

Libanius the Historian? Praise and the Presentation of the Past in *Or.* 59

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1. Introduction

Καὶ πρῶτόν γε ἐκεῖνο ἡλικὸν ἀμαρτάνουσιν ἐπισκοπήσωμεν· ἀμελήσαντες γὰρ οἱ πολλοὶ αὐτῶν τοῦ ἱστορεῖν τὰ γεγενημένα τοῖς ἐπαινοῖς ἀρχόντων καὶ στρατηγῶν ἐνδιατρίβουσιν τοὺς μὲν οἰκείους ἐς ὕψος φέροντες, τοὺς πολεμίους δὲ πέρα τοῦ μετρίου καταρρίπτοντες, ἀγνοοῦντες ὡς οὐ στενῶ τῷ ἰσθμῷ διώρισται καὶ διατετείχισται ἡ ἱστορία πρὸς τὸ ἐγκώμιον, ἀλλὰ τι μέγα τεῖχος ἐν μέσῳ ἐστὶν αὐτῶν. (Lucian *Hist. conscr.*, 7)

To begin with, let us look at this for a serious fault: most of them neglect to record the events and spend their time praising rulers and generals, extolling their own to the skies and slandering the enemy's beyond all reserve; they do not realize that the dividing line and frontier between history and panegyric is not a narrow isthmus but rather a mighty wall.¹

This passage, with its imagery of militarized topography, provides an opening salvo against Lucian's enemy—contemporary Greek historians, specifically those who had written about Rome's Parthian wars in the 160s. It forms part of Lucian's treatise, *How to write history*, itself an almost unique survival from antiquity that combines criticism of the faults of recent proponents of the genre (§§6–36), with a theoretical treatise on the ideal historian (§§37–63).² Lucian's opening reproach targets his contemporaries for sullyng history with panegyric in their treatment of the generals and emperors of those Parthians wars. Lucian goes on to describe how panegyric involves flattery and flattery requires lying; since truth is the most important tenet of history-writing, there can be no place for panegyric in true history.³ This article is also concerned primarily with the connection between these two genres, but from the opposite perspective—panegyric's relation to historiography—and it takes as a case study one Greek panegyric of the fourth century. First, however, it is worth considering briefly the better-studied topic that Lucian raises here—history's relation to panegyric—particularly since that relationship was more openly discussed by historians and theoreticians and appears to have conditioned a response from some panegyrists.

2. *Historians on panegyric*

What should we make of Lucian's attack? He was, after all, no historian himself. His only other historically-themed work, the *True Histories* is a satiric parody of the faults of historians that he had set out in the *Hist. conscr.* As far as was we know (and we may be fairly certain) Lucian made no attempt to put the theory he preached into practice. Nonetheless, more important for us is what this section of the *Hist. conscr.* reveals about the

¹ Trans. K. Kilburn, *Lucian Vol. 6* (Cambridge, MA. 1959) adapted.

² B. Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian* (Toronto 1973) 75–95; M. Fox “Dionysius, Lucian, and the Prejudice against Rhetoric in History,” *JRS* 91 (2001) 76–93; P. von Möllendorff, “Frigid Enthusiasts: Lucian on Writing History,” *PCPhS* 47 (2001) 117–140; C. Ligota, “Lucian on the Writing of History: Obsolescence Survived,” in C. Ligota and L. Panizza (eds.) *Lucian of Samosata Vivus et Redivivus* (London 2007) 45–70.

³ See Ligota, in *Lucian of Samosata* 45–58. Lucian's was not a universal view, see n.6 below.

relationship between panegyric and history under the Roman empire. Lucian gives first place in his catalogue of faults of recent historians to flattery of rulers. The existence and prominence of his protestations suggest that most historians failed to live up to the ideal that Lucian set down for them.⁴ This passage, then, reflects a contemporary anxiety amongst writers of history: praise, perhaps naturally, is the default mode for dealing with a living emperor and is thus unavoidable in contemporary history.⁵ Secondly, panegyric and history were by nature closely related. To return to the imagery of the passage quoted above: walls, however mighty, necessarily divide areas that are otherwise proximate.⁶

The proximity of these genres is a phenomenon that is also acknowledged by late-antique historians, albeit in a less direct way than by the theoretician Lucian, but in one that nevertheless upholds his tenet of generic separation. Eutropius and Ammianus, two historians of the fourth century, conclude their works with a statement that they draw a halt to their narrative at a chronologically appropriate place: at the death of the current emperor's predecessor. Instead they suggest that reign of the subsequent, current emperor should be treated with a *stilus maior*, a phrase generally acknowledged to be an open allusion to panegyric.⁷

⁴ Although the works that Lucian's targets do not survive, Velleius provides a good Latin example of "panegyric" contemporary history from the early empire. J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge 1997) 56.

⁵ In response, Lucian urges historians to think not of the present but the future when writing their works. He thus acknowledges the important application of praise in the short-term, *Hist. Conscr.* 10; Fox, *JRS* 91 (2001) 69.

⁶ As Rees recently observed "both [history and panegyric] were essentially ethical; both dedicated much time to political leaders, their qualities, habits and achievements in theatres such as war, domestic politics and their own homes", R. Rees, "Form and Function of Narrative in Roman Panegyric Oratory," in D.H. Berry and A. Erskine (eds) *Form and Function in Roman Oratory* (Cambridge 2010) 105–121 at 107. Hermogenes of Tarsus even describes historians as among the most panegyric of writers (*Id.* 404–413). Other theorists such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus were far more willing to allocate a role to rhetorical *inventio* in the composition of history than Lucian. Fox offers a comparison of Lucian and Dionysius and notes that "for Dionysius history is a source of political and moral inspiration, and its aesthetic effect empowers its utility", *JRS* 91 (2001) 90.

⁷ *nam reliqua stilo maiore dicenda sunt. quae nunc non tam praetermittimus quam ad maiorem scribendi diligentiam reservamus*, Eutr. 10.18.3. "What remains must be told in a more elevated style. Right now we do not really omit these matters but rather reserve them for a more careful composition." (trans. Bird), *scribant reliqua potiores / aetate doctrinis florentes. / quos id, si libuerit, aggressuros / procudere linguas ad maiores moneo stilos*, Amm. Marc. 31.16.9. "Let the rest be written by men with youth on their side, in the bloom of learning. To those who would embark on this, if it please them, I give the advice to forge their tongues to grander styles" (trans. G. Kelly, in *Ammianus after Julian* (2007) 219, who follows Blockley's grammatical interpretation the first sentence, R.C. Blockley, "Ammianus and Cicero: The Epilogue of the 'History' as a Literary Statement," *Phoenix* 52 (1998) 305–314 at 307). The scholarship on these historians' engagement with panegyric is extensive: for Ammianus' allusion to Eutropius, see G. Kelly *Ammianus Marcellinus, the Allusive Historian* (Cambridge 2008) 227, and for these historians' reference to panegyric by the phrase *stilus maior* see J. Straub *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart 1939) 154; S. MacCormack, "Latin Prose Panegyrics," in T. A. Dorey (ed.) *Empire and Aftermath* (London 1975) 143–205 at 153; J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) at 455; F. Paschoud, "Biographie und Panegyricus: Wie spricht man vom lebenden Kaiser?" in K. Vössing (ed.) *Biographie und Prosopographie* (Stuttgart 2005) 103–118 at 111. A similar sentiment is found in the concluding paragraph of Festus' *Breviarium*, which was published shortly after Eutropius' and was also dedicated to Valens: "Thenceforth with how great a voice (*quam magno...ore*) should your deeds, unconquered prince, resound! I shall prepare myself for them though unequal to the task of speaking and weighed down by age." (*Brev.* 30.1, trans. G. Kelly, "The Sphragis and Closure of the *Res Gestae*," in J. den Boeft, J.W. Drijvers, D. den Hengst and H.C. Teiter (eds.) *Ammianus after Julian: the Reign of Valentinian and Valens in Books 26–31 of the Res Gestae* (Leiden 2007) 219–41 at 228.)

