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ROMA E L'EREDITÀ ELLENISTICA

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PROGRAMMA

14 Gennaio, ore 15,30 (Aula di rappresentanza del Rettorato)

Saluto del Preside della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia prof. E. Franzini e del Direttore del Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità prof. G. Zanetto

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G. Brizzi (Università di Bologna), *Roma e l'ellenismo: interazione tra le strutture militari*

S. Bussi (Università di Milano), *Cornelio Gallo tra Egitto e Nubia*

L. Asmonti (Università di Warwick), *L'Atene ellenistica a Roma: Cicerone su Democare di Leuconoe*

15 Gennaio, ore 10 (Aula 113)

H. Cotton (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), presiede

A. Marcene (Università di Roma Tre), *Il culto imperiale*

B. Virgilio (Università di Pisa), *L'epistola reale dal santuario di Sinuri presso Mylasa in Caria (Fonds Louis Robert, AIBL)*

P. Desideri (Università di Firenze), *Il mito di Alessandro nell'età di Plutarco e Dione*

D. Foraboschi (Università di Milano), *Programmazione ellenistico-romana?*

15 Gennaio, ore 15 (Aula 113)

F. Hurllet (Università di Nantes), presiede

P. Michelotto (Università di Milano), *Le "frontiere" di Dura-Europos*

A. Coppola (Università di Padova), *Storia di statue: vincitori e vinti nella Graecia capta*

C. Miedico (Università di Milano), *Comunicare il potere nella corte di Demetrio Poliorcete*

B. Legras, H. Cotton, Presentazione del libro: S. Bussi, *Le élites locali nella provincia d'Egitto di prima età imperiale*, Milano, Cisalpino, 2008

16 Gennaio, ore 10 (Sala Napoleonica, via S. Antonio 12)

F. Cordano (Università di Milano), presiede

B. Legras (Università di Paris 1), *Rome et l'Égypte: les transferts de droit familial d'Octave a Caracalla*

L. Capponi (Università di Newcastle), *Culto di Serapide e rivolte anti-imperiali in Egitto*

L. Troiani (Università di Pavia), *Polibio e l'epifania del tempio di Gerusalemme*

A. Savio, A. Cavagna (Università di Milano), *La monetazione egiziana di Augusto: ideologia imperiale e substrato egiziano*

Segreteria organizzativa

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THE DEMOCRATIC MODEL
FROM HELLENISTIC ATHENS
TO REPUBLICAN ROME:
CICERO ON DEMOCHARES OF LEUCONOE

LUCA ASMONTI

I. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE MYTH
OF ATHENIAN SUPERIORITY

THE tie between the glory of ancient Athens and the invention of democracy has not always been as obvious as it is now.¹ In his *Life of Pericles*, for instance, Plutarch describes the construction of the Parthenon and of the other edifices as the «most delightful adornment to Athens, and the greatest amazement to the rest of mankind; that which alone now testifies for Hellas that her ancient power and splendour, of which so much is told, was no idle fiction».²

This passage is certainly not an important source for the student of classical Athens, but it raises some interesting questions on the perception of the 'school of Hellas' in the first and second centuries A.D.: what made Athens exceptional in the eyes of Plutarch's contemporaries? Did they see the invention of democracy as a constituent part of the Athenian *kosmos*, on a peer with the erection of the Parthenon and the Propylaea?

It might be tempting to answer both interrogatives by observing that, at the time of the *pax imperialis*, it was much more acceptable to see fifth-century Athens as the splendid capital of the arts, rather than the small yet proud creator of democracy, proud of its independence. If we are to follow Plutarch, the democratic regime seems to have been an obstacle to Pericles' achievements, since the most ambitious and praiseworthy of his ventures was also the most maligned by his political adversaries.

