

DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS ON THE HISTORIAN'S DISPOSITION (*POMP.* 3.15)*

Abstract: By comparing the Iliadic scholia that discuss the *διαθέσεις* of the epic's characters and of the narrator himself, the article seeks to elucidate what Dionysius of Halicarnassus means in his *Letter to Pompeius* when he speaks of the historian's 'disposition' (*διαθέσεις*).

Keywords: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, disposition, character, Iliadic scholia

I

In his *Letter to Pompeius Geminus* Dionysius of Halicarnassus offers, among other things, an extended comparison of Herodotus and Thucydides, followed by capsule evaluations of Xenophon, Philistus, and Theopompus.¹ Dionysius has chosen these five authors, he says, because in a treatise on imitation that he is composing, he judged them the historical authors most suitable for aspiring writers to imitate; and it is from this still incomplete work that Dionysius will excerpt some of his judgements.²

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¹ According to the developmental schema of Bonner (1939), the *de Imitatione* is an early work and it shows Dionysius as an immature critic, as does the *Letter to Pompeius*: of the comparison between Herodotus and Thucydides in the latter work, for example, Bonner claims that it follows a 'mechanical method' and concludes that it 'clearly did not require a great deal of thought or originality to produce a work such as this' (42).

² Dionysius' *de Imitatione* was in three books, the first treating the nature of imitation itself, the second discussing which poets and prose-writers should be imitated, and the third showing how to imitate properly (*Pomp.* 3.1); only Books 1 and 2 had been published when Dionysius wrote the letter to Geminus (*ibid.*). For the meagre fragments of *de Imitatione*, see Usener (1889), Usener and Radermacher (1904–29) II.195–217, Aujac (1992) 26–40, and Battisti (1997). Good brief discussion of the work at Aujac (1992) 11–23. There is also an epitome of the work (Usener (1889) 17–30; Usener and Radermacher (1904–29) II.202–14; Aujac (1992) 31–40), which seems to differ in parts from the text of the *Letter* as we have it: see Aujac (1992) 18–20 for the differences. Usener (1889) argued that the material in the *Letter* comes from an early version of *de Imitatione*, whereas the epitomator had access to a final version, and this accounts for the discrepancies between the two (6: 'epitomam non ex epistula sed ex opere perfecto excerptam'). Heath (1989) defends this view. Sacks (1989) holds that Dionysius changed his views substantially between what we have in the *Letter* and

The lengthier initial comparison of Herodotus and Thucydides looks at both subject matter and style, that is, the material that comprises the history and the language in which the history is presented. In the former category, that of the narrative itself, Dionysius offers four tasks (*ἔργα*) which the historian has in composing his work, tasks that the critic also looks at when evaluating the finished project.³ These tasks are quite common and easily found in other critics, namely: (1) the choice of subject;⁴ (2) the choice of beginning and end;⁵ (3) the choice of what to include and what to omit;⁶ and (4) the arrangement of the material that is included.⁷

Having elucidated these four tasks, Dionysius then mentions another important aspect of the subject matter (*Pomp.* 3.15 = II.238 U–R):

μιᾶς δ' ἰδέας ἐπιμνησθήσομαι πραγματικῆς ἣν οὐδεμιᾶς τῶν εἰρημένων
ἦττον ἐν ἀπάσαις ἱστορίαις ζητοῦμεν, τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ συγγραφέως διάθεσιν
ἣ κέχρηται πρὸς τὰ πράγματα περὶ ὧν γράφει· ἡ μὲν Ἡροδότου διάθεσις
ἐν ἅπασιν ἐπιεικῆς καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἀγαθοῖς συνηδομένη, τοῖς δὲ κακοῖς
συναλγοῦσα· ἡ δὲ Θουκυδίδου διάθεσις αὐθέκαστος τις καὶ πικρὰ καὶ τῇ
πατρίδι τῆς φυγῆς μνησικακοῦσα· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀμαρτήματα ἐπεξέρχεται
καὶ μάλα ἀκριβῶς, τῶν δὲ κατὰ νοῦν κεχωρηκότων <ἢ> καθάπαξ οὐ
μέμνηται, ἢ ὥσπερ ἡναγκασμένος.

I shall mention also one feature of the narrative which we seek in all histories no less than the ones already mentioned: the historian's own

what appeared in the 'final' version of *de Imitatione* (again, as known through the epitome). Weaire (2002) argues that neither thesis is correct and the differences in the two versions can be accounted for by the work of the epitomator himself. Cf. further Matijašić (2018) 67–70. The debate is an important one, but since the passage I treat in this article does not appear in the epitome, the question is not directly relevant to my examination.

³ For the correlation between the *ἔργα* of the historian and the *ἔργον* of history-writing see the illuminating remarks of Kirkland (2022) 42.

⁴ *Pomp.* 3.2: πρῶτόν τε καὶ σχεδὸν ἀναγκαιότατον ἔργον ἀπάντων ἐστὶ τοῖς γράφουσιν πάσας ἱστορίας ὑπόθεσιν ἐκλέξασθαι καλὴν καὶ κεχαρισμένην τοῖς ἀναγνωσομένοις. Wiater (2011) 132 n. 380 notes the similarity to Isoc. *Antid.* 15.276: πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ὁ λέγειν ἢ γράφειν προαιρούμενος λόγους ἀξίους ἐπαίνου καὶ τιμῆς οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ποιήσεται τὰς ὑποθέσεις ἀδίκους ἢ μικρὰς ἢ περὶ τῶν ἰδίων συμβολαίων, ἀλλὰ μεγάλας καὶ καλὰς καὶ φιλανθρώπους καὶ περὶ τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων.

⁵ *Pomp.* 3.8: δεύτερόν ἐστι τῆς ἱστορικῆς πραγματείας ἔργον γνῶναι πόθεν τε ἄρξασθαι καὶ μέχρι τοῦ προελθεῖν δεῖ.

⁶ *Pomp.* 3.11: τρίτον ἐστὶν ἀνδρὸς ἱστορικοῦ <ἔργον σκοπεῖν>, τίνα τε δεῖ παραλαβεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν γραφὴν πράγματα καὶ τίνα παραλιπεῖν. The supplement is Herwerden's.