Ammianus and Eutropius respond to a wider, defining topos of late-antique historical writing: that true history deals with dead emperors, panegyric with the living, the pervasiveness of which is attested by its imitation and subversion by other historical authors such as the *scriptor* of the *Historia Augusta* and Jerome, both of whom also make similar allusions to the *stilus maior* in concluding sections of their texts.⁸

Allowing for individual twists or adaptations, all these historical authors maintain Lucian's idea of a "wall" between history and panegyric. The boundary, however, is more theoretical than actual. Ammianus himself incorporates numerous panegyric motifs in his treatment of the emperor Julian. He declares that his account of Julian will "almost resemble material for panegyric" (16.1.3) and his final assessment of the emperor is structured around the four cardinal virtues traditionally used as the framework for panegyric on the Menandrian model (25.4).⁹ Although Eutropius disavowed panegyric, his fellow breviarist Aurelius Victor wrote a quasi-panegyric account of Constantius II, who was only newly posthumous at time of the completion of the work in 360.¹⁰ And at the beginning of the fifth century, Orosius too blended panegyric into the final book of his *History against the Pagans*.¹¹ It is worth remarking that biography, another genre closely related to both history and panegyric, expressed little concern over generic "mixing" with panegyric.¹² Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* for example almost evades definition as one or other genre, and expresses none of the signs of "generic anxiety" that Lucian, Ammianus, or Eutropius do.¹³

With regard to these late antique historians, again we find a situation, as in the second century, in which ideals (or theory) do not match up to practice. Nevertheless, the nature of the historians' disavowal of panegyric is revealing of these authors' formal attitude to the genre, and given the prevalence of the topos, may even be a conscious attempt to "frame" the reception of panegyric among contemporary audiences. As already discussed, Lucian's "mighty wall" is explicitly made to stand between contemporary and more remote history by Eutropius, the *scriptor*, and Ammianus. The division between the two genres is a temporal boundary; on one side lies historiography, which deals with the reigns of past emperors, on the other panegyric and the reigning emperor. Furthermore, all three historians place their reference to the *maior stilus* of panegyric at the conclusions of their texts, and thus the reference functions as a closural motif for their historiography: this is as late as historiography can safely go. Yet these statements also mark a transitional point and thus connect the two

⁸ *HA Quad. Tyr.* 15.10 and Jerome, *Chron.* Pref. p.7.3-6 (Helm). See Straub, *Herrscherideal* 153. Paschoud, in *Biographie und Prosopographie* 111.

⁹ H. Gärtner, *Einige Überlegungen zur kaiserzeitlichen Panegyrik und zu Ammians Charakteristik des Kaisers Julian* (Göttingen 1968); R.C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus, a Study of his Historiography and Political Thought* (Brussels 1975) at 73–74.

¹⁰ *Caes.* 42. Paschoud, in *Biographie und Prosopographie* 109; Kelly, in *Ammianus after Julian* 229. The Anonymous *Epitome* of 395 does likewise for Theodosius.

¹¹ See P. Van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* (Oxford 2012) at 156–169 for Orosius' innovative use of panegyric in his history and pp.12–15 for the relationship between rhetoric and history in Late Antiquity generally. For the use of panegyric in Greek fifth-century ecclesiastical history, see T. Urbainczyk, "Vice and Advice in Socrates and Sozomen," in M. Whitby (ed.) *The Propaganda of Power: the Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 1998) 299–319.

¹² As illustrated by the essays in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds.) *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 2000).

¹³ See A. M. Cameron and S. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999) 27–34 and A.M. Cameron, "Form and Meaning: the Vita Constantini and the Vita Antonii," in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds.) *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 2000) 72–88 for the *Vit. Const.* as a hybrid text that comfortably combines generic aspects of history and panegyric.

genres in a continuum: to continue reading the story chronologically one must next turn to panegyric.

These historians, then, engineer and openly display a somewhat schizophrenic relationship with panegyric, and one that ultimately aids the creation of authority for their chosen genre. On the one hand, they set up panegyric euphemistically as a “grander style” to their own, and one that complements history proper. But on the other, panegyric is a lesser form of history, covering the territory into which “true” historiography cannot stray. That historians articulate these sentiments at such key authorial moments as the final sentences of their texts (which, like prefaces, commonly set an authorial seal or “sphragis” on their works) reflects the important role of panegyric in Late Antiquity generally, and for late antique historians particularly. Defining panegyric as the subsequent, lesser continuation of history also allows historians to create a smokescreen for a different relationship between the genres: in terms of compositional sequence, panegyrics were often the first works to offer a (quasi-)historical account of any emperor’s reign. Before a historian could turn to the reign of any given emperor, he must wait for that emperor to die, by which time the panegyrist had already rendered his account.¹⁴ Panegyric thus precedes historiography, and may even be a source for the latter.¹⁵

If late antique historians had a vested interest in promoting a definition of panegyric that suited their truth-claims and the construction of authority, then did panegyrists exhibit a similar interest in defining or making use of the generic characteristics of historiography? Given the amount of scholarship on historiography’s relationship with panegyric, it is remarkable how little studied the reverse phenomenon is.¹⁶ Panegyrics have long been recognized as potential historical source material for the modern historian, but rarely have they been studied as witnesses to ancient historiography or appropriators of historiography’s conventions.¹⁷ The remainder of this article seeks to address some of these questions by using as a case-study a single panegyric written by the Antiochene sophist Libanius and addressed to the two reigning emperors, Constantius II and Constans.¹⁸

3. *Libanius Or. 59—context, form, and content*

¹⁴ MacCormack, in *Empire and Aftermath* 153.

¹⁵ Pacatus seems to be aware of panegyric’s ability to inform future writers: he concludes his panegyric to Theodosius in 389: “every pen (*stilus omnis*) will receive from me the story of your [Theodosius] exploits in due order (*gestarum ordinem rerum*); from me poetry will get its themes; from me history will derive its credibility (*fidem sumet historia*)” (*Pan. Lat.* II(XII).47.6, trans. Nixon). See S. Lunn-Rockliffe, “Commemorating the Usurper Magnus Maximus: Ekphrasis, Poetry, and History in Pacatus’ Panegyric of Theodosius,” *JLA* 3 (2010) 316–336 at 334–335 for the suggestion that Ammianus has Pacatus’ suggestion in mind when he refers to *maiores stili* at 31.16.9.

¹⁶ Portmann’s valuable *Geschichte in der spätantiken Panegyrik* (Frankfurt 1988) succinctly tracks the patterns of historical figures deployed as *exempla* within all surviving late antique panegyrics (more than 60 texts). He does not address panegyrists’ conception of the genre of historiography. Otherwise exceptions to this silence are offered by Rees in *Form and Function* (discussed below) and briefly by Van Nuffelen (*Orosius*, 158), who in the rest of his book focuses on Orosius’ use of panegyric tropes in the final book of his *History*.