The risks of rule by public debate are also highlighted by Maternus in Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus*. Oratory, he says, is an activity for turbolent times and turbolent places: nobody has ever heard of a rhetorician from Crete or Sparta, Macedonia or Persia, because those nations possessed *severissima disciplina* and *severissimae leges*. Rhodes and Athens, on the other hand, lacked such strong discipline; their peoples *omnia [...] poterant*, although they were *omnia imperiti*, and the two cities were consequently infested by orators.³

¹ See e.g. M. H. HANSEN, *The 2500th Anniversary of Cleisthenes' Reforms and the Tradition of Athenian Democracy*, in R. Osborne, S. Hornblower (eds), *Ritual, Finance, Politics. Athenian Democratic Accounts Presented to David Lewis*, Oxford, 1994, pp. 25-37, in particular p. 25.

² PLUT., *Per.* XII, 1.

³ TAC., *De or.* XL, 3: «Quem enim oratorem Lacedaemonium, quem Cretensem accepimus? quarum civitatum severissima disciplina et severissimae leges traduntur. ne Macedonum quidem ac Persarum aut ullius

The number of orators active in Rhodes and Athens – *quidam* in the former and *plurimi* in the latter – seems to be used here as an index of their different degrees of democratisation. The modern reader, however, might be surprised to see Rhodes compared to Athens in terms of democratic culture: this passage of the *Dialogus* might remind us of a paragraph from Cicero's *De oratore*, where it is said that Antonius used to confer with the most learned men *vel Athenis vel Rhodiis*.⁴ Maternus' words in my opinion reflect the assimilation of the Athenian democratic experience into that great cultural tradition – Mediterranean and cosmopolitan – which Rome assimilated in the second and first centuries B.C. and we call «Hellenism». After the awakening of the democratic 'Sleeping Beauty',⁵ the readers of the *Dialogus* might think that the world of Apollonius and Molon had very little in common with that of Demosthenes or the Pericles described by Thucydides, as though Maternus did not see the collapse of the Greece of the *poleis* as a decisive hiatus in the history of ancient Greece.

The depurated version of classical Athens proposed by Plutarch, is therefore not just the product of imperial prudery, but also, and principally, the result of a long cultural process, which was already operating in the Hellenistic Mediterranean at the time of Rome's expansion.

In the following pages, we shall try to investigate whether, in those centuries, the traditional image of democratic Athens, and that of the traditional *homo democraticus* still had any role in the political debate.

II. ROMAN EXPANSION AND GREEK FREEDOM

Let us start with a letter sent by Cornelius and Publius Scipio to the *boule* and the *demos* of Heraclea by Latmus in 190; the town had passed over from the Seleucids to Rome after the battle of Magnesia:⁶

We happen to be favourably disposed to all the Greeks and we shall endeavour, since you have placed yourselves in our trust (*pistis*), to show all possible care for you, and always to be responsible for some good. We grant you your freedom (*eleutheria*), as we have to the other cities which have placed themselves under our care (*epitrophe*), and you will keep under your control the administration of all your own affairs (*politeuesthai*) in accordance with your laws (*nomoi*).

The presumed respect for the independence of the *poleis* had been a key element of Roman propaganda in the Eastern since the days of Flamininus' campaigns in Greece, which were presented as a struggle for the liberation of Greece from

gentis, quae certo imperio contenta fuerit, eloquentiam novimus. Rhodii quidam, plurimi Athenienses oratores extiterunt, apud quos omnia populus, omnia imperiti, omnia, ut sic dixerim, omnes poterant».

⁴ Cic., *De or.* II, 3: «De Antonio vero, quamquam saepe ex humanissimo homine patruo nostro acceperamus, quem ad modum ille vel Athenis vel Rhodi se doctissimorum hominum sermonibus dedisset, tamen ipse adulescentulus, quantum illius ineuntis aetatis meae patiebatur pudor, multa ex eo saepe quaesivi».

⁵ M. Hansen, *Kleisthenes and the icons of democracy*, «History Today», XLIV : 1 (1994), pp. 14-21, 16.

