

## REVIEW–DISCUSSION

### DEBATING TRAGIC HISTORY: A NEW COLLECTION ON DURIS

V. Naas and M. Simon, edd., *De Samos à Rome: personnalité et influence de Douris*. Modernité classique, 5. Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2015. Pp. 372. Paperback, €23.00. ISBN 978-2-84016-207-0.

This collection of essays focuses upon the elusive but highly influential Hellenistic historian Duris of Samos, from whose once-extensive corpus only ninety-six fragments (or, more properly, citations by later writers) survive in Jacoby,<sup>1</sup> leading to his classification in 1989 by Paul Pédech as an *historien méconnu*.<sup>2</sup> Since then, even longstanding assumptions on both Duris and the nature of his historical works have been re-evaluated and called into question, including the widely held tradition that he was a student of Theophrastus (which provides a direct connection with Aristotle and the Peripatetics),<sup>3</sup> and his supposed invention of the genre of ‘tragic history’ through the application of the Aristotelian properties of tragedy to historical narrative.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the problems of identifying precisely which elements in the often-truncated citations in Jacoby’s collection actually do derive from Duris and which are imposed by the author of the ‘cover-texts’<sup>5</sup> are now increasingly being recognized.<sup>6</sup> This collection, originating from a conference held in Paris in 2010, offers a welcome addition to the increasingly problematic study of Duris of Samos, although (perhaps inevitably) some of its authors are more *au courant* than others with recent trends in the relevant scholarship.

<sup>1</sup> *FGrHist* 76; now with a new translation and commentary in *Brill’s New Jacoby*.

<sup>2</sup> Pédech (1989) 255–389.

<sup>3</sup> As demonstrated by Dalby (1991), the putative association between Duris and Theophrastus is based on nothing more than a nineteenth-century emendation of the text of Athenaeus (4.128a = *FGrHist* 76 T 1).

<sup>4</sup> First refuted by Walbank (1960); echoed more recently by *inter alios* Kebric (1977) 11–18, Pédech (1989) 368–72, Landucci Gattinoni (1997) 51–5, Hornblower (1994) 44–5, and Fromentin (2001). See Kebric’s essay in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> A useful term coined by Schepens (1977) 166 n. 66 in reference to the later works which preserve the citations from lost historians.

<sup>6</sup> On the difficulties inherent in studying lost historical works through intermediate historians in general, see Lenfant (2013); for Duris in particular, see Baron (2011), both with earlier bibliography.

The volume opens with an introduction by Agnès Rouvert, who identifies the fundamental question posed by the organizers of the conference as the following: do the fragments of Duris and the *testimonia* on his work allow us to specify exactly how he transfers the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis* into the realm of Hellenistic historiography, which in turn becomes highly influential upon the literary culture of Augustan Rome (11)? This general debate on the nature of Hellenistic historiography and its reception at Rome leads naturally into a second preoccupation of the original conference: does the concept of *mimesis*, which played so central a role in Duris' history, serve to explain more fully the scattered references to his authorship of treatises on painting and engraving?

Naturally, in order to answer these important questions, it is crucial to place Duris in his contemporary intellectual *milieu*, and this is the aim of the papers in the first section of the volume ('Douris et son temps'). Denis Knoepfler ('Douris et l'histoire d'Athènes: les connexions oropo-samiennes') addresses the complex issue of Duris' relationship with Athens, his second home (intellectually speaking) in light of his *séjour* in the city to study with Theophrastus, although it was Athenian imperialism which had been responsible for the exile of the Samians from their native island from 366/5 to 322/1. There is no trace in Duris' extant works of the Athenian occupation of Samos as a cleruchy in 366/5, nor of the Athenian loss of the border city of Oropus to the Thebans in the same year, which explains the aggression of Timotheus towards the Samians. As Knoepfler observes (27), it is difficult not to conclude that Duris viewed a connection between the two events. Similarly, although once again no relevant fragments survive, it seems likely that Duris would have mentioned the subsequent history of Oropus, both its liberation from Thebes by Philip in the aftermath of Chaeronea in 338 and Alexander's return of the city to Athens in 335, after the destruction of Thebes. Pausanias' telescoping of Duris' narrative of these two events is therefore responsible for his erroneous statement (1.34.1) that it was Philip who restored control of the city to Athens in 338. Although Knoepfler's hypothesis is certainly plausible, it remains based on a series of assumptions on the material that Duris included in his historical works, and cannot be proved either one way or the other.<sup>7</sup>

The problematic relationship between Samos and Athens is also the subject of the second contribution in this section by Franca Landucci Gattinoni ('Duride, Samo e i Diadochi: uno storiografo nella storia'). She argues that despite the fraught history between the two cities Duris' history very much focused upon Athens, particularly as 'simbolo della condizione ellenica nei confronti dei Macedoni' (53). Duris' emphasis on the progressive decadence of

<sup>7</sup> Knoepfler, however, (rightly) professes skepticism on some of the modern reconstructions of Duris' life based on the scanty biographical data, which he aptly characterizes (21) as 'un château de cartes dépourvu du tout fondement'.