⁷ *Pomp.* 3.13: μετὰ τοῦτο ἔργον ἐστὶν ἱστορικοῦ διελέσθαι τε καὶ τάξαι τῶν δηλουμένων ἕκαστον ἐν ᾧ δεῖ τόπω.

disposition which he employs towards the events that he narrates. The disposition of Herodotus is equitable throughout, rejoicing with the good and grieving with the bad. The disposition of Thucydides is somewhat severe and bitter, grudging towards his city because of his exile. He goes through the city's mistakes and in very much detail, but when events work out according to plan, he either makes no mention of them at all or as if under compulsion.

Dionysius does not refer to this aspect as one of the *ἔργα* of the historian.⁸ Instead, he uses the term *ἰδέα*, which here has the sense of 'feature', 'topic', or 'subject'.⁹ That it belongs to the subject-matter of a history, however, is assured by the sentence itself in which *διάθεσις* is grouped with the tasks just mentioned (*τῶν εἰρημένων*), as well as by the summarising sentence that follows it: 'On account of this, then, Thucydides is inferior to Herodotus in subject-matter. In his style ...'¹⁰

Although ancient literary critics often talk of a historian's character (*ἦθος*), they rarely speak of his 'disposition'. Is Dionysius, then, simply using *διάθεσις* here as a synonym for *ἦθος*?¹¹ And if not, to what, then, is he referring? If we consider the general meanings of *διάθεσις*, we find it used for a variety of related matters. It can indicate, first, the way in which a speaker or writer arranged or 'disposed' his work, that is, how he articulated and put together his material. This is perhaps the most common usage of the word, and in rhetorical handbooks it forms the second stage of composition, following on from *εὕρησις* or *inuentio*: once an orator had 'discovered' the arguments needed for his speech, he needed to 'dispose' them properly so that they had the greatest effect.¹² Second, the term could be used to describe the way in which an orator (or any other writer) sought to 'dispose' his audience, i.e., to put them in a particular frame of mind so as to elicit from them the emotional or

⁸ The *ἔργα* are, in fact, clearly numbered: *πρῶτον* (3.2) ... *δεύτερον* (3.8) ... *τρίτον* (3.11) ... *μετὰ τοῦτο ἔργον* (3.13).

⁹ The term is a favourite of Dionysius', but it does not yet have the technical meaning which it would receive under Hermogenes: see *Thuc.* 21.2 with Pritchett (1975) ad loc; cf. Aujac (1992) 233.

¹⁰ *Pomp.* 3.15: καὶ κατὰ μὲν τὸν πραγματικὸν τόπον ἦττων ἐστὶν Ἡροδότου διὰ ταῦτα Θουκυδίδης· κατὰ δὲ τὸν λεκτικόν, κτλ.

¹¹ Bonner (1939) 40–1 seems to think so, since he says that the treatment of the *ἔργα* in the essay is standard, and this is presumably because he thinks that Dionysius is saying here only that the historian 'must be impartial' (41).

¹² Lausberg (1997) §§443–52. For 'arrangement' in this sense Dionysius in the *Letter* uses the verbs *διαίρῃω* and *τάττω* (see, e.g., 3.13, *πῶς οὖν ἕκαστος* [sc. Herodotus and Thucydides] *διαίρεται καὶ τάττει τὰ λεγόμενα*). For *διάθεσις* in art criticism, see Pollitt (1974) 159–67.

intellectual response that he wanted.¹³ A third meaning of the term was the ‘disposition’ of the characters in a story, i.e., their mood, mental state, or emotional reaction.¹⁴ This could also be extended from the characters in a work to the narrator himself, i.e., his frame of mind, emotional state, or reaction towards his subject matter.¹⁵

There is no consensus among previous scholars as to which meaning of *διάθεσις* is appropriate here: all three of the meanings above have been suggested. In the earliest analysis of which I am aware, Paul Scheller connects Dionysius’ remarks with the rhetorical interest in the character of the speaker (*ῥήθος τοῦ λέγοντος*). Scheller argues that since Dionysius praises Herodotus here and elsewhere, he is demanding that a historian show a spirit that is *ἐπιεικής*.¹⁶ He believes that the demand for *ἐπιείκεια* came from the orators,¹⁷ and was transferred to historians as soon as history began to be written according to rhetorical principles. He concludes that by *ἐπιείκεια* Dionysius means ‘fairness’ (in Latin, *aequitas*) towards one’s country. But this, Scheller adds, should not be taken as neutrality: since *ἐπιείκεια* was often contrasted with strict adherence to the law,¹⁸ Dionysius here expresses the belief, sometimes found in other critics and even in historians, that a certain measure of patriotic partiality was permitted to, indeed expected of the historian.

Roos Meijering, in her study of literary criticism in the Greek scholia, connects Dionysius’ remarks with a famous passage from Diodorus, where the historian compares historical reality with its representation (20.43.7):

ταύτη δ’ ἂν τις καὶ τὴν ἱστορίαν καταμέμψαιτο, θεωρῶν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῦ βίου πολλὰς καὶ διαφόρους πράξεις συντελουμένας κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρόν, τοῖς δ’ ἀναγράφουσιν ἀναγκαῖον ὑπάρχον τὸ μεσολαβεῖν τὴν διήγησιν καὶ τοῖς ἅμα συντελουμένοις μερίζειν τοὺς χρόνους παρὰ φύσιν, ὥστε τὴν μὲν ἀλήθειαν τῶν πεπραγμένων τὸ πάθος ἔχειν, τὴν δ’ ἀναγραφὴν ἐστερημένην τῆς ὁμοίας ἐξουσίας μιμεῖσθαι μὲν τὰ γεγενημένα, πολὺ δὲ λείπεσθαι τῆς ἀληθοῦς διαθέσεως.

¹³ LSJ, s.v. *διατίθημι*, A.II.2.

¹⁴ Meijering (1987) 31–3; Nünlist (2009) 248 n. 33.

¹⁵ See below, pp. 12–15.

¹⁶ Scheller (1901) 34–7. Halbfas (1910), one of the earliest treatments of Dionysius’ historiographical views, quotes part of the passage at 35 n. 2, but does not discuss the meaning of *διάθεσις* itself.

¹⁷ He cites Arist. *Rhet.* 1356a6: *τοῖς γὰρ ἐπιεικέσι πιστεύομεν μᾶλλον καὶ θάπτον*.

¹⁸ For *ἐπιείκεια* as opposed to the strictness of law see LSJ, s.v. A.2, citing Arist. *Top.* 141a16, where *ἐπιείκεια* is opposed to *κατὰ τοὺς ὅρκους*; cf. s.v. *ἐπιεικής*, A.II.1.b, for a similar distinction.

