatic dimension of their work.[31] Even Thucydides' accuracy, hailed though it has been as the foundation of critical

[28] See, e.g., Macleod 1983a, Ford 1992, Segal 1994. Metatheatrical and metapoetic readings of Roman literature have also proved very fruitful across the genres: for Plautus, see, e.g., Wright 1971; on Ovidian elegy, see, e.g., Hinds 1987; for a metapoetic reading of Ovid's Pygmalion, see Sharrock 1991; for Seneca's tragedies, see Schiesaro 1997.

[29] See in particular the works of White (1973, 1978 and 1987), whose tropology all but erases the fine line between historical and fictional narratives. Although few, if any, historians subscribe to his approach, White has called to our attention the deeply rhetorical character of historiography. For another approach to the narrativity of historiography from the angle of hermeneutics and phenomenology, see Ricoeur 1990.

[30] Wiseman 1979a and Woodman 1988 are among the most influential contributions. The debate is ongoing, see Northwood 2008, Lendon 2009.

[31] Raaflaub 2010 elaborates on the ancient historians' claims to usefulness. See also Fornara 1983b: 104–20 and Luce 1991, who focuses on Tacitus' 'praecipuum munus annalium' but also illuminates the various notions of the *utile* in other ancient historians.

historiography, is ultimately owed to his intention to provide his readers with useful knowledge. Seen from this perspective, orators' attempts to use the past for their arguments may well illuminate the historian's construction of the past.

The proposition here advanced is to interpret the historian's plupast as a *mise-en-abyme*;[32] more specifically, most essays in this volume analyse the plupast 'metahistorically', which here signifies a combination of Hayden White's approach to metahistory with literary studies of meta-narrative. For White, metahistory refers to 'the presuppositions – conceptual, figurative and metaphysical – regarding the nature of historical reality required for belief in the possibility of a distinctively historical kind of knowledge'.[33] He limits himself to explicit reflections; but the concept of metahistory is here broadened so as to include the kind of implicit auto-reflection of literary texts that in other genres has been studied under the term of meta-narrative.[34] According to this definition, an act of memory that is embedded in a commemorative text can entail a comment on the text's own representation of the past and thereby open a metahistorical perspective.

As the contributions to this volume show, the metahistorical *mise-en-abyme* is not a simple mirror.[35] At times, as Clemence Schultze and Tim Joseph reveal for Dionysius and Tacitus, the plupast illustrates how characters learn the right lessons from the (plu)past and thereby reinforces the authorial claim to usefulness;[36] but it can equally often serve to distance the historian's activity from other commemorative practices so that the basic similarity is used to draw attention to deeper differences. Such usage

[32] It is defined as 'toute enclave entrenant une rétention de similitude avec l'oeuvre qui la contient'. Cf. the definition in Prince 2003, *s.v.*: 'A miniature replica of a text embedded within that text; a textual part reduplicating, reflecting, or mirroring (one or more than one aspect of) the textual whole.' The concept of the *mise-en-abyme* goes back to a note in Gide's journal dating from 1893 (Gide 1948: 41). The fundamental analysis of *mise-en-abyme* is still Dällenbach 1977 (whence the quotation, p. 18), which starts with an extended critical discussion of Gide's note, develops a differentiated concept and, on this basis, offers a reading of novels belonging to the *nouveau roman*. Bal 1978 is a critical discussion of Dällenbach, which tries to ground the *mise-en-abyme* in semiotics by understanding it as an icon. Ron 1987 turns the focus on the 'iconic relation in the narrative text and the relative position and importance of its sign . . . within it' (422) and discusses a variety of its aspects.

[33] See White 1973; the quotation is taken from White 2005: 302. Before White, metahistory was used to characterize '"overdetermined" historical works such as Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* and Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*' (302). For yet another use of metahistory, see Carrard 1992: 41–7, who applies the term 'metahistorics' to works 'whose main objective is not to bring new information on a certain subject . . . but to consider the available information, discuss its existing interpretations, and possibly comment on the assumptions that have made these interpretations possible' (41).

[34] On meta-narrative or metafiction, see, e.g., Waugh 1984, Wolf 1993, McHale 1993.

[35] Rimon-Kennan 1983.

[36] Cf. Joseph, below, pp. 164–5, and Schultze, below, pp. 117ff.

lends itself to the self-definition of historiography. It was of particular value to Herodotus and Thucydides, who could not rely on an established genre:[37] Thucydides defines his own approach to the past not only by criticizing poets and orators, but also by embedding speeches as cases of an alternative and clearly inferior commemorative medium. Underscored by verbal echoes, the tendentious representation of the past in speeches throws Thucydides' own methodological claims into relief.[38] The implicit comparison reinforces the explicit criticism.

Later historians continue to embed in their narratives questionable historical references by their characters, which contrast with their own account. These cases are particularly interesting when the character's reference to the past constitutes an internal plupast that invites comparison with the historian's narrative. Livy, even though historiography was an established genre, uses oratorical recalls of (plu)past episodes in order to distinguish his historical approach: Camillus' speech at the end of Book 5 deals with events that are covered by Livy in the preceding narrative. The two presentations of the past differ in that Camillus appeals to the *maiores*, an appeal Livy has been shown to shirk, maybe (and plausibly) in order to position his historiography above the fray of partisan invocation of the *maiores*. Furthermore, Camillus' notion of history with its emphasis on continuity and immutability stands in marked contrast to Livy's awareness – one might even say embrace – of historical change.[39]

The approximation of character and historian is often reinforced by the use of specifically historiographical vocabulary in the embedded act of memory, as when in the *synkrisis* in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* the beginning of Caesar's speech echoes the first words of the monograph.[40] The proem of Sallust's first monograph is also alluded to by Livy's Manlius, who additionally nods to the preface of the *Ab urbe condita*.[41] And while the reflections of the Roman soldiers upon the final defeat of Carthage in Appian's *Punica* do not seem to contain verbal allusions, they do rework several *topoi* of historiography and thereby invite readers to compare Appian's narrative with his characters' memory.[42]

[37] Scant though the evidence is, it is beyond doubt that there were several authors writing prose history at the end of the fifth century; see, more recently, R. L. Fowler 1996, Porciani 2001. Yet we cannot assume that the genre of historiography was already established. Neither Herodotus nor Thucydides has a *terminus technicus* for 'historian'.

[38] Cf. Grethlein 2005 on Pericles' funeral speech, and below, pp. 64–71, for a 'metahistorical' interpretation of the Plataean debate.

[39] See Miles 1988 for an interpretation of Livy's notion of the past along the lines indicated above.

[40] Cf. Feldherr, below, pp. 98–9. [41] Cf. Krebs, below, pp. 141–3.

[42] Cf. Pitcher, below, pp. 205–7. The metahistorical use of the plupast gains an additional twist in those cases where history is written by an active or former politician: Sallust, after his withdrawal