⁶ CIG 3800, ll. 8-14 = LW 588 = Syll. 3, 618 = SEG II, 566, as translated in M. AUSTIN, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest. A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 2006, p. 362; see also J. MA, *Antiochus III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 243-247, 366-367.

the rule of dynastic autocrats, carried out by good-willed Roman generals with no territorial ambitions.⁷ At the outbreak of the war against Nabis of Sparta, in 195, Flamininus could even act as a sort of arbiter in the quarrels between *poleis*;⁸ two years later, the general would invoke Rome's *susceptum patrocinium libertatis Graecorum* against Antiochus.⁹ The traditional values of *demokratia* were getting little by little identified with those of the *res publica*.¹⁰

In the crucial years of the struggle for the control of the Eastern Mediterranean, Roman generals were assimilating the structures and forms of power of the Hellenistic world, and combining them with their ideology of patronage.¹¹

The letter to the people of Heraclea is in this respect very interesting: the Scipiones give the impression to know very well the vocabulary of the classical city-state (*polis, eleutheria, politeuesthai, nomoi*), but the overall sense of the document is set by two words: *epistrophe* and *pistis*. The independence of the *polis* is subtly presented as a concession of the new rulers, *pistis* in particular refers to the *deditio in fidem*, i.e. a formal act of surrender,¹² through which a community put itself in the hands of the Romans. In that time of dialogue between Rome and the Hellenistic world, the Roman *pistis/fides* could also become an object of worship (*sebein*).¹³

III. THE CLASSICAL POLIS AND THE NEW POLIS: DEMOCHARES OF LEUCONOE

The classical Greek city-state may have been dead and buried, yet its institutions, principles and political vocabulary were still essential to define political power. In the course of the Hellenistic age, the *polis* underwent a process of «revitalisation and transformation»,¹⁴ in terms of social and cultural connotation, physical characteristics and geographical distribution were becoming identified: Hellenistic rulers, for instance, used poliadisation, or the grant of Greek civic institutions to non-Greek communities, to mark the dependence of the peripheries on the central power;¹⁵ the Romans would also employ this procedure, sanctioned via *epistrophe* and *pistis*, to further their control of Greece.

In his analysis of the foundation of new Greek-style *poleis* in the Seleucid kingdom and in the East, F.W. Walbank observed that in those contexts the notions of «democracy», «freedom» and «autonomy» were rather volatile, although freedom was certainly much less «than it would have been in the fifth or fourth

⁷ See e.g. LIV. XXXII, 21.36; cp. E. M. CARAWAN, *Graecia liberata and the role of Flamininus in Livy's fourth decade*, «TAPHΑ», CXVIII (1988), pp. 209-252, 214.

⁸ LIV. XXXIV, 22.7-13; cp. CARAWAN, *Graecia liberata*, cit., pp. 232-233.

⁹ LIV. XXXIV, 58.8-13; see D. W. BARONOWSKI, *The status of the Greek cities of Asia Minor after 190 B.C.*, «Hermes», CXIX (1991), pp. 450-463, 456.

¹⁰ See J.-C. COUVENHES, A. HELLER, *Les transferts culturels dans le monde institutionnel des cités et des royaumes à l'époque hellénistique*, in J.-C. Couvenhes, B. Legras (eds), *Transferts culturels et politique dans le monde hellénistique. Actes de la table ronde sur les identités collectives* (Sorbonne, 7 février 2004), Paris, 2006, 15-52, pp. 40-47, with bibliograph.

¹¹ See J. TANNER, *Portraits, power, and patronage in the late Roman Republic*, «JRS», XC (2000), 18-50, p. 40.

¹² See CAH, 2nd ed., vol. VIII, p. 89.

¹² PLUT., *Flam.* XVI, 4.

¹³ See CAH, 2nd ed., vol. VII.1, pp. 304-305.