And here one might in fact find fault with history, when one observes that although in life many different actions come to fruition at the same time, those who write history must necessarily interrupt their narrative and, contrary to nature, break up the times of events which happen simultaneously. The result is that while the actual events contain forceful emotion, the written account, deprived of similar power, represents what has happened but falls very short of the way events occurred in real life.

Since Diodorus seems to suggest that real life has *πάθος* but the written record falls short 'of the true *διάθεσις*', Meijering sees this as Diodorus' call for the historian to inject emotion into his narrative.¹⁹ Whether or not this is the correct interpretation of the Diodorus passage,²⁰ she goes on to define *διάθεσις* as 'the "mood" of characters in a story, the way they are emotionally *affected* by stirring events'.²¹ To demonstrate this, she cites a number of the bT scholia on the *Iliad*, in which the scholiasts claim that they can determine the *διάθεσις* of individual characters by looking at how Homer has described them.²²

Sotera Fornaro in her commentary on the *Letter to Pompeius* translates *διάθεσις* as 'atteggiamento', and follows Scheller and Meijering in her general interpretation.²³ Like Scheller, she believes that Dionysius here applies to historiography aesthetic principles that originally arose in the evaluation of oratory and poetry. Harkening back to Meijering's analysis, Fornaro connects Dionysius' remarks with rhetorical teaching on raising the emotions: if the writer wishes to raise the emotions of the audience, he must himself feel the emotions he is describing in 'un atto di vera e propria immedesimazione'.²⁴ She thinks further that this disposition of the historian is conditioned by the needs of the audience, and (again, like Scheller) believes that this calls for a kind of patriotic historiography. She argues that the underlying model is Homer, whose 'patriotism' was seen in his favourable attitude towards the Greeks, and she supports her interpretation likewise by reference to the Iliadic scholia.

Nicolas Wiater's interpretation, by contrast, takes *διάθεσις* in the first of the meanings we noted above, i.e., the order and arrangement of the history.

¹⁹ Meijering (1987) 31.

²⁰ I do not think it is, but discussion would take us too far afield, and so I reserve it for a future study. The passage has been much discussed: see Durvy (2018) 215 n. 316 for some important recent treatments.

²¹ Meijering (1987) 32 (emphasis original).

²² Meijering (1987) 33.

²³ Fornaro (1997) 210–11.

²⁴ Fornaro (1997) 210.

According to his analysis, it is the *form* and *structure* of the account that reveal the historian's disposition: this includes the choice of beginnings and end-points (which Dionysius had just mentioned, 3.8), as well as the working-up (ἐξεργασία) of individual events. In evaluating Thucydides, Dionysius could see that the historian gave ample space to the Athenians' failures but did not treat their successes with the same fullness, and it is from this disparity that one can determine Thucydides' disposition against his native city.²⁵

N. B. Kirkland argues that for Dionysius the writer's *ethos* is not about his innate character but is rather something that the writer himself shapes through his writing. He sees διάθεσις not as character but as 'a flexible willed disposition' that comprehends 'the author's emotional and sympathetic capacities'.²⁶ For the distinction between character and disposition, he cites Aristotle's *Categories* which contrast 'character' (ἕξις), which is more stable and enduring, and 'disposition' (διάθεσις) which can change and be changed easily.²⁷

There is much of value in all of these analyses, and my debt to them will be clear in what follows. But I think it is possible both to offer a more precise explanation of what Dionysius has in mind in using the term διάθεσις and to separate out the relationship Dionysius envisions among disposition, character, structure, and emotion. Before doing so, however, it will be useful to look again at the *Letter to Pompeius* to see what Dionysius says about the other historians he treats.

²⁵ Wiater (2011) 141: 'διάθεσις does not refer to explicit comments of the historical narrator about the events but to the general manner in which these events are arranged and presented ... A historian conveys his interpretation of the events through the form and structure of his account. Also the choice of the beginning and end influences the διάθεσις of a historical narrative, as is illustrated by Dionysius' criticism of the beginning and ending of Thucydides' history ...'. I agree with Wiater that διάθεσις does not refer to explicit comments, but I disagree that the term refers *exclusively* to the structure. If I understand him correctly, he sees the remarks about διάθεσις as proceeding from what Dionysius has just said about arrangement, whereas I would note that Dionysius has already discussed form and structure, and the manner in which he introduces the topic of διάθεσις suggests that it is a *separate* matter that one *also* looks for in a historian.

²⁶ Kirkland (2022) 45. Cf. *ibid.* 46 where he notes that since '[a]n attitude is not an inevitability', the historian's disposition arises directly from the historian's own choices.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 46, citing Arist. *Cat.* 8b26–28, 35–36: ἐν μὲν οὖν εἶδος ποιότητος ἕξις καὶ διάθεσις λεγέσθωσαν. διαφέρει δὲ ἕξις διαθέσεως τῇ μονιμώτερον καὶ πολυχρονιώτερον εἶναι ... διαθέσεις δὲ λέγονται ἃ ἐστὶν εὐκίνητα καὶ ταχὺ μεταβάλλοντα, κτλ.

II

Although Dionysius analyses Herodotus and Thucydides at greater length than the other three and offers more detail for both of them, the basic arrangement of his evaluation—namely, subject matter followed by style—is nonetheless maintained even in his briefer evaluations. Xenophon, for example, is first praised for his choice of historical subjects in the *Anabasis*, the *Hellenica*, and (perhaps somewhat surprisingly) the *Cyropaedia*, and also for his beginnings, divisions, arrangements, and variety.²⁸ Philistus gets rather less praise since he chose a subject (the history of Sicily) that was not of much benefit or interest but rather ‘single and local’, and even here he neither arranged it well nor gave it much variety.²⁹ With the final historian, Theopompus, Dionysius notes that he is deserving of praise for his subject matter, his arrangement, and the variety of subjects he treats.³⁰

After discussion of the subject matter and before the treatment of style, Dionysius says something about the character of each of the historians. In these capsule evaluations Dionysius does not use the term *διάθεσις* but, as we would expect, *ἦθος*. Xenophon, he says, ‘displays a character that is pious, just, energetic, and accommodating—one, in short, that is adorned with all the virtues’.³¹ Philistus, by contrast, ‘displays a character that is flattering, favourable to tyrants, mean, and petty’.³² Dionysius’ treatment of Theopompus’ character is addressed from a different angle and more fully than that of any other of the historians. Having noted the subject matter, arrangement, and variety of Theopompus’ historical works, Dionysius singles him out for special, indeed unique, praise for his ability to discern hidden truths beneath the surface.³³ This ability, Dionysius continues, was the cause of Theopompus’ bad reputation (*Pomp.* 5.8):

²⁸ *Pomp.* 4.2: ταῖς τε γὰρ ἀρχαῖς αὐτῶν ταῖς περὶ πρῶτον ἀποδεστάταις κέχρηται καὶ τελευτὰς ἐκάστη τὰς ἐπιτηδειοτάτας ἀποδέδωκε, μεμέρικέν τε καλῶς καὶ τέταχεν καὶ πεποίκιλκε τὴν γραφὴν.