¹⁷ The relationship between biography and panegyric is better served, for example by Hägg and Rousseau, *Greek Biography*. As noted above, writers of biography appear less concerned than historians with articulating a distinction between their genre and panegyric.

¹⁸ Although, as noted below, Libanius’ oration predates the historical works discussed in this section (Eutropius published his *Epitome* in 369, Ammianus his *Res Gestae* around 390), the similarity of the late-antique historians’ attitude to panegyric to that of Lucian suggests that this was a long-standing topos of historiography, and one that Libanius was feasibly aware of.

Oration 59 is an unusual speech within the context of the Libanian corpus. It sets out to praise two emperors simultaneously—the two remaining sons of Constantine, Constantius II and Constans, who had ruled the Eastern and Western portions of the empire respectively since the death of their third brother, Constantine II in 340.¹⁹ Libanius proclaims at the outset that he will treat his subjects equally, in accordance with the wishes of the official who commissioned him in Nicomedia to compose the speech (*Or.* 59.6).²⁰ The speech refers to both emperors in the third person, and thus does not privilege Constantius, the “local” eastern emperor as a primary addressee.²¹ Structurally, Libanius seeks to maintain a balance between the two brothers, treating them together as much as possible. The speech is largely Menandrian in its form; after a prologue, he treats Constans and Constantius together in a first section (§§10-55) in which he covers their ancestors, birth, education, and accession to the rank of Caesars. He then deals with their actions separately, first with those of Constantius (on the grounds that he is the elder) (§§56-123), specifically the early stages of his wars against the Persians, the funeral of Constantine, pacification of the Goths, the quelling of a riot in Constantinople, culminating in an account of a battle at Singara against the Persians; he then turns to Constans (§§124-150) and describes the pacification of the Franks, and a military expedition to Britain. A final section (§§150-173) describes the positive effects for the empire of their harmonious reign.

To modern eyes, a speech that praises Constantius may appear anomalous amongst Libanius’ surviving works.²² Libanius is perhaps best known as the staunch defender of the emperor Julian, particularly on account of a series of speeches addressed to Julian both during the emperor’s short reign and after his death. The most extensive example is the *Epitaphios* (*Or.* 18) that sought to create a lasting, positive interpretation of Julian’s career.²³ In his promotion of Julian, Libanius follows the lead set by Julian himself in attacking

¹⁹ Constantine II was killed after his failed attempt to seize territory from Constans. For narrative of these events, see D. Hunt, “The Successors of Constantine,” in A. M. Cameron and P. Garnsey (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 13: The Late Empire AD 337–425* (Cambridge 1998) 1–43 at 1–11.

²⁰ “But the proposer (ὁ τε προβαλὼν) of the contest showed equal love for both men and did not consider our powers rather than how on the one occasion both emperors might be included, and in short was not able to separate fairly for eulogy those who were united both by natural disposition and by temperament and virtues.” (*Or.* 59.6, all translations of *Or.* 59 are taken from Dodgeon et al.’s translation in S. Lieu and D. Montserrat, *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views* [London 1996]). The identity of the “proposer” is not clear: perhaps Pompeianus the governor of Bythnia who staged a contest between Libanius and Himerius (*Lib. ep.* 742); or Philippus, Constantius’ Praetorian Prefect, Lieu and Montserrat, *From Constantine to Julian* 158. Another attractive suggestion is Philagrius the *vicarius Ponticae* whom Libanius later states invited him to deliver a speech in Nicomedia (*Or.* 1.70-2), H.-U. Wiemer “Libanius on Constantine,” *CQ* 44 (2004) 511–524 at 513; P. Malosse, *Libanios: Discours T. 4*. (Paris 2003) 10.

²¹ A Reference to Nicomedia as “here” (*Or.* 59.72) indicates the speech was delivered before an audience in that city, without the presence of Constantius. Malosse, *Libanios* 8. The presence of Constans, of course, was an impossibility. W. Portmann’s (“Die 59. Rede des Libanios und das Datum der Schlacht von Singara,” *BZ* 82 [1989] 1–18 at 1 n.1) suggestion that Constans was comparatively nearby in Pannonia at the time of delivery relies on his early dating of the speech, which has been challenged by Malosse (see n.25 below).

²² MacCormack’s justification for the lack of modern interest in *Or.* 59 is typical: “his subject [Constantius II] did not appeal to Libanius, as one may gather when comparing this panegyric to his very different speeches on Julian.” S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Los Angeles 1981) 187. Malosse’s edition goes some way to rehabilitate *Or.* 59, especially from a literary perspective: *Libanios* 73–87.

²³ Considered sufficiently capable of achieving this aim, it was countered by Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Oration 5* “Against Julian”, S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church* (Berkeley 2012) 439–477.

Constantius.²⁴ Given the pro-Julianic stance that Libanius maintained from 360 onwards, it may be considered remarkable that a panegyric to Constantius and Constans survives at all. It is the earliest of Libanius' extant orations, composed sometime between 344 and 349 during his period as professor of rhetoric in Nicomedia.²⁵ Indeed it is the only extant work that can be securely dated to his five-year stay in the city; the majority of the others were composed during his long career as sophist in Antioch from 354 till his death almost forty years later.²⁶ The survival of this speech may suggest that Libanius valued *Or.* 59 despite its (potentially embarrassing) positive portrayal of Constantius, which he later supplanted with pro-Julianic invective.²⁷ Other of Libanius' panegyrics, which could not have been a source for pride, have been lost to us. In the *Autobiography* (the first section of which was written in 374) he states he was compelled (unwillingly) to deliver a panegyric to the tyrannical Caesar Gallus (*Or.* 1.97) and a further one to Valens, which was poorly received by the emperor (*Or.* 1.144).²⁸ Neither has been preserved in his manuscript tradition and it is tempting to posit a role for Libanius in the disappearance of these inconvenient documents (the first would have exposed the hypocrisy of panegyric and the second his rhetorical failure).²⁹ One reason for Libanius' pride in *Oration* 59 and his wish to preserve it may have been that it secured his return via imperial command to Constantinople in 349 seven years after he was forced to flee and this time with an imperial salary.³⁰ Even if he bemoaned his return to the eastern capital in the

²⁴ Julian's attacks on Constantius are best exemplified by the charges put forward in the *Letter of the Athenians*, particularly for the murder of his family (270c-d), his detention in Macellum (271b), and Constantius' suspicions after he raised Julian to the position of Caesar (277d). Julian had also composed two panegyrics (*Or.* 1 and 3) to Constantius earlier in his career in the mid and late 350s.

²⁵ See P. Malosse, "Enquête sur la date du Discours 59 de Libanios." *An.Tard.* 9 (2001) 207–306 for the suggestion of 348, *contra* Portmann, *BZ* 82 (1989) 1–18. Portmann convincingly argues for a date of 344 for the battle of Singara, but his accompanying argument that *Or.* 59 was composed soon after is not strong. I accept Malosse's observation that Libanius' invocation of autopsy of the aftermath of Singara does not imply composition soon after the event (§99), especially since that autopsy fulfills other purposes (as I discuss below).