¹⁴ See J.-C. COUVENHES, A. HELLER, *Les transferts culturels*, cit., pp. 28-30.

century». ¹⁶ We might add that in the fifth and fourth centuries, in Athens, those three notions – *demokratia*, *eleutheria*, *autonomia* – were also much less volatile and much more clearly identifiable. It is therefore not surprising that in Athens, at the end of the fourth century, when the process of transformation and revitalisation of the traditional *polis* was setting off, the principles of the new Hellenistic city-state were called thoroughly into question.

In 307, the Antigonid Demetrius Poliorcetes set sail towards Attica, defeated the other Demetrius, that of Phaleron, Casander's lieutenant, and established a democratic regime, naturally under his semi-divine *epistrophe*. ¹⁷ The reader of Plutarch's *Life of Demetrius*, might easily think that the Poliorcetes and his father Antigonus Monophthalmus were animated by the best intentions, just like Flamininus would be more than a century later: the glory brought to them by the Athenian campaign instilled in them the desire to achieve further glory by liberating the whole of Greece from the yoke of Cassander and Tolomaeus. ¹⁸ Quite paradoxically, this time the Athenians seemed to be much less concerned about their own freedom than the Antigonid rulers. In fact, the Athenians naively took to worshipping Demetrius as their saviour, as though the withdrawal of the other Demetrius' garrisons from Munichia would automatically bring back the *eleutheria* of old. ¹⁹

The only dissenting voice seems to have been that of Demochares of Leuco-noe (c. 355-275), Demosthenes' nephew and custodian of his memory, who in 303 was sent into exile for having made fun of a motion, proposed by a Stratocles, stating that the Athenians would hold any future order of Demetrius as «just towards men and gods». ²⁰ Demochares was the fiercest opponent of Demetrius of Phaleron, and is probably best known for the delivery of an oration in support of the expulsion of all the philosophers from Attica. He was briefly involved in the government of Athens under Demetrius Poliorcetes and was later on the author of a work of *Histories*, written between 280 and 270, when the Athenians were discovering their nationalist pride following the death of Lysimachus and Seleucus.

Athenaeus mentions a long passage from Demochares' *Histories*, where the author

source for studying the elaboration of the democratic heritage in the Hellenistic world, and its transmission to republican Rome.

The work of Demochares is debated in Cicero's *Brutus*, within a discussion of what should be meant by *attice dicere*:²³ Brutus mentions the case of Calvus, who labelled himself as *Attic* in reason of the well-cultivated *exilitas* characterising his style, as opposed to the excesses of, say, a Hortensius. Cicero finds this kind of attitude misleading. Choosing *sanitas* and *integritas* instead of *insulitas* and *insolentia* should in fact be the norm for any respectable orator, not just the distinguishing trait of a specific school. The trite assumption that a certain sobriety was the only key feature of Attic oratory is detrimental to a fuller understanding of that rhetorical tradition: Lysias and Demosthenes, for instance, had very different styles, yet they both certainly were Attic orators. Likewise, Demetrius of Phaleron was *floridior* than Hyperides or Lysias, but his speeches are so Attic that the reader can smell the perfume of Athens in them.

Cicero then go on to say:

*Et quidem duo fuerunt per idem tempus dissimiles inter se, sed Attici tamen; quorum Charisius multarum orationum, quas scribebat aliis, cum cupere videretur imitari Lysiam; Demochares autem, qui fuit Demosthenis sororis filius, et orationes scripsit aliquot et earum rerum historiam quae erant Athenis ipsius aetate gestae non tam historico quam oratorio genere perscripsit.*²⁴

Cicero in these chapters seems to draw up a brief history of Athenian rhetoric down to the second generation of Hellenistic orators, by offering samples of all the *gradus* and *dissimilitudines*, which made the richness of the Attic tradition. This stylistic perspective changes considerably when Charisius and Demochares are brought onto the stage. For the pair are representative of two different ways of interpreting their role as orators, rather than of two different styles. Charisius is seen as an epigon of Lysias because he was a professional logographer, the author of speeches delivered by another party. As for Demochares, Cicero does not say anything about his speeches but tells us something about his *Histories*, which were written *oratorio genere*: the work of an outspoken, politically engaged orator, not of a dispassionate historian.