²⁹ *Pomp.* 5.2: τάξιν ... οὐ τὴν κρατίστην ἀποδέδωκε ... ἀλλὰ δυσπαρακολούθητον ... ἀλλ’ ἔστιν ὁμοειδής.

³⁰ *Pomp.* 6.1–2, 4: ἄξιός ἐπαινεῖσθαι πρῶτον μὲν τῆς ὑποθέσεως τῶν ἱστοριῶν ... ἔπειτα τῆς οἰκονομίας ... μάλιστα δὲ τῆς ἐπιμελείας τε καὶ φιλοπονίας τῆς κατὰ τὴν συγγραφὴν ... καὶ γὰρ ἐθνῶν εἴρηκεν οἰκισμοὺς καὶ πόλεων κτίσεις ἐπελήλυθε, βασιλέων τε βίους καὶ τρόπων ἰδιώματα δεδήλωκε, κτλ. Dionysius also praises him for the travels he undertook to meet the leading figures of his history.

³¹ *Pomp.* 4.2: ἦθος τε ἐπιδείκνυται θεοσεβὲς καὶ δίκαιον καὶ καρτερικὸν καὶ εὐπετές, ἀπάσαις τε συλλήβδην κεκοσμημένον ἀρεταῖς.

³² *Pomp.* 5.2: ἦθος τε κολακικὸν καὶ φιλοτύραννον ἐμφαίνει καὶ ταπεινὸν καὶ μικρολόγον.

³³ *Pomp.* 6.7: τὸ καθ’ ἐκάστην πράξιν μὴ μόνον τὰ φανερά τοις πολλοῖς ὁρᾶν καὶ λέγειν, ἀλλ’ ἐξετάζειν καὶ τὰς ἀφανεῖς αἰτίας τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῶν πραξάντων αὐτὰς καὶ τὰ πάθη τῆς

διὸ καὶ βάσκανος ἔδοξεν εἶναι, προσλαμβάνων τοῖς ἀναγκαίοις τινὰ ὀνειδισμοῖς κατὰ τῶν ἐνδόξων προσώπων οὐκ ἀναγκαῖα πράγματα, ὅμοιον τι ποιῶν τοῖς ἰατροῖς, οἳ τέμνουσι καὶ καίουσι τὰ διεφθαρμένα τοῦ σώματος ἕως βάθους τὰ καυτήρια καὶ τὰς τομὰς φέροντες, οὐδὲν τῶν ὑγιαίνοντων καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἐχόντων στοχαζόμενοι.

This is why he has a reputation for being a slanderer, because in his reproaches of the famous he included along with what was necessary some things that were not. But here he was acting as physicians do when they apply the knife and fire to the corrupted parts of the body, cauterising and amputating up to a certain point, but not touching the healthy and normal parts.

Although Dionysius' approach with Theopompus is decidedly different, he has, as with the others, discussed first the historian's subject matter and then his character, though instead of a direct evaluation he offers a defence of Theopompus against the charge of being *βάσκανος*, choosing to address in this way the many attacks that had been made on the historian's character by earlier critics.³⁴

So, then, given the general parallelism between, on the one hand, the joint treatment of Herodotus and Thucydides, and, on the other hand, the three individual historians who follow, it might seem that *διάθεσις* in 3.15 is doing the work which *ἦθος* does in 4.2 (Xenophon) and 5.2 (Philistus), and which Dionysius addresses obliquely with the reference to Theopompus' reputation for being *βάσκανος* (5.8). We might, therefore, simply say that we should understand *διάθεσις* in 3.15 as 'character' and leave it at that. If we were to accept this, then, Dionysius could just as easily have said that Herodotus' *ἦθος* was *ἐπιεικές* and that Thucydides' was *αὐθέκαστον* and *πικρόν*.

There are at least three reasons, however, why I think we should not do this. First and most obviously, if Dionysius had wanted to speak of 'character' with Herodotus and Thucydides, it was open to him to indicate this clearly with the same terms that he uses for Xenophon and Philistus and implies for Theopompus.

ψυχῆς, ἃ μὴ ῥάδια τοῖς πολλοῖς εἰδέναι, καὶ πάντα ἐκκαλύπτειν τὰ μυστήρια τῆς τε δοκούσης ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς ἀγνοουμένης κακίας.

³⁴ For criticisms of Theopompus' character see *FGrHist/BNJ* 115 TT 7, 19, 25a, 28b. Scholars are often surprised that Dionysius should see Theopompus, of all people, a historian famous for his attacks, as a model historian, but Wiater (2011) 151–4 has convincingly shown that Theopompus, with his emphasis on morality, represented for Dionysius 'an Isocrates of historiography' (153) and 'an ideal model for Classicist historiography' (154).

Second, the manner in which Dionysius expresses himself indicates something that is different from character *per se*. He speaks of a *διάθεσις* that one employs (*κέχρηται*) towards (*πρός*) the events themselves. It is externally rather than internally directed. Now it is true, of course, that Dionysius is elsewhere explicit that the choice of subject is a sure indicator of a historian's character (*A.R.* 1.1.2–3):