Demetrius Poliorcetes in two long fragments extant from his Macedonian history (*FGrHist* 76 F 13 and 14) reflects the opinion of the Greek world on the current servitude of the city which vaunted itself as a liberator. This emphasis on Athens is not surprising, for the extant fragments reveal the Hellenocentric nature of Duris' Macedonian history, interested as he was only in the relations between the Successors and the Aegean Greek world, rather than the larger empire conquered by Alexander.<sup>8</sup>

Adele Cozzoli ('Duride di Samo e i circoli letterari contemporanei') examines the connections between the intelligentsia at Cos and Samos, where scientific currents commingled with poetic and philological ones, although the presence of the renowned school of medicine on Cos inspired the literary circle there, whereas at Samos the influence of Aristotle and the Peripatetics was more pronounced. It is in this context of intellectual rivalry that we should place Duris' conception of 'tragic' history, for through *mimesis* he recreates historical events in all their confusion and chaos in a way that imposes a historical unity and produces a 'true' emotional impact even if it does not necessarily render precisely the chain of events as they happened. Duris' willingness to enter into philosophical debates on literature suggests that he is deliberately responding to contemporary questions on the relationship between poetry and history.

Maria Rosaria Falivene ('At the table of kings. Lynceus, the brother of Douris, and his friends') argues that the epigrammatist Posidippus (himself connected to the Samian school of poetry by the scholia to Callimachus), as the addressee of a long choliambic poem by the poet Phoenix of Colophon (P. Heidelberg inv. 310) as well as a letter from Lynceus (Athen. 14.652c), is a figure who connects Duris to the wider circle of Hellenistic literary culture. The presence of intellectuals such as Lynceus at the banquets of the Successors demonstrates that the literati did play significant political roles as diplomats and courtiers, all the while entering into intense theoretical and aesthetical debates.

Évelyne Prioux ('Douris et Posidippe: similitudes et dissemblances de quelques éléments de critique de l'art et de critique littéraire') observes that the recent discovery of the new epigrams of Posidippus of Pella reveals that the poet had access to one or more of the treatises of art history composed in the late fourth and the third centuries BC. Furthermore, the close correspondences between his epigrams on the bronze-workers and numerous passages from Book 34 of Pliny the Elder suggest the existence of a common source, which is likely to be Duris, who wrote a treatise on the art of engraving (cited by Pliny) and was closely associated with the intellectual elite of Samos. It may be possible therefore to see in Posidippus a reflection of (and possible reaction to) the

<sup>8</sup> Landucci here further develops the arguments of her book (1997) 81–2; cf. Kebric (1977) 22–3.

aesthetic position of Duris and the balance that he was trying to strike as a historian between exact description and *mimesis*.

The second section of the volume ('Douris, filiation et héritage') segues nicely from Duris' contemporary intellectual context to his influence (particularly stylistic) upon later writers. Pascale Giovannelli-Jouanna ('Douris et l'historiographie d'Agathocle') focuses upon the extant fragments from Duris' monograph on the Sicilian tyrant Agathocles. She begins with an attempt to articulate a hypothesis on the architecture of the work, a difficult task because very few of its fragments are extant, they are completely heterogeneous, and Agathocles himself does not appear in any of them. She then turns to a study of the authors who used Duris as a source for their own narratives of Agathocles, particularly Diodorus, who offers a more balanced portrayal of the tyrant's political intelligence than the relentlessly hostile narrative of Justin (whose source, Timaeus, had his own personal ax to grind). She concludes that the biography of Agathocles should be considered 'tragic biography', and that Duris is indeed a representative of the Aristotelian school in his biographical interests and the adoption of the techniques of tragedy into his historiographical works.

Anca Dan ('Le Thermodon, fleuve des Amazones, du Pont-Euxin et de la Béotie: un cas d'homonymie géographique qui fait histoire') turns to a fragment which has not attracted much modern attention, F 38, in which the Thermodon River is mentioned by Plutarch (Plut. *Dem.* 19) in the context of the Battle of Chaeronea. In a rich and wide-ranging contribution, Dan surveys the role of the Thermodon river in the construction of Greek identity, as both the mythical home of the Amazons in northeast Asia Minor, and as the lesser-known river in Boeotia, site of the Athenians' victory under Theseus over the Amazons, when they invaded Attica in a legendary precursor of the Persian Wars. The Boeotian Thermodon was also associated with the Battle of Plataea through an oracle cited by Herodotus (9.43), which foretold the death on its banks of many Persians, another massive horde of invading barbarians. It was then a natural step in the fourth century to re-utilize this oracle in reference to the Battle of Chaeronea, which once again pitted Greeks against barbarians, this time Macedonians, by transposing the little-known Greek Thermodon from the Attic border to the northwest of Boeotia. While Dan's argument that Chaeronea was portrayed as the new Plataea is meticulous and convincing, the specific role that Duris himself played in the development of this tradition is less clear.