²⁶ See now the useful overviews in chapters 4–7 of L. Van Hoof (ed.), *Libanius: a Critical Introduction*. (Cambridge 2014): P.-L. Malosse, "Libanius' *Orationes*" 81–106; R. Penella, "Libanius' *Declamations*" 107–127; C. Gibson, "Libanius' *Progymnasmata*" 128–14; B. Cabouret, "Libanius' *Letters*" 144–159.

²⁷ *Or.* 59 may have been the cause for Libanius' initial frosty reception by Julian when the latter arrived in Antioch in 362, for which see H.-U. Wiemer, *Libanios und Julian* (Munich 1995) 32–47.

²⁸ Libanius manages to present these difficult episodes to his credit. A description of his fear distances him from Gallus, as the flop of his later panegyric does from Valens. He makes no mention of *Or.* 59 in the *Autobiography*, perhaps because it was problematic—it was not poorly received, and Libanius' career may have benefited from it (see below). For the compositional process of *Or.* 1, see L. Van Hoof "Libanius' *Life and Life*" in L. Van Hoof (ed.) *Libanius: a Critical Introduction* (Cambridge 2014) 7–38 at 11–16.

²⁹ Just as he may have been responsible for the careful fashioning of his letter collection, which omits any letters before his return to Antioch and any written between 365 and 388. The beginning of the later lacuna coincides with the beginning of Valens' reign. See now L. Van Hoof, "Self-Censorship and Self-Fashioning: Gaps in Libanius' Letter Collection," *RBPh* 92 (2014) 209–229, who argues convincingly for Libanius' "self-fashioning" of the letter collection to omit not so much "politically sensitive" letters written under Valens (as early scholars had suggested, J. Martin and P. Petit, *Libanios: Discours T. 1* (Paris 1979) xiii, 255 and 258; B. Cabouret, "La correspondance fait-elle peur au pouvoir? Réflexions sur la transmission de la correspondance de Libanios" in R. Delmaire, J. Desmulliez and P.-L. Gatié (eds.) *Correspondances: Documents pour l'histoire de l'Antiquité tardive* (Lyon 2009) 259–279, but to cover up his attempts to rebuild his social network after it had been weakened under Valens.

³⁰ *Or.* 1.74 and 80. Later in his career, Libanius remarked upon the rewards that accrued to orators who deliver speeches to officials *Ep.* 552.3, though fear (as well as reward) can also be a motivation "to praise people far worse than ourselves", *Ep.* 656.2.

Autobiography (*Or.* 1.75), written thirty years later, his retrospective presentation this event was a carefully crafted interpretation designed to act as an *apologia* for his lengthy career in Antioch. As Van Hoof has noted, at the time an imperial summons would have been perceived as a mark of great honour, and in any case, few people would “have ranked a career in Nicomedia above one in Constantinople”.³¹

The survival of the speech, whether accidental or otherwise, has been a boon for modern historians. It provides valuable details for Constans and Constantius’ activities during the 340s, a period rendered murky to modern examination on account of the loss of the early books of Ammianus’ *Res Gestae*, and it is the earliest of a series of panegyrics addressed to Constantius.³² Libanius of course did not know that his speech would become source material for modern historians, but he himself openly alludes to historiographical practices at key moments throughout the speech. The rest of this article will examine how he defines panegyric’s relationship with historiography in the abstract, and how he uses some historiographical topoi within this speech, particularly concerning his presentation of the two emperors’ deeds and their relationship to Libanius’ audience. Finally, I will return to the unusual nature of this double panegyric, and its role in Libanius’ career.

4. *Libanius on historiography*

56. ἔουκε δὲ κατὰ μικρὸν ὁ λόγος εἰς τὸ πρόσω χωρῶν αὐταῖς ἤδη προσάγειν ταῖς πράξεις αἱ μετὰ κινδύνων ἐτελέσθησαν. καὶ ἔγωγε μείζω κίνδυνον ὀρῶ τοῖς λέγουσιν ἐπικείμενον ἢ τοῖς παραταξαμένοις αὐτοῖς. οὕτως οὐ φαυλότερον εἰπεῖν τι τῶν μεγίστων ἢ κατορθῶσαι. τοσοῦτον δὲ ὑπειπεῖν ἄξιον. ἡμῖν γὰρ ἡ γνώμη νῦν οὐχ ἱστορίαν συνθεῖναι πάντα περιλαμβάνουσαν οὐδὲ διήγησιν ψιλὴν ἀποτεῖναι μηδὲν ἔξω καταλείπουσαν ἑαυτῆς, ἀλλ’ εὐφημίαν τινὰ τοῖς σωτῆροι τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀναθεῖναι. 57. ἔστι δὲ τοῦ μὲν ἱστορίαν συντιθέντος διὰ πάντων ἐφεξῆς τῶν εἰργασμένων ἐλθεῖν, τοῦ δὲ ἐγκωμιάζειν ἐπιχειροῦντος μηδὲν μὲν εἶδος εὐφημίας παραλιπεῖν, οὐ μὴν διὰ πάντων ἕκαστα διελθεῖν. ὅπερ οὖν περὶ τῆς τροφῆς καὶ παιδείας πεποιήκαμεν ἑκατέρου μὲν εἰς μνήμην ἐλθόντες, οὐ μέντοι καθ’ ἑκάτερον ἀπάντων, τούτῳ καὶ κατὰ τῶν ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις ἔργων χρηστέον. (*Or.* 59.56-7).

56. It appears that our discourse as it makes gradual progress is proceeding now to the very deeds which were accomplished in hazard. In fact I see a greater hazard besetting those who speak than beset the very men who were drawn up in battle. Thus it is no more trivial matter to say something about the most important of events, than it is to accomplish them. It is right to say this much by way of introduction. For it is our present intention not to compose a history which embraces everything, nor to prolong a bare account that leaves out anything of external interest, but to dedicate a panegyric to the saviours of the world. 57. It is the duty of the composer of a history to go through all the accomplishments in sequence, but of the man trying to deliver an encomium to omit no form of eulogy, rather than to recount each detail throughout. And so the technique we adopted with regard to their nurture and education which we mentioned for each one of them, without dealing

³¹ L. Van Hoof, “Libanius and the EU Presidency: Career Moves in the Autobiography,” in O. Lagacherie and P.-L. Malosse (eds.) *Libanios, le premier humaniste: Études en hommage à Bernard Schouler* (Alessandria 2011) 196–206 at 198–199.

³² Themistius *Orr.* 1–4 and Julian *Or.* 1 and 3 all date from the 350s. A fragment of a panegyric by Himerius to Constantius (fr. 1.6) can be securely dated to 351 by the (admittedly elusive) references to Gallus and Julian. T. D. Barnes 1987 “Himerius and the Fourth Century,” *CP* 82 (1987) 206–225.

with everything they each did, is the form we must employ also for their deeds in the wars.

Libanius thus marks the structurally important transition in his speech from the joint praise of Constans' and Constantius' youth and upbringing to the first section in which the brothers' deeds are treated separately (beginning with Constantius'). He offers a justification for his change of procedure in which he makes explicit reference to the difference between history and panegyric. His explanation is quite unlike what we found in the historians.³³ According to Libanius, the division between the genres is not determined by chronology; rather it is simply a question of the selection of material. Whereas the historian has a duty to cover all events, the panegyrist has a duty to select those which are most suitable for praising the addressee.³⁴ If the historians and theorists had criticized panegyric for its lack of truth (and in turn strengthened the truth-claims of their own genre), Libanius implicitly lays claim to historiography's monopoly on truth by ignoring the way in which historians define their genre in opposition to his. He does not intend to report events in a different way, he will merely be more restrictive in the events that he chooses to narrate. By implication, the events that he does narrate will be just as trustworthy and true as if they were narrated by a historian. He thus strives to overcome the criticisms voiced by the likes of Lucian.