ἐπέισθην γὰρ ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς προαιρουμένους μνημεῖα τῆς ἑαυτῶν ψυχῆς τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις καταλιπεῖν, ἃ μὴ συναφανισθήσεται τοῖς σώμασιν αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου, καὶ πάντων μάλιστα τοὺς ἀναγράφοντας ἱστορίας, ἐν αἷς καθιδρῦσθαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν πάντες ὑπολαμβάνομεν ἀρχὴν φρονήσεώς τε καὶ σοφίας οὖσαν, πρῶτον μὲν ὑποθέσεις προαιρεῖσθαι καλὰς καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς καὶ πολλὴν ὠφέλειαν τοῖς ἀναγνωσομένοις φερούσας, ἔπειτα παρασκευάζεσθαι τὰς ἐπιτηδεύουσας εἰς τὴν ἀναγραφὴν τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἀφορμὰς μετὰ πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας τε καὶ φιλοπονίας. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὲρ ἀδόξων πραγμάτων ἢ πονηρῶν ἢ μηδεμιᾶς σπουδῆς ἀξίων ἱστορικὰς καταβαλλόμενοι πραγματείας, εἴτε τοῦ προελθεῖν εἰς γνῶσιν ὀρεγόμενοι καὶ τυχεῖν ὁποιοῦδήποτε ὀνόματος, εἴτε περιουσίαν ἀποδείξασθαι τῆς περὶ λόγους δυνάμεως βουλόμενοι, οὔτε τῆς γνώσεως ζηλοῦνται παρὰ τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις οὔτε τῆς δυνάμεως ἐπαινοῦνται, δόξαν ἐγκαταλιπόντες τοῖς ἀναλαμβάνουσιν αὐτῶν τὰς ἱστορίας ὅτι τοιούτους ἐζήλωσαν αὐτοὶ βίους, οἷας ἐξέδωκαν τὰς γραφάς· ἐπιεικῶς γὰρ ἅπαντες νομίζουσιν εἰκόνας εἶναι τῆς ἐκάστου ψυχῆς τοὺς λόγους.

I am convinced that those who choose to leave behind to future generations monuments of their intellect which will not perish together with their bodies, and especially those who write histories—works which we all consider to be the very seat of truth, which is the beginning of reason and wisdom—should first choose topics that are noble and grand, and that will bring much benefit to their readers; and that they should then procure for themselves with great care and effort the sources which are appropriate for the composition of their topic. Those who compose treatises containing matters that are inglorious, wicked, or not worthy of our attention, whether they do so because they desire notoriety or to win some sort of name for themselves, or because they want to display the power of their eloquence, are neither admired by posterity for their notoriety nor praised for their talent; instead, they leave behind for those who take up their histories the belief that they approved of the sorts of lives which they treated in their works; for everyone rightly thinks that words are the image of each person's mind.

But this is not quite the same thing that he is considering in the *Letter to Pompeius*, where the emphasis is not so much on the choice of the overall topic itself as on the *reaction* that the historian has (or displays) towards the events that he narrates.

The third reason is that in a passage from *de Compositione Verborum* Dionysius himself distinguishes between character and disposition:³⁵

ὥστε πολλή ἀνάγκη καλὴν μὲν εἶναι λέξιν ἐν ᾗ καλὰ ἐστὶν ὀνόματα, κάλλους δὲ ὀνομάτων συλλαβάς τε καὶ γράμματα καλὰ αἵτια εἶναι, ἥδεῖαν δὲ διάλεκτον ἐκ τῶν ἡδυνόντων τὴν ἀκοὴν γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ παραπλήσιον ὀνομάτων τε καὶ συλλαβῶν καὶ γραμμάτων, τὰς τε κατὰ μέρος ἐν τούτοις διαφοράς, καθ' ἃς δηλοῦται τὰ τε ἥθη καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ αἱ διαθέσεις καὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν προσώπων καὶ τὰ συνεδρεύοντα τούτοις, ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης κατασκευῆς τῶν γραμμάτων γίνεσθαι τοιαύτας.

This leads us forcibly to conclude that style is beautiful when it contains beautiful words; that beauty of words is caused by beautiful syllables and letters; and that attractiveness of language is due to words, syllables and letters which please the ear by virtue of some affinity; and that the difference in detail between these, through which are revealed the characters, feelings, dispositions, actions and attendant qualities of the persons described, are made what they are through the original grouping of the letters.

Here we can see that ἥθος is not the same as διάθεσις and that it occupies some position that is related to, but different from, character (ἥθος), emotion (πάθος), and action (ἔργον).

Since Dionysius nowhere explains what specific things led him to determine the διάθεσις of Herodotus and Thucydides, we are left to look elsewhere. And since the term is not illuminated by its use in other historiographical criticism, the way forward seems to be that of Meijering, who first saw the relevance of the Iliadic scholia to the interpretation of Dionysius. She and Fornaro, however, cited only a few passages, whereas the scholiasts' discussion of διάθεσις is fairly frequent. It will be useful, then, to look in somewhat greater detail³⁶ at the ways in which the scholiasts employ the term in examining characterisation in the epic.

³⁵ *Comp. Verb.* 16.6; the text and translation are those of Usher (1985).

³⁶ Though even here I must emphasise that I offer only a selection.

III

The scholiasts employ a number of techniques in their attempts to determine the disposition of Homeric characters. Sometimes they focus on a single word that they believe indicates the current emotional or psychological state of a character or characters.³⁷ For example, when Ajax and Diomedes in Book 23 arm themselves to contest for the armour of Sarpedon, Homer says that ‘amazement held all the Achaeans’ (θάμβος δ’ ἔχε πάντας Ἀχαιούς, 23.815), and the scholiast notes that with the word θάμβος, Homer ‘succinctly describes the διάθεσις of the viewers’.³⁸ In Book 13, Meriones casts a spear at Deiphobus but the latter’s shield protects him, and Meriones is described by the poet as ‘dreadfully angry’ (χώσατο ... αἰνῶς, 13.165) at both his failure to win and the loss of his spear. The scholiast focuses on the word χώσατο, remarking that it shows ‘the confounding of Meriones’ spirit’, and adds that ‘while the warrior says nothing (for it would be inappropriate in the present moment) the poet nonetheless reveals Meriones’ διάθεσις through the word χώσατο’.³⁹ When Glaucus is wounded by Teucer in Book 12 and retires from the fight, Homer says that ‘grief came upon Sarpedon when Glaucus retired’ (Σαρπήδοντι δ’ ἄχος γένετο Γλαύκου ἀπιόντος, 12.392), and the scholiast singles out the word ἄχος to observe that in using this, Homer ‘the διάθεσις of his friend [sc. Sarpedon] was revealed’.⁴⁰ The word is likewise singled out at 19.366–7 when Achilles is readying himself for battle, and ‘unbearable grief entered his heart’ (ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ | δὴν’ ἄχος ἄτλητον), on which the scholiast writes that Homer ‘after descriptions of his body then also reveals the διάθεσις of his spirit’.⁴¹ In Book 16, Homer has Zeus weep tears of blood for Sarpedon, ‘honouring his dear child’ (παῖδα φίλον τιμῶν, 16.460), and the scholiast comments, ‘the word [sc. παῖδα] was sufficient for him to show the διάθεσις of the god’.⁴² Finally, Briseis, in Book 19, addressing the corpse of Patroclus remembers his kindness towards her, and his promise that he would make her the wife of divine Achilles (ἀλλά μ’ ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο | κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσειν, 19.297–8). Elucidating the word θεῖος, the scholiast suggests that ‘the woman calls him

³⁷ See Nünlist (2009) 246–56 on this ability of Homer in general to sum up character in a single word.

