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Father of Wonders, Fathers of Lies

Wonder and Disbelief in the Early Modern Reception of Herodotus

Edited by
Francesco Dall'Olio, Marco Duranti



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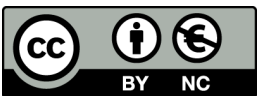

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Riccardo Vattuone is a retired professor at the University of Bologna. He graduated in Classical Literature in Bologna in 1972 and was a researcher (from 1981), associate professor (from 1987) and then full professor of Greek History (from 2001) at the same

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General Editors' Preface to the Series

Francesco Dall'Olio and Marco Duranti[1]

1.

This is the first of a series of volumes that we plan to publish with the aim of covering the widest possible range of fields and problems related to the encounter of the early modern world with Herodotus. The objective of our project is not simply to collect scattered testimonies of Herodotus' receptions; on the contrary, we aim to collect different forms of reception by bringing to the fore the generic cross-pollination, that is, the analogies and contaminations between different genres. Herodotus' stories were all too fascinating to be confined to historiography and entered several other genres: from political writings to novellas, from theatre to opera. After all, it is reductive to refer to Herodotus as merely a historian – if we agree with Vattuone in this volume, this is not even the most accurate definition: sophos or scholar would be more accurate (15). If Herodotus knew about modern professions, he would certainly claim to be a geographer and ethnographer, too. This should make us aware of the provisional and changing nature of the labels that we usually employ in order to classify polyhedral author like Herodotus, and encourage us to consider the peculiarities of each genre, including its classifications, connections and distinctions. Having explored one genre, it becomes possible to detect how genres interact and influence one another. Our aim is to systematically adopt a cross-genre perspective and develop an approach that will enable us to trace the often unexpected ways in which Herodotus reached the

1 Section 1 is by Marco Duranti, while section 2 is by Francesco Dall'Olio.

early moderns through numerous detours, contaminations, and reworkings. By means of this research, we aim to provide scholars of classical reception in the early modern age with a model that can be applied to the reception of other authors too; one that will enable scholars to better understand how the encounter with the ancients shaped the modern understanding of the world.

In addition to the cross-generic approach, the second, yet no less important, focal point of our research is the problem of truth and falsehood. Building on the issue of Herodotus' reliability, as summarised above, we will engage with the contrast but also coalition between tradition and autopsy, ancient and modern sources, reliance on intellectual authority and scepticism. We will compare the strategies used by the authors of mirabilia in order to persuade their readers of the veracity of their accounts. In a famous aphorism, the sophist Gorgias argued that truth does not exist. If it did, it would be impossible to understand it, and if it were possible to understand it, it would be impossible to communicate it to others (DK 82 B1-4). We could argue that the early modern ethnographic and travel literature, like Herodotus, faced the challenge of persuading readers to accept quite the opposite statement: I, the author, have had access to at least a fragment of truth, I was able to understand it by means of my intellectual capacities and my experience, and I am now communicating it to you faithfully and impartially. The frustrating problem of gaining the trust of those who had not witnessed the incredible things and events that the traveller had seen was a common issue for both and the early modern explorers or historiographers writing about distant lands. The ways in which Herodotus 'helped' the early moderns to strengthen their arguments, or the early moderns 'helped' Herodotus to be cleared of the accusations of being a liar, are the focus of our research, starting with Bajetta-Dall'Olio's and Duranti's chapters in this volume.

2.

Within this theoretical framework, our project comprises five volumes. Following this introductory volume, the second one will

be devoted to the early modern translations of Herodotus into Latin and the vernacular languages. Furthermore, it will address other possible mediations between Herodotus and the early moderns, for example ancient authors quoting Herodotus, as well as early modern dictionaries and encyclopaedias. The role of other ancient authors in shaping the reception of Herodotus cannot be underestimated: Plutarch, Lucian, Cicero, and Quintilian, among others, influenced the early modern approach to the various aspects of Herodotus' work, including its content, historical method, language, and style. As for secondary sources, their importance in the early modern reception of ancient authors is often underestimated in critical studies. In fact, they were widely read and made the content of ancient books accessible also to those who would not read them directly, due to linguistic barriers, lack of accessibility, or length of the text. They also often influenced how the way tales derived from Herodotus were read, by presenting them in connection to political or ethical issues, which also made them useful exempla to be re-proposed in different contexts. Therefore, our volume will reconstruct the network of secondary texts based on Herodotus, in an attempt to identify the ways in which his narratives and characters reached early modern readers.

According to the cross-genre perspective described above, the third volume will focus on the presence of Herodotus in literary genres. It will consider both direct adaptations of tales included in Herodotus' work and the influence of the historian on a determined imagery in various genres, ranging from novellas to romances, from epic poems to theatre. Such a study is particularly relevant because, although Herodotus' contribution to the development of early modern literary genres, such as romances or early modern English theatre, has already been a subject of research, the volume will offer new insights by considering the presence of the historian in lesser-studied genres. We know that tales from the *Histories* were often included in anthologies of short stories (e.g. William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, 1575), sometimes with an exemplary meaning. However, this phenomenon has yet to inspire a dedicated study. Similarly, scholars have yet to consider the historian's influence on the

emerging musical theatre in Renaissance Italy and France, which developed around the same time as early modern English theatre. The studies in our third volume will aim to make the first attempt at breaking into these new fields of research. In doing so, the volume will present the widest possible view of not only the circulation of Herodotus' narratives, but also, and more importantly, of their place in the development of early modern imagery from a literary and artistic standpoints.

Next comes the fourth volume, which will address the epistemological issue of truth and falsehood, building on the work of Bajetta-Dall'Olio and Duranti in the present volume. As is well known, Herodotus' reputation as a historian in the Renaissance was somewhat marred by the widespread opinion that painted him as an unreliable narrator, who preferred to tell entertaining stories rather than the truth. Nevertheless, this did not stop Renaissance historiography from regarding Herodotus as their main source of information about ancient Eastern kingdoms like Persia or Egypt (if for no other reasons, for lack of a suitable alternatives); some, such as Philipp Melanchthon and David Cythraeus, even came to consider him a God-sent continuation of the universal history of mankind as begun in the Bible. This habit resulted in the rehabilitation of Herodotus as a reliable historian in the second half of the 16th century (Henri Estienne was his main champion in this regard). This occurred at a time of significant cultural change in critical thinking about historical writing, thanks to the work of intellectuals like François Bauduoin and Jean Bodin, who began to advocate the idea that historians should engage in the critical process of contextualization and evaluation of sources. At the same time, the growing knowledge of the Eastern world and the exploration of America put European culture at the forefront of discovering a new world full of wonders. The reality of these discoveries would have seemed unbelievable to those who had only read about them. The fourth volume will explore how the changing perception of Herodotus intertwined with the Renaissance's evolving critical attitude towards historical writing, as well as with Herodotus' relationship with the travel literature of the time. It will also consider Herodotus' role in the growing discussion about truth and falsehood in historiography

and travel literature, particularly with regard to questions such as: 'What does it mean to tell the truth? What if I tell the truth but I'm not believed? Why should the reader believe me?'. Given his long-lasting reputation as a liar (or at least as one that fancies a good story more than the strict truth), it could be argued that Herodotus was the more suitable amongst ancient historians for a debate of that kind.

Finally, our series concludes with a fifth volume dedicated specifically to the relationship between Herodotus and the East during the Renaissance. After all, it was his description of Persia and Egypt that made his work popular during that period, far more than his account of the Persian Wars. Despite this, to our knowledge, only a handful of studies have been devoted to the history of Herodotus' reception in relation to the way Renaissance culture saw the Eastern world of their own time. Although there is some evidence suggesting an early modern reading of the Persian Wars as an analogy for the religious wars between Christianity and Islam in the 16th century, no mention has been made of the potential use of Herodotus' work in relation to this particular issue. Such a study would be of great interest to current scholarship, as would a study of how information from Herodotus could be used to explain the origins of the Turks and the Persians, or simply to compare ancient and early modern Eastern worlds.

By the end of the project, readers will thus have access to a comprehensive study of the receptions of Herodotus in the Renaissance, encompassing all its major aspects and comprising both old and new research perspectives. This study could serve as a model for others of a similar nature focusing on different ancient authors.

Introduction

Francesco Dall'Olio and Marco Duranti[1]

1.

In the preface to his translation of the *Histories* into Italian – the first in any vernacular language ever – Matteo Maria Boiardo hails Herodotus as prince and father of all historians (1533, 7*v*; "tra gli historici . . . Principe e padre"). He attributes Herodotus' "delightful usefulness" (ibid.; "dilettevole utilità") to the variety of content (ibid.; "la varietà"), the acknowledgement of strange and marvellous things (ibid.; "cognitione delle cose istrane e meravigliose"), the numerous judgements and good teachings (8*v*; "le spesse sententie e buoni amaestramenti"). Boiardo's three reasons for admiring and reading Herodotus provide an apt starting point for our volume on his reception in the early modern age. The Italian translator encapsulates why readers are fascinated by the *Histories*: it is both a sort of guidebook to the world and to its various peoples and a collection of delightful and instructive stories.

Following the well-known Horatian principle, the combination of delight and usefulness was often regarded as a basic prerequisite for appreciating an author. Early modern editors had no difficulty finding this combination in Herodotus. In addition to the reasons for delight listed by Boiardo, one more quality was his eloquence, which had been celebrated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 4), Quintilian (*Inst. or.* 10.73) and even by Plutarch, otherwise hostile to Herodotus (*Mor.* 874b; see below). Quintilian's passage is quoted in the prefatory letter of Aldus Manutius' *princeps* edition of the *Histories* in Greek (Herodotus 1502) and Boiardo reminds us that

1 Section 1 is by Marco Duranti, sections 2 and 3 by Francesco Dall'Olio.

Herodotus "was reputed of utmost eloquence among Greeks" (1533, +7*r*; "tra i Greci reputato eloquentissimo").

As for usefulness, Nicolaus Cornapaeus (Cornap), the editor of the 1582 edition of the constitutional debate contained in Herodotus' third book (3.80), explains that the *Histories* "contain numerous outstanding examples of virtues and vices, and at the same time narrates the punishments of crimes, in order to admonish the readers on divine judgement, and exhort them to cultivate virtue" (1582, A2*v*; "multa . . . exempla continet virtutum et viciorum insignia, ac simul scelerum poenas narrat, ut lectorem de iudicio divino commonefaciat, et ad studium virtutis exsuscitet").[2] Furthermore, Cornapaeus commends Herodotus for providing numerous examples of political deliberations that are useful for effectve state governance (ibid.). Conrad Heresbach, the editor of a revised edition of Valla's translation, believes that Herodotus' teachings are useful not only in public life, but in private life too (Herodotus 1526, Aa2*r*). Speaking generally about historiographers, Boiardo adds another reason for reading them (Herodotus included): not only do they teach princes how to behave in peace, but also teach commanders how to behave in war (1533, +7*r*).

According to Cornapaeus, historians such as Herodotus are even superior moral teachers to philosophers, because the latter merely expound abstract doctrines, whereas the former convey moral lessons through fascinating narratives (Herodotus 1582, A2*r*). Undeniably, the narratives contained in Herodotus' *Histories* are captivating, and in recent decades they have been studied through the lens of narratology (see Baragwanath 2008, de Jong 2004 and 1999). As has been observed since antiquity, Herodotus sought to achieve literary status, setting Homer as his model for both content and style (on this see, among others, Pelling 2006). It is therefore unsurprising that Herodotus' narratives transcended the boundaries of the historiographical genre and made their way into the blooming early modern literature. As Murrin (1994) and Looney (1996) have demonstrated, Herodotus also served as a model for two

2 Cornapaeus' statement is well grounded in Herodotus' belief in divine justice and divine punishment as central factors in history; on this see Desmond 2004.

eminent writers of Italian chivalric literature, Boiardo and Ariosto. Herodotus' Persia provided the setting for English romances and theatre (Grogan 2014) and Herodotus' memorable characters inspired literary creations: the figure of Cyrus the Great was behind Lope de Vega's historical comedy *Contra valor no hay desdicha* (printed in 1638; see Walker 2014), while Tomyris travelled through seventeenth-century French theatre (see Conroy 2020).

However, the marvellous richness and variety of Herodotus' stories have a possible downside that is not discussed in Boiardo's introduction, but was crucial in Herodotus' reception since antiquity. Imagine that someone tells us wondrous stories about faraway places and peoples at odds with our normal experience of the world, that we cannot verify; they will cause both wonder and disbelief. The step between wonder and disbelief is a short one, to the extent that the two can be regarded as two sides of the same coin. This raises questions of telling, showing, and discourse reliability. Granted that the narratives of exotic lands and their wonders are engaging, are they also *true*? The problem of distinguishing truth from falsehood was especially challenging in Herodotus' age, given the general lack of knowledge about faraway countries and unreliability of sources. As these were mainly oral accounts, Herodotus had to rely on his interpreters' competence. Written accounts were not always available, uneasy to find and to translate. Given the difficulties involved in establishing their trustworthiness, it is not surprising that Herodotus' successor as historian, Thucydides, decided to adopt a different approach for historiography. As Arnaldo Momigliano puts it, in Thucydides' view

> [t]o write serious history, one had to be a contemporary of the events under discussion and one had to be able to understand what people were saying. Serious history . . . was not concerned with the past, but with the present; it could not be concerned with distant countries, but only with those places in which you lived and with those people whose thoughts you could put into your own words without difficulty. (1958, 3-4)

Thucydides' historiographical method gave rise to a tradition of critical condemnation of Herodotus that reached its zenith in Hellenistic and imperial times. While most anti-Herodotean

literature was lost after antiquity (as in the cases of Valerius Pollio's *On Herodotus' Thefts*, Aelius Harpocration's *On Herodotus' Lies*, or Libanius' *Against Herodotus*), the criticism of Herodotus in Plutarch's *De Herodoti malignitate* was severe enough to deeply affect how this author was perceived from the early modern age to the nineteenth century.[3] In addition to doubts about Herodotus' method and the truthfulness of his narratives,[4] this tradition was fuelled by the accusation of being "a friend of the barbarians" (*philobarbaros*), as well as – in Plutarch's accusation – of disregarding the merits of Greek cities and regions other than Athens in the Persian wars (notably, of Plutarch's native region, Boeotia). Despite Herodotus' assumed bias in favour of the barbarians, attack on Herodotus' reputation did not only come from Greece, but also from Egypt, after the region was Hellenised as a result of Alexander's conquests. For example, the Egyptian priest Manetho criticised Herodotus for his supposed ignorance of Egyptian history (in Josephus, *Ap.* 1.14; see Moyer 2011, 103-41).

This anti-Herodotean tradition was inherited by the early moderns, famously epitomised by Juan Vives' assertion that Herodotus was not only "the father of history" – as Cicero named him (followed, as we have seen, by Boiardo) – but also "the father of lies" (1532, 89).[5] However, in both antiquity and the early modern age, this condemnation of Herodotus was just one part of the story. Despite scepticism regarding his reliability, he continued to be read, used, and imitated. He had paved the way for carrying out research

3 Another important mediator of Herodotus' reception was Lucian, whose attitude towards the historian of Halicarnassus is more multifaceted in comparison to Plutarch's. To mention just a few references, *True Histories* contain several implausible ethnographic details that appear to mock Herodotean *mirabilia*, whereas in *How to Write History* the preface of Herodotus' *Histories* is praised (together with Thucydides' one) for effectively arousing the readers' interest. On Lucian's engagement with Herodotus, see Kirkland 2022, 186-260.

4 Strabo accused Herodotus (together with Ctesias, Hellanicus and writers of Indian histories) of creating impossible fictions out of the desire of entertaining their readers (1.2.35).

5 The premises of Vives' definition were also in Cicero, who judged that Herodotus' work was full of stories (*fabulae*; *De Leg.* 1.5).

into distant lands and peoples, and all those in antiquity who refused Thucydides' restrictions and set out to do the same job could not avoid measuring themselves against his model. Nor was this an exceptional case. On the contrary, as Riccardo Vattuone points out in his essay included in this volume, "Greek historiography is 'Herodotean' because of the new broad geographical interests that opened up especially with the enterprise of Philip and Alexander the Great and because of its marked ethnographism" (13). In this respect, it could be argued that early moderns too were Herodotean. This period saw a flourishing production of travel books, geographical and ethnographical literature, reflecting the explorations that led to the opening of new trade routes and the discovery of new lands. As again Arnaldo Momigliano pointed out:

> In the sixteenth century historians travelled once more in foreign countries, questioned local people, went back from the present to the past by collecting oral traditions. In some cases they acted as ambassadors, in others they were missionaries and explorers: they were seldom professional historians. But they wrote history – a history extraordinarily reminiscent of Herodotus both in style and in method. (1958, 10)

Momigliano famously argued that most early modern explorers and writers were unaware of Herodotus' work, yet they independently re-discovered his method due to facing similar challenges. This rediscovery was then beneficial to Herodotus' reputation, as modern travel accounts were read by scholars who used them as tools to defend him against accusations of unreliability. This position is discussed in Marco Duranti's chapter in this book. For now, suffice it to say that this controversy surrounding Herodotus highlights the crucial question of travel literature: how can readers be persuaded to believe in what they read, no matter how strange it may seem? Would it be more effective to appeal to the prestige of the authors themselves or rather to the prestige of the literary tradition to which authors claim to belong? The past and the present were in a dialectical relationship. Were readers expected to believe in the existence of modern wonders as they were discovered around the world because similar wonders were described in books by revered ancient authors? Or conversely, were scholars supposed to believe

the ancients because the marvels which they read about in ancient books were analogous to those in modern books? A more effective alternative could be to rely on the readers' *own* experience of the world, as we are more inclined to believe what corresponds to what we have seen with our own eyes. However, this approach is difficult to apply to extraordinary things that are far removed from the reader's everyday life. Nevertheless, as Duranti points out, the most valiant defender of Herodotus, Henry Estienne, effectively chooses this line of reasoning. As well as comparing Herodotus' wonders with those in modern books, Estienne makes the reader aware of the surprising variety of customs and usages in small geographical areas (e.g. between France and Germany) and over short periods of time (e.g. in France itself between two generations). This variety does not need to be demonstrated, as it can be directly witnessed by readers. If such differences exist within a small space-time interval, Estienne concludes, then we should not be surprised to find even greater differences with respect to our customs in Herodotus – that is, in a considerable larger space-time interval.

These issues lay at the heart of the early modern world's engagement with Herodotus. In Herodotean terms, the relationship between information gathered from books (whether ancient or moderns) and information derived from personal experience corresponds to the relationship between *akoe*, hearing things from others (as Herodotus mainly relied on oral sources), and *autopsia*, seeing things personally. As Carlo Bajetta and Francesco Dall'Olio demonstrate in this book, the role of autopsy was a topic of discussion in historiographical literature, particularly in late sixteenth-century France. Such reflections inspired an English historian like Walter Raleigh to defend Herodotus against his detractors (21-2). According to Bajetta and Dall'Olio, Raleigh uses *his own* experience of the world to declare that Herodotus' reconstruction of the origins of the first Persian war is plausible. He believes that his experience at the English court enables him to understand the mechanisms of the ancient Persian court (given Raleigh's implied assumption that human psychology does not change). While Estienne builds on the reader's experience, Raleigh relies on the author's experience. Just as Herodotus asks the reader to trust his visual memories because he has actually visited the countries about which he writes, so Raleigh asks

the reader to trust his experience to gain a general understanding of how things work in royal courts, the Persian one included. Both Herodotus and Raleigh require the reader to take an act of faith. Although they claim that what they write corresponds to their own observations of the world, they could, in principle, be lying. Thus, it is only the authors' prestige that can justify their request for belief on the part of the reader. Ironically enough, the entire complex issue of Herodotus' method rests on this unstable foundation.

2.

Considering how widespread Herodotus' presence was in early modern culture, as well as the wealth of theoretical and methodological problems involved, we have the sudden impression of entering into a maze of paths and roads spreading all throughout Renaissance Europe, which has been only partially explored. Over the past decade, a significant number of studies have examined the early modern reception of Herodotus, as witnessed for instance by the collective volume edited by Susanna Gambino Longo (2012). Subsequently, chapters on the reception of Herodotus in early modern Italy and France have appeared in Jessica Priestley and Vasiliki Zali's volume on the history of Herodotus' reception from antiquity to the modern day (Earley 2016, Foley 2016 and Looney 2016), as well as in Jane Grogan's volume about the reception of the ancient Near East in early modern Europe (see especially Looney 2020, Hall 2020). The presence of Herodotus in Germany – the country with the highest number of early modern translations[6] – has been studied in contributions such as Kipf 1999, Kliege-Biller 2004, Ben-Tov 2009, Ellis 2015 and 2017. These studies analyse the main characteristics of the early modern reception of Herodotus, and provide a useful background of the main critical and literary tendencies sorrounding the historian's reception in early modern

6 We have three German translations of the whole Herodotean work in the 16th century, which is more than twice as many when compared to Italy, France, and England, where only one per country can be found (Boiardo's fifteenth-century translation, printed in 1533; Saliat's 1552 French translation; B.R.'s 1584 English translation).

literature. For example, Foley's account of the historical and literary context of Boiardo's 'romance-like' translation (reassessed by Gritti offers in this volume) proves useful to understand the main features of the following reception of Herodotus' account of Persia as fabulous and wonderful, providing a theoretical ground for the widespread scepticism about the historian's veracity. Similarly, Earley's analysis of the theoretical debate surrounding Herodotus' status as a historian in 16th-century France illustrates the challenges posed to early modern readers in that country by his work, as well as the reasons why scholars such as Pierre Saliat (the author of the first French translation of the text, 1552-1556) and the aforementioned Estienne still maintained that it was useful to read the *Histories*.[7]

It is also worth considering studies that tackle a specific aspect of Herodotus' reception, such as Luisa Moscati Castelnuovo's edited volume on the legacy of the episode of Solon and Croesus (2017),[8] or Jane Grogan's book on the depiction of ancient Persia in early modern English literature (Grogan 2014).

Overall, we can conclude that scholarship over the past decade has shown an interest in the early modern Herodotus. However, closer inspection of these studies reveals that some cultural areas of early modern reception of Herodotus have been explored more extensively than other. As regards Italy, while great attention has been paid to Valla's Latin translation and Boiardo's vernacular one (see Fumagalli 2005, Pagliaroli 2006, Looney 2012 and 2020, as well as the relevant essays in Priestley and Zali's 2016 volume mentioned above), the later impact of Herodotus in the sixteenth century has largely been overlooked.[9] When discussing Herodotus

7 For example, Earley notes that the first French translator of Herodotus, Pierre Saliat, underlined the historian's military usefulness: his description of battles could provide generals and kings with a good model of how to win a battle. See Earley 2016, 125-9.

8 We can also add the volume about the cultural reception of the Persian wars edited by Emma Bridges, Edith Hall and P.J. Rhodes (2007).

9 Which, to be fair, seems to be a continuation of an ongoing scholarship trend about Herodotus and Renaissance Italy, as can be seen in Achille Olivieri's book (2004). Despite its promising title *Erodoto nel Rinascimento*, the book considers the presence of Herodotus in 15th-century Italian Renaissance

in the sixteenth century, a curious absence cannot be ignored. Although there are some clues in early modern European culture that suggest the Persian Wars could be seen as a reflection of the religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims,[10] to our knowledge, no study has discussed how this cultural tradition affected and/or was affected by Herodotus' rediscovery. We know that the first recorded modern performance of Aeschylus' *Persians* took place in Venice in 1571 as part of the celebrations for the Christian victory in the Battle of Lepanto (see Hall 2007, 117). In this context, ancient Persia was clearly seen as an equivalent to the Turks. Therefore, it is somewhat unexpected that no study appears to have been conducted on how religious tensions between Islam and Christian Europe influenced the reception and interpretation of the Histories in early modern Europe.

Even in those fields where much research has been conducted, notable gaps can be found. Gambino Longo's aforementioned collective volume acknowledges Herodotus' influence on historiography, geography, ethnography, and other social sciences, yet it overlooks his impact on several early modern cultural contexts (once again fifteenth-century Italy and sixteenth-16th-century France are at the forefront, with only one essay considering early modern Spain; no mention is made of Germany or England), and neglects his forays into literature. More generally, the literary examples of Herodotus' early modern reception have been only partially explored. Murrin (1994) and Looney (1996)

literature, and devotes no attention to literature in the following century.

10 A notable example can be found in Petrarch's *canzone* "O aspectata in ciel beata et bella" (*Canzoniere* 1.28). It was written in 1333, around the time a new Crusade was being promoted by Pope John XXII, and addressed by the poet to a friend and fellow scholar of his, the Dominican friar Giovanni Colonna (see Santagata in Petrarca 2022, 142, 144), to invite him to take part to the Crusade. In Stanza 7 (vv. 91-105), to persuade him that God's will is with the crusaders, Petrarch cites the Persian wars as examples of God favouring the West against the East: a suitable example for a man like Colonna who, says Petrarca in his *Canzoniere*, has "per arricchir d'un bel tesauro, / volte l'antiche et le moderne carte" (1.28.76-7; "to gain a beautiful treasure, / perused the ancient and the modern texts"; translation by Francesco Dall'Olio).

have investigated how Herodotus influenced the most prominent writers of Italian chivalric literature, Boiardo and Ariosto, but did not expand their research into a broader study of later Italian and European romances, nor did they consider the possible influence of Herodotus on other literary genres of the time such as novellas or the rising tragic theatre. Such research has, however, been conducted in relation to other early modern literatures, with the most prominent case probably being early modern England. Grogan has fully enquired the presence of ancient Persia in English romances and drama (2014), initiating a line of research that has been continued by Houston (2023) and Dall'Olio (2024) in relation to theatre. Similarly, Conroy (2020) illustrates the appropriation of the Herodotean character of Tomyris in seventeenth-century French theatre. Grogan's focus on the contrast between he descriptions of Persia by Xenophon and Herodotus has shed light on ways in which Herodotus' influence affected drama and long narratives in particular. However, genres such as novellas, travel literature, and early modern English historiography (at least with regard to methods) remain to be further explored. In a similar way, while Houston's book provides an insightful analysis of the so-called 'Persian plays' in their historical contexts, it only briefly considers what these plays reveal about the history of Herodotus' early modern reception.