Claudio William Veloso ('*Mimèsis* et historiographie chez Aristote et chez les historiens des époques hellénistique et impériale: quelques réflexions') tackles head-on Duris' criticism in F 1 of his predecessors Ephorus and Theopompus for their lack of *μίμησις* and *ἡδονή*. Veloso attempts to draw out exactly

what the term *mimesis* means in this fragment, apparently from a methodological section in Duris' prologue, by surveying what the verb μιμέομαι actually signifies first for Greek authors of the Classical period, and then for those subsequent to Duris, for whom the word undergoes a considerable transformation. He concludes that Aristotle appears to be a liminal figure who bridges this gap in the usage of the word, and it is possible that it is in the Aristotelian sense in which Duris employs it in F 1, although we cannot be sure. Veloso's arguments throughout the chapter are so tentative, however, that one hesitates to draw any positive conclusions from them on this fragment which has been so crucial to the characterization of Duris' work as 'tragic history'.

Gabriella Ottone ('La critica a Eforo e Teopompo. Nuove prospettive ermeneutiche a proposito del F 1 di Duride di Samo') approaches this problematic fragment from a different angle, by examining more closely the 'cover-text' in which it is cited. As she notes, the fragment suffers from a 'difetto congenito' (210) in Jacoby's citation, which is truncated and does not include the relevant portions of the original text from *codex 176* of Photius' *Bibliotheca*. In fact, consideration of the broader context of Photius reveals that Duris' criticism of Ephorus and Theopompus is on stylistic grounds, rather than historiographical ones, and sets him squarely into the ancient antithesis between the polemical agonistic rhetoric of Demosthenes and the flashy epideictic rhetoric of the Isocrateans, a tension that was eventually resolved through the ascendancy of Peripatetic rhetoric.

Valérie Naas ('Douris de Samos chez Pline l'Ancien') observes that although Duris has traditionally been considered one of the major sources for Pliny the Elder's anecdotes on artists, he only in fact mentions him once by name (Plin. *Nat.* 34.61 = F 32). Duris' anecdote on the sculptor Lysippus' autodidacticism displays various themes which are characteristic of the Peripatetics and attested in his historical work: the role of chance in human destiny, the interest in biography, and a concern for *mimesis* not just for entertainment but as a theoretical construct. Although it is necessary to exercise caution in attributing all anecdotes on artists and sculptors on similar themes to Duris' treatises on painting and engraving, it is very likely that his presence in the *Natural History* is not limited to the sole explicit mention of his name.

Pliny provides a link to the third section of the volume, 'Douris et l'histoire romaine'. Thomas Baier ('Douris et l'historiographie romaine') begins by posing the question of whether or not Duris exercised any concrete influence upon early Roman historiography. He concludes that there appears to have been a consensus in Roman Republican historiography to accept Isocratean style, but to organize the content of the historical narrative in a dramatic and mimetic way, very similar to the 'tragic history' of Duris.

Mathilde Simon ('Douris et le récit livienne de la mort d'Alexandre le Molosse') examines Livy's unusually long and dramatic account of the death of Alexander the Great's uncle (and brother-in-law) Alexander of Molossus (Livy 8.24). Certain aesthetic aspects of Livy's narrative of the episode, not present in other extant treatments, suggest that he is using a source identifiable with Duris, particularly his portrayal of Alexander as a tragic character. Ideologically, Livy was also attracted to the Molossian as a less fortunate double for Alexander the Great, and one whose unsuccessful campaigns on Italian soil could be used to reinforce the glory of Rome.

Dominique Briquel ('Un événement capital de l'histoire de Rome, la bataille de Sentinum: le témoignage de Douris et ses limites') turns to the only episode of Roman history that appears in the extant fragments of Duris, the Battle of Sentinum in 295, a stunning victory for the Romans. The battle is mentioned in two problematic fragments of Duris, F 56a (derived from the Hoeschl fragments of Book 21 of Diodorus) and F 56b (a scholion from Tzetzes on Lycophron, *Alexandra* 1378). In both, Duris is cited for an inflated number of casualties suffered by the adversaries of Rome; F 56b, where Diodorus and Dio Cassius are cited as sources alongside Duris, also includes a reference to the self-sacrifice of the consul Publius Decius Mus in the battle. There is no reason, however, to assume that Duris offered a detailed narrative of this battle, which (despite its importance to the Roman historiographical tradition) was marginal to his biography of Agathocles (the probable context for this citation), and he probably limited his narrative to the identity of the Roman adversaries and the number of their casualties. The reference to the *devotio* of Decius therefore comes from other authorities.