The placement of this statement is notable. It betrays Libanius' awareness that his ensuing account of an emperor's deeds in war and peace brings his speech in close proximity with the traditional subject matter of imperial historiography, and in treating the deeds of the reigning emperor specifically he covers the material that historians themselves suggest avoiding.³⁵ At the very opening of the panegyric, however, Libanius had introduced his purpose as one which historians themselves would approve of. He outlines the intended results of his speech:

οὐ γὰρ μόνον τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ὅσον ἔξεστι τοῦ γιγνομένου φυλάζομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ δόξαν ἴσως προσληψόμεθα βελτίω καὶ τῷ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν προβαλόντι φιλοτιμηθῆναι παρέξομεν. (*Or.* 59.4)

³³ It is, however, the same way in which Plutarch distinguishes biography from history in his his *Life of Alexander*: “[we] make no other preface than to beg our readers not to complain, if we do not report all of [Alexander' and Caesar's] famous deeds and do not report exhaustively on any of them, but do the majority in summary. For it is not so much histories (ἱστορίας) that we are writing but lives (βίους)” (*Alex.* 1.1-2, trans. Duff). That both authors felt the need to offer an *apologia* for their relationship to historiography reveals the dominating role of historiography in determining the potential form and conventions of other “proximate” genres. (Although it should be noted that Plutarch's statement ought to be read in the specific context of the *Lives* of Alexander and Caesar, and not as a universal tenet for biography, T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford 1999) 14-22. See n.34 below for an example of Plutarch's expression of the opposite position.) Historiography is key to this process: Libanius chooses to define his practice against that of the historian, not the biographer; on the latter he remains silent.

³⁴ A rather different formulation than Pliny's: *quid est enim in principatu tuo, quod cuiusquam praedicatio uel transilire uel praeteruehi debeat?* “For what aspect of your reign could anyone's speech jump over or pass by?” (*Pan.* 56.1, trans. Rees in *Form and Function* 112). Libanius also stands in contrast to Plutarch's advice for writing biography in a positive mode, who suggests nothing of a man's life should be omitted, but there should be some “polishing” of the bad bits, *Vit. Cimonis* 2.4–5.

³⁵ The early careers of emperors before their accession, such as Libanius has just described, are rarely deemed suitable for narration by historians. Jovian, Valens, and Valentinian, for example, receive little mention in Ammianus before their accessions and certainly no narration of their youth or upbringing (21.16.10; 26.4.2; 16.11.6); and even Julian's education in Athens is skirted over (15.2.7; 15.8.1).

For not only shall we preserve for the emperors as much as is possible of their achievement, but we shall ourselves also gain, perhaps, a better reputation and we shall give the proposer of the speech the opportunity to be honoured.

The reference to δόξα for the speaker (and by extension, here, for the proposer) may be typical of panegyric (Men. Rhet. 368.14–15) but it is also commonly associated with practitioners of historiography. First amongst the motivations of historians, Josephus states, is “to display their literary skill and to win the fame (δόξαν) therefrom expected” (*AJ* 1.2)³⁶ and the procurement of fame is a motive ascribed to Herodotus by Lucian (*Her.* 1).³⁷ Libanius’ other reason—the preservation of the ruler’s deeds—is more obviously shared with historians, however, and is one that he elaborates slightly later in the prologue when he remarks on the cognitive power of speech or writing: οἱ μὲν λόγοι τὰ ἔργα μνηύουσιν “words make deeds known”³⁸ (*Or.* 59.7). A major function of Libanius’ speech, then, is to provide *cognitio rerum* and thus in turn to preserve that knowledge.³⁹ It is a motivation not so distant from that of Herodotus, who had set out the purpose of his work “to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and of other peoples” (*Hdt.* 1.1).⁴⁰ In comparison Libanius’ cognitive purpose even seems stronger than Herodotus’. Herodotus implies that he merely preserves what is already known; Libanius will make things known in the first place.

Libanius’ appropriation of this historiographic objective is surprising for a panegyrist. In a more traditional setting for the delivery of panegyric, the provision of *cognitio rerum* was a redundant function—if a speech was to be given before a present emperor and his entourage, all of whom likely already knew of if not had actually taken part in the events under discussion, there was no need to inform the audience of what had happened.⁴¹ Menander alludes to this problem when he demands panegyrists’ subject matter should be ὁμολογουμένην / ὁμολογουμένους “agreed” (368.2 and 7) between speaker and audience.⁴² Libanius’ pose reflects the unusual context of composition and delivery of his speech. Without the presence of the emperor and court, there was a greater possibility that for the local audience in Nicomedia Libanius’ speech did indeed fulfil the historiographic purpose of *cognitio rerum*. In the following two sections of this article, I suggest that Libanius develops

³⁶ Trans. Thackeray.

³⁷ Herodotus does not mention this motivation openly himself. The earliest historian to do so is Theopompus *FGrHist* 115 F 25, after which it became a standard topos in Latin as well as Greek historiography. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition* 57–62.

³⁸ λόγοι could of course also refer to “speeches” (and therefore panegyrics) as much as “words” in general.

³⁹ Libanius’ contemporary Ammianus expresses the purpose of history in a preface as to provide *cognitio gestorum* (15.1.1). Pliny’s discussion of *rerum cognitio* (*Ep.* 5.8.4) suggests he believes “one of the main attractions of writing history was to rescue from oblivion those to whom *aeternitas* is owed and to enhance one’s own fame in the process.” R. Ash, “*Aliud est enim epistulam, aliud historiam...scribere* (*Epistles* 6.16.22): Pliny the Historian?” *Arethusa* 36 (2003) 211–225 at 221; cf. Rees, in *Form and Function* 109. In practice, of course, historiography did far more than offer a simple elucidation of facts, and historians openly drew attention to moral functions in the prefaces of their works (Sallust *Jug.* 1.1 & *Cat.* 1.1; Livy *Pref.*) Rees, in *Form and Function* 109.

⁴⁰ Trans. de Sélincourt (rev. Burn).

⁴¹ Rees, in *Form and Function* 110, citing Pliny’s awareness of this problem: “In other speeches, the novelty itself keeps the reader attentive; in this one [i.e. *Panegyricus*] everything is already known, common knowledge, discussed.” *Ep.* 3.13.2. Rees goes on to suggest that narrative in Latin panegyric serves purposes other than a cognitive function for its initial audience, namely to provide evidence of the emperor’s virtues and celebrate his achievements.

⁴² See also L. Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric: Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise* (Austin 2015) 87.

the sense that his speech pursues a cognitive function (despite his claim at §56 not to be writing history), specifically in relation to the ways he (and historians) create authority for their texts. In deploying historiographic motifs, however, Libanius creates a distinction in his treatment of each emperor, which betrays his concentration on his “local” emperor Constantius.