In sum, although considerable progress has been made, there is still much more work to be done. Recent research has provided the skeleton for a comprehensive study of Herodotus' reception in early modern Europe. Now, what remains to be done is to provide this skeleton with limbs, organs, nerves and tissues. Firstly, the now-existing critical trends can be furthered by extending research on Herodotus' reception in early modern Italy to cover the 16th century and by including other literary genres. Secondly, new areas could (and should) be explored, such as Herodotus' presence in early modern French literature aside from the historical debate about his reliability, and the possible use of his history to justify the religious wars against the Ottomans. Most importantly, the study of dialogues and intersections between different genres, cultural traditions and languages should be encouraged. Until now, studies in this area have mostly overlooked the larger cultural trends or

landscapes in Renaissance Europe. Consequently, a comprehensive assessment of Herodotus' presence in early modern Europe, including the most relevant features of his critical and literary reception across different cultural contexts, is still pending.

3.

In a sense, the six essays in this volume act as a sort of bridge between existing studies of Herodotus' reception in early modern Europe and our new perspective. For the most part, they build on established scholarly trends, taking the reader through familiar paths, like Renaissance Ferrara or early modern England. However, they also introduce new visions, topics, and approaches. Thus, they provide an excellent introduction to the broader research that will be carried out in this series with the aim of presenting new critical perspectives on the early modern reception of Herodotus.

Riccardo Vattuone's Chapter in Part 1 ("Ancient Premises of Herodotus' Early Modern Reception") opens the volume as an ideal premise by setting the tone and the approach. It is a well-known fact that the Renaissance reception of Herodotus was often marred by his reputation as a liar. However, the emergence of such a reputation in ancient literature has rarely been considered in studies of his subsequent reception in early modern Europe. What does it mean that Herodotus is a liar? What is he lying about? And is he lying at all, or have his texts simply been misread? Vattuone addresses these issues by showing that the reputation of Herodotus as a liar is born from a fundamental misunderstanding of his work. When Herodotus wrote the *Histories*, Vattuone remarks, there was no such thing as 'history', i.e. either as a literary genre defined by recognisable literary features or as a discipline with an established discipline. Therefore, Herodotus should not be interpreted according to later notions of history, as did 2nd-century writers such as Lucian and above of all Plutarch (the main responsible for the view of Herodotus as liar),[11] whose texts influenced the

11 Plutarch also had a more personal reason for accusing Herodotus of lying, as Vattuone points out. In his accounts of the Persian wars, Herodotus diminished or did not consider the contribution of the people of Boeotia

Renaissance reputation of the historian. Rather, Herodotus should be seen in its original context, that of the 5th century BC, when there was a shift from the epic paradigm of narration, in which the *aoidos*' knowledge of ancient deeds was based on what the Muses told him, to the sophistic one, in which the knowledge of the *sophos* (the wise man) was founded on his own ability to interpret what he saw or heard. This epistemological shift lies at the heart of the account of the Persian Wars in the *Histories*, which Herodotus presents as a new form of epic narration based on his own *historie* (research) into both past deeds and present-day customs. Vattuone's article thus shows how, from its outset, Herodotus' text is at the heart of a dialogue between literary genres, as well as between old and new forms of knowledge and inquiry, where the question of believability is central: you should believe me, says Herodotus, because I investigated those things. This issue was to resurface later, influencing all the major forms of early modern reception of Herodotus.

The three chapters collected in Part 2 ("Fascination with Herodotus' *Histories*") introduce us to the early modern Herodotus in familiar territory: first Renaissance Ferrara, then Renaissance Italy at large, and finally Renaissance England. While these essays are firmly rooted in an established scholarly tradition, they also offer new perspectives. All three chapters focus on why Herodotus was so interesting in the three cultural contexts mentioned above, and how this interest could take different forms depending on the different kinds of information one wanted to find in the *Histories*. This abundance of perspectives is undoubtedly part of the reason why Herodotus fascinated early modern readers. His work contained a variety of information about many wonders, as well as memorable tales, probably comparable in quantity only to poems such as the Homeric ones. However, there was a very important difference. Homer's text, given their nature as poetry, could be considered fictional recreations of historical events; on the contrary, Herodotus' account is supposed to be taken as reliable and true, with a very restricted artistic licence to it. It is therefore no surprise that his work attracted many early modern readers, and the three

(Plutarch's birth region), in the defeat of Persia.

chapters of this first section illustrate three different instances of such an attraction.

In her analysis of Boiardo's vernacular translation, Valentina Gritti focuses on an aspect of the that has previously been overlooked: Boiardo's rewriting of the history of Cyrus the Elder, also known as Cyrus the Great. Many studies in the last decade have emphasised the importance of this figure in Renaissance culture as a model of ideal kingship[12] (a reputation largely derived from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, another text that Boiardo translated). However, Boiardo's translation has scarcely been considered in this context until now. Gritti addresses this topic by highlighting how Boiardo's way of rewriting the history of Cyrus (which is also based on other historical sources such as Xenophon and the historian Justin) aligns with the cultural propaganda of the Estense dynasty. This marks the beginning of a tradition that would see Cyrus proposed repeatedly in various early modern contexts over the following two centuries to promote and discuss educational patterns of good kingship, as well as being used as an explicit tool for propaganda.[13] Gritti also illustrates how Boiardo's translation was at the centre of an intricate web of literary and cultural references, which Gritti reconstructs by offering a new survey of the historical context as well as a philological overview of the different manuscript traditions and their impact on the reconstruction of the text. In this sense, Gritti's article follows on well from Vattuone's work and is as a good introduction to this section, whose three chapters share an interest in Herodotus' place in Renaissance culture as a point of convergence of multiple cultural tendencies.

Like Gritti, in the second chapter Jane Grogan addresses the question of the authorship of the first English translation of Herodotus' two books (1584), advocating the traditional identification of the anonymous 'B.R.' with Barnabe Riche. This attribution is particularly interesting, given that Riche is a

12 Too long would be to give a detailed list of such studies; I will just mention Grogan 2014, 60-4; Humble 2017.

13 A good example of this last tendency is James I Stuart's use of Xenophon to promote his absolutist ideology in 17th-century England: see Grogan 2014, 44-5.

fascinating and multifaceted figure in his own right. A soldier in the Irish wars of the 1570s, he began a prolific literary career in 1581, mostly writing romances and novellas, which he protested he was writing only because it was the fashion of the time. Grogan suggests that such a writer could be very interested in translating Herodotus, an author whose influence on the romance genre was well known, and whose most notable tales were already famous thanks to their inclusion in contemporary anthologies of literary *exempla*. Herodotus could also be viewed and read as an authority on military matters (as Pierre Saliat, the first French translator of Herodotus, did): an aspect of Herodotus' fame that would definitely have appealed to a former soldier like Riche.[14] By defending the plausibility of his authorship of Herodotus' translation, Grogan once again highlights how Herodotus' text could be attract different people for very different reasons. By translating Herodotus, Riche knew he was providing early modern English culture with a text that would appeal to a wide readership thanks to its connection to romances, while also being of great interest to a more cultured audience due to its practical (i.e. military) and ethical content.

In Chapter 3, Maren Elisabeth Schwab provides us with an insight into an alternative aspect of Herodotus' reception in the early modern period, which transcends his literary appeal and his potential political undertones. Mummies were an important subject for Renaissance medical science: it was believed that drinking some medicinal liquid derived from embalmed bodies could be beneficial. They also feature prominently in descriptions of both medical treatments and magical rituals.[15] In her essay, Schwab takes

14 Amongst the most notable examples of this trend, we can quote Cambises' story as included by Richard Taverner in the second book of his *Garden of Wysedome* (1539) and Croesus and Solon's story included in William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1575). Solon and Croesus' story also recurred in Riche's first literary text, *A right excellent and pleasaunt dialogue between Mercury and an English Soldier* (1574), on whose Herodotean inspiration see Grorgan 2014, 79.

15 Of such beliefs we found trace in two passages of Shakespeare's theatre. The first one is in *Othello*: as the Moor describes to Desdemona how his wife supposedly enchanted the handkerchief he is giving her, he says that it was "dyed in mummy" (*Oth.* 3.4.7), i.e. "medicinal liquid, supposedly

us on an intriguing journey through how Renaissance antiquarians read Herodotus' description of the process of mummification (as presented in Hdt. 2.85-9) as a source about ancient funerary practices, and how they reconsidered these practices in light of both Christian theology and historical practice of the 16th century.[16] Once again, Herodotus emerges as a writer whose work lies at the intersection of various cultural interests: his description of the ancient Near Eastern culture attracts antiquarians, medical practitioners, scholars of ancient history, and even some theologians, each interested in different aspects of his work. Schwab's analysis of mummies is a prime example of how a multidisciplinary approach can enrich our understanding of Herodotus' early modern reception.

The last two chapters of this volume form Part 3 ("Reliability Between Historiography and Travel Writing") and deal with the other major feature of Herodotus' early modern reception as outlined above: the issue of his credibility. In Carlo M. Bajetta and Francesco Dall'Olio's chapter, this issue is analysed within the context of a wider study of the presence and influence of Herodotus' work in and on Sir Walter Ralegh's *History of the World* (1614), the most notable attempt at crafting a universal history in Renaissance England. The essay considers Herodotus' reputation and standing as a historian, the edition present in Ralegh's library list we possess, and finally, how Ralegh used it as a source. What emerges is a complex picture, with one notable feature: Ralegh's certainty about Herodotus' reliability as a source. While he does dismiss some of Herodotus' tales as either too fantastical or too improbable (as was typical at the time), Ralegh is also ready to defend Herodotus' account whenever it conflicts with his own experience. An example of this can be seen in a notable passage in Book 2 of the *History*, where Ralegh defends Herodotus' choice of indicating the desire of Queen Atossa for Greek slaves as a cause of the First Persian War:

made from embalmed bones" (Honigmann in Shakespeare 2016, 249). The second one is in *Macbeth*: a "mummy's witch" is one of the ingredients of the Witches' spell at the beginning of act 4 (*Mac.* 4.1.23). See Mabilliard 2009 for further details.

16 Such an interpretation can be found in the works of notable 16th-century Protestant writers, such as David Chytraeus: see Earley 2016, 138; Dall'Olio 2024, 211-2.

the author believes it, he says, because it has been proved by the experience of many men that even great events such as wars can be caused by the smallest occurrence. Herodotus' account is thus defended and accepted as consistent with the common experience of many people, contrary to the view of those – Ralegh implicitly states – who believe that great historical events are always caused by other great events.

In this sense, Ralegh's *History* appears to have been influenced by the process of critical re-evaluation that Herodotus underwent in the second half of the 16th century. Thanks to the work of prominent scholars such as Joachim Camerarius and Henri Estienne, the view that the *Histories* were full of fantastical and unbelievable tales began to fade. This shift is also clearly visible in Marco Duranti's chapter, which closes the volume as a sort of epilogue. Duranti begins his analysis of Herodotus' presence in early modern travel literature by addressing the epistemological problem at the heart of the genre: if the author describes things that are unbelievable, should the reader believe them? As we have seen, this is 'the' question at the heart of both Herodotus' research method and his early modern reception. Indeed, the reception of Herodotus and the genre of travel writing underwent an incredibly fertile cross-pollination. As Duranti demonstrates, on the one hand, early modern travel literature found in Herodotus an illustrious precedent and a high authority to justify its often hardly credible stories. If readers were ready to believe Herodotus based on his authority as an ancient historian, they could also accept contemporary accounts of extraordinary travels and wonders. However, this justification also functioned the other way around. After all, as Henri Estienne wrote in his *Apologia pro Herodoto* (1566), if readers could see many wondrous facts in the world all around them, so why should they consider Herodotus to be unreliable? Thus, the evolution of travel literature helped foster the critical re-evaluation of Herodotus in the second half of the 16th century. If wonders can be seen in the modern world, then there was no reason not to believe Herodotus. As Duranti concludes, Herodotus and the early modern travellers helped one another, as it were, in a sort of solidarity between colleagues.

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1

Herodotus "pater historiae"?

Riccardo Vattuone

Abstract

Where does Herodotus' reputation as a liar come from? Who came up with that? And how exactly is Herodotus a liar? Such questions are at the core of my chapter, where I trace the birth of this particular reputation of Herodotus down to the Hellenistic period, to the writings of authors such as Lucian and Plutarch. For those authors, Herodotus is a liar in the sense that his writing does not conform to the established rules for writing history, as they were codified and theorised in their time. He does not respect, most of all, the core principle of writing only about proven, true facts, and instead it includes in his work tales pleasant but either fictional or untrue. I would argue, however, that such a view does not consider the cultural context where Herodotus lived and operated, that of the second half of 5th-century BC, where no such concept of 'history' yet existed. By that time, Herodotus' work would more accurately placed as another instance of the cultural shift from the wisdom of the Homeric poet (whose knowledge of events is granted by the Muses) to that deriving from the *sophia*, the 'wisdom' of the expert man who exposes the results of his own particular 'research'.

Keywords: reception of Herodotus; historiography; Herodotus as a liar; *sophia*; *historie*

Herodotus as "pater historiae" in Cicero's definition (*De leg.* 1.5)[1] does not mean for moderns that the *Persika* corresponds to what they mean when they speak of 'history', even if some of its foundations can be glimpsed in that work; moreover, Cicero, and others before and after him, already doubted that the *mirabilia* contained in Herodotus' account were an essential part of it.[2]

1 References are from Cicero 1959. Here and below all translations from Latin are mine.

2 The context of *De leg.* 1.5 makes it clear that Herodotus and even Theopompus, his 'epitomizer', had somehow violated the unwritten distinction between historical and poetic laws: "Quintus Intellego te, frater, alias in historia leges obseruandas putare, alias in poemate. / Marcus

Plutarch, in a strange, aggressive and surprising pamphlet, believed that the founder of the discipline was a liar, and that he had deliberately concealed or distorted important facts of the events surrounding the Persian wars. Plutarch's unusual irritation was that Herodotus had obscured the role of Boeotians and Corinthians in the unfolding of events and, moreover, cast his countrymen in a bad light as traitors to the great Panhellenic cause (Plut. *De Herodoti malignitate*, 854f).[3] The biographer of Chaeronea protects his country from an all-too-legitimate accusation, besmirching his illustrious predecessor while making ample use of him in the lives of the protagonists of that war, Themistocles and Aristides. John Marincola (2016) has recently shown how the historian's 'malice' had provided the most accurate version of the momentous battle of Platea. Herodotus' authorship of the discipline, therefore, has not always found credence in the course of time and has to this day engaged the ingenuity of many scholars to prove that the *Persika* are unreliable reconstructions of a forger.[4]

I certainly do not intend to enter into the question here: there are other, mostly obvious reasons for maintaining the distance between Herodotus' *historie* and modern scholarship. Instead, it is useful to reflect further on the cultural identity in which the *Persika* took shape and which are, on closer inspection, the very

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Quippe cum in illa ad ueritatem, Quinte, quaeque referantur, in hoc ad delectationem pleraque; quamquam et apud Herodotum patrem historiae et apud Theopompum sunt innumerabiles fabulae" (QUINTUS I see, brother, that you believe that different rules are to be observed in writing history or writing a poem. / MARCUS Yes, because in the first one everything is to be said according to the truth, while in the other one many things are said for the pleasure of the reader; although in Herodotus, father of history, and in Theopompus there are innumerable tall tales).

3 Plutarch's text is quoted and referenced according to the edition edited by Maurizio Girmaldi (Plutarch 2004). The historian's *lokalpatriotismus* emerges entirely when the themes of the Persian wars are touched upon: see Plut. *Her.* 861f.

4 The negative judgement on Herodotus as a narrator of falsehoods reached a peak in Fehling 1989. The reaction to this extreme opinion is based on a reading of cultural context that overcomes the 'true-false' antinomy, in itself false: see Fowler 1996; Baragwanath-de Bakker 2012.

roots of that distance. Perhaps the most significant difference between that past and our present lies in the relationship between the reconstruction of facts and their publication, as we shall see later. The essential task of the writer is to recreate in the mind of the listener or reader, through the spoken or written word, the images of what happened. The relationship with the 'audience' is based on the pleasure of narration, and this pleasure depends entirely on the efficacy of the images produced by the words in the mind of the recipient of the tale. The *historie* is therefore governed entirely by the *ars dicendi,* by rhetoric, for Cicero this was obvious. The fluctuations of judgement over time on Herodotus' work, praise and blame, enthusiasm and criticism, stem essentially from whether or not one has accepted this fact. And yet the question remains: what does it mean with respect to Herodotus, and ultimately also for us, his readers, to have traced the authorship of historical writing back to the *Persika*?

Simon Hornblower (2006) has clearly indicated what Herodotus' influence was in the ancient world. Thucydides writing a short time later, without ever naming him, shows that his predecessor's work is already a *monumentum* with which one is obliged to reckon and which one submits to judgement. In essence, Thucydides states that it is not good to write for an audience which is interested in the events that took place simply for reasons of pleasure and consensus. And he adds that it is appropriate to concentrate upon writing about military and political events, neglecting descriptions of places, customs, peoples and traditions. In thinking in this way, by narrowing the narrative field, Thucydides questions the whole 'epic' tradition, and the work of the logographers who drew on the modules of the Homeric epos. But Homer himself, the poem and especially the Persian wars narrated by Herodotus are the essential references for understanding the nature of the historiographical genre.

Thucydides' reaction to Herodotus' work can only be understood by reading his introduction, what we call 'archaeology', i.e. the 'ancient history of the Greeks' (Thuc. 1.2-19), written with the epidemic purpose of demonstrating that the Peloponnesian War is the greatest of any fought before, and above all that the work describing it is consequently the most important.

The *tapeinosis* exerted towards the Trojan War (ten discontinuous years during which very few battles were fought) and the Persian Wars (basically a couple of battles, or little more: see Thuc. 1.18) is revealing with regard to Thucydides' narrative paradigms, not only in respect to the agonistic character of Greek culture, but also (and perhaps most of all) to the terrain where what modern scholarship on Thucydides defines as 'history' takes shape – in spite of the fact that this kind of writings still is not called that.

It is worth recalling, albeit briefly, how Herodotus, the supposed *pater* of the discipline, prefaces his work: Ἡροδότου Ἁλικαρνησσέος ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις ἥδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, τά τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι (1.1; "This is the exposition of the research of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that human events do not fade with time and so that the great and marvellous deeds performed by the Greeks and the Barbarians do not remain without glory and light: to establish, also, why they fought among themselves").[5] Herodotus writes the results of his *historie*, which here counts as 'research, enquiry, reflection on the subject at hand', and refers to it in writing, the result of readings made in different ways and at different times to different audiences. In this way the vibrant image of τὰ γενόμενα [τῶν] ἀνθρώπων is not lost or faded by time so that the deeds performed by both Greeks and Barbarians do not remain without the splendour of "glory" (ἀκλεᾶ), and finally the "cause" of their clash is made obvious (adduced by each of the contenders and their mutual accusations: all this and more is in the concept of αἰτία; see Bakker 2002).

No reader has missed the epic context of these words. Instead of the Muses, to whom the task of preserving memory was delegated, the *sophos* is used: he sees, reflects, considers (*historeo,* 'to see, to know') human facts, that is, events concerning men, and selects their marvellousness so that it does not fade away. The task of speech, when the omnipresent gaze of the goddesses

5 References are from Herodotus 2005. Here and below all translations from Greek are mine.

has been lost, is to restore colour (μήτε . . . ἐξίτηλα γένηται) to the facts so that they are present to the gaze of the beholder through the word of the wise man. The *historie* maker is a craftsman who reproduces data gathered in disparate ways about extraordinary events that no one could otherwise see. The *sophos*, who no longer has the power to bear witness to the facts, collects the accounts (the news, the sources of all kinds) and, new *poietes*, restores to them the light of the past. The enquiry is certainly the crux of the matter but almost as important is its exposition, that is, the ability to breathe life back into what would otherwise be lost forever.

It is also relevant that the enquiry concerns both Greeks and barbarians with the equanimity of a gaze from above, moving from one camp to another, as Lucian declared to be the impartial gaze of Zeus in his *How History is Written*: but the Greeks were irritated because Herodotus put the events of friends and foes on the same level. One of the major flaws of ancient historiography was precisely its recurrent *Lokalpatriotismus*, and Herodotus was certainly not entirely exempt from this. Nonetheless, in the proem it was necessary to declare in an inspired and epic form that the great deeds of the 'barbarians' deserved to be preserved in the same way as those of the Greeks. Finally, but certainly not secondarily, Herodotus declares the *aitia* of the great war, where the word once again reveals itself as the intellectual, epic and poetic backdrop to the 'causes' that are supposed to explain the reasons behind the conflict between East and West. These immediately reveal themselves as biased, polemical, not at all unquestionable but mutual accusations rather than 'scientific' reasons. One only has to read the first five chapters of the *Histories* to realise this (1.1-5).

It is evident that at the origins of what we call 'history' lies between the 6th and 5th centuries BC: an event that the Greeks perceived as epochal, that shook their *ecumene* and that turned out to be unpredictable, absurd, unexpected. This was indeed the victory of the Hellenes over the enormous power of the Persians. Elsewhere I have tried to show how the Persian wars were the event that conditioned so-called classical Greek history until the Macedonian conquest (see Vattuone 2017, 19). The epic culture of the Greeks allowed them to shape the extraordinary succession of

events and at the same time to create the roots of a new 'genre', what we anachronistically call 'history'. History as *techne*, i.e. as a 'genre' among others in the 5th century BC in the time of Herodotus and Thucydides did not yet exist. And when we search for the roots of our knowledge, in this as in many other cases, we use sometimes conscious anachronisms that satisfy our desire for noble foundations. When Cicero calls Herodotus "pater historiae" in him and in his culture, the oratorical, i.e. rhetorical, dimension of the discipline is very clear ("opus oratorium maxime"). The false and distorting image we have of rhetoric does not help contemporaries to deal with this perspective adequately.

Herodotus' *historie* is a search for human events within geo-ethnographic contexts, with a descriptive intent of peoples and customs, in which those facts are immersed. The model, it has been said, is Homeric: the hero's journey is a tale of his vicissitudes and an encounter with often unknown, unexplored worlds and places. It is really no coincidence that the figure that best expresses *historie* and its norms is precisely the Homeric Odysseus (see Marincola 2007). The logographers who dealt with those *genomena* between the 6th and 5th centuries BC applied the scheme of the *periplous* (the journey) and the voyage to the enquiry, putting together traditions and tales of different origins. Herodotus in the eyes of Thucydides (who, moreover, never mentions him) belongs to this category of writers. The criticism of the enquiry of the logographers is essentially directed against the amplifications, the *mirabilia*, inherent in the very nature of storytelling: the writer does it for an audience that hears the stories and is delighted by them, eager even for fantastic details. In a famous page of his work, Herodotus, aware that he is reporting extraordinary events, declares without any embarrassment that he reports everything he has gathered about an event without being obliged to believe everything he reports (Hdt. 7.152).[6] The error

6 Not only with regard to the investigation of the Egyptians (2.99), but also in the exemplary case of the rise of Cyrus, Herodotus' method is made explicit as enquiry, sifting through several versions and personal vision: ἐπιδίζηται δὲ δὴ τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τόν τε Κῦρον ὅστις ἐὼν τὴν Κροίσου ἀρχὴν κατεῖλε, καὶ τοὺς Πέρσας ὅτεῳ τρόπῳ ἡγήσαντο τῆς Ἀσίης. ὡς ὦν Περσέων μετεξέτεροι λέγουσι, οἱ μὴ βουλόμενοι σεμνοῦν τὰ

of moderns and contemporaries is to assume that Thucydides' reaction against this type of narrative comes from a different cultural context, and that it is the expression of a new mentality, of a 'scientific' approach, in a kind of far-fetched opposition between *fabula* and *logos* that belongs only to the distorted views of readers of other epochs.

Thucydides criticises the way in which logographers try to procure pleasure in their listeners, but claims for his own way of narrating another kind of *terpsis* (pleasure) that derives from an image of the facts that is more adherent to their real unfolding, shorn of the implausible (Thuc. 1.22.4). Plutarch is well aware that Thucydides is perhaps the highest model of 'dramatic' writing (Plut. *de gloria Athen.* 3.347 a-b), and it would seem paradoxical if one did not consider that in any case the task of the writer of events is to graphically restore their image in the mind of the listener or reader. At stake is the refined rhetorical culture of the era in which both Herodotus and Thucydides composed their works, the art of the evocative word, and its power to restore the truth of what has happened and is no longer visible.

The contrast between Herodotus' narrative method and Thucydides' dry and critical one overlooks some essential elements: having lost the omnipresent gaze of the Muses, those who turn to the description of events have only *akoé*, *hopsis*, *gnome,* i.e. what is said, their own vision, and reflection on the material, at their disposal (e.g. Hdt 2.29.1). This applies to both Herodotus and Thucydides. The truth of an event is determined through the use of these instruments. At the centre is the critique of what is being told, through one's own gaze, one's own knowledge. It is the sphere of *logos* that authoritatively intervenes in the plurality of narratives and words. Herodotus and Thucydides do not belong to different worlds in this either:

περὶ Κῦρον ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐόντα λέγειν λόγον, κατὰ ταῦτα γράψω, ἐπιστάμενος περὶ Κύρου καὶ τριφασίας ἄλλας λόγων ὁδοὺς φῆναι (1.95.1; "My story will investigate who this Cyrus was who destroyed the empire of Croesus and how the Persians came to rule Asia. I shall tell it as some Persians, who do not want to exaggerate the events of Cyrus, but to tell the true story, although I can relate three other kinds of stories about Cyrus"). See Bakker 2002; Cartledge-Greenwood 2002.

when Thucydides states that he is pursuing τὴν . . . ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν . . . [τοῦ] πολεμεῖν (Thuc. 1.23.6; "the truest cause of the war")[7] between Sparta and Athens, he assumes responsibility for a complete account of the facts recorded according to a criterion of verisimilitude. The instruments through which the facts are sifted are the same: traditions, words, and the criterion of choosing between them. Herodotus, more so than Thucydides, shows in his narrative the reasons for his choices: and it is paradoxical that moderns consider Thucydides' account to be closer to their way of understanding history, as he hardly offers any alternative in reporting the facts, never dwelling on the reasons why they are reported in this way and not another. But both work on the more remote past with similar tools.