Marielle de Franchis ('L'épisode de Sophonisbe chez Tite-Live, 30,12–15: un morceau d'histoire tragique?') argues that the rich and varied afterlife that the tragic heroine Sophisba has enjoyed since the Renaissance explains the persistence of the hypothesis that Livy was influenced in his historical work by 'tragic history', even though recent scholarship has confirmed Walbank's doubts that such a genre ever existed in Hellenistic historiography. Nevertheless, the modern invention of the concept of tragic history has had a salutary effect on the scholarship on Livy, raising it out of the sterile morass of *Quellenforschung* and focusing upon the historian's actual aims and methods. Contrary to the *communis opinio*, the episode is not a digression from Livy's military narrative of Scipio's African campaign, nor is Sophonisba at the centre of the story (this is a misleading inference from her leading role in the later western tradition). Furthermore, the elements that previously led to the reading of the episode as tragic history are designed to arouse the emotion of the reader not for mere entertainment, but to provide political instruction. Sophonisba's seductive charm has dangerous political consequences for those leaders it ensnares

because it leads them away from Rome, and offers an obvious analogy in recent history with Cleopatra (I wonder if the figure of Dido might provide a useful comparandum in this connection?).

We return to the Battle of Sentinum with Charles Guittard's contribution ('*Douris et la tradition de la devotio des Decii*'). Historiographical sources have recorded three examples of the battle ritual of the *devotio*, all accomplished by one of the Decii (for which reason it is unlikely that all three are historical): the father at the Battle of Vesperis in 340, the son at the Battle of Sentinum in 295, and the grandson at the Battle of Ausculum against Pyrrhus in 279. Although the first and third examples of the ritual almost certainly do not appear in Duris, he is cited as an authority for the Battle of Sentinum. Although certainty is not possible, it is tempting to suppose that Duris, who was writing before the first known annalistic historians, put his stamp on the tradition of the *devotio* of the Decii, in light of the dramatic elaboration of the episode and the obvious attraction that such a ritual would have exercised on a historian interested in ethnographical details. Because Guittard reaches conclusions that are almost diametrically opposed to those of Briquel, it is unfortunate that the authors were not given the opportunity to engage directly with one another, and indeed the two papers are not even placed next to one another in the volume.

In the final article ('Caesar, Duris of Samos, and the Death of "Tragic History"'), Robert B. Kebric deals the death blow to the modern concept that 'tragic history' ever existed as a separate genre of historical writing in antiquity. Because the works of the so-called 'tragic historians' are all lost, Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, whose dramatic and emotional qualities have often been recognized, offers the closest surviving representative of the kind of historical narrative that inspired the modern invention of this genre of history. Interestingly, when the full text of the original historical work is available, 'passages that might otherwise be characterized "tragic" do not have the same forceful impact as they do when they appear as isolated fragments removed from their original context' (343). Similarly, the criticism by ancient authorities of Cicero's *De Bello Gallico* is virtually indistinguishable from that received by the so-called 'tragic historians' and, if we did not possess the full text of his work, modern scholars would almost certainly consider that he practiced the same lesser brand of history as Duris and Phylarchus.<sup>9</sup> While Aristotle and the Peripatetics did not impose theoretical guidelines borrowed from tragedy onto historical writing, they did begin a discourse on what stylistic elements resulted in engaging and aesthetically pleasing historical narrative, which found fertile ground in the later historiographical tradition.

Kebric's protestations to the contrary, however, 'tragic history' as a concept is clearly not completely dead, as a number of the contributors to this

<sup>9</sup> For a similar (and groundbreaking) examination of an extant historian through the (often misleading) lens of ancient citations, see Lenfant (1999).

volume evidently still subscribe to it. As is often the case in collected essays of this kind, the general lack of engagement (with few exceptions) of the contributors with one another is unfortunate, especially when no index is provided to aid in finding the connections and points of contrast between the papers. Furthermore, a few select fragments are often forced to bear a very heavy weight in the overall interpretation of the character, aims, and methods of Duris' lost works. Nevertheless, despite the somewhat uneven quality of its contributions and the varying degree to which they take recent scholarship into account, the volume offers a useful addition to the kaleidoscope of angles through which the enigmatic figure of Duris can be approached.

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