Obviously this orator is not the logographer *à la* Lysias, or more modestly *à la*

IV. WHAT IS HISTORY WRITTEN ORATORIO GENERE?

The extant fragments of Demochares' *Histories* are very few, but we are fortunate enough to have one which seems to illustrate very clearly what might have meant by history written *oratorio genere*. The passage in question, reported by Polybius, is a venomous portrait of Demetrius of Phaleron. Against him,

Demochares has inveighed with extraordinary bitterness in his *History*, alleging that «His conduct as a prince, and the political measures on which he prided himself, were such as a petty tax-gatherer might be proud of; for he boasted that in his city things were abundant and cheap, and every one had plenty to live upon».²⁵

Demetrius, the enlightened tyrant who styled himself as *prostates tes patridos*, is degraded here to the rank of an ordinary tax collector; the political priority, for this would-be *prostates*, was the availability of cheap goods in the marketplace. Polybius also mentions another passage, where Demochares censures Demetrius' fondness for the most bizarre forms of honours, and his fellow-citizens' eagerness to confer them.²⁶

The context of these citations is a long tirade against Timaeus, which occupies quite a large section of Polybius' *Histories*. Among his many other faults, Timaeus is accused of having maliciously damaged the reputation of Demochares, by accusing him of unnatural lust and indecency. In Demochares' defence, Polybius unsurprisingly highlights his immaculate family background, but does also point out that, apart from the comments of the comic poet Archedicus, there is no evidence of such accusations being moved against Demochares by his political enemies, chiefly Demetrius, in spite of all the taunts that the loyal democrat had addressed against him.

According to Polybius, the sneer at Demetrius was in fact *ou ten tychousan*, or 'well aimed', and this may also help to explain what should be meant by history *oratorio genere*: far from offering a reliable account of events for those willing to have a clear overview of what happened, and thus to have a guidance for the future,²⁷ Demochares wants first and foremost to damage his political enemies, he did not share Thucydides' concern for posterity. Like any good orator, his voice was always conformed to his immanent political necessities, to *kairoi*.²⁸

If we return to the *Brutus*, Cicero, interested as he is in the *forense concertatorium iudiciale* [...] *genus*,²⁹ does not consider the bouletic style of Demochares as an

²⁵ POL. XII, 13,9-10.

²⁶ POL. XII, 13,11: «He was not ashamed to have a procession in the theatre led by an artificial snail, worked by some internal contrivance, and emitting slime as it crawled, and behind it a string of asses; meaning by this to indicate the slowness and stupidity of the Athenians, who had yielded to others the honour of defending Greece, and were tamely submissive to Cassander».

²⁸ DIO. AL., *Dem.* x.

²⁹ CIC., *Brut.* 287: «“Thucydidem”, inquit, “imitamur”. Optime, si historiam scribere, non si causas dicere cogitatis. Thucydides enim rerum gestarum pronuntiator sincerus et grandis etiam fuit; hoc forense concertatorium iudiciale non tractavit genus. Orationes autem quas interposuit – multae enim sunt – eas ego laudare soleo; imitari neque possim si velim, nec velim fortasse si possim».

²⁷ THUC. I, 22,3-4.

unsuitable paradigm for the Roman judiciary orator. Likewise, Thucydides, as a narrator of *res gestae*, was certainly worthy of admiration, the speeches which he inserted in his *Histories* were also commendable, could never represent a viable model for the Roman speaker, because they were eminently political speeches, in a quintessentially Athenian way, we might add.