In the 'archaeology' (Thuc. 1.2-19), Thucydides clearly shows how the most remote events can be narrated: in order to establish that the Greeks were very weak at the beginning of their history and therefore unable to perform great feats, or to understand the insignificance of the Trojan expedition, he relies on Homer's testimony, on his own reading and finally on what survives and is still visible (1.2.10). Tradition (*akoé*), his own judgement (*eikos*), a survival of what is still visible (*hopsis*). The operation makes it possible to restore to the facts a truth of their own that is based, precisely, on the poets' account, on a personal reading and on the visible (see Vattuone 2015). The Thucydides method is found again, perhaps much more refined, in the pages in which Herodotus describes the tradition concerning Helen and Alexander's sojourn in Egypt, which emerged during the historian's journey there (1.113), when he questioned the priests and reported their words. The problem for Herodotus is that Homer does not mention that stage in the East, and in this way the personal enquiry into the past arises: through places in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (*Il.* 6.289-92; *Od.* 4.227-30, 351-2), subjected to his own judgement, it becomes clear that in his wanderings Alexander had come to Egypt just as the priests claimed. What Herodotus and Thucydides have in common is that they both rely on *logos*, on refutation (*elenchos*) to read both the oldest and the most recent traditions.

7 References are from Thucydides 2004.

It is the art of speech that gives rise to the truth of an event, with the same criterion with which Gorgias, a contemporary of both, defends Helen from the Greeks' accusations of her responsibility in the Trojan War.

It is in this sphere, that of 5th century BC rhetoric, that the cultural identity of Herodotus and Herodotus' successor is fully understood. The contrast between Herodotus and Thucydides is not a theme of ancient historiography, which will be much more pro-Herodotus than pro-Thucydides: with the exception of the early Xenophon, in the first two books of the *Hellenics* which continue the work of the interrupted predecessor, and in part Polybius (who, moreover, never mentions him, even though he is in many ways indebted to the Athenian), Greek historiography is 'Herodotean' because of the new broad geographical interests that opened up especially with the enterprise of Philip and Alexander the Great and because of its marked ethnographism. There is no ancient text in which there is an opposition between the two 'wise men', even when they expressed predilections and negative judgements. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for instance, considered Thucydides obscure and somewhat boring, while Lucian admired his seriousness because after all, it was not their credibility and seriousness that was in question, but rather their style and narrative forms.

It is important to emphasise the continuity between Thucydides' and Herodotus' cultural experience, starting with their intentions as expressed in their respective proems. And there it is evident how rhetoric is the common premise. In Thucydides everything that is said about the speeches (*logoi*) of which, with Homeric imprint, the narrated events (*erga*) are interwoven, is based entirely on the *eikos*, on *ta deonta,* to argue that the credibility of the words uttered by the protagonists during the events, even before and after, are reconstructed on the character of the speakers, and on the historical context. And similarly, the reconstruction of events (*erga*), while rejecting the intromission of the observer ('not as it seems to me'), ends up admitting its presence, albeit in another way. In this way the so-called 'methodological chapter' (Thuc. 1.22) that so fascinates moderns reveals how the method of reaching the truth of a fact is founded

on the *ars dicendi*, in the same way as we observe in the eloquent words of the Herodotean proem.

The real problem for moderns, I say this in general, is to consider rhetoric as an artifice, something alien to any form of historical writing, reduced to matters of style, as if it were antithetical to any rigorous critical method. And this is a position that the ancients would obviously never have subscribed to. The other misunderstanding that is detrimental to understanding the foundations of the works we are concerned with here is the belief that the Thucydides method is defined as 'scientific', as opposed to the much less critical, affabulatory forms of its predecessors. In spite of the enthusiasm of 19th-century German historiography (see Morley 2016), Thucydides' *Histories* have nothing 'scientific' about them either in terms of narrative or method with respect to what we mean by this epithet. The error of the moderns, and in general of the historiographical tradition, stems from the admiration in that cultural context for the political and philosophical slant of Thucydides' work, and the devaluation for the geo-ethnographic slant of the Ionian logography.

This type of approach to the issues discussed here generates a misunderstanding not only with respect to the author of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, but also with respect to that Ciceronian definition that calls Herodotus a "pater historiae". Rosalind Thomas (2006) has pointed out how the culture in which the works of the first writers of *ta genomena* took shape was in a broad sense the sophistic one: in short, the reconstruction of the greatest and most admirable facts was no longer entrusted – it has been said – to the all-seeing of the Muses and to poetic inspiration. Those who set out to make their own *historie* were left with the arduous experience of personal investigations, the search for sources and traditions from which they had to choose with their own personal *logos*. This is the solemn declaration that we read in fragment in the prologue of the *Genealogies* of Hecataeus of Miletus (FGrHist 1.F1a), whereby one takes a stand between different and conflicting versions, assuming personal responsibility. The writers of *pragmata* speak in the first person, replacing the authority of the poetic word guaranteed by the gods. History at the time of the Persian Wars is still, significantly, written in verse.

Herodotus writes the facts of the Persian Wars aware that he no longer enjoys the privilege of indisputable traditions.

The age of the great conflict between Greeks and barbarians is also the time when a new vision of nature and man matures. It is the wise man, the *sophos*, who observes, describes events of all kinds, and of course also *ta genomena* as Herodotus defines them in his proem in a very meaningful way. Everything that surrounds man, every kind of happening is the subject of enquiry (*historie*) that is operated by the gaze and the power of the human *logos*. The awareness of a radical imperfection in the process of knowledge does not take away courage and energy from the researcher who seems, on the contrary, to find essential stimuli. And the reading of the data and their reconstruction is entirely entrusted to the tools of the *ars dicendi*. Without this assumption, the proem of Herodotus' *Histories* is completely incomprehensible. And if behind Herodotus' work we can glimpse the achievements of Protagoras' *homo mensura rerum* ('man as a measure of all things'), it is indisputable that the search for truth (*aletheia*), the declared objective of the final part of Thucydides' proem (1.23.6), is closely related to reflections found in Antiphon and Gorgias, i.e. with exponents of a period of sophistry shortly after Protagoras (see Thomas 2006, 8). Epic model and sophistic culture, through the tools of rhetoric, give shape to what we call 'history' with some anachronism.

Cicero's very definition of Herodotus as a "pater historiae" suited his 'oratorical' nature much more than a specific identity. Herodotus' *Persika* was an extraordinary model for his successors, who nevertheless felt his archaic character, a sort of critical unawareness: in Theopompus of Chios and in the historiography of the 4th century BC there was a profound reflection on the writing of events that led to the definition of history as a true *techne* among others, what for us would be a true genre, a discipline. In Fragment 25 of the *Philippika,* as well as in some other texts by Ephorus of Cumae and Timaeus of Tauromenius, Theopompus affirms the critical superiority of his own time with respect to the past, already arousing much perplexity in antiquity, but the self-commendation did not concern the value of the writings of illustrious predecessors, but rather questions of

method (see Vattuone 2014; Parmeggiani 2024). To Herodotus, and certainly to Thucydides as well, the definition of *sophoi* or scholars is more appropriate than that of historians. And if we adopted this motivated point of view, we would save ourselves so many unhelpful discussions about history and its origins.

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2

Cyrus the Elder in Boiardo's Translation of Herodotus. Rewriting a *speculum principis*

Valentina Gritti

Abstract

The essay is divided into four parts. The first illustrates the reception of Herodotus in Este vernacular literature of the early and mid-15th century. In the second part, the relationships between witnesses of the vernacular translation of the *Histories* are re-examined on the basis of a partial *collatio* that has enabled a better framing of the nature of the archetype, an idiograph with occasional examples of Boiardo's intervention. The third sketches a new dating hypothesis for the vernacular translation. The fourth and final part illustrates how Boiardo used alternative sources to rewrite the story of Cyrus the Elder in Book 1 of the *Histories*. Analysing the textual tradition and reading the story of Cyrus in the translated *Histories* allows us to understand its political-cultural significance in the cultural propaganda of Ercole I d'Este.

Keywords: Herodotus; Matteo Maria Boiardo; Justin; Cornazzano; Italian translation; intertextuality; textual criticism

1. Herodotus in Ferrara

In Renaissance Ferrara, as in all the seignories of the time, attention to ancient history was closely tied to cultural propaganda. By the end of the fourteenth century, the great leaders of antiquity and the Roman emperors had already been absorbed into the figurative arts and literature as *specula principis*, finding expression in historical and biographical works dedicated to the Este family (such are the cases, for example, of Petrarch's *De viris illustribus* and *De gestis Caesaris* volgarised by Donato degli Albanzani for Nicholas II, or Cornazzano's *De excellentium virorum principibus ab origine mundi* set up for Borso d'Este in the 1460s).[1] With the accession of Ercole I, second Duke of

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1 Extensive bibliography on the subject can be found in Gritti, Sanchini

Ferrara (1471–1505), whose interest in history had developed since his Aragonese childhood and early education in the Naples of Alfonso the Magnanimous, antiquity acquired a new channel of dissemination. Under his rule, ancient historiography – previously read in Latin translations by humanists – spread at court due to numerous vernacular versions. The intellectuals gathered around him gradually assembled, at his encouragement, a veritable library of vernacular classics (Cornelius Nepos, Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Josephus Flavius, Plutarch, Arrian, Riccobaldo of Ferrara, etc.).[2] Among all the Este translators, Matteo Maria Boiardo – closest to Ercole in his cultural interests – was the most prolific, translating works by Cornelius Nepos, Xenophon, Riccobaldo, Apuleius, and finally Herodotus.

However, a brief overview of Herodotus's reception within the Este duchy is necessary to better understand Boiardo's translation of the *Histories*, which – together with his version of Apuleius's *L'asino d'oro* – is considered the most significant both stylistically and for its subsequent cultural impact.[3] The Greek historian arrived in Ferrara with Guarino Veronese, who had begun translating Book 1 of the *Histories* (the first seventy-one paragraphs) into Latin when he was still in Venice, presumably from 1414.[4] Reference to Herodotus can indeed be read in Guarino's correspondence with his students during the Ferrara years confirming that, along with Plutarch and other Greek writers, the 'Father of History' served as a pedagogical tool

2023 and Gritti 2025.

2 In this regard, still fundamental the essays of Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti (2005 and the more recently 2023).

3 Dennis Looney, who has repeatedly dealt with Boiardo and his vernacular translations, has well illustrated the reception of Herodotus in Ferrara (see in this regard Looney 2005, Looney 2012a and Looney 2012b).

4 This would be evidenced by a letter from Gasparino Barzizza dated 1415, in which the humanist claims that Veronese is "in transferenda historia graeca occupatus" (Sabbadini 1915, vol. 1, letter n. 101; "busy translating a Greek History"). Remigio Sabbadini (1915, vol. 3, 45) thinks this is precisely the Herodotus set up by Guarino as a scholastic exercise for his pupils. Riccardo Truffi (1902, 73-8) identified the version in the Ravenna ms. 203 of the Classense Library.

within the humanist milieu of the Ferrara *Studium* during the years of his *magisterium* (Looney 2012b, 171-2). Beyond this early and partial version, only one of the two full translations of the *Histories* (the first by Mattia Palmieri, drafted between 1452 and 1455, and the other by Lorenzo Valla, commissioned by Nicholas V and composed between 1452-1457) appears to have circulated in Ferrara, specifically Valla's version, even before its release in print in 1474, when Boiardo began reading it.[5]

Only minimal traces remain of the circulation of Herodotus during the reign of Leonello and, especially, that of his successor Borso. We know, for instance, that in 1457 Aurispa, during his travels between Ferrara and Rome, carried with him a Greek codex of the *Histories* (identified today as the Vaticanus Palatinus Graecus 176),[6] or that Filippo Nuvolone, in a letter to Ludovico Gonzaga dated 8 October 1468, requested that the copy held in the Mantuan court library be sent to him in Ferrara ("la Illustrissima Signoria Vostra se voglia dignarsi a questo [e.g. lend me some Greek books] et aiutarmi et prestarmi l'Erodoto. . .").[7]

5 For the extensive bibliography on Herodotus' early fortune in Italy and his Latin translations, see at least Olivieri 2004; Pagliaroli 2006 and Pagliaroli 2012, 23nn1-2.

6 As can be read in Sabbadini 1931, 146n1: "L'Aurispa era da Ferrara di ritorno a Roma sino almeno dal 6 luglio 1457: ciò che si deduce dalla nota apposta a tre codici greci (Plutarco, Moralia, Erodoto, Ippocrate, Vatic. Palat. Gr. 170, 176, 192) la quale suona: 'Questo libro è di Francesco di Nicholaio Biliotti da Firenze, lo quale tiene messer Aurispa da lo detto Francesco in soma [= in carico] di più altri libri; e però io Francesco sopradetto ho fatto questi versi di mia propria mano questo dì -vi. Di luglio 1457 in Roma' (*Codices mss. Palat. Gr. Bibl. Vat.*, rec. H. Stevenson, Romae, 1885, 89-90, 93, 97)" (Aurispa was from Ferrara on his way back to Rome until at least July 6, 1457: what can be deduced from the note affixed to three Greek codices (Plutarch, Moralia, Herodotus, Hippocrates, Vatic. Palat. Gr. 170, 176, 192) which reads: 'This book is by Francesco di Nicholaio Biliotti da Firenze, which Aurispa keeps from Francesco *in soma* [= in charge] of more other books; and however I Francesco have made these verses by my own hand this day the 6th of July 1457 in Rome'). Here and below, all translations are mine.

7 I am quoting from Looney 2012b., 178-9. On the Gonzaga's early interest in Greek language literature see at least Gardoni 2012, 84, who quotes extensive prior bibliography, and on the exchange of books between the two cities, see Gardoni 2017.

Engagement with the earliest Greek historian can be traced in the works of several humanists associated in various ways with the Este court: for example, in Angelus Decembrius's *De politia litteraria*, composed mainly in Ferrara during the marquisate of Leonello; or in Alberti's *Teogenio* and *Profugiorum ad Aerumna libri*, also dedicated to the Este marquis (Looney 2012b, 173-7); and in Bernardo Ilicino's commentary on Petrarch's *Triumphi*, dedicated to Borso (Fioravanti 1995, 152.). Unlike the Gonzagas, who were avid collectors of Greek manuscripts, the Estes showed little interest in Greek literature, especially after Leonello; consequently, the *Histories* do not appear in their library inventories, either in Greek or in Latin (Tissoni Benvenuti 2023, 477).

How far knowledge of Herodotus had penetrated among Italian writers outside humanist circles is even more difficult to determine, especially considering that some of the historical episodes and tales recounted in the *Histories* had, since antiquity, circulated through other channels.

Take, for example, the story of Cyrus the Elder, recounted in Book 1: in the 1460s, Ludovico Sandeo and Antonio Cornazzano, two writers of encomiastic works for Borso d'Este, employ Cyrus as a *speculum principis* (along with Caesar, Alexander the Great, and others) by deriving information through the mediation of Dante (from the *Commedia*), Petrarch (from the *Triumphi*), and Boccaccio (from *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris*), or directly from late Latin sources, such as Justin and Orosius. Even without pursuing the question in detail, it is worth examining a few significant passages from these two writers.

In Ludovico Sandeo's *Odosophia* (an allegorical poem, composed between 1460 and 1465, imitating Dante's *Commedia*) we read (Gritti 2021, 2-3n3):

> Quel che col capo sanguinoso siede
> è Cyro che così di sangue il tinse
> la schyta vedoella orba d'herede.
> (4.95-105)
>
> [He who sits with the bloody head is Cyrus who thus / the Scythian widow, bereft of her son, dyed him with blood.]

Although the Ferrarese scholar was already familiar with the story through Cornelius Nepos and Justin, as attested by the note in the margin of 64*r* of the Barberinianus Latinus 42 (an autograph list of Sandeo's youthful readings), the episode of the Persian king's death at the hands of Tomyris is reinterpreted through an explicit Petrarchan imitation from the *Triumphus Pudicitie* (4.104-5; "né Ciro in Scizia, ove la vedova orba / la gran vendetta a memorabil feo"; "Nor Cyrus in Scythia, where the widow without an heir took great revenge worthy of remembrance"):

> Cornelius Nepos, *Reges*, 1: Ex iis vero, qui dominatum imperio tenuerunt, excellentissimi fuerunt, ut nos iudicamus, Persarum Cyrus et Darius, Hystaspi filius . . .
> *A margine*: Cyrus apud Messagetas a Thomyri regina Sytharum mortuus et decolatus fuit eiusque caput positum in utrem plenum humano sanguine. Iustinus capitulo primo. (Barb. Lat. 42, 64*r*)[8]
>
> [Cornelius Nepos, *Reges*, 1: Among these those who held an empire, were excellent, as we believe, of the Persians Cyrus and Darius, son of Istaspes . . . / *A margine*: Among the Massagetes Cyrus was killed by Tomiris, queen of the Scythians, and was beheaded and his head placed in a wineskin filled with human blood. Justin, chapter one.]

Antonio Cornazzano in *De excellentium virorum principibus ab origine mundi*, written for Borso d'Este around 1465-1466 (Gritti

8 I thank Francesco Sanchini for kindly passing me this information and the transcription of the *Odosophia* verses from the Vatican Library, ms. Rossiano 219. The Justin passage to which Sandeo refers is in *Historiae philippicae*, 1.7.11-3.

and Sanchini 2023, 173) and existing in both Latin and vernacular versions, also devotes considerable space to the figure of Cyrus the Elder. Although Cornazzano claims to have read directly from the "grecha istoria", his account of Cyrus's life is drawn from the Latin sources:[9]

> Cognatae pueros fugiunt thyberinides undae
> invenit et sicca quos lupa lactat humo.
> Quis negat hoc? Non ne sit quamvis graeca mendax
> audimus Cyro lac tribuisse canem?
> (2.1.161-4, 20*v*)

> [the paternal waves of the Tiber flee the children, and a she-wolf finds them and nurses them on dry land. Who denies this? If it is not some Greek lie, did we not hear that a female dog gave milk to Cyrus?]

> Lactò una lupa alhor quelli duo bambi;
> chi nega questo e ciò, cosa sì magna?
> Non legian noi i'nella grecha istoria
> che lacte a Cyro diè sol una cagna?
> (2.2.12-15, 23*r*)

> [A she-wolf then suckled those two little boys; Who denies this and that, so great a thing? Do we not read in Greek history that a female dog gave milk to Cyrus?]

The source of the passage in both versions is once again the forementioned Justin,[10] with whom Boccaccio will also be loosely

9 The transcriptions from the manuscripts, with modern punctuation and accents, are mine. Cornazzano's work is in two editions: the first composed in Latin couplets and the second in capitoli ternari, both transmitted by codices of dedication to Borso (Modena, Estense Universitaria Library, Lat. 872 and It. 101). The story of Cyrus is told together with that of Romulus in the Latin text (Book 2, chapter 1), while in the vernacular the two characters will each have their own chapter (for Cyrus Book 2, chapter 2). On the textual tradition of the work, see Bruni and Zancani 1992, 81-7.

10 See *Historiae philippicae*, 1.4.10: "Cuius precibus fatigatus pastor reversus in silvam invenit iuxta infantem canem feminam parvulo ubera praebentem et a feris alitibusque defendentem" (Persuaded by her prayers, the shepherd, upon returning to the woods, found a female dog beside the

associated in the verses that follow: "canis enim feta, cum illi ubera admovisset, ab infestis avibus dente latratuque servabat" (*De casibus virorum illustrium*, 2.17, *De Astyage Medorum rege*; the female dog defended the infant from importunate birds with her teeth and barks, after detaching it from the udder). Among other things, it is worth noting the assimilation of the story of Cyrus to that of Romulus, to which we shall return later.

The Roman historian – like the later Orosius – was widely read in fifteenth-century scholastic circles and is listed in numerous volumes of the court library, as attested by inventories beginning with those of 1436 and 1467.[11]

2. The Translation of Herodotus' *Histories* by Boiardo

Over the past few decades, from the late twentieth century to the present, interest in Boiardo's translations – and particularly in his most stylistically refined work, the translation of Herodotus – has developed through a series of literary-historical and philological-linguistic studies, culminating in the critical editions of other vernacular translations.[12] With regard to the translation of the

child, holding out her udders to him and defending him from ferocious birds).

11 Among the oldest manuscripts preserved in Rigobello's tower and accessible to those who frequented the Este court are Justin in Latin (Inventory of 1436 at n11, with insignia already of Niccolò II, and at n16, copied on February 15, 1370; Tissoni Benvenuti 2023, 49-50) and then in vernacular (n167 with insignia of Niccolò III; Tissoni Benvenuti 2023, 77-8, 280, later perhaps in the inventory of Ercole's books as n27). According to the scholar, (204) all would be most likley attributable to the period of Nicholas III, who possessed many ancient historiographers. As for Orosius, a more restrained presence, in the Rigobello Tower inventory of 1436 he is reported as n8 (48).

12 The publication of critical editions (the Xenophon's *Pedìa de Cyro* in Boiardo 2014, the Cornelius Nepos in Boiardo 2020a, the *Historia imperiale,* a composite selection of the works of Riccobaldo da Ferrara in Boiardo 2020b and the *Asino d'oro* in Boiardo 2021) provided an opportunity to reflect on Boiardo's translation skills (from lexicon to syntax) as early as Aprile 2012, and followed by Gritti 2014b, Gritti 2015, Zanato 2015, Romanini 2016, Romanini 2020, Romanini 2021 and Favaretto 2021. Moreover, Edoardo Fumagalli had already given, in 1994, a partial edition of Book 1 of Herodotus

Histories, a wealth of studies, dating back to the late nineteenth century, allows us to form a fairly clear picture of its textual status and, more generally, of its fidelity to the source text: namely, an exemplar of the incorrect *editio princeps* of Valla's Latin translation, already reported by Giuseppe Albini, Giulio Reichenbach and Edoardo Fumagalli, but not yet physically identified.[13]

Let us briefly trace the history of the textual tradition. The vernacular translation is transmitted by three witnesses, two manuscripts – M (Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria It. 1726 [α H 3.22]), dating from the end of the 15th century, and B (Berlin, Deutsche Staatbibliothek, Hamilton 294), copied by Domenico Gaza between December 1504 and March 1505[14] – and P, the late *editio princeps* of 1533, from which all subsequent printings (1538, 1539, 1553 and 1565) derive.[15] The relationships among the witnesses

(chapters 95-130) together with Valla's Latin text.

13 Albini 1916, 309-11; Reichenbach 1929a, 193. As will also be seen below, the assertion of Edoardo Fumagalli (1994, xv) that the Count of Scandiano had under his hand a copy of Valla "in precedenza riveduto e corretto a penna" (previously revised and corrected in pen) because that was how he worked as a habit, also in the light of more recent studies, should be better scrutinized. A few lines below, in fact, he states, "Non c'è qui il modo di diffondersi su un elemento che potrebbe anche essere casuale, se non fosse evidente anche nel volgarizzamento di Apuleio . . . , ma proprio l'abitudine del Boiardo di lavorare su testi in qualche misura eendati (emendati da chi, non sappiamo) è una prova decisiva della cura ch'egli procurava di mettere in queste opere che troppo spesso giudichiamo con sufficienza" ("There is no way here to diffuse an element that might even be accidental, if it were not also evident in the vernacular translation of Apuleius . . . but Boiardo's very habit of working on texts that had been amended to some extent (amended by whom, we do not know) is decisive proof of the care he took to put into these works that we too often don't judge critically enough"). Already Giulio Reichebach (1929, 193) had argued that the copy of the *princeps* that Boiardo had under his eye "fosse stata già in precedenza purgata di alquanti errori" (had been previously purged of many errors).

14 As stated in the colophon, already cited in Frati 1918, 267. For M see Reichenbach 1929b and for both also Fumagalli 1994, xx-i.

15 *HERODOTO ALICARNASEO HISTORICO delle guerre de Greci et de Persi, Tradotto di Greco in lingua Italiana per il Conte Mat|theo Maria Boiardo*, non piu stampato, Ma nuouamente uenuto in luce, in Veneggia per Giouann' Antonio di Ni|coluni di Sabbio. A instantia di M. Marchio Sessa. Anno

were outlined, though not conclusively demonstrated, by Fumagalli in his partial edition of Book 1 (1994). The scholar proposed a bipartite stemma codicum: from the archetype ω – very close to the original – P is said to descend directly on one branch, while the two manuscripts derive from the other, through a common antigraph, α. The result of his *collatio* is summarised by Fumagalli as follows:

> Deferring to another occasion a detailed examination of the readings of the witnesses, I anticipate here that . . . the α branch is afflicted with numerous micro-lapses, but frequent errors are also present in P; the errors common to the three witnesses, finally, compel the postulation of an archetype. (1994, xxi-ii; translation mine)

However, a sample *collatio* of the first, fifth, and last books, which I carried out in recent years, does not fully confirm Fumagalli's *stemma codicum*, although it would be premature at this stage to propose an alternative. I have therefore chosen to limit myself to presenting only a few examples of new evidence concerning the two manuscript witnesses.

Attention should first be given to M, the Modena manuscript, whose importance had already been noted by Frati (1917). On its final page, M bears a handwritten note distinct from that of the scribe who copied the text and from that of the person who annotated it in the margins:

> Fu scripto q(ue)sto libro chiamato Herodoto Alicarnasseo / patre della historia greca, p(er) Vitaliano di Trotti, e pa/gato p(er) mi zoane pencharco da parma, e Miniato / p(er) el figliuolo de m(aestr) o Andrea da le veze, e ligato / p(er) m(aestr)o Matheo da ferrara negli anni de la asumpta / redemptione 1491: adi 29 de octobre: / E fu dicto anno memorabile nel quale el Re di portugallo / co(n) ingegnosa e liberal pratica ridusse alla catolica re/ligione molti signori e populli dele Isole noviss. Tro/vate. (115)
>
> [This book, called Herodotus Halicarnasseus, the father of Greek history, is written by Vitaliano di Trotti, and paid by me, Giovanni

Domini. MDXXXIII. Fumagalli 1994, xx-i.

> Pencaro da Parma, and illuminated by the son of master Andrea da le Veze, and bound by Matteo da Ferrara in 1491, the 29th of October. And that year should be remembered because the King of Portugal, with ingenious skill, converted to the Catholic religion many lords and peoples of the newly found islands (the Americas).]

With regard to this final annotation, it is worth quoting Fumagalli's own words:

> Questo colophon, scritto da mano diversa da quella che ha vergato il testo, manifestamente non si riferisce a M, dove non compare la mano di Giovanni Pincaro (che avrà «purgato», cioè corretto il codice, impossibile essendo che l'abbia «pagato»), copista del marciano It. VI 222 (6040) per cui cfr. Benedectins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidéntaux des oigines au XVIe siècle*, III, Editions Universitaires, Fribourg Suisse 1973, 427 no 10903, né vi sono interventi di Cesare, figlio del più celebre fra i miniatori di Ercole I d'Este, Andrea Delle Vieze, è tuttavia certo che si riferisce all'esemplare di dedica di cui M è probabilmente una copia. (1994, xx-i)

> [This colophon, written by a hand other than the one that penned the text, manifestly does not refer to M, where there is no sign of the hand of Giovanni Pincaro (who will have "purged", i.e., corrected the codex, impossible given that he apparently "paid" for it), copyist of the Marcianus It. VI 222 (6040), cfr. Benedectins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidéntaux des oigines au XVIe siècle*, III, Editions Universitaires, Fribourg Suisse 1973, 427 no 10903; nor are there any interventions by the son of the most famous of Ercole I d'Este's illuminators, Andrea Delle Vieze, Cesare. It is certain, however, that he refers to the dedication codex of which M is probably a copy.]