5. *Constans in the unknown West*

Libanius’ account of Constans’ activities in the West (§§123–165) may more naturally be expected to fulfil the historiographical aim of *cognitio rerum* on account of Constans’ geographical remoteness. I address this section first before returning to that on Constantius. Although Libanius is at pains to stress the unity of the two halves of the empire and the ease with which information passed between the emperors (“their government has been divided by area but is held together by goodwill...Horses and chariots every day, increasing their speed with successions of teams, carry news of each other’s thoughts to one another” §152)⁴³ Constans’ activities in the West must certainly have been less well known to the inhabitants of Nicomedia than those of Constantius.

Constans is praised for two significant deeds: the pacification of the Franks, and crossing the channel from Gaul to Britain in the depths of winter. The orator’s description of these actions prompts a prefatory statement (in parallel to that at §56 for Constantius) that introduces a different mode of presentation and indeed one that is in contrast to his earlier overt claim that he will not be writing history:

λέγω δὲ ἤδη μικρόν τι τὸν Θεουκυδίδην μιμησάμενος. οὐ γὰρ ἀβασανίστως τὴν ἀκοὴν εὐθὺς ἐδεξάμην οὐδὲ τὸ ταλαιπωρῆσαι περὶ τὴν ζήτησιν τῆς ἀληθείας φυγῶν τοῖς ἐτοίμοις προσέδραμον, ἀλλ’ ἐπιπόνως τε καὶ μετὰ τῆς ἐσχάτης ἀκριβείας περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα διατρίψας οὐκ ἂν ἀπιστηθεῖν εἰκότως. (*Or.* 59.126)

Now I shall say a few words in imitation of Thucydides. For I have not immediately accepted any report without examination nor have I avoided hardship in my quest for the truth and had recourse to what was available, but with difficulty and with the utmost exactitude have I spent my time in the project, and it would not be reasonable to mistrust me.

Constans’ West is presented as a subject in need of investigation and is, therefore, constructed as naturally unknown for Libanius’ audience. It is up to Libanius to provide the Nicomedians with a true account of what happened. In doing so he makes a claim to authority via inquiry, an important methodological tool frequently claimed by historians, and the assertion that his investigations will uncover the truth.⁴⁴ His methodology is based upon that of the most

⁴³ The harmony between the emperors that is stressed here and elsewhere (§171) is another strong argument for dating the speech after 346 when Constans and Constantius were reconciled following a period of mutual distrust (K. Kraft, “Die Taten der Kaiser Constans und Constantius II,” *JNG* 9 (1958) 141–186; W. Portmann, “Die politische Krise zwischen den Kaisern Constantius II. und Constans,” *Historia* 48 (1999) 301–329; K. Olbich, “Athanasius, die Kaiser und der Anbruch einer neuen Ära: Propaganda und Münzprägung um 343 n.Chr.,” *Klio* 86 (2004) 415–441. For the relation of this event to the date of the speech, Malosse, *An.Tard.* 9 (2001) 207–306.

⁴⁴ On the role of inquiry in historiography see G. Schepens, *L’ ‘autopsie’ dans la Méthode des historiens grecs du V^e siècle avant J.-C.* (Brussels 1980) 33–93 and “History and *Historia*: Inquiry in the Greek Historians” in J. Marincola (ed.) *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (London 2007) 39–55; Marincola, *Authority and Tradition* 63–95.

respected practitioner of history, Thucydides,⁴⁵ who is cited by name and whose own methodological statement is directly invoked.⁴⁶ This procedure places Libanius in a medial and explicative position between the emperor and the Nicomedian audience: he investigates and informs the latter of what they do not know. The theory set out in this introductory paragraph is reinforced by authorial statements during the narration that follows, most overtly in the description of Constans' voyage across the channel and the challenges it brings:

Οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ τὸν διάπλουν εἰς τὴν νῆσον τὴν Βρεττανίαν σιωπῇ παρελθεῖν ἄξιον, διότι πολλοῖς ἢ νῆσος ἠγνόηται. ἀλλ' ὅσῳ πλέον ἠγνόηται, τοσοῦτῳ πλέον εἰρήσεται, ὥσθ' ἅπαντας μαθεῖν, ὅτι καὶ τὴν ἔξω τῆς ἐγνωσμένης βασιλεὺς διηρευνήσατο. (*Or.* 59. 137)

It is not right to pass over in silence his voyage to the island of Britain, because many are ignorant about the island. But the greater the degree of ignorance, the more will be told, so that all may learn that the emperor explored even beyond the known world...

The claim that Britain is an unfamiliar island and “beyond the known world” seems incongruous when one considers that Constans' grandfather died there and his father was proclaimed there. The topos of “unknown Britain”, however, was well established across several literary genres,⁴⁷ and perhaps was too obvious not to exploit in a panegyric context. Indeed, Libanius' western contemporary Firmicus Maternus did just that when referring to Constans' crossing in his *On the error of the Pagans* (28.6): *sub remis uestris incogniti iam nobis paene maris unda contremuit et insperatam imperatoris faciem Britannus expauit* (“The wave of a sea already become almost unknown to us has trembled beneath your ours, and the Briton has quailed before the unexpected visage of the Emperor”).⁴⁸ In comparison, Libanius' use of the topos appears far more historiographical.⁴⁹ His statement reinforces the sense that he anticipates the shortcomings in his audience's knowledge and responds accordingly. His method of inquiry relies upon the best sort of informers: in the next paragraph he supports his interpretation through recourse those who were μάρτυρας “eyewitnesses” themselves.⁵⁰

Libanius' historiographical pose does not of course preclude panegyric treatment of Constans' deeds— “[Constans] willingly gave himself over to the greatest dangers, as though going to suffer the greatest losses if he did not take the greatest risks” (*Or.* 59, 141) is hardly

⁴⁵ At least according to Lucian (*Hist. conscr.* 15, 26 and 57), but it is an estimation that Libanius would no doubt have agreed with, B. Schouler, *La tradition hellénique chez Libanios* (Paris 1984) 522–535.

⁴⁶ Libanius alludes to a statement in which Thucydides criticizes the methodological practices of other historians (and thereby defines his own): οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἢ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται “So averse to taking pains are most men in the search for the truth, and so prone are they to turn to what lies ready at hand” (1.20.3), trans. Smith.

⁴⁷ e.g. Catullus 11.11; Seneca *Apoc.* 12.3.

⁴⁸ Trans. Forbes. Firmicus composed his *de errore* c.346, R. Turcan, *Firmicus Maternus: L'Erreur de religions païennes* (Paris 2002) 24–27. It is not impossible that both authors respond to Constans' propaganda, but Libanius' treats it in a distinct way to Firmicus (see n. 49).

⁴⁹ The remoteness of Britain and its isolation on account of Ocean is a typical concern of historians as Libanius himself notes in the next sentence when he refers to Herodotus' theories on Ocean, 2.21-3 (§137). Roman authors made much use of Ocean as a natural boundary for Roman imperialism, Cic. *Leg. Man.* 33; Plut., *Vit. Pomp.* 38.2-3; *Vit. Caes.* 58.6-7. See also Malosse, *Libanios* 209 who notes the same topos in Aristid. *Or.* 26.28. Libanius' overt reference to Herodotus gives the topos here an historiographic flavour, however.