Political and juridical oratory are two different *genera*, but, again, the problem is not only a matter of style: the *prytaneria* and the *forum* are in fact two different worlds: an oration *à la* Pericles delivered in front of a Roman court would be a glass of an out-of-date Falernian wine, however renowned its winery might be. We might at this point wonder whether for a historian of oratory, in particular one who considered Demosthenes the «perfect» orator,³⁰ the work of Thucydides could represent a mere container of speeches. The link between *res gestae* and *logoi* was in fact crucial for understanding the culture of Athenian political oratory, as exemplified by Demosthenes himself, the orator who chose a historian as his main model, refusing to stick to the teachings of just one teacher.³¹

If, however, the objectives of the *Brutus* did not contemplate an analysis of the great rhetorical tradition of democratic Athens, as embodied by Demosthenes and Demochares, in other circumstances Cicero would make very direct allusions to that political, cultural and rhetorical canon.

V. CICERO'S «

true duty of an Athenian politician, which is that of leading the fatherland to *politeuesthai en tois Ellesi*.³⁴

Let us now return to Rome: just as he was engaged in the struggle against Cati-line, and in the most Athenian of his rhetorical enterprises, Cicero utilised a strategy similar to those employed by Demosthenes and Demochares in his defence of Lucius Licinius Murena, the victorious general in the campaigns against Mithridates, who had been accused of bribery.

In this trial, Cicero was to take on two notable *principes fori*, like Marcus Porcius Cato and the famous jurist Servius Sulpicius Rufus. Facing such well-versed counterparts, the orator decides to tackle the case in a roundabout way and question the actual merits of his opponents, rather than concentrating on the specificities of the case. Cicero thus asks the audience some general yet crucial questions: what kind of man can really work for the good of the republic? Who is the *rector*? Who is the *gubernator*, who can hold the state's helm through *maximas rei publicae tempestates*?

The main assets of a really deserving man, Cicero says, are two: the *militaris laus* and the *dicendi facultas*, compared with which the *ius civile*, the field where Sulpicius excelled, was merely a *tenuis disciplina*. This emerged most clearly in the days of the fateful consular elections for 63, when Sulpicius himself was one of the candidates. Unfortunately, however, he did not possess what Cicero calls *studium acerrimum*, which is in fact the essential attribute of any politician aspiring to win the consulship. Busy as he was gathering accusations against Murena, all absorbed in secret meetings with his witnesses, Sulpicius in fact neglected his canvass. For what are elections about if not showing your face in public, engaging with the voters of the *comitia*?³⁵

The portrait of a sad-looking and sadness-inspiring Sulpicius, sunken in all his paperwork, is really worth reading:³⁶

Enim te inquirere videbant, tristem ipsum, maestos amicos; observationes, testificationes, seductiones testium, secessiones subscriptorum animadvertabant, quibus rebus certe ipsi candidatorum voltus obscuriores videri solent.

The speech in defence of Murena, the letter to Atticus on the Catilinarians and the discussion of Demochares featured in the *Brutus* reveal the presence, in the Rome of the first century B.C., of an image of Athens, still bound to its democratic culture, which did not want to conform to the Hellenistic *koine*. Athens and Rhodes could absolutely not be compared, as was implied by Maternus. Whereas the Romans generals in the East, from Flamininus on, had taken over and employed the notions of *eleutheria* and *autonomia* to foster Roman rule in those regions, Cicero established a link between his consular oratory and the democratic, say, pre-Hellenistic, Athenian tradition.

³⁴ DEM. XIII, 35.

³⁵ See CIC., *Mur.* 38: «Nam quid ego dicam populum ac vulgus imperitorum ludis magno opere delectari? minus est mirandum. Quamquam huic causae id satis est; sunt enim populi ac multitudinis comitia. qua re, si pupulo ludorum magnificentia voluptati est, non est mirandum eam L. Murenæ apud populum profuisse».

³⁶ CIC., *Mur.* 49.

By mentioning Demochares' *Histories*, Cicero thus records an important cultural operation, though bound to be defeated: in the formative years of the Hellenistic monarchies and of their new, cosmopolitan and metropolitan culture, an Athenian intellectual tried to resist the process of normalisation by reasserting the irrenounceable link between Athens and its democratic heritage, as embodied by history and oratory. Demochares was trying to preserve the specificity of the Athenian experience.

University of Warwick

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