Fumagalli draws the following conclusions: 1) the colophon does not refer to M but to its antigraph, a dedication codex to Ercole I, to which we will return later; 2) Giovanni Pincaro may have been its owner and, at most, may have corrected it, but 3) none of the hands found in M is his, as his distinct *ductus* has been identified in a manuscript preserved at the Marciana.

Although this is not evident from the passage quoted, several marginal annotations also appear in M, which have been studied at length by Dennis Looney since 1997. The American scholar attributes them to the same hand as the colophon, which he identifies as that of Giovanni Pincaro.[16] Moreover, he detects the same annotations in the Berlin codex B, which he therefore calls M's *descriptus*; a view later endorsed by Zanato (2015, 125).

However, even on a *prima facie* examination, the handwritten marginal annotations in M appear to differ from the hand of the final note, the colophon. The same can be said of B's marginal annotations, which, upon direct examination of the ms., seem to have been drafted by not one but two hands, both distinct from the one that copied the text. Leaving aside for the moment the strictly paleographic question concerning Pincaro's hand, the presence of identical annotations in M and B could be explained in various ways, well attested in mss. history: for example, the same glossing tradition may appear in several mss., either through the copying of one from the other (or vice versa), or through a shared antigraph, or through separate antigraphs which in turn are part of a shared family.

Without presenting in full the data of the sample *collatio*, it may be stated that M – where numerous are the separative errors (and understandably so, given the work's length) – poses a particular dilemma at 171-6: the textual pericope of 171*r* (corresponding to the text portion of 5.1.7) continues to the beginning of 172*r* and then returns to 171*v*., then moves to 173*r*, and then continues to 172*v*, 174*r*, 173*v*, 175*r*, 174*v*, 176*r*, 175*v*, 177*r*, 176*v*. After 176*v*, the textual sequence resumes its normal order, corresponding to the arrangement of the folios in the fascicles (each fascicle consists of 10 folios, folded in half and inserted into each other). This incorrect sequence cannot be explained by a random misordering of the folios in the 17th fascicle of M; rather, it reproduces the disorder of the antigraph, whose folios within the fascicle must have been misarranged, and consequently

16 Looney 1997, 128; Looney 2012a, 68 and finally Looney 2020, 57. M's annotations would be dated according to Looney (2020, 62-3) roughly between 1493 and 1503.

copied in the same order by M's copyist. The Berlin ms. B does not have this alteration in textual sequence (but neither does the *princeps* P) and thus cannot be considered its *descriptus*.

Another distinguishing feature concerns the rubrics. In M as in B, the rubrics go up to Book 4, chapter 3 and can confidently be attributed to Boiardo's hand since they also appear in earlier translations (in the *Pedìa de Cyro* and very synthetically in the *Historia imperiale*).[17] However, in the Modena ms., Book 3 follows a different division of chapters and contains one fewer rubric (M in fact has 10) than B, which has 11 chapters and rubrics.

The P *princeps* has the same sequence of rubrics as M in Book 3, but, in addition, continues the rubrication from Book 4 to the end. Since P is a typographical product and also rather late (dating from almost the mid-sixteenth century), the sequence of rubrics beyond the third of Book 4 must be considered spurious.[18]

B's extra rubric (which falls between chapters 5 and 6 of M and P) presents Cambises' speech before he died, killed by conspirators: "Parole di Cambise a li principi de Persia et confessione del fratricidio" (86*r*; Words of Cambises to princes of Persia and confession of fratricide). Here the rubric's subject fits well considering what is to follow:

> Come Pazithe et Smerdio de natione magica occuparno con simulatione il regno de Persia, come morite Cambise e fo scoperto lo oculto inganno de li doi germani occupatori del regno. (85*r*)
>
> [How Pazithe and Smerdio, Magi of origin, deceitfully occupied the kingdom of Persia, how Cambises died, and how the secret deception of the two brothers occupying the kingdom was discovered.]

A number of factors argue in favor of its authenticity: 1) the beginning of the chapter in B finds correspondence in the beginning of the chapter in Valla's *princeps* (81*r*); 2) already in the *Pedìa de Cyro* Boiardo encloses direct speech (those of Cyrus in

17 The *Amorum libri* also feature rubrics by the author (Zanato 2002, cci-ii).

18 On typesetting changes, additions and linguistic corrections made to texts, Trovato 1991 (2009) continues to be an authority.

particular) in chapters; 3) in B, in the copyist's *ductus*, the division of the two chapters and rubric present an arrangement that supports the rubric's authenticity.

As can be seen in Fig. 1, the beginning of 86*r* – where chapter 5 ends and the rubric appears – clearly shows Domenico Gaza's uncertainty in copying the text. The arrangement of the words in the first two lines demonstrates how Gaza, while copying the final portion of the chapter, omitted its closing phrase (specifically, the syntagma "queste parole"; "these words"), and instead proceeded directly to copy the rubric in red. At this point, he stopped transcribing the rubric, returned to black ink to insert the missing pericope at the end of the chapter – thus effectively completing the second line – and only then resumed in red to finish copying the rubric in the line below. What could have prompted such behavior if not Gaza's hesitation in the face of a difficult-to-read antigraph? This confusion becomes understandable only if one assumes that the antigraph was an idiograph in which Boiardo had subsequently added a rubric. It is most likely that the antigraph, at this point, lacked a clear indication of where one chapter ended and the next began. A very faded and inconspicuous placeholder mark – which would have indicated where to place the rubric – was probably unclear and the rubric itself may not have been laid out in the adjacent margin. This would explain why M and P do not reflect the chapter division of text and omit the rubric.[19]

19 The problem of distinction into chapters recurs in other cases as well. The copyist of M, when seeing a division into chapters, customarily leaves a few lines for the possible rubric (reflecting in this the process of his antigraph, common disposition in court amanuenses' texts). The copyist of B leaves a blank line and, at times does not differentiate one chapter from another except for a faded red pen marking (e.g., on 143*r* for 5.3, a chapter not indicated instead in M) or a small space (e.g. on 148*v* for the beginning of 5.4). The P print tended to mirror the division of M and B except for breaking chapters which were considered to be excessively long into two. Therefore, it is more than likely that at the origin of the tradition there was as archetype an idiograph in which Boiardo marked the division with a barely distinguishable stroke of his pen, where he did not insert rubrics.

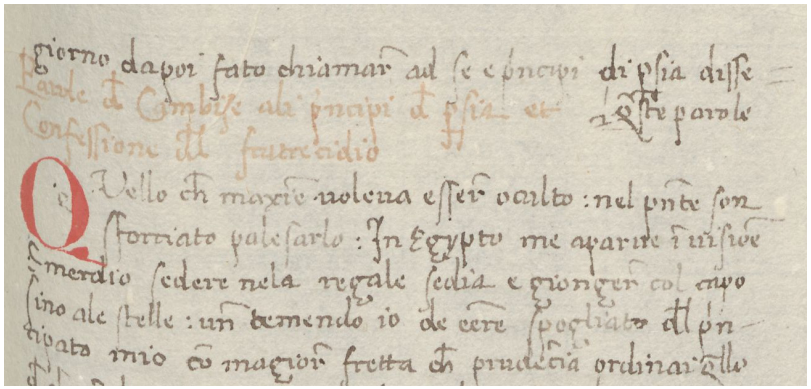

Fig. 1 Berlin, Deutsche Staatbibliothek, Hamilton 294, 86*r*.

To recapitulate, the evidence concerning the misordered textual pericope in Book 5, chapter 1 of M, together with the additional rubric in B, is sufficient to rule out the hypothesis that B is a *descriptus* of M, as proposed by Looney.

Before drawing further conclusions,it is worth turning our attention to some interesting new findings concerning the Modena ms. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti's recent monograph on the Este library devoted an appendix to *codices* bearing the same coat of arms as M. The scholar describes it the as follows:

> . . . rotondo, fondo oro, con all'interno tre pesci disposti a formare un cerchio e tre cartigli, disposti pure in cerchio sopra i pesci; in ogni cartiglio una delle parole, da sinistra, NABILIS, LABILIS, POTABILIS. Sopra lo stemma, una testa di elefante, sulla cui proboscide è scritto FORTIS ET PATIENS; avvolto intorno al collo dell'elefante un lungo nastro bianco con la scritta OMNIS VITA EST SUPPLICIUM. (On c. 1; Tissoni Benvenuti 2023, 533)

> [. . . round, gold background, within which are three fish arranged in circular pattern with three cartouches, also arranged in circular pattern above the fish; in each cartouche are each of the words, from left, NABILIS, LABILIS, POTABILIS 'nabilis (?), labile, drinkable'. Above the coat of arms is an elephant's head, on whose trunk is written FORTIS ET PATIENS 'strong and patient'; wrapped around

the elephant's neck is a long white ribbon with the inscription OMNIS VITA EST SUPPLICIUM 'every life is an agony'.]

Such an emblem with the motto *Potabilis Nabilis Labilis*, though difficult to read, appears in ms. Egerton 1999 of Boiardo's *Amorum Libri*, dated *die quarto Jan. 1477* (ibid.; see Zanato 2002, xxii) and, according to the scholar's hypothesis, it belonged to an Este official very close to Boiardo, Bonifacio Bevilacqua.[20] This identification would confirm what is stated in the colophon of M, that the ms. was executed in Ferrara and precisely from the *codex* set up in 1491 for Ercole I. There is no trace of it in the inventories of his library, but the disappearance of the dedication *codex* could likely be attributed to the loan to copy M or another ms.[21]

As noted above, B – which does not present the misordering of folios to Book 5 Chapter 1 (reconstructible from M's textual disorder) – cannot derive from the antigraph of M (the dedication *codex* for Ercole I). The derivation of M and B from the same antigraph, argued by Fumagalli on the basis of micro-lapses, should therefore be reconsidered in the light of these new data to assume an additional antigraph between B and the *interpositus* of M.[22]

20 For Tissoni Benvenuti 2023, 534 who derives information from Gundersheimer 1988 (86-7 and 116) Bonifacio Bevilacqua is on salary with the Este family in 1476, judge of the XII Savi between 1482 and 1486 and "compagno del duca, insieme a Boiardo e Teofilo Calcagnini" ("companion of the duke, together with Boiardo and Teofilo Calcagnini").

21 A Herodotus in the vernacular is reported only in Alfonso II's 1561 inventory of books. However, because of the vague description ("n. 112 Erodoto vulgare, in carta buona coperto di curamo rosso"; "no. 112 Herodotus in vernacular, in good paper covered with red leather") in 1561 it could also refer to the 1533 *princeps* or another reprint (Tissoni Benvenuti 2023, 477).

22 The existence of these micro-lapses is certain, but given the nature of P's typographical reality, it must be assumed that in the print shop not only were the rubrics invented right up to the end of the work, but also the missing parts in the antigraph were added. Take the example of *Storie*, 1.3 (corresponding to the beginning of Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.29) in B and M the beginning of the period is missing, while in P there is the pericope "La grandezza di questo re attrasse dalle diverse parte del mondo . . ." (The greatness of this king attracted from the different parts of the world . . .), which does not reflect the passage of the Latin translation at all (Valla, 1.29,

According to what is known of Boiardo's *scriptorium* – where his assistants prepared final copies of his works to be forwarded to the ducal amanuensis for the production of presentation *codices* – M's antigraph (i.e., the dedication *codex* to Ercole I) was most likely transcribed directly from a final copy based on the original.[23] Moreover, considering the extra rubric in B, it is plausible to assume that this *codex* too directly derived from the same final copy, an idiograph, rather than the archetype, as proposed by Fumagalli.

Furthermore, both Fumagalli and Looney, who have extensively studied the vernacular translation, emphasise the greater stylistic accuracy of the earlier books compared with the later ones. The latter present a more careless drafting and a probable lack of revision. One can infer that a final copy of the original existed only for the earlier books – those on which Boiardo himself would have intervened, at least in the matter of the rubrics. It is therefore probable that the final textual portion extended to the end of chapter 3 of Book 4, after which the rubrics cease.[24] One could thus hypothesise that for the remainder of

6*r*; "his subactis et potentia Lydorum per Croesum aucta contulerunt se sardis opibus florentes . . ."; subjugated these and increased the power of the Lydians thanks to Croesus they gathered in Sardis, flourishing in wealth). Given the possible objection that Boiardo rewrites and does not faithfully translate text, one must consider the occasional gaps evident in some of the tradition of texts of the humanistic period. This is in part due to portions of unintelligible text which was not copied into the idiograph and therefore resulting in subsequent transmission of incomplete or inaccurate works.

23 In this regard, Guerrini 1988, Guerrini Ferri 1998, Zanato 2002, clxxvi-ix; Gritti 2014a, 6n.26.

24 Boiardo's methodology is confirmed through the reconstruction of the relationships between witnesses of the *Pedìa de Cyro,* for which see Gritti 2014a, but also by what can be deduced from the compositional history of the *Inamoramento de Orlando.* The "ricopiatura degli autografi da parte dei menanti al suo servizio . . . il Conte continuava a operare, introducendo varianti di vario genere ma senza controllare troppo a fondo il lavoro dei suoi copisti" (Zanato 2015, 148; recopying of the autographs by the secretaries in his service . . . the Count continued to operate, introducing variants of various kinds but without controlling too thoroughly the work of his copyists). The absence of a rereading would therefore justify the transmission from the idiograph-archetype to the rest of the tradition of the micro-lapses attested by

the work the copies were taken directly from Boiardo's original *minuta*, perhaps in unbound fascicles and in a difficult-to-read condition.[25] However, this hypothesis will need to be tested against the data that emerge from a complete collation of the vernacular witnesses.

Moreover, there is little doubt that the presence of identical annotations in the two *codices* can be explained by the intervention of an owner of B who, having borrowed M – already annotated – copied its *marginalia*. It is likely that the transcription of these notes took place in Ferrara between 1505, the date marking the completion of B's copying, and 1520, the year of Ippolito d'Este's death, an event recorded at the end of the manuscript (288*v*).

We can therefore say that at least two of the three surviving witnesses circulated in Ferrara in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. These are not, however, the only *codices* between Ferrara and Mantua of which there are records: for example, on 30 October 1498 Isabella d'Este had a copy of Boiardo's *Storie* sent to her (the one prepared for her uncle Alberto d'Este), which she kept with her at least until 9 July 1499 (the date of the letter in which she declared that she had not yet finished reading the translation; Luzio-Renier 1903, 15 and 23; Looney, 2020, 56). It is quite possible that before returning it she had a copy made. However, in the sixteenth-century Gonzaga family inventories there is no mention of Herodotus. Nonetheless, it is likely that the 1533 printed version derived from one of these manuscripts circulating between the two courts.[26] For the moment, research

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B and M, and which could be both the result of distraction, in the face of such a long text, and the difficulty of Boiardo's own secretaries in reading the original.

25 In a letter of August 1491 to Isabella d'Este Gonzaga who asked him for the most recently composed cantos of the *Inamoramento de Orlando* Boiardo replied: "al presente non ho copia alcuna se non l'originale de mia mane che seria difficile da lezere" (letter n. 504 in Monducci and Badini 1997, 256; Now I have no copy except the original written in my own hand and it would be hard to read; see also Zanato 2015, 149).

26 The printer of Herodotus' translation on behalf of Melchiorre Sessa was, not surprisingly, Giovann'Antonio Nicolini da Sabbio, who had working relations with Brescia and the surrounding area (Parolotto 2013, 738; Curi

points to a rather limited circulation of the translation in this area. In fact, the greatest fortune of the vernacular Herodotus would begin only after its print publication, as evidenced by the four editions derived from the *princeps* within a few years, between the 1530s and 1560s.

To recapitulate, based on the current state of the sample collation, the following may be inferred: the three witnesses most likely derive from an archetype-idiograph, though only the Berlin codex B does so directly; while the printeed edition P, at least through the copy that reached the press, and the Modenese manuscript M, through the *interpositus* of dedication to Ercole I d'Este. M is thus not the most reliable witness for textual reconstruction as has been confirmed thus far.

3. Boiardo's Knowledge of Herodotus Before the Translation

We now come to the history of the composition of the translation. According to the scholars cited so far, Boiardo's translation of Herodotuswould belong to the later years of his life, coinciding with his governorship of Reggio Emilia on behalf of the Duke of Ferrara. Zanato, in particular, suggests that it was composed during a period of relative pause – or reduced activity – in the writing of the *Inamoramento de Orlando*, and the most likely dates of composition would fall between the mid- and late 1480s, since the dedication *codex* bears the date 1491.[27] This represents a longer time span than that required for his other vernacular translations, and a period not without difficulty for Boiardo due to his poor health (his long-standing gout had intensified) and to the administrative responsibilities attached to his office in Reggio.

The *Histories* of Herodotus is a vast historiographical work in nine books. Unlike the abbreviated version by Poggio Bracciolini of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (from which Boiardo took the *Pedìa de Cyro*), Valla's Latin translation of Herodotus is very careful to

Nicolardi 2019, 51-2).

27 The first eight cantos of the last book would have been written between mid-1485 and October 1486, however, before August 1491 (Zanato 2015, 133 and 161).

respect the original as much as possible; the *princeps*, from which Boiardo translates, does indeed consist of 261 folios. Given his many obligations, it seems scarcely plausible that he could have completed the translation in as little as five years.

In fact, Boiardo was already reading Herodotus when he composed the *Pedìa de Cyro*, that is, around 1469-1471 – a period roughly five years before Valla's translation went to print.[28] Although he was also familiar with the Latin retellings of Cyrus' story, at least those by Cornelius Nepos (which he had recently translated) and Justin,[29] the Count of Scandiano had already

28 Gritti 2014a, 124, 126, 455-6; considerations later taken up also by Zanato 2015, 129. On the other hand, there is no evidence that at the time of the composition of *Carmina* (pre-May 1464; Zanato 2015, 66) he was already reading Herodotus, because the allusion in *Carmen* 9.15-7 ("*biscentena* canat Tomyris sub milite caesa / *milia* Persarum: simul atque addant humano saturatum sanguine Cyrum"; Sing the two hundred thousand Persians killed by Tomiris' soldiers and add Cyrus satiated with human blood] in whose note *Histories*, 1.214, is given as the source) can be well explained by what Justin says about the death of Cyrus: "Ibi compositis in montibus insidiis *ducenta milia Persarum* cum ipso rege trucidavit . . . Caput Cyri amputatum in utrem humano sanguine repletum coici regina iubet cum hac exprobratione crudelitatis: 'satia te' inquit 'sanguine, quem sitisti cuiusque insatiabilis semper fuisti'" (*Historiae philippicae*, 1.8.11-3; there, prepared an ambush in the mountains, slaughtered *two hundred thousand Persians* along with the king himself . . . The queen ordered that Cyro's severed head be thrown into a wineskin filled with human blood, thus chastising him for his cruelty: 'Drink your fill', she said, 'that blood for which you have been so thirsty and which has never been enough for you'; italics mine). And it is no coincidence that in both works the number of Persians killed is 200,000 (in the translation it will increase to 400,000), while in Herodotus the number is not given (*Histories*, 1.214; Ἡ πολλὴ τῆς Περσικῆς στρατιῆς, 'most of the Persian army'). On Boiardo's possible reading of a manuscript of Justin, see Zampese 1994, 21-2.

29 Boiardo derived the information that the Massagetians and not the Scythians were the ones who killed Cyrus from Cornelius Nepos's *De viris illustribus* (*De regibus* 1.2, whose source is Herodotus, *Histories*, I 214). The Massagietians in fact appear in Boiardo's related translation: "De quilli che hebbino signoria cum imperio furno excelentissimi secundo il iuditio nostro: de li Persiani Cyro e Dario, filio di Hirthapso . . . Il primo di questi morite in batalia contro a li Massageti" ([21] *Li ri* 1.2; Among these those who held an empire, were excellent, as we believe, of the Persians Cyrus and Darius, son

shown an interest in Herodotus' account of it, as is evident from a passage in the *Prologue* to the *Pedìa de Cyro*, which seems to allude to the episode related in the *Histories* (1.110):

> E così Cyrro per molti è detto intra e pastori allevato e *da una cagna essere stato nutrito* e Romulo che dette principio a l'imperio italiano per simigliante modo da una salvaticha lupa allevato si dice. (*Prologo*, 12)
>
> [And so many say that Cyrus was raised among shepherds and fed by a female dog, and that Romulus, who started the Italian empire, in a similar way was raised by a wild she-wolf.]

In Boiardo's translation there is a similar syntagma – "di quindi hebe origine la fabula di Cyro che da una cane miraculosamente fosse stato nutrito" (1.9 25*r*; hence originated the fable of Cyrus that by a female dog he had been miraculously fed) – which renders quite freely Valla's Latin text: "divulgaverunt a cane Cyrum, cum esset expositus, fuisse educatum. Unde haec fabula menavit" (*Historiae*, 23*r*; they reported that when he was exposed, Cyrus was raised by a female dog. Hence this fable mentions it).[30] Yet the similarity between the passages in the *Pedìa* and the translation of the *Storie* only proves that Boiardo was recalling the words of the *Pedìa* from memory when he drafted the first book of his translation. Moreover, in the *Prologue*, the juxtaposition of the myth of Romulus suckled by the she-wolf and that of Cyrus being nourished by a female dog clearly recalls the passage from the *De excellentium virorum principibus* of Cornazzano already quoted in §1.

Definitive proof that Boiardo was reading a ms. of Valla's translation while working on the text of the *Pedìa* is provided by the gloss of *Pedìa* 6.64, 3 – "Primamente erano aparechiati

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of Istaspes. The first of these died in battle against the Massagetians). See also Gritti 2014a, 124.

30 Pending the preparation of the critical edition, henceforth the text of the Herodotus vernacular translation is given on the basis of the Berlin ms. amended of errors, which, as seen in §2, appears to be the most reliable witness at the moment because it is closest to the idiograph-archetype of the tradition.

davanti alla real corte quatro milia de *quei soldati che loro doriphori appellano, cioè pedoni hastati*" (First, four thousand of *those soldiers they call doriphori, i.e., hastati pedestrians i.e., foot soldiers armed with poles, were arrayed before the king's court*; italics mine) – in which the Greek name of the king's bodyguards, the *doriphori*, was made explicit.[31] In the Latin translation, Valla had likewise felt the need to explain the term used by Herodotus in the *Histories* (3.127), namely ἐδορυφόρεοι. The Roman humanist does indeed write: "doriphori, id est hastati satellites" (*Historiae*, 3, 89*v*). The presence in the *Pedìa* passage of the two terms already used by Valla in his gloss, namely *doriphori* and *hastati*, removes any doubt that the Count of Scandiano had Valla's Latin Herodotus before his eyes.

Significantly, the calque *doriphori* also recurs in a number of passages in the vulgarised Herodotus – e.g. in *Histories* 3.9, 98*v*: "quelli che doriphori sono appellati, che sono de la guardia regale" (those who doriphori are called, who are of the royal guard); or "doriphori, cio è li guardatori regali" (99*r*; doriphori, that is the royal guard) – in which the Greek term, re-introduced by Boiardo, replaces Valla's *satellites* (89*v* and 90*r*), a term usually rendered in the *Pedia* with "guardatori della persona sua" (6.46.37; the royal guard); not coincidentally, an expression also appearing in the vulgarised *Histories*.

Another passage in Xenophon's version confirms Herodotus' reading, and again from Book 3: "Dietro a questi ne veniano e *cavalli persiani che nisei se apellano*, e per candore e per superba grandecia belli a vedere" (*Pedìa*, 6.45.9; Behind these came the Persian horses that are called nisei, and by candor and superb grandeur beautiful to behold). The gloss on the *nisei* horses echoes Valla's translation: "Nam ab equis medicis vincuntur qui nysaei vocantur" (*Historiae*, 3.106, 85*v*; Indeed they are won by Media's horses that are called nisei).

And even the hint of their greatness finds confirmation in the period immediately preceding: "Nam ut paulo ante dixi ultima

31 The word *doriphori* does never appear in the Latin translation of Poggio Bracciolini's *Cyropedia*: "Primum ante regiam parati aderant ad quatuor milia hastati milites" (6.174; Firstly, four thousand soldiers with poles were present in front of the palace). See Boiardo 2014, 455.

plagarum quae ad orientem vergentes habitantur indica est, in qua et animantes tam quadrupedes quam volucres multo sunt *grandiores* quam caeteris in locis *praeter quam equis*" (Valla, *Historiae*, 3.106, 85*v*; For, as I said just now, the last of the lands extending eastward that are inhabited is India, in which also the animals both quadrupeds and birds are larger than in other places, with the exception of horses). The corresponding passage in the translation of the *Storie*, however, appears freer – except for the accurate detail about the origin of the horses (Media rather of Persia):[32] "excepto li cavalli, li quali, anchora che quivi grandissimi siano, sono avanciati da gli nisei che nascono in Media" (3.7, 95*r*; except for the horses, which, although they are very great, are surpassed by the nisei who are born in Media).

Traces of a reading of Herodotus also surface in the *Historia Imperiale*: in the chapter devoted to Diocletian's life, the description of the region inhabited by the Sarmatians (not coincidentally called Sauromatians by Herodotus) clearly reveals dependence on *Histories*, 4.21-8, where the Greek historian pauses to describe the Northern peoples and lands perpetually covered by frost.[33] The following is the passage in the *Historia imperiale*:

> Li Sarmati, che sono da li Greci chiamati Sauromati per la orribile guardatura, hanno da oriente il mare Euxino, che al presente se chiama Mazore; da mezodì la Tracia, da ponente li Geti e da septentrione li Halani. Tuta la loro terra è piana, sancia alcuna pianta fructevole né salvagia; lo assencio è il più de l'herba che quivi nascie, a la amarecia del quale sono asuefatti e loro cavalli; le aque sono fredissime e crude e il cielo tanto gelato che non solo e fiumi di quella regione, ma il mare spesso se indura in tanta giaza che porta le lor carette e li exerciti armati a la bataglia. (1.33 *Diocliciano*, 41-2)

> [The Sarmatians, who are called by the Greeks Sauromatians because of their hideous appearance, have from the east the

32 The mention of Persia in the *Pedìa* could be the result as much of a trivialization as of an erroneous lesson read by Boiardo in the Latin ms. he had in hand at the time.