⁵⁰ “There is a report that supplies those who have seen it as witnesses, namely that it is a greater danger to launch a merchant ship upon that sea [the channel] than to fight a naval battle elsewhere.” (*Or.* 59.138). For the central role importance of eyewitness testimony, see Thuc. 1.22.2–3, where Thucydides “puts first- and second-degree visual evidence at the center of his historical method”, Schepens, in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* 47.

free of praise—but it does allow him to claim to be an authoritative source for actions in the West and positions him in an explicative role in relation to his audience, who in turn are constructed as unknowing and in need of elucidation. It is quite a different construction of the relationship between orator, emperor, and audience than what came before in his description of Constantius' actions, and to which we turn now.

6. Constantius' familiar East and the eyewitness audience

Inquiry, which Libanius promotes as his means of speaking authoritatively and truthfully about Constantius' deeds in the West, was only one of the tools available to the historian. The other, equally fundamental, was autopsy. For Herodotus, personal autopsy was paramount, to be supplemented only if need be by inquiry from eyewitnesses.⁵¹ Similarly Thucydides acknowledges the importance of both, though he maintains that each method should be subject to proper verification of the information they impart.⁵² Autopsy is important for Libanius too, and he alludes to its role in the prologue to the speech:

πολλαχῆ δέ μοι δοκεῖ χαλεπὸν εἶναι τὴν εὐφημίαν ταῖς τῶν βασιλέων ἀρεταῖς ἐξιῶσαι. ὅσοι μὲν γὰρ βασιλικῶν αὐλῶν ἄξιοι κριθέντες καὶ στρατευομένοις συναπαίρουσι καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡσυχίας παρ' ἡμέραν πραττομένων οὐκ ἀπείρως ἔχουσι, τούτοις μὲν ἓν ἐστὶν ἐργῶδες τὸ ζητεῖν, ὃ τι χρὴ τῶν ἐγνωσμένων ἄξιον εἰπεῖν, ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις εἰ καὶ πολλῶν ἢ γνῶσις πάρεστιν, ἀλλὰ πλείω γε ὧν ἴσμεν ἀγνοεῖν. (*Or.* 59.8)

In many ways it seems to me difficult to match a eulogy with the virtues of the emperors. For there are those who have been judged worthy of the imperial palace and march away with the emperors on campaign and are well acquainted with what is done in peace day by day; these men experience the one difficulty of seeking what they should say that is worthy of what they know; whereas for the rest of us even if we have knowledge of many of the facts, yet we are ignorant of more things than we know.

Although he does not use the term here, Libanius clearly refers to the importance of autopsy as a source of information about emperors and specifically of the sort of information necessary for panegyric.⁵³ There are no better eyewitnesses than those who attend the emperor's court and participate in his campaigns.⁵⁴ This privileging of autopsy brings Libanius once more in line methodologically with the historians, but in a reversal of the statement expected of a historian, Libanius distances himself from that authoritative eyewitness testimony. Not being a member of court, he cannot lay claim to personal autopsy. In an adaptation of the *captatio* typical of panegyrist, in which they stress their humbleness

⁵¹ Hdt. 2.29.1, 34.1; 3.115.2; 4.116.1; Schepens, *L' 'autopsie'* 51–53.

⁵² “But as to the facts of the occurrences of the war, I have thought it my duty to give them, not as ascertained from any chance informant nor as seemed to me probable, but only after investigating with the greatest possible accuracy each detail, in the case both of the events in which I myself participated and of those regarding which I got my information from others.” Thuc. 1.22.1, cf. 5.26.5. See Marincola 1997, 63–95; and T. Rood, “Objectivity and Authority: Thucydides' Historical Method,” in A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis (eds.) *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden 2006) 225–250 at 235–236 for an explanation of Thucydides' reliance on oral testimony conditioned by rhetorical milieu of fifth-century Athens.

⁵³ He does refer to autopsy elsewhere in the speech, *Or.* 59.86, discussed below.

⁵⁴ He may thus allude to the same problem for the panegyrist as that identified by Pliny, see n.41 above.

and unworthiness in praising the emperor,⁵⁵ Libanius instead appears to undermine his capabilities to speak authoritatively about his subject(s). Importantly, also, he disassociates himself from the court and explicitly aligns himself instead with the Nicomedian audience—it is the rest of us (ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις) not just the speaker who suffer from lack of autopsy. This statement anticipates Libanius’ later claim that he writes panegyric not history—he is aware of, but cannot follow the regular methodologies of historiography—but nevertheless it makes the audience conscious of the importance of autopsy even if Libanius himself does not have access to it himself.

Libanius revisits these two themes of autopsy and his connection with the Nicomedian audience in his subsequent description of Constantius’ actions, and he does so in a way that makes the section on Constantius stand in stark opposition to that on Constans later in the speech. Among Constantius’ military successes has been the capture of an unnamed Persian city.⁵⁶ Libanius uses the episode not just to praise Constantius’ military prowess, but also his clemency in dealing with the captured inhabitants of the city, whom the emperor transports to and resettles in Thrace (§83). The episode provides Libanius with an opportunity to connect the audience directly with actions of their “local” emperor:

καὶ τούτοις οὐκ ἔνεστιν ἀπιστεῖν. οὐ γὰρ ἐξίτηλον χρόνῳ γεγονυῖαν πράξιν διηγούμεθα συναγωνιζομένης εἰς ψευδολογίαν τῆς ἀρχαιότητος, ἀλλ’ οἶμαι πάντας ἐπὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἔτι προφέρειν τὴν χθὲς καὶ πρόην γεγενημένην τῶν αἰχμαλώτων πομπήν... (86) ἐπὶ τούτοις τοὺς πόρρω κατωκισμένους ἡμᾶς τῆς τῶν πολεμίων χώρας οὐ περιεῖδεν ἀκοῆ μόνη τῶν γεγενημένων ἐστιωμένους, ἀλλ’ αὐτόπτας τῶν ὄλων καταστήσας ἡδονῆς τε πολλῆς καὶ χρηστῆς ἐλπίδος ἐνέπλησεν ἐν μὲν τοῖς κατορθώμασι γεγηθότας, τοῖς δὲ κατειργασμένοις τεκμαιρομένους τὸ μέλλον. (*Or.* 59.84 & 86)

And these facts cannot be disbelieved. For we are not recounting an action which has vanished in the mists of time, as Antiquity contends to create falsehood, but I think that everyone can still recall before his eyes the procession of prisoners that took place yesterday and the day before... (86) Furthermore, he did not leave us who were dwelling further away from the enemy’s land to feast only on the report of what had happened, but he made us eye-witnesses of everything and filled us with much joy and good hope. We rejoiced at his successes and judged the future from his achievements.

Libanius shows anxiety for establishing the credibility and truthfulness of his account (“these facts cannot be disbelieved”); it is important that his audience believe him (a prime historiographical concern). His reasons for dispelling doubt, however, are polemical towards historiography whilst they also appropriate its methodology. In a reversal of the position adopted by Ammianus, Eutropius, and the *scriptor*, more distant rather than contemporary history is accused of being inherently less believable. He may even hint that historians (those who write about ἀρχαιότης) cause, or at least perpetuate ψευδολογία rather than dispel it; contemporary history, by implication is more truthful.⁵⁷ Yet the justification for the audience

⁵⁵ Most *captationes* frequently stress the ineloquence of the speaker, e.g. Eumenius *Pan. Lat.* IX(V); Mamertinus *Pan. Lat.* III(XI).1.1; Pacatus *Pan. Lat.* II(XII).1.2. Julian professes to be overwhelmed by the scale of Constantius’ achievements *Or.* 1.1. Cf. Men. *Rhet.* 368.8-12.