³⁸ Schol. T 23.815b: ἐν βραχεὶ τὴν διάθεσιν τῶν θεατῶν παρέστησεν.

³⁹ Schol. T 13.165b: ἡ σύγχυσις τῆς ψυχῆς ... καὶ φθέγγεται μὲν οὐδέν (οὐ γὰρ οἰκείον τῷ παρόντι καιρῷ), τὴν δὲ διάθεσιν αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ χώσατο ῥήματος ὁ ποιητὴς παρέστησεν.

⁴⁰ Schol. bT 12.392: ἐδηλώθη ἡ διάθεσις τοῦ φίλου.

⁴¹ Schol. T 19.366–7: μετὰ τὰς τοῦ σώματος ἐκφράσεις εἶτα καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν διάθεσιν δηλοῖ.

⁴² Schol. bT 16.460a: ἀπήρεσκεν αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα πρὸς ἐνδειξιν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διαθέσεως. For the focalisation here see Nünlist (2009) 126–7.

[sc. Achilles] “divine” either in view of his [sc. Patroclus’] association with Achilles (because Patroclus called him “divine”) or because she had experience of his [sc. Achilles’] *διάθεσις*.⁴³

A character’s *διάθεσις* can also be read from a remark. In Book 3, when Priam tells Helen that she is not to blame for the war (οὐ | τί μοι αἰτίη ἐσσί, θεοί νύ μοι αἵτιοί εἰσιν, 3.163–4) the scholiast says that this remark ‘shows his fatherly *διάθεσις*’.⁴⁴ In Book 17, when Glaucus chides Hector and threatens that his Lycians will leave Troy (156–9), the scholiast remarks that ‘by threatening to return home, Glaucus again urges Hector to bring assistance, and he indirectly presents the *διάθεσις* of one who is angry and concerned’.⁴⁵

Διάθεσις can be read from a simile. In Book 18 Achilles’ grief is compared to that of a ‘strong-bearded lion, whose whelps a deer-hunter has snatched from the thick wood’ (ὥς τε λῖς ἡϋγένειος, | ᾧ ῥά θ’ ὑπὸ σκύμνους ἐλαφηβόλος ἀρπάσῃ ἀνὴρ | ὕλης ἐκ πυκινῆς, 18.318–20). The scholiast comments, ‘nothing would seem more expressive for showing his *philia* towards Patroclus than the *διάθεσις* of parents towards their children’.⁴⁶

Διάθεσις can also be read from the elaboration of particular scenes. When Homer in Book 4 describes Menelaus’ wound at some length (139–51), the scholiast remarks, ‘he has elaborated the description of the wound so that he might give an indication of Agamemnon’s *διάθεσις*’.⁴⁷ In the lengthy speech that follows (4.155–82), Agamemnon imagines himself an object of reproach, going home without Menelaus and without having accomplished the vengeance he intended in coming to Troy: the scholiast sees the poet here ‘employing vividness so as to reveal the hero’s sympathy as well as the *διάθεσις* of his comrades who are grieving’.⁴⁸

Now in all these cases the scholiasts are discussing the characters as they are delineated by Homer. But it is not just the characters whose dispositions the scholiasts feel able to interpret. For as has long been known, the scholiasts

⁴³ Schol. bT 19.297: ἡ πρὸς σύστασιν Ἀχιλλέως, Πατρόκλου θεῖον αὐτὸν λέγοντος· ἡ πειραθεῖσα διαθέσεως αὐτοῦ ἡ γυνὴ θεῖον αὐτὸν καλεῖ.

⁴⁴ Schol. T 3.164a¹: πατρικὴν σφῶν διάθεσιν; cf. Schol. b 3.164a²: πατρικὴν πως σώζων διάθεσιν.

⁴⁵ Schol. bT 17.156–9: ἀπειλήσας τὴν ἐπάνοδον πάλιν προτρέπει ἐπὶ τὴν βοήθειαν, ὀργιζομένου καὶ κηδομένου ἐμφαίνων διάθεσιν.

⁴⁶ Schol. bT 18.318–22: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμφαντικώτερον φανείη πρὸς τὸ δεῖξαι τὴν Πατρόκλου φιλίαν τῆς πρὸς τὰ τέκνα τῶν γεγεννηκότων διαθέσεως.

⁴⁷ Schol. T 4.140b: ἐπεξεργάζεται τὴν πληγὴν, ὅπως τὴν Ἀγαμέμνονος ὑποφάνη διάθεσιν. Passages such as these and those that follow on p. 13, though not cited by Wiater (above, n. 25) are good evidence for his argument that the working-up of a scene can reveal the author’s disposition.

⁴⁸ Schol. bT 4.154: ... τὴν ἐνάργειαν, ἣτις ἐμφαίνει τὴν Ἀγαμέμνονος συμπάθειαν καὶ τὴν τῶν συναχθόμενων ἐταίρων διάθεσιν.

believed that they could read the disposition of the *narrator* also.⁴⁹ In doing so, they saw a poet who was fundamentally favourable towards the Achaeans (*φιλέλλην* is the term they use) and hostile towards the Trojans.⁵⁰ The vast majority of the evidence comes, as with the examples above, from the bT scholia,⁵¹ which identify certain techniques by which the narrator reveals this, and I offer here again only a brief selection.⁵²

To begin with, they observe that Homer will sometimes abbreviate scenes or break off his narratives of Greek setbacks and losses. In Book 8, when Hector is having success in the field and driving the Achaeans back towards the ditch, the poet changes the scene to Olympus and a conversation between Hera and Poseidon (8.200–11). The scholiast comments: ‘relieving us of the narrative of Greek misfortunes, he [sc. Homer] introduces the conversation of the gods’.⁵³ The Greeks rally, but shortly thereafter, the Trojans are again on the march, at which point Homer again moves to Olympus and a conversation between Hera and Athena (8.350–80), and the scholiast comments, ‘Again, he keeps us in suspense, away from the present circumstances, not wishing to narrate the bad fortune of the Greeks, in as much as he [sc. Homer] is pro-Greek’.⁵⁴ And in a generalising remark about the entire book the scholiast writes, ‘This book is called “the unfinished battle”, because the author, grieving with the Achaeans, shortens his narrative.’⁵⁵

Similar to this is the scholiast’s reading of the beginning of Book 10. Here Agamemnon, awake in the night, marvels as he looks at the fires of the Trojans and hears the sounds of flutes and pipes; but he groans and pulls out his hair when he looks at the Achaean forces (10.11–16). The scholiast comments (Schol. bT 10.14–16):

⁴⁹ For earlier bibliography on the topic see Schmidt (2011) 123 n. 12.