33 The reference is already footnoted by Rizzi and Tissoni Benvenuti 2020, 204.

> Eusinian sea, which is now called the Major; to the south Thrace, to the west the Geti and to the north the Alanians. All their land is flat, without any fruit trees or bushes, cultivated or wild; absinthe is the herb that most grows here, to the bitterness of which their horses are addicted; the waters are very cold and raw and the sky so frozen that not only the rivers of that region, but the sea often hardens into so much ice that it can support their chariots and armed forces in battle.]

Two elements point directly to the corresponding passage in Valla's translation: the reference to the desolation of the heath – "sancia alcuna pianta fructevole né salvagia", which finds correspondence in "vacuum prorsus arboribus tam agrestibus quam fructiferis" (*Historiae*, 4.21, 99*r*; empty of vegetation as wild as it is fruit-bearing)[34] – and the emphasis on the ice forming a surface solid enough for armies to cross (§42; "le aque sono fredissime e crude e il cielo tanto gelato che non solo e fiumi di quella regione, ma il mare spesso se indura in tanta giaza che porta le lor carette e li exerciti armati a la bataglia"). This description closely parallels Valla's: "Ibidem quoque mare glaciatur et omnis cimerius bosporus super quam glaciem omnes qui intra fossam incolunt scythiae exercitus ducunt et plaustra agunt trans mare usque ad Indos" (4.28, 100*r*; There the sea freezes and all the Cimmerian Bosporus, and over that ice all the Scythians who live within the valley lead armies and chariots and pass over the sea to the Indians).[35]

A little further on, in §50 of the *Historia imperiale*, Boiardo mentions the bitter water springs of the Ipan River:

> Quivi haveano fatto e nostri capitani deliberatione de allogiare, per *l'aqua del fiume che mancho è ria che quelle de le fonte del*

34 In the translation of the *Storie* it will be translated "vuoto de ogni pianta frutifera e salvaticha" (4.2, 108*v*).

35 In the Herodotean translation, with respect to Valla, Boiardo omits the pericope of the passage over the frozen sea to the Indians, perhaps not credible to him: "quivi se congela il mare e la grandissima palude de Cimerio e sopra a la giacia marina conducono gli Scythi lo exercito e le carete loro" (4.2, 109*v*; There the sea freezes, as does the vast marsh of Cimmeria, and over the frozen sea the Scythians lead their army and their wagons).

> *paese*, e li campi là dintorno sono più herbosi e fertili; ma li barbari, cognosciuta la intentione de' nostri, passato il Romano exercito, se alogiarno a la rippa de Itero. (1.32 *Diocliciano*, 53; italics mine)[36]
>
> [Here our captains had decided to lodge, for *the water of the river is less bad than that of the sources of the country*, and the fields around there are grassier and more fertile; but the barbarians, knowing the intention of ours, passed the Roman army, lodged near the bank of the Itero. (Italics mine)]

The information is found in *Histories* 4.52, which in Valla's translation reads: "propter amarum qui in eum [Hypanim] influit fontem, adeo inquam amarum ut cum sit exigua magnitudine tam inficiat Hypanim, flumen in paucis magnum" (*Historiae*, 4.52, 103*v*; because of the bitter spring that pours into it [Hypani] the water, I say, is so bitter that, although it is of modest flow, it alters that of the Hypani, one of the most large rivers).[37]

Moreover, Boiardo also seems to resort to Herodotus' *Histories* when he vulgarises Apuleius. In a passage from *L'asino d'oro*, translated before 1479, according to Favaretto "l'autore, scostandosi dal testo latino, sembra rifarsi all'episodio dell'indovino Evenio e delle pecore sacre al Sole, descritto nell'opera dello storico greco" (2021, 11n3; the author, departing from the Latin text, seems to refer to the episode of the soothsayer Evenio and the sheep sacred to the Sun, described in the Greek historian's work).[38] In the translation, we read: "Queste [pecore] sono dedicate al Sole e sogliono rabiosamente contro a gli homini incrudelire con corno

36 Also reported in Rizzi and Benvenuti 2020, 205.

37 Thus faithfully translated in Herodotus' translation: "è amarissimo per una fonte amara che dentro vi deriva; tanto amara dico che, essendo pochissima acqua, guasta tuta quella del fiume Hipano, del quale se trovano pochi magiori" (*Storie*, 4.4, 113*v*).

38 Favaretto 2021, 11n3. The reprise of the myth of the Sun's sheep could also refer back to the *Odyssey*, 12.322 where the god's "cows and fat flocks" are mentioned, but at the current state of research it is rather difficult to assume a reading of Homer, even in Latin translation, by Boiardo (I thank Luciana Furbetta for helping me locate the Homeric reference). On classical literature read by Boiardo see Zampese 1994, Carrai 1998 and Zanato 2015, in addition to the critical editions of Boiardo that have already come out.

acuto e con sassosa fronte et, alcuna fiata, con morso venenoso" (*L'asino d'oro*, 6.12.4; These sheep are dedicated to the Sun and are wont, in fury, to attack men with sharp horns and stony foreheads and, at times, with poisonous bites). Beyond the wrathful behavior of the sheep (an invention of Boiardo), the passage recalls *Histories* 9.93, rendered by Valla as follows: "Sunt in hac Apollonia sacrae Solis oves, quae interdiu secundum flumen pascuntur quod e monte Lacmone per apolloniatem agrum fluit in mare iuxta Oricon portum" (*Historiae*, 9.93, 241*v*; In this city of Apollonia there are sheep sacred to the Sun, which graze by day along the river that flows from Mount Lacmon through the fields of Apollonia into the sea near the port of Oricum).[39]

We may now begin to draw some conclusions. It seems beyond doubt that:

1) Boiardo was reading Herodotus' *Histories* at least up to Book 3 while translating the *Pedìa de Cyro*; Book 3 when he was vulgarising the chapter on Diocletian of the *Historia imperiale*; and at least up to Book 9 while working on the Apuleius translation.

2) Consequently, he must have read Herodotus slowly, using a ms. that he had available for a long time. Why not, then, suppose that this reading was accompanied by translation (at least a literal rendering of those sections that most interested him)?

3) Moreover, on the basis of the evidence provided by the *Pedìa* and the uncertain dating of the translation of the *Historia imperiale* (which, according to Andrea Rizzi and Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti, should be placed in the mid-1470s),[40] one might infer that between 1469 and 1474 (the year of publication of the *princeps* of Flavio Biondo's *Italia illustrata*, mentioned in the letter of dedication to Ercole of *Historia imperiale*), Boiardo was engaged in the first books of his Herodotus translation, at least up to Book 4.[41]

39 In the Herodotean translation, it is faithfully translated as follows: "Ne la sopradeta citade de Apollonia sono pecore consecrate al Sole, le quale il giorno se pascono a la rivera de quello fiume che descende dal monte deto Lacmone e per la campagna de Apollonia corendo nel mare presso al porto de Orico" (*Storie*, 9.8, 276*v*).

40 In this regard, see Rizzi and Tissoni Benvenuti 2020, 18.

41 This dating is also confirmed by several passages from the *Histories* employed as sources for the *Inamoramento de Orlando* (Zampese 1994, 87-

Consequently, the hypothesis that the 1474 *princeps* was the sole witness of Valla's Latin translation known to Boiardo can no longer be sustained.[42] It will therefore be necessary – though difficult, given the few passages examined – to identify the *codex* Boiardo may have used before obtaining the 1474 print.[43]

4) Finally, the reference to Herodotus in *L'asino d'oro* suggests that, by or around 1479, the Count of Scandiano was completing his reading, and then his translation, of the *Histories*, this time having Valla's printed text at hand.

At this point, the narrower chronological range of the translation proposed by Zanato (i.e., the mid-1980s) will have to be reconsidered. The work of revision and stylistically refinement, at least for the first part of the translation, may instead belong to these later years.

4. Boiardo's Methodology: the Tale of Cyrus

The process of translating the *Storie* thus seems to have prolonged over time, often overlapping with that of the other translations and especially with the equally extended composition of the *Inamoramento de Orlando* (drafted, according to scholars, from the second half of the 1460s to the end of his life) and that of the *Amorum libri*. Consequently, Boiardo seems to have devoted only partial attention to the stylistic refinement of his Herodotus translation.[44] In this regard, it is worth recalling Zanato's summary

89n122; the first one from Herodotus 2.148, for the two levels of Morgana's reign in *In. Or.*, 2.8.34; the second from Herodotus 5.85, for comparing Orlando's action to the unleashing of an earthquake, in *In. Or.*, 2.8.24). The first twenty-one cantos of Book 2 of the poem would in fact have been composed between 1471 and 1473 (Zanato 2015, 156-8).

42 Edoardo Fumagalli (1988, 49-91) had noted that already for the translation of Apuleius Boiardo used a print with lessons from other witnesses.

43 Zanato 2015, 129, suggests that it may be the Venice, Marciana Library, Latin X 52 (3230), which he cites, however, because it has a gap in Book 7, also common to the *editio princeps*.

44 On the issue of Boiardo's translating skills and style, the debate has been ongoing for a long time. In recent years, in the wake of Acocella 1991,

of the prevailing scholarly view of the differences between the early and later books, based especially on Murrin's analysis of Books 2, 4, and 7, and Looney's analysis of the last two books:[45]

> Boiardo's conspicuous and multifaceted interventions in the first book are not repeated with such intensity in the other books, particularly in the fourth and seventh, the subject of Michael Murrin's direct investigation, while notable cuts are detected, but in a less thoughtful way in the eighth and ninth books. (Zanato 2015, 128)

Immediately afterwards, Zanato makes an observation that deserves further reflection:

> [I could not explain this disparity, especially in the first book (on the other hand, it is part of Boiardo's — and not only his — translation practice to work more swiftly toward the end), except by assuming that *the first book* of the *Storie* had been subjected *to*

71-5, and Fumagalli 1994, viii-ix, Tiziano Zanato (2015, 96-8) and especially the linguistic analyses of Fabio Romanini (2020 and 2021) have embraced the idea that the presence of errors or word-for-word syntax are typical of the genre and should not be ascribed to Boiardo as a sign of neglect or even inauthenticity. Of a different opinion is the now very unreliable Tincani 1884, 267-71, and with more critical judgment Reichenbach 1929a, 194, Tissoni Benvenuti 1972 (1981), 52, and Gritti 2014b and 2015, who thought instead that the Count of Scandiano had intervened to arrange the text drafted by a secretary at a later time (but Acocella 1991, 75, also considers this plausible, only for some textual portions and during periods of the Count's intense work). The dilemma also concerns Herodotus' translation. Boiardo becomes progressively more explicit about the difficulty of translating classical authors into the vernacular around 1490 (as expressed in the *Prologue* of the *Storie*), after a long experience of translation (Matarrese 1998, 614-5); his reflection would seem to arise precisely from the direct hand-to-hand with the Latin reference texts, however the presence of gross errors in the translation from Latin of the *Historiae* persists (recall, for example, what Fumagalli 1994, 28, says about the misunderstanding of the Latin *insimulo*). Only when the critical edition is completed will it probably be possible to come to a better understanding of the issue.

45 Murrin 1994 examines the differences from the Greek and Valla's Latin texts, identifying Boiardo's or Valla's errors, expansions (updating explanations or additions), clarifications, censures (on tyranny, already partly Valla's) and cuts of various kinds. Regarding Books 8 and 9, see Looney 1998, 436.

> *special attention* by the Count, probably well before he devoted himself to the full translation of Herodotus. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that the Greek writer himself had been the focus of Guarino Veronese's philological attention and pedagogical system. (Ibid.; italics mine)[46]

Boiardo's special attention to Book 1 offers valuable insight into his translation practice, especially in the sections devoted to Cyrus the Elder, who, as we have seen, by the 1460s had become fully integrated into the *specula principis* of Este political-cultural propaganda.[47]

By the time Boiardo drafted the translation of Herodotus, he was clearlly aware of this, not only because he had contributed to it with the *Pedìa*, but also because he had already encountered the tale of Cyrus in the versions of Cornelius Nepos and especially Justin and Cornazzano.

As Looney has rightly noted, "in order not to distort the ancient text and at the same time to make Herodotus familiar to his Ferrara audience, Boiardo arrives at an ingenious solution by enriching Herodotus's narrative with elements of romance" (1998, 435-6). Let us therefore examine how Boiardo drew upon cues from authors who had previously recounted the tale of Cyrus and who, circulating in the Este court, would have been easily recognisable to readers.

In the first book of Herodotus, the story of the king of Persia unfolds in two main stages: first, his clash with Croesus and victory over the king of Lydia; then, in flashback, his birth, coming to power in Persia and Media, conquest of Babylon attack on the Massagetians, and death at the hands of Tomiris, their queen. In the translation, these narrative stages are divided into chapters

46 Zanato alludes to the early Latin translation of a portion of Book 1, quoted in §1.

47 On this subject see Gritti 2025. Nevertheless, there is a very common tendency, in almost all the school and lecture notes, commentaries, and translations, to pay great attention to book 1 of Herodotus' *Histories* (esp. the Lydian *logos*), and then to lose interest, either reading less carefully, and commenting more sparsely or stopping the reading/translation/commentary entirely.

introduced by rubrics that summarise their content: the first half of the war with Croesus is narrated in chapters 5 and 7,[48] while, in *narratione interposita* or flashback, the whole life is offered in chapters 9-11.[49]

The division into chapters makes the narrative organisation more compact and enjoyable for a reader who belonged to the Este court (for example, the description of the customs of the Assyrians concludes chapter 10 devoted to the taking of Babylon, while the presentation of the Massagetian lands opens chapter 11, serving as a prelude to the end of Cyrus). Yet Boiardo's narrative skill is emerges most clearly in his use of metanarrative linkage (already enacted in the *Inamoramento de Orlando* as a development of the *entralacement* of Old French romances). In the *Storie*, this connective device is introduced at the end of chapter 8 to bridge chapters 7 and 9, otherwise quite distant from one other. To resume the tale of Cyrus, left in chapter 7, and introduce the account of his childhood (chapter 9), Boiardo adds the following transition:

> Hor seguitando, narraremo chi fosse questo Cyro e chi fossero e Persiani chi la Asia subiugorno, scrivendo non secondo coloro che hano voluto bellire la cosa, ma secondo che è la veritate, sapendo molto bene la vita de Cyro esser stata scrita in altre mainere. (*Storie*, 1.8, 21*v*).[50]

48 These are the two rubrics: "La guerra de Croeso contro a Cirro re de Persia et de questi oraculi havuti circa questa empresa" (1.5, 10*v*; The war of Croesus against Cyrus, king of Persia, and the oracles relating to this enterprise); "Sèguita la guerra de Croeso contra de Cirro et de le battaglie fate fra loro e come fosse Sardi obsediata" (1.6, 16*r*; Croesus' war against Cyrus continues and the battles between them and how Sardis was besieged).

49 The last rubrics of Book 1: "Incomencia la historia mediana et a qual modo fosse transferito lo imperio in Persia e come maravigliosamente fosse Cirro allevato" (1.9, 21*v*; The story of Media and how power was transferred to Persia begins and how wonderfully Cyrus was raised); "Come Cirro prendesse Babilonia e come fata era quella citade et che costumi, habiti et legie usino gli Assyrii" (1.9, 27*r*; How Cyrus conquered Babylon and what that city looked like and what kind of customs, habits and laws the Assyrians have); "Come Cirro fo sconfito e morto da Thomiris et de la natura et costume de Massageti" (1.11, 31*r*; How Cyrus was defeated and killed by Tomiris and the characteristics and customs of the Massagetians).

50 Looney 1998, 436-8 dwells at length on this technique. For the *Pedìa*

> [Now we will continue by narrating who this Cyrus was and who the Persians were who subjugated Asia, writing not as those who wished to embellish the tale, but according to truth, being well aware that the life of Cyrus has also been written in other ways.]

In this closing chapter (which, incidentally, reproposes in anticipation Herodotus' commentary at the conclusion of the tale of Cyrus, placed almost at the end of Book 1),[51] Boiardo notes that the Persian king's life had been "written in other ways" ("scritta in altre maniere"), recalling the same reflection expressed in the *Prologue* of the *Pedìa* and prompting readers to discern the reasons for the reference. The Count of Scandiano thus invites his audience to participate in subtle intertextual game: recognising the sources he draws upon to embellish his translation.

Without examining the entire life of Cyrus, we will limit ourselves to a few significant examples drawn from the account of his childhood. The first meeting between the future king of Persia – who until then had lived among shepherds with his putative father (Mithridates in the vernacular version) – and the king of Media, Astyages, his grandfather, is narrated in Herodotus (*Histories*, 1.114-5). Compared to Valla's translation, which follows Herodotus closely, Boiardo fictionalises the tale, enriching it with pathos. Cyrus is brought before the lord of Media because he mistreated the son of Artembares, a high-ranking courtier, during a game. When Astyages reproaches him, which reminds him that he is the son of a simple shepherd while the other boy is socially superior to him, Cyrus responds by displaying an innate sense of authority: within the fiction of the game, having been chosen as king by the other children, he punished Artembares' son for being disobedient.

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see the analysis of Gritti 2015, 181.

51 Valla's translation of it is quoted: "Haec de Cyri vitae exitu de quo cum multa referantur is qui mihi maximum verisimilis videt, a me commemoratus est" (*Historiae*, 1, 31*r*; This was the end of the life of Cyrus, of which I have related what seemed to me the most verisimilar, though others report otherwise), thus faithfully translated by Boiardo: "Questo credo io esser stato il fine de la vita de Cyro abenché altramente da molti sia referito, ma quello che a me è parso più versimile io ho narrato" (*Storie*, 1.11, 33*v*).

Here is Valla's translation:

> Artembares, ut erat ira percitus, ad Astyagem ducens filium secum contendit et rem intolerandam passum esse inquiens eiusque humeros ostendens: 'Siccine indigne' ait 'accipimur, rex, a filio bubulci servi tui?' Audiens haec ac cernens Astyages, volens ulcisci puerum Artembaris honoris gratia, iussit aercessi bubulcum et filium; qui cum ambo affuisset intuens in Cyrum, Astyages: 'Tunc' inquit 'hoc tali patre genitus ausus es huius filium, viri apud me primarium, tam indignis concidere verberibus?' Cui ille: 'Istuc' inquit 'here, huic ego iure feci. Pueri, enim, pagani, quorum hic unus erat, me regem suum ludentes constituerant, quippe qui videbar eis ad hoc maxime esse idoneus; at iste, cum caeteri pueri iussis obtemperarent, audiens dicto esse nolebat ac me nihili faciebat, propter quod poenas dedit; quod si ego propterea ullo malo sum dignus, hic tibi praesto sum'. (*Historiae*, 1, 21*r*)
>
> [Artembares, angry as he was, came to Astyages leading his son with him and complained that he had been treated unworthily. Laying bare his son's shoulders, he said: 'So unworthily, O king, do we agree to be treated by the son of a bumpkin, your servant?' Astyages, hearing the lamentations and seeing the wounds, wanting to avenge the child to honor Artembares, ordered that the shepherd and his son be called. When both were present, turning to Cyrus, Astyages said to him: 'You, then, who are the son of such a father, have you dared to whip so unworthily the son of a man who occupies the first place with me?' To him Cyrus replied: 'I did so with him according to law. The little boys of the village, among whom was also he, for fun had made me their king, for it seemed to them that I was best suited for this. But while the others carried out my commands, this one did not listen to what I said and would not obey, so I punished him. If therefore by my conduct I deserve any punishment, I am at your disposal'.]

Let us now examine Boiardo's version:

> Artembare, che di natura era iracundo e superbo, ne andò incontinenti al re e dolendosi gravemente, Astiage per satisfare a lui fece adimandare e il pastore et il figliolo, e quali, gionti ne la presentia del re e *stando Mitridate tuto smarito*, Cyro *non mutò volto* ma *con ardito sembiante* rispose ad Astiage che lo minaciava: 'Senza

> obedientia, o re, vale niente la signoria. L'altri fanciulli de la villa, et questo con loro, per suo principe ordinato me haveano e costui non me extimando facea pocho conto de gli mei comandamenti et perhò ne ha portato iustissima pena'. (*Storie*, 1.9, 24*r*; italics mine)
>
> [Artembares, who by nature was wrathful and haughty, immediately came to Astyages and complained that he had been treated unworthily. Astyages, wanting to honor Artembares, ordered that the shepherd and his son be called. When both were present and *with Mithridates standing all bewildered*, Cyrus *did not change his countenance* but *with bold behaviour* answered Astyage who threatened him: 'Without obedience, O king, lordship is worthless. The little boys of the village, among whom was also he, had made me their king, but this one, not esteeming me, paid no attention to my orders and for that he received a very just punishment'.]

As is his custom, Boiardo omits most of the direct speech – retaining only Cyrus's response so as to centre the reader's attention on his words (Aprile 2012, 128; Gritti 2014b, 151, and Gritti 2015, 167). Instead, he dwells on the emotional interplay of the two defendants before the ruler: on the one hand, he enriches the figure of Mithridates with a humble and bewildered attitude in a way that counterbalances the confidence of Cyrus; on the other, he empahsises the boy's recklessness through two stylistic devices: *non mutò volto* and *con ardito sembiante*.[52] The two stylistic devices are taken up respectively from Justin, from whom he translates word for word "nihil mutatu vultu" (*Historiae philippicae*, 1.5.3; not changing his countenance),[53] and from Cornazzano (*De excellentium virorum principibus*, 2.2.76, 24*r*), from whom he takes the cue *con molta baldança* (with much boldness), reworking it in the similar

52 Instead, M (f.29r) and P (c. 25r) bear the variant adiaphora *facia*.

53 I quote the entire period for better understanding: "Ille [Astiages], arcessito puero et interrogato, cum *nihil mutatu vultu* fecisse se ut regem respondisset, admiratum constantiam in memoriam somnii responsique revocatur" (*Historiae philippicae*, 1.5.3; He [Astyages], having summoned and questioned the child, since Cyrus, *not changing his countenance*, had replied that he had simply behaved like a king, impressed by his firmness, returned with his memory to the dream and the response; italics mine).

form *con ardito sembiante*. Cornazzano, who had condensed the entire episode in two tercets, had, unsurprisingly, employed this stylistic device to highlight Cyrus' bold nature.[54]

Another passage in the translation, shortly after this one, confirms that Boiardo was reading Cornazzano and drawing upon him as a source. In the episode of Astyages' terrible revenge – when he serves Harpagus his own son's flesh and immediately presents him with the head and limbs so that he may recognise them – Valla's translation remains faithful to Herodotus's original:

> Dehinc sub hora coenae, postquam affuerunt cum caeteri convivae tum vero Harpagus, convivis quidem aliis atque ipsi Astyagi mensae appositae sunt ovilla referate carne, Harpago autem carne filii sui praeter caput atque extrema manuum peduumque cetera omnia. Nam ea *in canistro* operta separatim reposita erant. (*Historiae*, 1.119, 22)
>
> [When the time for dinner arrived, after both the guests and Harpagus had arrived, tables full of mutton were placed before the other guests and Astyages himself, Harpagus, on the other hand, was brought all of his son's flesh except his head, hands and feet. These parts, separately and covered, were placed in a basket.]

Boiardo, however, once again rewrites and summarises:

> . . . e medesimamente ne erano ancho fatte de le altre [vivande] de carne somigliante a quelle [del figlio di Arpago]; ma ad Harpago solamente forno date di quelle che de la carne del figliolo erano composte, et ne la fine de la cena li fece entro a un *piatto* portare e capo e piedi e mane del fanciulo che servate havea. (*Storie*, 1.9, 24*v*; italics mine)

54 This is the entire passage from *De excellentium virorum principibus*: "Un dì accusato al re fu in criminale / che la come è fra gli pastor usança, / sendo el signore, ad un ruppe el costale; / al qual rispose *con molta baldança* / che gli havea come re facta tal cosa / e che con lui a partir nulla gli avança" (2.2.73-8, 24*r*; One day he was charged before the king for the custom among the shepherds: being the lord among them, to one he broke a rib; to the king he replied *with much boldness* that he had done such a thing as lord of the others and that to him he had nothing else to reply; italics mine).

> [. . . and in the same way were still made the other [dishes] of meat resembling those [of Harpagus' son]; but to Harpagus only were given those composed of the meat of his son, and at the end of the supper he had the head, feet and hands of the child, which he [Astyages] had preserved, brought him within a *dish*. (Italics mine)]

The aspect on which we wish to focus, however, concerns Boiardo's adoption of the Tuscanism *piatto* instead of the more usual Latin-derived *canistro*. Rather than opting for a more straightforward adaptation of the Latin term, the Count of Scandiano seems to have been prompted to this choice by recalling the word *piattello* ("small dish") used in the tercet where Cornazzano summarises the episode:[55]

> Un figlio alhor ch'Arpago havea percuote.
> El capo manda al padre entro un *piatello*
> e vendicato sì l'ira si scuote.
> (*De excellentium virorum principibus*, 2.2.85-7, 24*r*)[56]

> [He then strikes a son whom Harpagus had. / He sends the son's head to his father inside a small dish / And thus avenged, he shakes off his wrath.]

55 Justin should be excluded as source because he summarizes the story in very few words without mentioning the exposition of the limbs ("filium eius interfecit epulandumque patri tradidit" (*Historiae philippicae*, 1.5.6; he killed his son and offered him for food).

56 It is completely different in the Latin redaction. The same cue also returns in the *Inamoramento de Orlando* in Marchino's novella, when Stella "li apresenta l'una e l'altra testa / d'i fioli, che io servai dentro a un piatelo" (*In. Or.*, 1.8.43-4; presents to him in a small dish the heads of his sons). The similarity with the Harpagus tale had already been noted by Zampese 1994, 37-8 and Fumagalli 1994, 30, who believes, however, that Boiardo in both works is "attracted by the tray on which, in the tradition especially iconographic, the head of John the Baptist had been displayed". The suggestion of biblical iconography may also have influenced Cornazzano himself, who was very sensitive to the fascination of the visual arts in his works (Gritti and Sanchini 2023, 169-70); the vernacular redaction of *De excellentium virorum principibus* remains in any case a direct literary source for Boiardo.