⁵⁶ Probably Nineveh. M.H. Dodgeon and S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD226-363* (London 1991) 329 n.18.

⁵⁷ This itself is a more Thucydidean position; the *Archaeology* at the opening of the history establishes the greater difficulty in investigating the remote rather than the recent past (Thuc. 1.1.2; Rood, in

to believe Libanius' account relies upon the same authoritating use of autopsy as that promoted by Ammianus and other historians.⁵⁸ That eyewitness testimony, however, is now unmediated by the panegyrist—the audience of the speech has become also the audience for Constantius' laudable actions (“he made us eye-witnesses of everything”), and thus they as much as he play the role of the “historian”.

Libanius goes further than just invoking the audience's autopsy to gain their credence for the event; he also constructs their reaction of hope and joy to what they see, and thus he reinforces a key celebratory aspect of panegyric discourse. Libanius has been able to connect the local audience and absent emperor in a way that both celebrates Constantius' victory and reminds the emperor that such victories are necessary for a sense of well-being of the inhabitants of this part of the empire (“we rejoiced at his successes and judged the future from his achievements”). Thus we should read two-way communication here, what Sabbah termed long ago *communication ascendante*, or advice to the emperor (the emperor should continue to protect the East militarily), and *communication descendante*, or the emperor's message to the people (Constantius is a protective emperor).⁵⁹ If the “natural” flow of panegyric discourse is two-way, Libanius' invocation of the historiographical topos of autopsy reinforces the true panegyric nature of this section of the speech. In comparison the one-way flow of the section on Constans (whereby Libanius stands firmly between emperor and audience and interprets the former for the latter) raises questions about the true function of this double panegyric.

7. Conclusions—whose panegyric?

At key sections throughout this panegyric—the programmatic prologue and introductions to the sections on each emperor—Libanius consistently returns to the theme of historiography and its relationship with panegyric. He is at pains to establish that he is not writing history, but he actively defines historiography as merely a less selective version of panegyric. The relationship between the two genres, then, is not cast as negatively as it is by historians themselves. Despite his protestations, however, Libanius lays claim to one of the principal objectives of history (to provide knowledge of the truth) as well as the historian's dual methods of achieving it, inquiry and autopsy. The pursuit of truth via these historiographical methods serve as an important defense against the standard charges of lying and distortion that were levelled against panegyrists.⁶⁰ In turn, Libanius' pose of the “truth-telling historian” during the sections of narrative in his speech inevitably helps define the orator's *persona* throughout the rest of the speech as authoritative and believable.

Libanius' distribution of these two historiographical techniques reveals an imbalance in his treatment of the two emperors, despite his carefully structured speech.⁶¹ The sections that

Brill's Companion to Thucydides 233). And polemic with earlier historians is a historiographical topos itself. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition* 218–236.

⁵⁸ Ammianus, echoing Herodotus and Thucydides, claims to rely on *uisa et lecta* (22.8.1). Schepens, in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* 39–40; Kelly, *Ammianus* 36–37.

⁵⁹ G. Sabbah, “De la rhétorique à la communication politique: les Panégyriques latins,” *BAGB* 43 (1984) 363–388.

⁶⁰ Exemplified by Lucian, quoted at the head of this article, and perhaps most famously by Augustine in *Conf.* 6.6. Such criticisms were as old as the genre, however, Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric* 72–77.

⁶¹ Constans and Constantius may be granted an equal number of sections, but the sections are not balanced in terms of length. Constantius' deeds receive three times as much text as Constans'. And each main section of the speech (prologue, joint praise, Constantius' deeds, Constans deeds, second section of joint praise, epilogue) progressively increases in length culminating in Constantius' deeds, then declines. The structure is neatly illustrated in tabular form in Malosse, *Libanios* 14.

narrate the deeds of each emperor both receive methodological introductions; that for Constantius disclaims historiography whereas Constans' (tacitly) embraces it. The activities of the distant Constans entail inquiry by the panegyrist, who then relates his findings to the Nicomedian audience; Constantius' actions, by contrast, are self-evident, witnessed not just by the panegyrist but by the audience themselves. The historian-panegyrist's role as mediator and explicator has been rendered unnecessary. By constructing the audience as eyewitnesses, the panegyrist can therefore connect the loyal provincial audience and the local emperor far more closely than in the case of the distant Constans. For Constantius, panegyric can function as panegyric, not as historiography as in the case of Constans.

We discussed above that *Oration 59* is a curiosity within the Libanian corpus. It is also a curiosity amongst extant late antique panegyrics. Menander Rhetor envisaged the *Basilikos Logos* as a speech that would address a sole ruler, but the collegiate form of government instituted by Diocletian and which survived, adapted according to circumstances, through most of the fourth century, posed a challenge to his formula. Libanius' variation of the Menandrian model, however, was not typical of other third- and fourth-century panegyrists who found themselves in similar situations. Gallic panegyrists, who frequently addressed an emperor who was part of a college, preferred to focus only upon the "local" emperor, and bring in his colleagues as and when necessary. The one occasion of truly joint praise was necessitated by the simultaneous presence of two of the Tetrarchs (*Pan. Lat.* VII(VI)).⁶² Only one other comparable example of a double-panegyric survives, Themistius' *Oration 6* to Valens and Valentinian delivered in Constantinople in 364, which nonetheless privileges the "present" Valens.⁶³

This raises the question whether it is actually possible to praise two emperors effectively in a single panegyric, or even whether it would be desirable for a panegyrist to do so. For anyone in Nicomedia, orator, prefect, or inhabitant, it could only be the local, eastern emperor who may bestow any sort of patronage that a panegyric might be expected to bring, such as the patronage Libanius himself benefitted from in 349 when he was returned, newly promoted, to Constantinople. The inclusion of Constans in this speech usefully celebrates the newly established brotherly harmony in the wake of 346, but the historiographical framing of each section perhaps signals that Constantius is its primary honorand.

To return to our original questions, panegyric, at least in the hands of Libanius, was just as capable of exploiting the close generic relationship with historiography as was historiography itself. There was a pressure to maintain a formal distance between the genres, but equally it was advantageous for an orator to appropriate the authorizing persona of an historian. Libanius also appears to be aware of the negative aspects of being too historiographical (as in

⁶² *Pan. Lat.* VII(VI) was addressed to both Maximian and Constantine in 307 in Trier. *Pan. Lat.* X(II) and XI(III) was delivered to one member of the diarchy; *Pan. Lat.* VIII(IV) addressed Constantius I as part of the tetrarchy. The varied use of second person forms in the singular or plural helped the panegyrists distinguish their addressee from the rest of his college yet also create a "metaphysical presence" for the absent emperors. R. Rees *Layers of Loyalty in Latin Panegyric AD 289–307* (Oxford 2002) teases out the strategies employed by the orators under the Dyarchy and Tetrarchy to negotiate these complex relationships between audience, addressee, and wider imperial college.

⁶³ Themistius addresses Valentinian and Valens together with the second person plural, however at several points he also uses the singular to address (the present) Valens (e.g. 75a-b, 81c). P. Heather and D. Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire in the Fourth Century. Select Orations of Themistius*. (Liverpool 2001) 173–179.

the case of Constans) and even turn this to an advantage of his panegyric discourse on his true honorand, Constantius.⁶⁴

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