⁵⁰ One might note as well the scholiast’s view that Homer ‘is always warmly attached to Achilles’: Schol. b 2.692: *ἀεὶ δὲ πρὸς Ἀχιλλεῖα προσπαθῶς ἔχει*.

⁵¹ See Richardson (1980) 273 for the absence of this view in the A scholia; Dittenberger (1905) 463–4 had already noted that in its extreme form the viewpoint does not come from the Alexandrians.

⁵² Further examples can be found in Dittenberger (1905) 460–2 and Schmidt (2011) 123–9, to both of which I am much indebted for what follows.

⁵³ Schol. bT 8.209b: *ἀναπαύων δὲ ἡμᾶς τῆς διηγήσεως τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἀτυχημάτων παρεισάγει τὸν διάλογον τῶν θεῶν*.

⁵⁴ Schol. bT 8.350: *ἀναρτᾷ πάλιν ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν παρόντων μὴ διηγούμενος τὴν δυστυχίαν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὡς φιλέλλην*. Cf. Schol. bT 8.487–8, where Homer cuts a battle-narrative short, *ἐγχρονίζειν ταῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων δυστυχίαις οὐ θέλων*.

⁵⁵ Schol. AbT 8.0: *τὴν ῥαψωδίαν ἱκῶλον ῥήματα μάχην καλοῦσι· συντέμνει γὰρ τὴν διήγησιν συναχθόμενος τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς*. Note here that the scholiast uses *συναχθόμενος*, the same term that Dionysius uses to describe Herodotus.

οὐκ ἐπεξηγήλθε δέ, ὅσα περὶ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας ἦν δεδοικώς, ἀλλ' ἠρκέσθη τῇ τῶν εὐήμερων διαθέσει ἐμφῆναι τὴν τῶν δυστυχούντων κατάστασιν· αἰὲν γὰρ φιλέλλην ὁ ποιητής.

But he [Homer] has not gone through all the fears he [sc. Agamemnon] has for the Greeks; it was sufficient to indicate the situation of the losers by means of the *διάθεσις* of the victors; for the poet is always partial to the Greeks.

The narrator's *διάθεσις* can also be read from the way in which he treats Achaean and Trojan casualties. Sometimes Homer will anonymise the Greeks when they fail or flee, as when (again in Book 8) the Achaeans rally, and the scholiast observes, 'When he narrated the flight of the Greeks, he did not go through the names, but now that they are back in the battle, he remembers the majority of them.'⁵⁶ Or the narrator may sometimes indicate that a Greek setback or a Trojan success will not long endure, and this again reveals his disposition. For example, at the death of Patroclus Homer observes that Zeus was giving Achilles' arms to Hector to wear, but adds that the latter's 'destruction was near at hand' (*σχεδόθεν δέ οἱ ἦεν ὄλεθρος*, 16.800). The scholiast observes, 'He softens the anger of the audience by saying that Hector will not long enjoy the weapons; as a result of which he adds "his destruction was near at hand".'⁵⁷

Even the choice from among similar words or phrases can be used to determine the narrator's attitude. The scholiasts note that Homer will sometimes use a 'softer' expression, as when, for example, during the battle that opens Book 8, Zeus gives the advantage to the Trojans, thundering his intention, at which point 'neither Idomeneus dared to remain nor Agamemnon nor the two Aiases, servants of Ares' (*ἐνθ' οὐτ' Ἰδομενεὺς τλῇ μίμνειν οὐτ' Ἀγαμέμνων, | οὐτε δὺ Ἀΐαντες μενέτην θεράποντες Ἄρηος*, 8.78–9). The scholiast comments (Schol. bT 8.78):

ὥς φιλέλλην παρατρέχει τὰ δυσχερῆ, ἐπ' ὀλίγα πρόσωπα τὴν ἦτταν φέρων. καὶ ἡ ἐκλογή δὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων θεραπεύοντός ἐστι τὴν ἦτταν· οὐ γὰρ εἶπεν ἔφυγεν, ἀλλὰ τλῇ μίμνειν.

⁵⁶ Schol. bT 8.261–6: τὴν μὲν φυγὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀπήγγειλεν οὐ πολλὰ διελθὼν ὀνόματα, νῦν δὲ εἰς τὴν μάχην ἐπιστρέφων αὐτοὺς τῶν πλείστων Ἑλλήνων μέμνηται.

⁵⁷ Schol. bT 16.800b: τὴν ἀγανάκτησιν δὲ τῶν ἀκουόντων ἱᾶται, οὐκ ἐπὶ πολὺ φάσκων ἀπολαύειν τῶν ὅπλων τὸν Ἑκτορα· διὸ ἐπήγαγε τὸ σχεδόθεν δέ οἱ <ἦεν ὄλεθρος>.

As one who is partial to the Greeks he treats briefly the misfortunes, attributing the defeat to a few figures. And his choice of words is that of one assuaging the defeat: for he does not say 'fled' but 'dared to remain'.

Similarly, in Book 16 when Aias, under siege, 'no longer remained' (Αἴας δ' οὐκ ἔτ' ἔμεινε, 16.102), the scholiast writes, 'He chooses his words well: for he has not called it "flight" but "was not able to remain", and he gives many reasons.'⁵⁸

The use of a single word can also indicate simultaneously the character's and the narrator's disposition, at least if it involves the Achaeans. For example, when Ajax goes forth to fight Hector in Book 7, the Argives are described as 'greatly rejoicing as they looked upon him' (τὸν δὲ καὶ Ἀργεῖοι μὲν ἐγήθεον εἰσορόωντες, 7.214). To this the scholiast remarks:

ἦν ἡ ποιητῆς ἔχει διάθεσιν, καὶ τοῖς προσώποις⁵⁹ περιάπτει. ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς τῶν ὁρώντων διαθέσεως τὸν ἔπαινον τοῦ ὀρωμένου ηὔξησεν.