Returning to Cyrus's speech in his own defence before Astyages: while eliminating what he deemed inessential, Boiardo prefaces it with the maxim "Senza obedientia, o re, vale niente la signoria" (Without obedience, O king, lordship is worthless), which succinctly encapsulates the substance of Crisanta's address to the Persians in the *Pedìa de Cyro*, urging them to support their ruler. I quote here most of that speech, which would undoubtedly have caught the attention of an Este reader:[57]

> Questo certamente da ciascuno è tenuto fermo: per niuna più facile via poterse li homini vincere ne la guerra cha quando ciascuno segue il suo parere, facendo di quello del capitano pocha stima. *Non è anchor questo dubio, nulla di bene potersi fare da quilli che a li magiori non vogliono obedire,* né alcuna libera citade *senza ubidiencia potere le sue legie usare*, né alcuna privata casa salvarsi, né le navi anchore nel porto disiato potere agiungere se non siano obediti gli governatori. Da nui cotanti beni sono aquistati perché a Ciro obedito habiamo. In che modo melio se pono conservare che a lui obedire? . . . *Se, adunque, ne lo aquistare lo emperio se dimostra optima cossa lo obedire a principi, molto più nel conservare lo aquistato necessaria se dimostra.* E veramente per adietro molti ne signoregiavano, nui non comandavamo ad alcuno, adesso vui tutti, che qua seti in consiglio, haveti servitori e qual più e qual meno . . . *Ma nui, che libertade meritiamo, dovemo voluntariamente al nostro principe obedire.* (*Pedìa de Cyro*, 6.59.5-16; italics mine)
>
> [This certainly is considered sure by everyone: in no easier way can men be defeated in war than when each follows his own opinion, holding the captain's view in low regard. This too is not in doubt,

57 Already Edoardo Fumagalli (1994, 22) noted the closeness of the maxim with the related passage in *Pedìa*. More generally, Xenophon's vernacular translation offers repeated cues to embellish the translation of the *Storie*, both in terms of the expression of the exercise of power (the same speech of Chrysanthas in *Pedìa de Cyro*, 6.59.4-16, will be taken up in the passage of the *Storie* corresponding to Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.137) and more punctual ones such as the gloss "le spie che là vengono appellate gli ochii del re" (*Storie*, 1.9, 23*v*; in Valla simply *oculus regis*), rewritten on basis of "coloro che . . . ochii de il re et orechie se apellavano»" (*Pedìa*, 6.62.7; those who the king's eyes and ears were called). See Fumagalli 1994, xviii-ix and 20; also Fumagalli 1998, 415-6 and 427.

> nothing good can be done by those who will not obey superiors, nor can any free city without obedience put its laws into effect, nor can any private person save himself, nor can ships still reach the desired port if captains are not obeyed. We have acquired so many goods because we obeyed Cyrus. In what better way can they be preserved than by obeying Cyrus? . . . *If, therefore, in the conquest of power it proves to be an excellent thing to obey princes, much more in preserving it proves necessary.* And truly once many kept us under their power, we commanded no one, now you all, who here are in council, have servants who more and less . . . *Therefore we, who deserve freedom, must voluntarily obey our lord.* (Italics mine)]

In other cases, the traces of sources external to Herodotus and Valla are subtler yet more precise. For example, at the beginning of the tale of Cyrus, when Astyages entrusts him to Harpagus so that he can take the infant away to die, Valla – faithfully quoting Herodotus[58] – describes the courtier as "familiari suo et inter Medos fidissimo atque omnium rerum suarum procuratori" (*Historiae*, 1.108, 19*v;* his close subordinate, the most trusted among the Medes and the administrator of all his things). Boiardo, by contrast, amplifies his importance, literally borrowing Justin' words – "Harpago, regis arcanorum participis" (*Historiae philippicae*, 1.4.6; Harpagus, confidant of all the king's secrets – and weaving them in a *climax*: "Era costui molto onorato dal re e principale ne la corte e *participe de tute le secrete cose* et sopra gli altri nobili di Media estimato nel regno" (*Storie*, 1.9, 22*v*; He was greatly honoured by the king, a principal figure at court, confidant of all the king's secrets, and esteemed in the kingdom above the other nobles of Media; italics mine).

The analysis of tale of Cyrus in Book 1 demonstrates unequivocally that, over time, Boiardo's deep familiarity with classical narrative – particularly historiographical ones – and with Este literature, more or less contemporary to him, enabled him to achieve a kind of rewriting that, while respecting the requirement of fidelity to the source (as Ercole I demanded), accords greater

58 This is the passage in Herodotus: ἄνδρα οἰκήιον καὶ πιστότατόν τε Μήδων καὶ πάντων ἐπίτροπον τῶν ἑωυτοῦ (*Histories*, 1.108; a man of his household, the most trusted of the Medes, and the steward of all his affairs).

importance to the *compositione*. Although Boiardo cannot alter *inventio* (the most relevant part of eloquence according to Guarino Veronese's teaching) in the translation, he can rely on *compositione* (i.e. the *mutatio* theorised by Seneca and Quintilian) to rewrite Herodotus' *Histories* and adapt them to a readership profoundly different from the ancient one.[59]

Boiardo makes use of cues from different writers (especially Justin, a historian much loved at the Este court), which he uses freely and effectively. In doing so, he both invites his readers to engage in the intellectual game of recognising the different narratives about Cyrus, and succeeds in reproducing the moral utility of the Greek historian's teachings, adapting them to Ercole's political-cultural propaganda. One might think, for example, of the maxim on obedience to the king. Through this process, Boiardo achieves a vivid dramatisation that brings the translation close to the romance style of the *Inamoramento de Orlando*.[60]

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59 Ponte 1972, 22-3, had already noted how *mutatio* was a relevant part of Boiardo's writing in all his works.

60 This relevant aspect of Boiardo's rewriting of the Greek historians had already been highlighted by Gritti 2014b and Gritti 2015 in the *Pedìa de Cyro*, where the romance characteristic was mainly realized on the elegiac level in the tragedy of the married couple Abradata and Pantea.

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3

Herodotus in Action: from Early Modern English Scholars to Soldier-Poets

Jane Grogan

Abstract

This essay studies the first English printed translation of Herodotus, the 1584 translation attributed to "B.R." of Books 1 and 2 of the *Histories*. It explores some of the 1570s and 1580s contexts in which Herodotus found admiring readers, and argues that such readers looked to Herodotus less for their "strong moral interest" (Braden et al. 2010) and more for colourful plots, military plans and techniques and lively narrative style. It then uses these readerly contexts, as well as some investigation into the printer Thomas Marshe, to provide further support for the traditional but uncorroborated attribution of the translation to the soldier-poet Barnabe Riche.

Keywords: early modern translation; Barnabe Riche; ancient historiography; soldier-poets; classical reception

Herodotus was a late arrival in early modern England, so late, in fact, that his arrival has hardly been noticed. Nor was he particularly well-served by his first English hosts. There were only two printed editions of Herodotus produced in sixteenth-century England. One was the first English translation, a small quarto which appeared in 1584, but offered only two Books of the nine promised by the title-page: Books 1 and 2 ("Clio" and "Euterpe") on Persia and Egypt. Seven years later, a Greek edition of Book One was published in Oxford by the university printer, Joseph Barnes. Another small quarto, no editor is associated with this text, though it included a paragraph on the life of Herodotus and a single, unsigned commendatory sonnet. This looks to be a teaching text, produced for university students. We know very little about the 1584 translation either. The translator is not named on the title-page; although two prefatory epistles are signed "B.R.". The *ESTC* postulates this to be the soldier-poet, Barnabe Riche, but neither Riche's biographers Thomas Cranfill and Dorothy Hart Bruce, nor Willy Maley in his substantial *ODNB* entry for Riche

make any mention of the translation, even speculatively. Thus, the attribution remains unconfirmed, the circumstances of the translation somewhat of a mystery.

To judge by this record of Herodotus in the print marketplace, Herodotus seems not to have been a particularly strong interest for early modern English readers. Only two copies of the Greek teaching text of Book 1 survive, according to the *ESTC*, there would be no continuation of the translation and it would be 1709 before a full English translation was printed. The paucity and anonymity of English editions of Herodotus is striking. For context, by 1584 readers could already access printed English translations of Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, Quintus Curtius and Arrian, for example, not to mention Livy, Julius Caesar, Sallust, Appian and other Roman historians. Even Justin (highly derivative of Herodotus) had received the attentions of the prolific translator, Arthur Golding. And while Greek printing was underdeveloped in England, there was already a second press at Eton producing Greek texts for educational use by 1591. It is, thus, a historical irony that Johannes Camerarius, editor of the landmark 1541 Greek edition of Herodotus, claims to have first encountered the *Histories* at the Leipzig house of the Englishman Richard Croke, who had been teaching Greek there decades earlier, from 1515-1517/18, before returning to Cambridge to take up the Cambridge post previously occupied by Erasmus.[1]

But the picture is not as bleak for Herodotus in England as these surviving material traces imply. We know that Herodotus was the subject of popular lectures and commentary by the man often credited with promoting Greek studies in early modern England, Sir John Cheke, and continued to be promulgated through the "Cheke circle" (see Rhodes 2018, McDiarmid and Wabuda, 2021). We know that narratives from Herodotus circulated fairly widely in English culture, appearing in derivative forms in English plays, romances and *novelle*, from at least the 1530s onwards. And we have evidence of ownership of European-printed copies of

1 See Ellis 2017. Camerarius recounts this in his Proem to Herodotus (1541 α 2*r*-*v*).

Herodotus's *Histories*, including two copies owned by women.[2] More distantly, we find further evidence of English familiarity with printed texts of Herodotus thanks to the unusual structure of the *Histories*: nine Books named after the nine muses (Spenser et al 1949, 471).[3] So, for example, in one of his published letters from 1580, Gabriel Harvey mentions Spenser's alleged intention to write "9 *Comoedies*, whereunto (in imitation of Herodotus,) you giue the names of the *Nine muses*", and Roger Ascham also mentions the "ix Muses" of Herodotus in *The Schoolmaster*.[4] Philip Sidney also mentions this ninefold division of the *Histories* under the names of the Muses in his *Apology for Poetry*:

> So Herodotus entitled his history by the name of the nine Muses; and both he and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm, or, if that be denied me, long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced. So that truly neither philosopher nor historiographer could at the first have entered into the gates of popular judgments, if they had not taken a great passport of poetry. (1977, 97)

Sidney prizes Herodotus as a historian, but one who openly and successfully borrowed from poetry narrative effects, colour and imagination; in this, he holds him a more poetical historian than Justin. This recognition of the literary techniques used by Herodotus, its "passionate describing", in a treatise of poetics, is

2 A 1570 Geneva edition, was owned and signed by Elizabeth Cooke, Lady Russell (one of the famously learned Cooke sisters); another was owned by her sister Mildred Cecil. See Bowden 2005, 11n33. I am very grateful to Carlo Bajetta and his research team for sharing preliminary results of their scholarship on owners of Herodotus in early modern England.

3 The origins of this division are disputed but scholars agree that it dates back at least to the Alexandrian historians who edited his work in the first century BCE.

4 There are many other references to Herodotus by the names of the Muses, showing direct acquaintance with the text. For example, John Dee cross-references his 1539 copy of Cicero's works with the note "Melpo[mene] 123". Dee's copy of Herodotus, now held in the Royal College of Physcians, was a 1537 Cologne edition in Latin.

telling. So, too, is Harvey's evocation of comedy as in some way a parallel to Herodotean historiography.

That is to say, the traces left to us by Herodotus's early arrival in England may be scant but they are intriguing, hinting (we may speculate) at some popularity among those educated with Latin, at its uses as a language primer in Greek, and holding some attraction for a different audience again, those confined to the vernacular but seeking out popular details of ancient Persia and Egypt, as the first (and incomplete) English translation may attest. And influential writers like Spenser and Sidney are clearly attuned to the literary qualities of Herodotean histories, to their readerly effects and their subsequent affinities with other popular or even 'low' genres.

The difficulty in quantifying or evaluating this reception history of Herodotus in England may, in fact, lie in our critical expectations. Robin Sowerby is not unusual in contending that early modern English readers principally read ancient histories for their "strong moral interest" (Braden et al. 2010) – we might add their political interest and instructions too, to judge by Machiavelli's reading of Livy or, indeed, the well-attested case of the Hill House readings of Livy in relation to colonising enterprises in early modern Ireland (see Grafton and Jardine 1990). The case of Herodotus – and Sidney's commentary – implies that we might usefully cast the net still wider, at least insofar as this ancient historian is concerned. Herodotean narratives – and the influence of Herodotean narrative style – can be found in such disparate texts as didactic writings (including instructive "mirrors"), romance and *novelle*, travel writing and even military manuals or texts with strong strategic military interests. Nor are the *Histories* always directly transmitted, as the case of Justin – or a host of early modern intermediaries – attest. While Herodotus is not the only ancient witness to such popular and well-known narratives as the life of Cyrus the Great, or the moral fable of "Solon's happiness", for example, the circulation of materials from the *Histories* can be traced across an impressive range of early modern English writing, whether firsthand, secondhand or even more distantly or diffusely absorbed.

In this essay, I want to explore, firstly, some of the early contexts within which Herodotus's *Histories* were read by the

scholars who led the revival of Greek studies in England in the period, notably Cheke and the Cheke circle. The impulse to make English translations of Greek texts also originates, to some extent, with this group – although it is also in keeping with wider cultural trends, and the rise of vernacular translation more generally (see Rhodes 2018). Secondly, I turn to that first English translation to test the hypothesis that its translator is Barnabe Riche, and to elucidate from that identification more details about the likely contexts within which Herodotus's *Histories* was read in the final two decades of the sixteenth century. I contend that we should look for Herodotus's early modern English readers (and influence) not just among the readers of ancient history, but primarily among the readers of more popular narrative and/or instructive texts, as well as among those interested in military affairs.

1. Herodotus and the Cheke Circle

The story of the revival of Greek studies by Sir John Cheke, and the students, colleagues and friends of the Cheke circle is a well-known one (see McDiarmid and Wabuda 2021, Rhodes 2013 and 2018, Richards 2003, Law and Nicholas 2020). While, as Micha Lazarus (2015) shows, we should not over-state the effects of Cheke's appointment as Regius Professor of Greek in 1540, recent scholarship into the work of the Cheke circle, rooted in St John's College, Cambridge, shows the enduring influence of Chekeian Greek scholarship and support of Greek learning even decades after his death (see McDiarmid and Wabuda 2021; Grogan 2020).[5] Some of this influence derives from Cheke's move from the world of university to that of court, through his appointment by Henry VIII as tutor to the heir, Prince Edward – a move Cheke capitalised upon by bringing several other St John's colleagues with him (see Pollnitz 2015). But the Chekeian project was also strengthened by Cheke's students, whether through their political influence or their scholarship. An example of the first is William

5 Greek was also well established at Oxford. See Lazarus 2015 and Rhodes 2016, 38-41.

Cecil, longstanding senior adviser to Queen Elizabeth, and one of Cheke's most devoted students. In fact, Cecil's first marriage was to Cheke's sister Mary (died in 1544). A shared interest in Greek scholarship was clearly part of Cecil's second marriage, to Mildred Cooke, one of the scholarly Cooke sisters, daughters of Anthony Cooke: her "singular knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues" was remembered to her on the Westminster Abbey tomb Cecil erected to her, and his St John's College, Cambridge friend Roger Ascham, gave her his copy of the Greek New Testament (See Lazarus 2020, 300). She, along with her sister Elizabeth, each owned copies of Herodotus printed in Europe.[6]

Cecil is an important part of the story of translation from Greek (and other languages) during the the slow but insistent national cultural project that was the development of the English Renaissance, through patronage and his upholding of the values of Greek scholarship. For Neil Rhodes, Cecil represents a crucial stage in the "genealogy of translation patronage" (2018, 124), a commitment to rectifying the country's "cultural deficit" (123) through the "art of making common, providing knowledge for the many that could previously only be accessed by the few [and] an activity that is directed towards increasing the store of common wealth" (125). Rhodes attributes this to Cecil's education by Cheke, and his commitment to the Chekeian agenda, for whome "the value of Greek lay partly in its usefulness as a touchstone for validating English" (115). Thomas Wilson's translation of three speeches from Demosthenes, published in 1570 and dedicated to Cecil, remembering both men's loyalty to Cheke, is a prime example: Wilson had heard Cheke lecture on Demosthenes while a Marian exile in Padua in the 1550s, and this translation is framed entirely as a service to and of Cheke (who had himself translated Demosthenes, though that text is now lost), the dedication continuous with that: "And although your honour hath no neede of these my doinges, for that the Greeke is so familiar vnto you, and that you also, as well as I, haue hearde Sir Iohn Cheeke read

6 See n1. For the inscription on Mildred's tomb, see Mildred Cecil, Lady Burghley and Anne Countess of Oxford. Westminster Abbey (westminster-abbey.org).

the same Orations at other times . . . the sayd Sir Iohn Cheeke (whome I doe often name, for the honour and reuerence due to so worthie a man) was your brother in lawe, your deare friende, your good admonisher, and teacher in your yonger yeares, to take that way of vertue, the fruite whereof you do feele and taste to your great ioy at this day, and shall for euer be remembred therefore" (Wilson 1570, 1*v*-2*r*).

But if Cheke's student Cecil had the power and means to support and promote translators and fellow-supporters of Greek studies (some in his own household), it was a contemporary colleague of Cheke's at St John's College who would turn out to be the most vociferous advocate of Chekeian values, of Greek studies and its benefits for English culture and society. And it is primarily from Ascham that we have evidence of Cheke's promulgation of Herodotus, and its place in this transformative cultural agenda. Moreover, Ascham's legacy of treatises, letters, reports and translations from various stages of his life – as a scholar, a tutor, a Cambridge college fellow, a diplomat, a secretary, an aspiring courtier – provides a useful insight into the varied uses and interests of Herodotus for this first generation of English encounters with Herodotus in Greek.

In Ascham's early letters, written from Cambridge where he was a fellow of St John's, alongside Cheke, the reading of Herodotus stands for a significant change in the culture of student and scholarly reading at the university, towards Greek. In an often cited letter of 1542 or 1543, he writes to his friend, former student Richard Brandisby that "Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon are more read now than Livy was" five years previously (Ascham 1865, xxxvii), attributing this change in culture to the appointment of Cheke as Regius Professor of Greek. But here, Herodotus is representative of a greater flowering. The historians are joined by tragedians ("Sophocles and Euripides are more familiar to us than Plautus was when you were here"), Demosthenes outpaces Cicero and Isocrates Terence, Ascham boasts to his friend. Nonetheless, Herodotus does seem to have been an author favoured by Cheke, who twice read through the *Histories* for those who gathered in

his chambers, Ascham adds in that same letter.[7] (In fact, a volume survives at St John's College (Aa.4.48) in which three Aldine editions of Herodotus (1502), Thucydides (1502) and Xenophon's *Hellenica* (1503) are bound together, the title-page signed with Cheke's Greek ownership inscription; see Taylor 2022, 123n75).

Ascham spent much of the 1540s seeking patronage via Cheke to move away from Cambridge to another position, turning down roles as tutors to aristocratic families, and ultimately accepting the role of tutor to Princess Elizabeth on Cheke's recommendation. His efforts to win more financial and professional security continued, and with the publication in 1545 of *Toxophilus*, dedicated to Henry VIII and advertising "its author's usefulness to the Henrician regime" (Shrank 2020, 209-10), he secured a royal pension.[8] It is here, in a treatise in the form of a dialogue on the merits of archery (of which the king was known to be fond), that we find Ascham's strongest engagement with Herodotus as, principally, an esteemed authority endorsing archery, as well as a repository of ancient examples of the strategic military benefits of archery. In this, Ascham appears to travel beyond Cheke's own personal interest in Herodotus, extending the cultural programme Cheke had outlined for Greek studies as a "humane discipline" (Rhodes 2018, 40) useful specifically for English culture. Tracking Ascham's classical sources in *Toxophilus*, Cathy Shrank (2020, 215-16) shows that Greek authors far outweigh Roman authors, among Ascham's allusions. Herodotus is mentioned twelve times in the text, the most frequent classical author after Plato, Aristotle and Homer, and sixteen times in the printed marginal annotation (making him the most often cited in the margins) that were

7 The claim is repeated in Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545, J1*v*): "For by [th] e great commoditie [th]at we toke in hearyng hym reade priuatly in his chambre, all Homer, Sophocles, and Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato, we feele the great discommoditie in not hearynge of hym, Aristotle and Demosthenes, whiche. ii. authours with all diligence last of all he thought to haue redde vnto us".

8 Ascham's *DNB* biographer notes that he also took the precaution of sending presentation copies of *Toxophilus* to multiple courtiers and bishops, acknowledging in Stephen Gardiner's copy that he had written the text in pursuit of patronage or a royal pension.

often used as navigation aids for readers, and thus a useful tally of readerly interest in its own right. But Herodotus offers still more to Ascham: Herodotean ethnography, and geopolitics are also called into play to justify and authorise the uses of archery specifically for the English.

Toxophilus mediates the worlds of soldier and student, addressing the value of archery for English men – "gentlemen and yeomen", his prefatory epistle addresses, but especially targetting students. "You study to sore Toxophile", is Philologus's opening gambit in this dialogue, meeting Toxophilus with his head in a copy of Plato's *Phaedrus* as he walks the fields around Cambridge. Toxophilus responds to assure him that "I wil not hurt my self ouermoche, I warraunt you", before proceeding to to educate Philologus on the virtues and necessity of "shooting" (1545, [2] A1). The focus is specifically on the use of longbows, and the recommendation that "youth should use it for the most honest pastime in peace, that men might handle it as a most sure weapon in war" (1545, [A4]), as the prefatory epistle insists.

Ascham's focus throughout on labourers – yeomen as well as gentlemen – is relatively unusual: it is signalled not just on the title-page ("To all Gentlemen and yomen of Englande, pleasaunte for theyr pastyme to rede, and profitable for theyr use to folow, both in war and peace") and the prefatory epistle ("To all gentle men and yomen of Englande") but throughout. Jennifer Richards has argued that this shaping of the audience is bound up with various mid-Tudor projects of reform: social, political, religious and linguistic, and entirely in keeping with the Chekeian project (Richards 2003, 71).[9] In suggesting "a new model for the gentleman to follow" (that of the "urban artisan", as Richards argues (2003, 67)), Ascham draws on his considerable humanist learning, even as he presents his theories in English rather than Latin. In fact, the scholarly life and humanist learning are carefully invoked as the context for this discussion, even as it participates in the instructive mode of manuals such as Xenophon's *Of Horsemanship*. It challenges the humanist opposition between

9 Richards points out that this group are also "the likely (and forgotten) addressees" of Cheke's *The hurt of sedicion*. On *Toxophilus*, see especially 75-8.

active and contemplative life, and indeed the nature of scholarly life as one not entirely of or confined to contemplation and learning, as Ascham is keen to demonstrate of himself. And it tells us more about the significance of books to humanist notions of the active life of the soldier, particularly Greek books, and particularly, in this case, Herodotus. This is not just a point of theory. A revealing later example of this espousal of classical reading while on active military service can be found in the 1580 letter Philip Sidney writes to his friend Edward Denny, serving in Ireland. "But first let me reioyse with you, that since the vnnoble constitution of our tyme, doth keepe vs from fitte imployments, yow doe yet keepe your selfe awake, w[ith] the delight of knowledge" (Kuin 2012, 980), Sidney remarks, before making some further reading recommendations to Denny, apparently at Denny's request.)[10]

The opening words of his epistle to the "gentlement and yomen of Englande" unfold an unattributed story from Herodotus, a foundational narrative of sage counsel that, in turn, illustrates Ascham's key rationale for promoting archery among the English: ethno-nationalist militarism. Although a passing moment in Herodotus, Ascham focalises Bias of Priene's advice to Croesus about the folly of challenging the Ionian Greeks in ships, given that the Greeks' famous proficiency in naval warfare (Hdt. 1.27). The narrative, already knotty, is a little garbled in Ascham's retelling, recast primarily as a dialogue, but he uses it to give a strong classical precedent to "regard and set most by that thing whereunto nature hath made them most apt, and use hath made them most fit" (1545, A4) – that is, for the English, long-bow shooting.[11] This is the crux of Ascham's argument in favour of longbow shooting, an ethnographic rationale, authorised (and derived) from Herodotus, in support of English archery. It is all the more striking that this happens explicitly in the context of English

10 Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine drew attention to this 22 May 1580 letter in their landmark article, "Studied for Action".

11 "And so Croesus hearing not the true news, but perceiving the wise man's mind and counsel, both gave then over making of his ships, and left also behind him a wonderful example for all commonwealths to follow: that is, evermore to regard and set most by that thing whereunto nature hath made them most apt, and use hath made them most fit".

scholarship, university learning, and the transition to manhood that Ascham asserts within this dialogue. In fact, Herodotus returns numerous times in both Books of *Toxophilus*, not just in the first Book (which provides sources in support of archery), but also in the second, which offers more technical instructions in that art; I will focus primarily on the former in this essay.

In Book 1, Ascham's Herodotean military examples of the benefits of archers and archery derive from Egypt, from Ethiopia, and especially from Persia: in the education of Cyrus the Great (as attested by Xenophon); in the infamous subduing of the rebellious Lydians, effeminised by having their weapons taken from them and replaced by women's garments and lutes, "And thus lutinge and singinge take awaye a manlye stomake, whiche shulde enter & pearce depe and harde studye" (Ascham 1545, C2*r-v*; "Herodotus in Clio" is identified as the source in the marginal note on C2).[12] Thus, "you shall se them quickelye of men, made women". This Herodotean touchstone for the gendering of military behaviour runs deep in the dialogue – as it does in later English engagements with Herodotus, as we will see. The contest with university studies, too, generates a riposte in Book 1 that resituates archery within the world of such studies: Philologus challenges Toxophilus that "rather I thynke that a man w[ith] a bowe on his backe, and shaftes vnder hys girdell, is more fit to wayte vpon Robin Hoode, than vpon Apollo or the Muses" (1545, 12*v*). But Toxophilus reminds him of the bow carried by "Apollo god of lerning" and the significance of archery and hunting to the Muses. Thus, "if Apollo and the Muses either were examples in dede, or onelye fayned of wise men to be examples of learninge, honest shoting maye well ynough be companion with honest studie' (1545, 12*v*-13).

Ascham also finds plentiful military examples in Herodotus: most eloquent, perhaps, is his use of the example of the Sesostris, ruler of Egypt, whose conquests of the Thracians, Assyrians and Arabians are attributed to the skills of his army's archers. "And in token how he ouercame al men he set vp in many places

12 The reviewer of this essay makes an interesting suggestion potentially linking this critique to King Henry VIII, to whom *Toxophilus* was dedicated, bearing in mind Henry's well-known predilection for luting and singing.

great ymages to his owne lykenesse, hauynge in the one hande a bowe, in the other a sharpe heeded shafte: that men myght knowe, what weapon his hooste vsed, in conqueryng so manye people" (H2*v*-H3). Here, Ascham closely follows the Herodotean passage describing Sesostris's habit of erecting statues of himself at these sites of conquest – and indeed the printed marginal note identifies "Herod. in Euterpe" as the source: to quote the later B.R. translation, "these haue the forme and figure of a man, fiue hands breadth in bignesse, bearing in his righte hand a Darte, in his left a bowe, his harnesse and furniture after the manner of the *Aegyptians* and *Aethyopians.* Crosse his backe from the one shoulder to the other went a sentence ingrauen in the holy letter of *Aegypt:* hauing this meaning. *By my owne force did I vanquishe this region*" (1584, [N8]*v*). The Herodotean source of the next three examples Ascham cites – Polycrates, the Scythians and the Persians – is also clearly marked in the marginal notes: Polycrates, prince of Samos, defeating the Persians with an army of archers; the Scythians, who threatened the Persians with their skills as archers; and of course, "howe moche the Persians them selues set by shotinge, wherby they encreased their empire so moche", thanks partly to their teaching of archery to the youth (1545, H3*v*).[13] Immediately preceding these examples, Ascham gives space to the narrative in Book 3 of the Ethiopians "(as Herodotus doth saye)" whose proficiency as "wonderfull bowmen" (H2*v*) is such that their ruler enacts a performance of power centred on the gift of a bow as a warning message to the Persian emperor Cambyses, following the arrival of a putative Persian embassy in Ethiopia.[14]

13 A compositorial error appears to give Sesotris success, also, over the "Iues" [Jews?], a group famously not treated by Herodotus (see Marchand, 2023); rather, it appears to be a turned letter "u" and that Ascham remembers instead the appearances of Sesostris's trademark statues in conquered lands, of which Ionia has one – thus "I[o]nes"?. A marginal note identifies "Herod. in Euterpe" as the source of this material.

14 "[A]fter that he had princely entertayned them, he sent for a bowe, and bente it and drewe it, and then vnbent it agayne, and sayde vnto the ambassadours, you shall coo[m]mende me to Cambyses, and gyue him this bowe fro[m] me, and byd him when any Persian can shote in this bowe, let him set vpon the Ethiopians: In the meane whyle let hym gyue thankes vnto

Evidently, his choice of examples also reveals a tendency to cite Herodotean parallels to a vulnerable England facing more powerful enemies at the moment he writes, strengthened by that ethnographic rationale of the wisdom of cleaving to one's "wonted" arms and traditions.

This concatenation of examples from Herodotus are strikingly coherent as a group: offering a wide and scholarly range of classical sources on the advantages of archery and the achievements of armies dominated by archers from across the Mediterranean world, Ascham also highlights the reputational benefits as well as the particular excellence of archery where it is part of domestic or indigenous tradition. He associates English military tradition and scholarship – Robin Hood alongside Apollo – and through his examples, invokes archery in the context of the brave defence of smaller or more vulnerable nations (such as the Ethiopians or Scythians), as well as to illustrate the imperialising opportunities it creates (in the case of the Persians or Egyptians). Toxophilus winds up his Herodotean litany of examples in the first Book of Ascham's dialogue by concluding, "And thus you se Philologe, in al contries Asia, Aphrike and Europe, in Inde, Aethiop, Aegypt & Iurie, Parthia, Persia, Grece, and Italie, Schythia, Turkey, and Englande, from the begynninge of the world euen to thys daye, that shotynge hath had the cheife stroke in warre" (1545, [K4]*v*).

It was not necessarily unusual for early moderns to look to Herodotus for military wisdom, as Suzanne Marchand has shown (Marchand 2024). Classical military harangues (motivating speeches before battle) had been gathered and anthologised in texts such as Francois de Belleforest's *Harangues Militaires* (1573), as Marchand notes, and before that, in collections such as Remigio Nannini's *Orationi Militari* (1557). More significantly, perhaps, the scholar-printer Henri Estienne, who produced the influential 1566 edition of Herodotus, as well as the "Apologia pro Herodoto" included in that edition (which became notorious in its expanded French translation, *Apologie pour Herodote*), published a

God, whiche doth not put in the Ethiopia[n]s mynde to co[n]quere any other mans lande" (1545, H2*v*).

selection of 510 military speeches in 1570, of which 64 came from Herodotus.[15] Add this to Ascham's sustained use of Herodotean examples and his ethnographic and geopolitical rationales for English archery, and we begin to see why Herodotus might have proven appealing reading for professional soldiers such as Barnabe Riche as well as the university students and yeomen he addressed.

In *Toxophilus*, Ascham illustrates the pragmatic as well as ideological uses of Herodotus for the formation of English cultural tradition and identity, with a military inflection. But Herodotus remained an important author for Ascham in his engagement with the wider world, and in his most influential publication, *The Scholemaster* (1561). The former is glancingly but richly evinced in a note from Ascham's travel diaries. Cheke had gotten him an appointment as secretary to Sir Richard Morison on a 1550 embassy to Charles V, during which (his report notes), the two men read Herodotus together (in Greek) four mornings a week, turning to Sophocles and Euripides (also authors favoured by Cheke) in the afternoons.[16] The second point, on Ascham's ongoing commitment to the Greek language and learning of Herodotus can be seen to a lesser but still significant extent in his best-known publication, *The Schoolmaster* (1561), this time in company with Xenophon, whose description of Persian education in the *Cyropaedia* helped inspire Ascham's treatise. The work narrates its own origins in a conversation in the chambers of William Cecil at Windsor, specifically one conversation with Sir Richard Sackville about the deficiencies of English education at that moment. In a passage glossed "[t]he chiefe pointes of this booke", Ascham describes the conversation moving "from children and came to yonge men, namely, Ientlemen: we taulked of their to moch libertie, to liue as they lust: of their letting louse to sone [*i.e., their letting loose too soon*], to ouer moch experience of ill, contrarie to the good order of many good olde common welthes of the Persians and Grekes: of witte gathered, and good fortune

15 See Noreen Humble 2020, 347-50. Suzanne Marchand kindly drew my attention to the significance of these texts in relation to the early modern reception of Herodotus.

16 See "Life of Ascham'", in Ascham 1865, lxviii.

gotten, by some, onely by experience, without learning" (Ascham 1570, B2*v*).[17] Language-learning is a key interest, and the use of Herodotus as a source for periphrastic translation into Attic Greek is recommended (Ascham 1570, M2*v*).[18]

As noted, Ascham is perhaps the most voluble as well as the richest source for the Cheke circle, in terms of his writings and what survives of his letters. As even this brief overview suggests, Herodotus was a mainstay of Greek scholarly study within the Cheke circle, but was also put to multiple uses by them, and was read in multiple contexts – at Cambridge but also at Windsor, to sustain scholarly studies while on embassy but also to be read for military examples and strategy, for language-learning and the education of young men. And yet, despite the Cheke circle's support for translation, especially of Greek texts, no English translation of Herodotus appears until 1584, and when it does, it seems to have little to do with that group. Instead, an unidentified translator, "B.R." signs the two epistles, and the dedication is to Robert Dormer (with a passing reference to his father Sir William Dormer).[19] Printed by Thomas Marshe, a long-established printer, it offers few paratextual clues as to its origins. It is to this text that I now turn.

17 The shape of Ascham's book is structured in the shape of this conversation and its interests, even if the best-known part of it today is Ascham's vehement critique of Englishmen's travel to Italy (which they move onto next): "And lastlie, he required of me verie earnestlie, to shewe, what I thought of the common goinge of Englishe men into Italie".

18 "A man, that is exercised in reading, *Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato*, and *Demosthenes*, in vsing to turne, like places of *Herodotus*, after like sorte, shold shortlie cum to soch a knowledge, in vnderstanding, speaking, and writing the Greeke tong, as fewe or none hath yet atteyned in England".

19 In fact, it was Robert's half-sister Jane Dormer who had the more illustrious career, following her time as lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary and her marriage to the Duke of Feria, confidant of Philip II and Spanish ambassador to the court of Elizabeth. The Dormers were a Catholic family, and Robert married into the (Catholic) Montagues.

2. Riche as Translator?

Barnabe Riche, a professional soldier and a writer of a large number of romances, *novelle*, and reports on Ireland (where he served as a soldier) has initials to match, and was active as an author at the time of the translation. He also had strong links with a number of contemporary translators, among them Thomas Churchyard, Thomas North, Lodowick Bryskett, Lodowick Lloyd and Thomas Lodge, many of whom, like him, held other professional roles. There are no other contemporary translators of other works with the initials BR or RB, and while Riche had no Greek, that would not necessarily have presented an obstacle: the translation was most likely produced from French – the much-printed translations of Pierre Saliat, which began with the first three Books (1551, 1552) before completing all nine (1556, 1575, 1580).[20] Given the context outlined above of the military uses of Herodotus, whether for "harangues" or for instruction and examples in military strategy, Riche's profession as a soldier, on which he wrote and to which he was dedicated, might in itself be another reason for associating him with Herodotus. Moreover, Riche's production of popular narratives crossing the genres of romance and *novella* also puts him into contention as a candidate for translating Herodotus, specifically, given English appreciation for the "passionate" literary style and techniques of the *Histories*, at least according to Sidney. There were certainly precedents in the Italian tradition for associations between Herodotus and romance, notably through the example of Boiardo, as Michael Murrin (1995, 57-74) and Dennis Looney (1996, 65-76) have shown.[21]

20 There were also dozens of Latin translations printed across Europe from the 1540s onwards, many from the fifteenth-century Lorenzo Valla translation.

21 The author of the *Orlando innamorato*, Matteo Maria Boiardo, had undertaken a translation of Herodotus for his patron in Ferrara, Ercole d'Este. Murrin has argued that Boiardo's careful use of Herodotus in his romance speaks to the Italian awareness of the renewed threat from the Ottomans in the 1470s. Looney, too, has cogently traced the multiple ways in which Boiardo's vernacular translation of Herodotus from the Latin of Lorenzo Valla "romancifies" the Herodotean material, effecting a crucial shift of context that was to be repeated in B.R.'s 1584 English translation.

I turn here to Riche's biography and interests, as evidenced in his publications, especially those before 1584 when the Herodotus translation appeared.

The translation was entered in the Stationers' Register on 13th June 1581, by which point, presumably, someone had committed to producing the translation for Marshe. Riche's circumstances in 1581 are worth mentioning: he had recently returned to England from Ireland, where he had been serving as a soldier, frustrated by the campaign against James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald and indeed by Elizabeth's recall of a large contingent of soldiers at this time.[22] But he had also turned his hand from the court of Mars to that of Venus, as he himself framed it, a significant swerve for him. His first two publications, *A Right excelent and pleasaunt dialogue betwene Mercury and an English souldie*r (1574) and *Allarme to England* (1578), were firmly military in their interests. He had tackled the contemporary "decay of warlike discipline" and of English respect for soldiers and warlike discipline, notably in quite literary forms, from dialogue to dream-vision.[23] Riche had promised his readers more of the same in the *Allarme to England* – a promise he would return to in a few years' time. But for a few short years, principally from 1581-84, Riche looked to entirely different kinds of authorship and books. In so doing, he shows a particular sensitivity to the condition of the market as well as of English society, as he had in his earlier publications. *Allarme for England*, for example, took a sterner line on the decline of respect for military culture than the *Pleasant Dialogue*, but justified its

22 See the entry in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (DIB): Rich, Barnaby (Barnabe) | Dictionary of Irish Biography (dib.ie) We have Riche's own account (*The true report of a late practise enterprised by a papist* (1582) of a curious event he and Captain Thomas North encountered at a church in Chester on his way back, "hauyng been in Irelande vpon her Maiestes affaires" (Riche 1582, A3*r-v*).

23 The *Pleasaunt Dialogue* centred on this notion that "Mars [is] now in Venus court", as the opening exchange frames it (Ascham 1574, B3*v*). On its title-page, *Allarme* was advertised as "a short discourse conteyning the decay of warlike discipline, conuenient to be perused by gentlemen, such as are desirous by seruice, to seeke their owne deserued prayse, and the preseruation of their countrey".

publication against the more popular publications of the day: "if I could haue framed some conceite according to the time, some pleasant discourse, some strange nouell, some amorous historie, some farre fette or vnknowen deuice: this might haue purchaced me credit: the Printer might haue gayned by selling of my booke" (Riche 1578, A1*v*).

Riche took his own advice with his next publication, the popular collection of *novelle* (including three Italian ones given him by Lodowick Bryskett). *Riche his Farewell to the Militarie Profession* (1581a), describing them in a preface "to the noble Souldiours bothe of Englande and Irelande" as "these louyng Histories, the which I did write in Irelande at a vacant tyme, before the commyng ouer of Iames Fitz Morice".[24] Those "vacant houres" during his soldiering – of which there cannot have been many, given that Riche was based in Limerick from 1579-81, a hotspot of military activity at that time – seem also to have produced the romance *Don Simonides* (also published 1581 and cited here as 1581b) and which must have done well enough to encourage the second part of *Don Simonides*, which appeared in 1584. This is what Juliet Fleming calls Riche's "prodigal period", arguing that these publications were born not just out of a need for cash, but also out of a frustration with the queen's strategic prevarications and misrule of the military.[25] All of these publications are prose fictions, romances and *novelle*, precisely the kind of "pleasant discourse", "strange nouell" and "amorous historie" he had repudiated in *Allarme*. Notably, all also had direct or indirect continental sources and influences. And like his two early military publications, these publications also show a strong acquaintance with – and some strategic uses of – Herodotus's *Histories*.

And yet, by 1585 he was back in Ireland, in command of a company of infantry in Ulster (*DIB*), and his next publication,

24 This preface only appeared in the 1581 edition. Only one copy survives of this edition, for which digital images are not available.

25 "I suggest Rich's sudden concern for the pleasures of women, figured by his surprising turn to the writing of fiction, is deeply sarcastic, and represents an attack, first on a society that he considered to be dangerously effeminised, and then on his queen, whose prevaricating conduct in Ireland and in the international marriage market seemed to be threatening England's military and imperial ambitions." (Fleming 1993, 166-7).

in 1587, was firmly back in the field of military strategy: *A Pathway to Military Practice. Containinge offices, lawes, disciplines and orders to be obserued in an army, with sundry stratagems very beneficiall for young gentlemen, or any other that is desirous to haue knowledge in martiall exercises* . . . (1587). Although a new romance, *The aduentures of Brusanus, Prince of Hungaria*, "pleasant for all to read, and profitable for some to follow" appeared in 1592, its title-page declared it to have been written "seauen or eight yeares sithence", and besides two reprints of *Riche his Farewell* (1594 and 1606, the latter "newly augmented"), all of Riche's subsequent publications were on matters martial or Irish or both.

Returning to his first publication, *A Right Excellent and Pleasaunt Dialogue* (1574), the Herodotean strain is clear. The text begins with a well-known epigraph from Valerius Maximus – "The happy and quiet estate of blessed peace, doth onely consist in the bosome and custody of knowledge in warres" – a point with which Ascham clearly agreed., and to which Riche returns again and again, in this and subsequent publications. But Riche goes further by gendering the decline in militarism in his era. It is, to some extent, a common complaint during Elizabeth's reign, particularly by self-styled military men frustrated at her unwillingness to go to war. For Riche, the effeminisation of men, the diminishing of "warlike discipline" in soldiers, and the consequent decline in respect for soldiering as a profession and as a class is an abiding concern, one only strengthened by his experiences in the Low countries and Ireland. As Helen Hackett argues of *Riche His Farewell to the Militarie Profession* (1581a), in which Riche stages his turn away from soldiering to the more socially-validated world of romance and "pleasant discourse" Riche both thematically and stylistically "distil[s] larger concerns about the effeminisation of men" (Hackett 2000, 85). But this is a theme that is also prominent in the first Book of Herodotus, which offers a key articulation of this concept of effeminised soldiers: the narrative of the Lydians tactically effeminised by Cyrus the second time they rebelled, on the advice of their own king, Croesus: "Commaund therefore that no man amongst them be founde to keep any warlike weapons in his house; ordayning besides that [they] auoyde the coats they weare, drawing on theire

feet pumpes and buskins, inioyne them to bring vp theyr children by playing on the cithern, in keping of tauernes and vintning houses: and vndoubtedlie thou shalt see that of valiant men and warlike people they will shortly become effeminate and like vnto women; there shall be no cause to feare least euer hereafter they rise against thee" (B.R. 1584, 49*r-v*).[26]

Further narratives from Book 1 of Herodotus appear among the "sondry worthy Histories, rare inuentions and politicke deuises" of the *Pleasaunt Dialogue*, including that of "Solon's happiness". This continues in the *Allarme for England*, which digresses to discuss the military situation in Ireland.[27] At one point, Riche cites even applies Herodotean examples to the situation, citing Semiramis and Sardanapalus and their cross-dressing habits "the better to shewe her manly courage" for the former, and "the more liuely to expresse his effeminate minde" (Riche 1578, E2) for the latter, explaining Irish apparel and the need to restrict it.[28] Granted, Herodotus is only one among the many classical authorities Riche looks to in pursuit of his hobby horses. But there is no denying his close familiarity with the *Histories*, nor the continuity of his Herodotean interests with those of Ascham and the Cheke circle: military examples and the necessity of "Martiall exercise" (F3*v*) and education, even in peacetime; gendered anxieties of military "decline"; literary techniques of prosopopoeia

26 In Golding's translation of Justin's version of this narrative, Cyrus "toke away their horses, armour and Weapon, commaunding them to vse victailing, minstrelsie, gaming and al kinde of ribaudry and wantonnesse. And so by this, meanes the people which sometime were of great prowesse, puissant, and redoubted for their chiualrie, haue now through effeminate tendernes and riote, lost al their puissaunce and strength: and they which before Cyrus time could by no warres be vanquished, now falling to al kind of riote & excesse, are ouercome with slouth and idlenesse" (1564, B1*v*).

27 From the title-page of the *Pleasaunt Dialogue*.

28 "And like as Semiramis, when shée gouerned the Assyrians, tooke on her ye habit of a man, the better to shewe her manly courage: and as Sardanapalus disguised himselfe into womanes attyre, the more liuely to expresse his effeminate minde: so I am of this opinion that these Irish do the rather desire this rogish maner of apparel, because it is most sutable and best agreing to their conditions: neither were it amisse if by coo[m]pulsion they were restrained from it as much as conueniently it might be" (Riche 1578, E2).

and "passionate describing"; and notions of ethnic allegiance to certain forms of military practice.[29]

Given Riche's strong working knowledge of Herodotus, and the appeal of the text both for military wisdom as well as for romance-like narratives, as well as the availability of the French translation, it certainly seems possible, if not likely, that Riche is indeed the translator, during this period in which his literary activities and favoured genres expanded from the court of Mars to that of Venus. One counter-argument, however, is the issue of the printer: from 1581-87, Riche's works were almost all printed by John Kingston and published by Robert Walley. The 1584 Herodotus, however, was printed by Thomas Marshe, a much more experienced and prolific printer; in fact, this is the final surviving text printed by Marshe, after a thirty-year career. Robert Walley, by contrast, was the son of John Walley, one of the founders of the Stationers' Company, but had only recently entered the business in his own right with the publication in 1576 of George Whetstone's *The Rocke of Regard*, a collection of Italianate *novelle*, capitalising on the fashion for them following Painter's *Pallace of Pleasure* (see Das 2007, xxxviii). But Riche is not entirely disconnected from Marshe, who had recently printed some of Thomas Churchyard's work, including his translation of Ovid's *De Tristibus* (1572, 1578, 1580) and the *First Part of Churchyardes Chippes* (1575, 1578). As another soldier-author who had fought alongside Riche at Flushing in 1572, Churchyard shares a similar profile to Riche as a contemporary soldier-author who wrote on matters military as well as popular, and had military experience in some of the same theatres of war as Riche had.[30] Might Riche have been introduced or recommended to Marshe by Churchyard? Marshe had also printed the 1571 edition of Ascham's *Toxophilus*, and John Sadler's 1572 translation of the influential

29 "But where peace is so inordinatly desired, that in ye preferring therof they forgett all Martiall exercises, whiche is the very preseruer, and mainteiner of peace, (according to the mind of *Valerius Maximus* . . .)" (Ascham 1578, F3*v*).

30 On *Churchyards Chippes* and Churchyard's translation of Ovid's *De tristibus* (1572), see Matthew Woodcock's 2016 biography of Thomas Churchyard, 156-8.

Latin military theorist Publius Flavius Vegetius, so he had some background in producing materials of military interest. In fact, it is even possible that the switch of printers might not undermine the identification of Riche as translator but help confirm it: might this break from Riche's usual publisher account for the enigmatic attribution of the translation not to Riche but to "B.R."?[31]

One way or another, Marshe was a good fit. He had plenty of experience of printing classical translations by this point – besides Churchyard's Ovid (1572) and Sadler's Vegetius (1572), he had printed English translations of Livy (1561), Terence (1568), Justin (1564), Horace (1566) and various others. He had also shown a good eye for the popular market: the *Mirrour for Magistrates* (1571) and the two books of William Painter's *The Pallace of Pleasure* (1566, 1567) were in his back-catalogue, for example. The 1584 Herodotus translation appears to straddle both markets: a cheap edition of a well-known ancient author in English translation, but delivered in the material and paratextual idiom of more popular work. The work's title attests to this broadened appeal: *The Famous Hystory of Herodotus, conteyning the Discourse of dyuers Countreys, the succession of theyr Kinges, the actes and exploytes achieved by them; the Lawes and customes of euery Nation, with the true Description and Antiquities of the Same*. The title of this translation of Herodotus did not unequivocally evoke its "moral interest" so much as its narrative richness and colour, and perhaps also its cosmographical interests. (Marshe had also printed compilations from Sebastian Münster's *Cosmography* in 1572 and 1574.) That phrase, "famous hystoriographer" had already been used by Marshe in several editions of Arthur Golding's translation of Justin's *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* (1564, 1570 and 1578). But unlike the straightforwardly instructive title-

31 I'm grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this piece for this intriguing suggestion. Although it was not unusual to use initials to designate an author, there had also been some infamous recent examples of contributors (or protagonists) identified only by their initials: E.K., the editor of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), for example, or indeed the eponymous lover-protagonist of George Gascoigne's notorious *The Adventures of Master F.J.* (1573). Both Gascoigne and Spenser had strong connections with Barnabe Riche.

page description of Justin as "a worke briefly conteyning great plenty of most delectable histories, and notable examples, worthy not onely to be read but also to be embraced and followed of all men", the long title of the 1584 Herodotus casts it in a less insistently disciplinary mould, hinting instead at ethnography, chorography, even travel reports, more than it does ancient history. The argument can also be made in reverse: the very decision *not* to signal Herodotus as a worthy Greek historian or the "father of History" on the title-page is notable, in what B.R. acknowledges as Herodotus's "first entry into Englande".

The title-page to the 1584 translation provides some further clues as to the market Marshe envisages for the work. It has a somewhat classicised ornamental title page featuring two grotesques, and was the most elaborate frontispiece in Marshe's printshop. He had previously used it for classical history (Golding's translation of Justin, Richard Rainold's 1571 *Cronicle* of Roman emperors), for military writings (Sadler's translation of Vegetius, the 1571 edition of Ascham's *Toxophilus*), for popular romance or *novelle* of continental or classical provenance (Fenton's 1567 translation of Bandello's novelle, the two volumes of Painter's *Pallace of Pleasure*), for more serious but popular readings (the *Mirrour for Magistrates*), and for other classical translations or commentaries on the classical world (Churchyard's translation of Ovid's *De tristibus*, Stephen Batman's 1577 *Golden Book of the Leaden Goddes*). One unusual feature of the Herodotus title-page not found in any of Marshe's other uses of the title page is the embedding of a small medallion image of the Eastern Roman emperor Justinian (presumably Justinian I; both Justinians are long after Herodotus's time). Marshe's usual habit was to fill this particular frontispiece with text, whether long descriptions of the contents or biblical quotes, or simply formatting text to fill the space available. This inclusion of an Eastern Roman emperor, one known to have been in ongoing conflict with the Sassanid Persians, seems a hasty inclusion to catch the eye and strengthen the appeal of the translation to those interested in the Middle East, in empire, in forms of Christian imperium.[32] But perhaps

32 I have not been able to trace the source of the image, or any other

more likely is that it was hastily added by the printer to infer visually and associatively a continuity with Marshe's editions of the translations of Justin.[33] If the text is being loosely allied with Marshe's edition of Justin, a previous successful edition of ancient history, it may also be testing new kinds of markets for classical texts, advertising cosmographical and ethnographic appeal. Herodotus's Egypt is particularly promoted in the epistle to the "Gentlemen Readers": "where she [Euterpe] found the people so witty, the countrey so wonderfull, all things so straunge, and differing from the common course of nature, that abiding there, shee thoughte *Aegypt* to haue greater store of myracles, then all the world beside" (B.R. 1584, A3*v*).

Beyond the title-page, the dedicatory and prefatory epistles, too, contain clues, though they are perhaps more slight as evidence as to the identity of the translator. Nonetheless, it is also possible to link them to Riche, albeit distantly. The dedicatee is Robert Dormer, son of Sir William Dormer, then in his early thirties and a little old for the sort of hortatory rhetoric we find in the dedicatory epistle. Both Robert and William (who served as MP) are fairly undistinguished figures, with a Catholic background (see *ODNB*); Riche, by contrast, was firmly Protestant, and even more firmly anti-Catholic.[34] Sir William Dormer's first wife, however, was Mary Sidney, sister of Henry Sidney (who served three terms as Lord Deputy of Ireland, and with whom Riche had served in 1576); Robert was the eldest child of his second marriage to Dorothy Catesby. When Dorothy remarried after the death of William in the mid-1570s, Robert's new step-father was the

examples of its interpolation in the blank space of the frontispiece in this manner.

33 Only one other book that Marshe produced featured a similar medallion: a 1584 edition of Dominico Mancini's popular neo-Stoic Latin verse on the four cardinal virtues. Here, the woodcut medallion is of "Imp. Henricvs. V. Aug." [Henry V], but it was a plain title-page with no frontispiece frame.