The *διάθεσις* that the poet holds he attributes to his characters; and from the *διάθεσις* of those looking on, he has increased his praise of the one being looked at.

Finally, the poet often ascribes traits to the Trojans that the scholiasts associate with the behaviour of barbarians: having multiple wives, displaying arrogance, showing cowardice, and being reckless or unreasonable.⁶⁰ This also contributes to the belief that he is favourably disposed towards the Achaeans.

IV

From our examination of the scholia, then, several important points emerge with consequences for our understanding of Dionysius' remarks at *Pomp.* 3.15.

First, one's *διάθεσις* is one's *emotional* state. This is clear from the incidents examined by the scholiasts, which regularly focus on the *feelings* and *emotional reactions* of the characters. And it is also used for the emotional state of the narrator who has a stake in the story and 'rejoices' or 'grieves' with the characters, just as Dionysius thinks of Herodotus doing in his history.

⁵⁸ Schol. bT 16.101–11: καλῶς δὲ τῇ ἐκλογῇ τῶν ὀνομάτων χρηταί· φυγὴν γὰρ οὐκ ὠνόμασεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι μένειν οὐκ ἡδύνατο καὶ τὰς πολλὰς αἰτίας ἐπάγει.

⁵⁹ Schol. bT 7.214b. *προσώποις* is Bekker's emendation of the MS *πρώτοις* ('recte ut vid.', Erbse).

⁶⁰ The passages are adduced by Dittenberger (1905) 462–3 and, more fully, by Schmidt (2011) 129–37.

Second, one's *διάθεσις* is almost always a reaction to circumstances, and it changes when circumstances change. Disposition is thus not fixed, since it is affected by the matter at hand. So in referring to Herodotus' and Thucydides' *διάθεσις*, Dionysius is not, strictly speaking, talking about their *ῆθος* but is thinking rather of their attitude towards the various individual subjects and events that they treat, and this changes based on what they are narrating at the particular time.

Third, *διάθεσις* can be read from a number of what we might call narratological features: from single words, especially those that indicate an emotional state; from remarks made by the characters; from similes; from the abbreviation or elaboration of particular scenes; from narrative foreshadowing; from the choice from among synonymous expressions; and from the traits ascribed to characters and groups, which we may consider a form of group characterisation.

Fourth, although the examination of *διάθεσις* is based on *individual* incidents and events, it is possible for these to give insight *cumulatively* into the disposition of the narrator. Homer's repeated special treatment of the Achaeans, at least as the scholiasts see it, allows them to deduce that he is fundamentally favourable to the Greeks and opposed to the Trojans. In this way, then, one can over the course of a work be seen to hold a *general* disposition, a habitual way of looking at things, so to speak. This is ultimately how the scholiasts can infer Homer's 'philhellenism': it is not based on anything explicitly said by the poet in the text—Homer nowhere says 'I favour the Achaeans and disfavour the Trojans'—but is something that forms gradually in the reader's mind either from repeated expressions or treatments or both.

V

We are now in a better position to explain the relationship of disposition to character, emotion, and structure.

Disposition is not the same as character. It is read from *individual* events and can be seen in the individual choices made by the narrator, and this will usually vary from incident to incident. It is not something that needs to be fixed or consistent. Nonetheless, it is related to character: the disposition revealed by a historian in his treatment of individual events and characters can cumulatively give important insights into his character: when an author has consistent or largely consistent reactions to the same or similar events and characters, these can be the basis for an evaluation of his character.

Disposition is an *emotional* reaction, usually of the characters in the story, but it can also be that of the narrator. As Dionysius sees it, Herodotus rejoices with the good and grieves with the bad: in other words, Herodotus has an

emotional reaction to the material he is treating. So too does Thucydides, though in a different way: his anger at his exile and treatment by his fellow-citizens comes through in the way that he treats the Athenians in his work.

Finally, the historian's emotional disposition can be read in the actual practical disposition—i.e., the arrangement—of his history. This comprehends not only the order and sequencing of individual events—things which have the additional value of indicating the historian's interpretation of events—but also the amount of time he spends on those events, since narrative time generally indicates importance.⁶¹ In cases where it can be shown that the historian ignores events known from other sources, the absence of those events from his history can likewise be used to make inferences about his disposition.

It remains an interesting question whether a narrator's *explicit* remarks can be used to determine his *διάθεσις*. Wiater is certain that they cannot, and he is likely to be right.⁶² Indeed, we have no example in Dionysius' brief treatment of the historians or in the scholiasts' more extensive treatment of the *Iliad* where an explicit remark by the narrator is used to gauge his disposition. But of course Homer rarely speaks in his own person, whereas historians often do so. Nonetheless, I think it holds true also for them.

Why does all this matter? The main reason is that it gives us additional insight into an important way in which critics read histories, one that we perhaps do not pay enough attention to. For ancient critics, the historians' explicit statements, especially their methodological pronouncements, were of course read and taken into account.⁶³ But those remarks were merely claims. They had to be balanced by what the historian did in the history itself, for there, on every page, so to say, and in every choice the historian's disposition, and thus ultimately his character, was on display.⁶⁴ Naturally, historical texts may not have received the obsessively close attention that the poems of Homer

⁶¹ Shaw (2022), which is mainly concerned with the digressions in Sallust, has an excellent discussion (65–72) of *dispositio* in its sense as the arrangement of events and how the historian can use this to advance a particular interpretation of history. One can appreciate his analysis even if one believes that historians invented material more often than Shaw thinks they did (on which see his discussion at 51–65).

⁶² See above, n. 25.

⁶³ For these kinds of remarks see Marincola (1997) 128–74.

⁶⁴ That, at least, is the sense that one gets from the polemical passages that populate a number of classical histories, where an author's explicit claims are measured against his individual treatments in order to come to a juster evaluation of him and his work. One thinks, for example, of Polybius' thorough criticisms of Timaeus: see, e.g., Pol. 12.11a, where Polybius cites Timaeus' methodological statement that the greatest failing in history is falsehood, but then sets this against many examples of what he considers falsehoods throughout Timaeus' history.

did—indeed, few texts did. But the techniques themselves were part and parcel of the critical arsenal of antiquity and available to be used on all texts; and, as Dionysius shows, they could be applied just as well to the historians as to the poets.

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