34 Even besides his career-long abuse of Irish Catholicism, Riche is the author of a sharply anti-Catholic report against "our foolish Mas[s]mongers" in early 1581, following an encounter at Chester as he returned from Ireland; see Riche, *The Trew Report . . .* (1582).

committed Protestant, military man and Lord Justice of Ireland Sir William Pelham who, like Riche, served in Ireland during the rebellion of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald in 1579-80.[35] Pelham had also been in command at Le Havre in 1563, Riche's first campaign, along with Ambrose Dudley. (Dudley was the dedicatee of Riche's first publication, the *Right Excellent and Pleasant Dialogue*, and Riche wrote warmly of the command and company at Le Havre). Sir William Pelham, Robert Dormer's new and notorious stepfather, a man who (like Riche) had also had his quarrels with Elizabeth's government and her military command in Ireland, and been summarily returned to England upon the appointment of Arthur Lord Grey as Deputy in late 1580, may well be the link to Riche. Pelham had also commanded troops at Le Havre, and his military career would coincide twice more with that of Riche: in Ireland 1579-81 and in the Low Countries (see his *DIB* entry).

In sum: the primary evidence for identifying Riche as the first English translator of Herodotus, in this 1584 edition, is not conclusive. But the contextual evidence is strong, particularly Riche's biography, his literary interests before and during this moment in the early 1580s, and his clear knowledge of, and interest in Herodotus, as demonstrated by his earlier texts. It is also worth attending to the marketing of the printed text itself, its paratextual framing and its place in Marshe's corpus of texts and authors. But it is also important to let go of our preconceptions about what attracted early modern readers to Herodotus. Taking a longer view back to the early appearance of Herodotus in the works of Sir John Cheke and the Cheke circle's promotion of Greek scholarship in England, we find surprisingly little evidence of reading him for his "moral interest". Instead we find Herodotus valued for his colourful narrative style (Sidney), his military examples (Ascham, Riche), his ethnographic politics (Ascham), his cosmography and ethnography (B.R.), and surprisingly often, his compelling demonstration of the strong links between gender,

35 In 1584 Robert Dormer became High Sheriff of Buckingham – a fact not mentioned in the dedicatory epistle, which strengthens the idea that he may have been a dedicatee of convenience, with B.R.'s patronage interests elsewhere.

apparel and militarism exemplified in the narrative of the rebellious Lydians, finally quelled by Cyrus who has them dress in women's clothes, "drawing on theire feet pumpes and buskins, inioyne them to bring vp theyr children by playing on the cithren" (B.R. 1584, H1*r-v*). The latter is a particularly resonant example for Riche in the context of his obsession with the decline of English martial practices and the effeminization, as he saw it, of English society. To trace the reception of Herodotus in England (or, more properly, in the Anglophone world at the time), whether in Greek, Latin or English, I suggest that we should also look to literary and educational sources rather than to the historiographical alone. It seems that the infamous dual Herodotean provenance as "Father of History" and "Father of Lies" was no obstacle, but perhaps even part of his attraction for early modern English readers.

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4

Early Modern Encounters with Herodotean Mummies (*Histories* 2.86)*

Maren Elisabeth Schwab

Abstract

Italian scholars of the 15th and 16th century had a deep interest in ancient Egypt and often looked at this unknown culture through the lens of Herodotus's *Histories*. This essay provides a tour through the early reception of Herodotus's famous account on mummification, chapter 86 of Book 2. A close reading of letters, poems, commentaries and dialogues by authors such as Guarino Veronese, Girolamo Castelli, Tommaso Porcacchi sheds light on why the passage was read and how it was understood and interpreted.

Keywords: mummification; Egyptian Renaissance; Guarino Veronese; Tommaso Porcacchi; antiquarian scholarship

When Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) wrote his influential works on Egyptian culture and mummies in the 17th century he stood on the shoulders of many scholars who had paved the way for the study of *Aegyptiaca*. They had scrutinised ancient literature, checked medieval medical and biblical knowledge and had kept and examined far-travelled mummies and their decoration, which they had in private collections. They had adapted every tool and method that antiquarians had developed in the course of the 15th and 16th centuries when investigating the antiquities of Rome and beyond. And just like the artists who studied the monsters in the grottoes of the Domus aurea, they had even crept through cobwebbed holes and dusty tunnels into the bowels of the Cheops pyramid. Kircher prominently pasted an illustration by Giovanni Battista Balatri

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into both of his groundbreaking Egyptological works, his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1654)[1] and at the beginning of his *Sphinx Mystagoga* (1676). Earlier, in 1647, the engraving appeared in a commentary on Lucretius by the Florentine physician Giovanni Nardi (1580-1655): It shows an imaginary Egyptian landscape chock-full of fantastic pyramids with the River Nile flowing through it. In the foreground, some staffage figures use a rope to climb down into the subterranean world of the Memphis pyramid (see fig. 1).[2]

If these people were European discoverers, they could have been the French merchant Louis Bertier and the Polish scholar Tito Livio Burattini or the two 16th century adventurers Pierre Belon and Johann Hellfrich. But surely, Giovanni Nardi was not one of them, as he had no need to travel: he had his own collection of mummies and the one of the Tuscan Grand Duke Ferdinand II at his disposal. At that time, there were indeed more than twenty Egyptian mummies in Florence (Sliwa 2006, 151-60) – enough material for a close investigation that resembled empirical research. When he wrote a scholarly commentary on Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, Nardi took the remark at the end that the plague in Athens had its origins in Egypt (6.1141) as an opportunity to present his research on Egyptian mummies in detail in an appendix:

> Speraui olim miram fragrantiam à medicato Funere, tot, tantisque infarcto aromatibus: verùm spes me fefellit . . . dum partes cadaueris singulas attentiùs examino, altèque gummi imbibitas video. Fregi discerpsi, ossibus neque peperci, gummi ubique redolent, atque sapiunt. (1647, 635)[3]
>
> [I once hoped for a miraculous fragrance from the embalming, into which so many and such good aromatic substances had been stuffed. But my hopes were deceived . . . When I examined the parts of the corpse, I found them deeply soaked in resin. I broke

1 Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* was reprinted in 2013, for the illustration see 4.403. See also 1.123-4 for an introduction to Kircher's chapter on mummies by Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann.

2 Nardi 1647, Pl. 1; see Kircher 1676, before the prooemium ad lectorem. In Kircher's reprint we see four people entering the pyramid while in the earlier version by Balatri in Nardi's commentary they are only three.

3 Unless stated otherwise, all translations into English are mine.

> them up, tore them apart and didn't even spare the bones, but they smelled and tasted of resin all over.]

Nardi had his difficulties with the embalmers, the Egyptian priests, and even with the *Histories* themselves: his nose and tongue contradicted the most detailed and accurate ancient account about the Egyptian practice of mummification by the Greek historian Herodotus, who gave a list of the precious herbs used in the process (2.86.5).

It did not matter. Herodotus's famous account on mummification, chapter 86 of Book 2, in which he introduced three types of mummification for rich, less rich and poor people and gave a precise description of the most expensive kind of mummification remained one of the favorite and most-read passages in Greek literature. In the following we will use this passage as our own rope to climb down into the early history of Herodotean reception and interpretation. Our story begins when the *Histories* were a newly discovered ancient text. On February 25 in 1427 Guarino was in his hometown Verona and wrote a letter to his friend Antonio Panormita: "Before I liked you, but now I begin to love you" (Cic. *Ad fam.* 11.14.5; "antea te diligebam, nunc te amare coepi") – he confessed, thus borrowing a phrase from Cicero's *Ad familiares*. Guarino was thrilled: his friend had sent him a complete manuscript of Herodotus's *Histories*. He finally held it in his hands, the nine books named after the nine muses. He continued:

> ego te indulgentia caritate benivolentia tanta complector, ut vel arctissimam propinquitatem superem. Quam gratum quam amoenum quam iocundum mihi extiterit hoc officium tuum non satis explicare possem, quod tuo ductu atque auspicio huc volitavit Herodotus et musae, ut verius loquar, Herodoti. Tantum tamque benignum ad peragrandas orbis terrarum plagas et res gestas ducem parasti, ut nihil praestari suavius mihi potuerit: eius sermone cupide fruor, eius per vestigia fluvios colles maria portus urbes visere datum, immo, quod mirabilius est, cum mortuis confabulari et 'vivas audire et reddere voces' (Virg. *Aen.* 6.189).[4]

4 Guarino's letter to Antonio Panormita qtd in Sabbadini 1915, 564 (no 391), ll. 18-28.



Fig. 1: Giovanni Nardi's commentary on Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (1647), plate one of the appendix.

> [I embrace you with such tenderness, love and benevolence that no leaf fits between us. How welcome, how charming, how gracious this your service of love is to me, I could not sufficiently explain, since by your guidance and direction Herodotus and (to say it more correctly) the Muses of Herodotus, have fluttered here. You have prepared such an important and such a kind guide for exploring the lands and deeds of the whole world, that nothing could prove to me sweeter: his language I enjoy eagerly, through his footsteps it is possible to visit rivers, hills, seas, harbors and cities, yes indeed, what is even more wonderful, [it is given] to chat with the dead and 'to hear and answer their voices as if they were alive'.]

Guarino's enthusiasm took him very far. He was, in fact, probably the best expert and promoter of Herodotean studies in the beginning of the 15th century. As one of the first Italians who went to Constantinople for five years to study ancient Greek with the famous teacher and diplomate Manuel Chrysoloras, he himself was a learned traveller who had explored foreign realms. Then he went on to spend the rest of his life teaching Greek and Latin, first at the Studio in Florence, then in Venice and his birth city Verona and finally, on the run from the plague, in Ferrara (Sabbadini 1933; cf. Miletti 2021). Herodotus ranked highly among his most beloved ancient Greek authors. Before the first complete translations by Matteo Palmieri and by the famous Lorenzo Valla in the early 1450s, which was the first translation to appear in print in Venice in 1474, Guarino had already produced a partial translation of the first book (see Chapter 2 by Valentina Gritti in this volume). To arrange some spare time from his demanding teaching job Guarino borrowed teaching materials from Gasparino Barzizza, a teacher of grammar and rhetoric in Padua, that he would use to keep his students busy while he was working on the translation.[5]

5 Gasparino Barzizza's letter to Guarino qtd in Sabbadini 1915; (no 46), 101, ll. 13-18: "Quid vero de ceteris exemplis iudicaturus sis non expectabo sententiam tuam, cum nihil in iis fatear esse quod sit a te viro eruditissimo legendum, neque tu ea gratia a me copiam eorum quesisiti, sed dum in transferenda historia greca occupatus es, interim adulescentibus qui apud te proficiunt mutuari aliquid ex me voluisti quod studiis eorum prodesset" (As for what you think about the other examples, I shall not wait for your opinion, since I admit that there is nothing about them worthy of being

Still, his teaching obligations did not allow him to proceed with a translation of Book 2.

If translation was difficult and time-consuming, interpretation was not easy either, especially when it came to book two of the *Histories*. Egypt was a foreign culture, even if Guarino must have known some *Aegyptiaca* by sight, such as the Vatican obelisk. He discussed this monument in detail as a speaker in a learned dialogue written by one of his students in Ferrara, Angelo Decembrio's *De politia litteraria*. The discussion is part of a lengthy lecture on coins, inscriptions, and ancient customs on the use of wreaths that takes place in the antechamber of Leonello d'Este, who was depicted as suffering from a fever (book 5 of *De politia*). This might seem odd, since the historical Guarino ridiculed Niccolò Niccoli for taking an interest in such obscure topics (Gombrich 1967).[6] In *De politia*, however, Giovanni Gualenghi, who had often been to Rome, said: "I think, Guarino, that you too have been to Rome at some point. For I think no Italian who has not seen that city can be a properly trained scholar and antiquarian . . .".[7] Taking his cue from the topic of ancient funeral practices, Guarino responded with a detailed and technical survey of the Vatican obelisk, clearly based on direct examination.

Both the Guarino in Decembrio's dialogue and the real Guarino showed a deep interest in ancient Egypt looking at this unknown culture through the lens of Herodotus's *Histories*. In his contribution to the learned dialogue the character Guarino inserted a reference to Herodotus's *Histories* 2.126, which is one of those juicy and somewhat delicate passages that made Herodotus a famously good read, but earned him the reputation of being less serious than Thucydides:

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read by you, a most learned man. Nor did you request them from me for that purpose, but rather, while you are busy with translating the Greek history, you wished in the meantime to borrow something from me that might be useful for the young students who are making progress under your guidance).

6 Guarino's invective against Niccolò Niccoli qtd in Sabbadini 2015, 39-40 (no 17). I owe this reference to Anthony T. Grafton.

7 Decembrio, *De politia*, 5.55.1: "'Credo te', inquit, 'quoque, Guarine, aliquando Romam adisse. Nam ex Italicis neminem ego rite peritum senem et antiquitatis studiosum existimo, qui eam urbem non viderit . . .'".

> . . . ut Herodotus auctor est illius generis moles ab Assyriis regibus plurimas esse constructas, caeterum alias singularibus petris, alias compluribus aggestas, adeoque ex iis quempiam regem extitisse, qui, cum pecunia ad perficiendam eius molem non suppleret, filiam publice prostituerit, cuius subinde meretricio quaestu compleretur. (Decembrio, *De politia,* 5.55.4)[8]
>
> [. . . according to Herodotus, the Assyrian kings raised a good many structures of that kind [i.e. obelisks], some of them consisting of one stone, others of many piled up. Indeed, one of these kings [Cheops] who did not have enough money to complete his structure made his daughter a public prostitute, so that her harlot's wage would enable it to be completed at once.]

Thus, in this early interpretation, Guarino took Cheops's and his daughter's pyramids for obelisks – a confusion that often occurred in early scholarship on Egypt (Curran et al. 2009).

Being a passionate teacher, Guarino shared his love for Herodotus and read the *Histories* with his students. His enthusiastic approach towards the Greek historian stirred their imagination, as a cheerful poem by Girolamo Castelli suggests. Girolamo, who became a medical doctor of the Este family at their court in Ferrara, learned rhetoric and the love for the Greek language from Guarino (Palma 1978). In the poem dedicated to his beloved teacher he pictured Herodotus anachronistically accompanied by Hesiod in the very streets of Ferrara: Joined in friendship and their interest in a certain volume of the works of Plato,[9] they are heading towards the home of the most learned and eloquent Guarino. To make the long journey seem shorter they tell each other about their works. In Girolamo's imagination Herodotus begins:

> Et ne forte graves artus via longa fatiget,
> Vestra per alternas scripta referte vices.

8 This passage and its context in Decembrio's *De politia* was translated and attributed to Leon Battista Alberti by Curran and Grafton 1995, 234-48. See also Grafton 2020, 1149.

9 For a list of the works of Plato owned by Guarino as he lists them in his preface to a *Vita* of Plato, see Sabbadini, 1919, 270-1.

Illi magnorum reseres exordia regum
Intulerint Asiae funera quanta suae
Et quid in Europam deduxit Barbara primum
Agmina diversas implicuitque manus.
Fluminaque et populous numeres habitusque locorum,
Multa comes liceat credere posse neget.[10]

[Revealing to him [i.e. Hesiod] the beginnings of great kingdoms, how much ruin they brought to his Asia, and what first led barbarian forces to Europe and involved them in various wars. And you [i.e. Herodotus] would number rivers and peoples and the nature of many places – your companion [Hesiod] may well deny being able to believe much of it.]

Hesiod cannot believe what Herodotus is saying. This incredulous shrug of the shoulders was the most common reaction to the ancient historian's narration for centuries to come. Based already on Cicero's ambivalent characterization, Herodotus was considered both the father of history and a notorious liar (Cic. *De leg.* 1,5).[11] As Arnaldo Momigliano has shown in "The Place of Herodotus in the History of Historiography" (1958) this ambivalent view on Herodotus's accomplishments hampered his reception considerably in the 15th century. According to Momigliano, the mainstream anti-Herodotean account only received a counter-narrative in the course of the 16th century when – especially through the discovery of the new world – news and images poured into the European societies that seemed equally fantastic and untrustworthy as Herodotus's travel account.[12]

Still, Girolamo's poem shows that Herodotus's *Histories* were read with much fun and fantastic imagination in the 15th century. His teacher Guarino had at least two favorite passages that he shared in his erudite letters: the astonishing story of the Egyptian King Mycerinus who buried his daughter in the wooden figure

10 Part from Girolamo Castelli's poem in honor of Guarino qtd in Sabbadini 1916, 423 (no 778A), ll. 11-18.

11 This characterisation was finally coined in a phrase by Vives 1612, 87: "Herodotus, quem verius mendaciorum patrem dixeris, quam quomodo illum vocant nonnulli, parentem historiae".

12 See Momigliano 1958, 10-13, and Varotti 2012.

of a cow (Hdt. 2.129-33) and the account of the Egyptian art of mummification (Hdt. 2.86-90). Most surprisingly, these passages were not taken from book one – the part of the *Histories* that, as we know, was partially translated by Guarino – but from book two. Thus, it is clear that Guarino continued to read the *Histories* with great pleasure even though his teaching obligations might have kept him from providing a polished translation.[13] What is more, he used the bold images in Herodotus's description to pepper his letters with erudite quotes.

Already in 1416, at the time when Guarino had moved to Venice to found his own school of Latin and Greek (see "Guarino Veronese" in *Enciclopedia Italiana online*), he was struck by the story of Mycerinus and his cow-figured sarcophagus. He used the image in a letter to Niccolò Pirondolo, a man of law from Ferrara. Apparently, Niccolò had flattered and praised Guarino and offered him his friendship – a close relationship that lasted as their collaborative work on the rediscovery of Aulus Gellius in Ferrara shows.[14] In turn, Guarino thanked him effusively and praised him for his efforts in learning the Greek language: "Gaudeo et magnopere te collaudo, quod summa cum ratione ad graecarum studia litterarum te vehementer anhelantem aspicio" (I am glad and I praise you very much indeed, because I see how with the highest interest you vehemently crave for the study of Greek literature).[15] In a seemingly modest way, he rejected Niccolò's overly flattering comparison of his person to Cicero:

> Quocirca tuae et humanitati et sapientiae magnum in modum congratulor, cuius iudicium tantum apud universos ponderis assecutum est, ut incultum me ac horridum homuncionem facile apud ignotos *ornatum* splendidumque reddideris. (Ibid. ll. 7-11)
>
> [Hence I greatly congratulate your humanity and wisdom, whose judgment has reached such great weight with everyone, that you

13 For a translation by Guarino of a passage in book three of the *Histories* (Hdt. 3.108), see Pade 2024, 118-20.

14 Ibid., 113-16. See also Baron 1951, 118 and See Guarino's letter to Ugo Mazzolato (1425) qtd in Sabbadini 1915, 477-8 (no 321), ll. 9-12.

15 Guarino's letter to Niccolò Pirondolo qtd in Sabbadini 1915, 98 (no 43), ll. 29-31.

> easily make me, an uneducated and simple little man, *adorned* (*ornatum*) and radiant among the ignorant. (Italics mine)]

To illustrate the transformation caused by Niccolò's words, Guarino created a picture that must have been completely unheard of by his recipient:

> Venit in mentem Aegyptiorum regis Mycerini, qui, ut est apud Herodotum [2.129], cum defunctam vita gnatam magnifico et inusitato quodam sepeliendi genere *ornare* vellet, ita excogitasse traditur. Ligneam quandam bovem fabricatus, filiolam interius *collocavit*; postmodum quaquaversum inauratam desuper faciem tanto inclusit artificio, ut quivis rerum inscius non lignum aut cadaver, ceterum aurum esse sine ulla dubitatione affirmaret. Tu item, cum ego longe magis quam ferrum ab auro disiunctus sim, in tam alto me *collocas* fastigio, ut, si tibi crediderim, aliquid mihi cum Cicerone commune esse dixerim. (Ibid., ll. 11-20; italics mine)

> [The story of the Egyptian king Mycerinus comes to mind, about whom, as it is said in Herodotus, we are told that when he wanted to *adorn* (*ornare*) his deceased daughter with a certain splendid and extraordinary way of burial, he thought it out as follows: He had a certain wooden cow made, and *placed* (*collocavit*) the daughter inside; after which he had the figure above it gilded on all sides and enclosed with such artistry that anyone who knew nothing of the matter would confirm without any doubt that it was not wood or a corpse, but gold. Likewise, although I am far more away than iron from gold, you *place* (*collocas*) me at such a height that if I believed you, I would say that I had something in common with Cicero. (Italics mine)]

Guarino referred to a very specific piece of information from the *Histories* (2.129.3 and 2.132.1) when he focused on the final coating of the wooden cow with a golden layer. Through a smart analogy – he carefully used the same verbs *ornare* ("to adorn") and *collocare* ("to place") twice – Guarino implicitly compared himself to the dead body of the king's daughter and Niccolò with his affection and praise to that of King Mycerinus's love towards his daughter and the ingenious burial he invented for her. While this may seem like a humble gesture towards Niccolò, Guarino was at

the same time showing off his knowledge of the newly discovered Greek historian. The pleasures of Herodotean imagery served as commercial advert for Guarino's new school.

The letter that deals with mummification dates to the year 1430 when Guarino was already in Ferrara. It was addressed to his physician, Filippo di Giovanni Pellizzone, who took care of him and his family at the time in Ferrara and a few years later went on to be the doctor of Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan. The context of the letter could not be more fitting: the only people who professionally knew about Egyptian mummies at that time were medical doctors. Mummies were sawed into pieces and ground up to produce the medicine *mumia* (Reetz 2019, 8-66, esp. 12; Dannenfeldt 1959, 16-23). They were exported to Europe, sometimes in the backpacks of Jerusalem pilgrims, and always at great risk, as superstition had it that they caused sea storms and thus put ships in danger (Henny and Oosterhoff 2023, 158-61; Mulsow 2022, 62-126; Dannenfeldt 1985, 169-70). The sources for the pharmaceutical practice were medieval: Platearius, Rhazes and Pseudo-Serapion – not yet the *Histories*. Through the addressee of the letter it is clear, though, that Guarino connected the passage that he had found in the newly discovered work by Herodotus with the medieval tradition of the *mumia* medicine. His letter accompanied a learned introduction to a biography of Plato. In it, Guarino flattered Filippo lavishly, praising his character and way of living as well as his knowledge and profession:

> Tuarum sane rerum cum alii permulti, tum vero ipse tibi sum testis non infimus, quem singulari benivolentia, stricta familiaritate, assidua consuetudine, colloquiis intimis, tuenda mei meorumque valitudine et omni denique necessitudine tibi devinctum tenes. Cuius quidem rei memoriam tam iocundam tam honestam atque probabilem si qua ratione *perpetuo conservare* liceat, saepius mecum verso. (Italics mine)[16]

> [Of these things of yours, may there be many other witnesses, I myself can be an especially strong one: you hold me tight

16 Guarino's letter to Filippo di Giovanni Pellizzone (1430) quoted by Sabbadini 1916, 89 (no 574), ll. 14-20.

> through your unique benevolence, firm familiarity, constant visits, intimate conversations, your care for the health of my family and me and finally with all your friendship. I often think to myself whether there could be any way *to perpetually preserve* (*perpetuo conservare*) the memory of precisely this thing that is so delightful and honorable and worthy of applause. (Italics mine)]

With this, the question is well-posed: it is about preserving and maintaining the memory of a good man and friend. Guarino chose his words carefully when he asked for a way to "preserve perpetually" (*perpetuo conservare*). Using this specific terminology, he opened the curtain to present his Herodotean reference and thus an absolutely unique encounter with the Herodotean mummy:

> Sicut Aegyptiorum artificio et *excogitatis quibusdam odoribus* incorrupta teneri corpora "pater historiae" (Cic. *De leg.* 1.5) tradit Herodotus (Hdt. 2.86-90), id demum facile fieri posse intelligo si litteris, quasi perenni condimento et fideli rerum gestarum custode, posteritatis etiam commendatione crebrisque sermonibus durare curabimus. (Italics mine)[17]

> [Just like the father of historiography Herodotus tells us that through the art of the Egyptians and *certain well-invented fragrant herbs* bodies are maintained without decay, I understand that this can be done quite easily, if we perpetuate the memory through numerous speeches, a recommendation to posterity and written works, almost as if they were an everlasting herb and loyal guard of great deeds. (Italics mine)]

The process of conservation is illustrated by a vivid comparison: mummification, as it is described by Herodotus. Guarino seems to refer to a very precise phrase in the *Histories*, namely the different herbs that the Egyptians used (*excogitatis quibusdam odoribus*), which are listed in Hist. 2.86.5: "with a sharp stone of Ethiopia they make a cut along the side and take out the whole contents of the belly, and when they have cleared out the cavity and cleansed it with palm-wine they cleanse it again with spices pounded up: then they fill the belly with pure myrrh pounded up and with cassia and

17 Qtd in Sabbadini 1916, 89 (no 574), ll. 20-5.

other spices except frankincense, and sew it together again."[18] To find a way to mummify the fond memories of Filippo, his virtuous friend and physician, Guarino compared the Egyptian knowledge on herbs with the art of writing. Both practices lead to making things everlasting, be them dead bodies or great deeds.

The letters show that Guarino read Herodotus as an entertaining fabulist who provided him with rhetorical showpieces. This, however, is not to suggest that he thought dismissively of Herodotus. As we may assume from his discussion of the obelisk attributed to him by Angelo Decembrio, Guarino also used the *Histories* as an important source of knowledge – as did other 15th-century authors such as Leon Battista Alberti in his *De re aedificatoria* – and was inspired by Herodotus's research practices, especially those in book two. This part of the *Histories* could actually be read as a tool set of antiquarian practices, one that showed how to investigate a foreign or ancient culture through its material objects, historic records and important religious feasts. Yet, neither Decembrio's Guarino nor any of the other scholars of antiquity in the 15th century would have admitted that he had consulted Herodotus for serious research methods.

More than a hundred years later the situation had changed. Herodotean practices had become a hot topic among scholars and historians. They had been defended by the apologetic writings of Camerarius (preface to his 1541 edition of the *Histories*, see Ellis 2017) and Henri Estienne (*Apologia pro Herodoto* of 1566, see Kramer 1980). At the same time, the Egyptian practice of embalming remained a fascinating topic for antiquarians. Tommaso Porcacchi (1530-1576), a versatile scholar in Venice who published poems as well as translations and geographical works, planned a huge editorial undertaking: the *Collana historica de' greci*. The idea was to publish a selection of ancient Greek historians translated into Italian. This series should have been interspersed by volumes of contemporary treatises on military matters. Sadly, the project never came into being. But in the project outline Herodotus's *Histories* would have been the second volume (Pignatti 2016). We may assume that in the course of preparation for this ambitious undertaking, Porcacchi got to know his Herodotus pretty well,

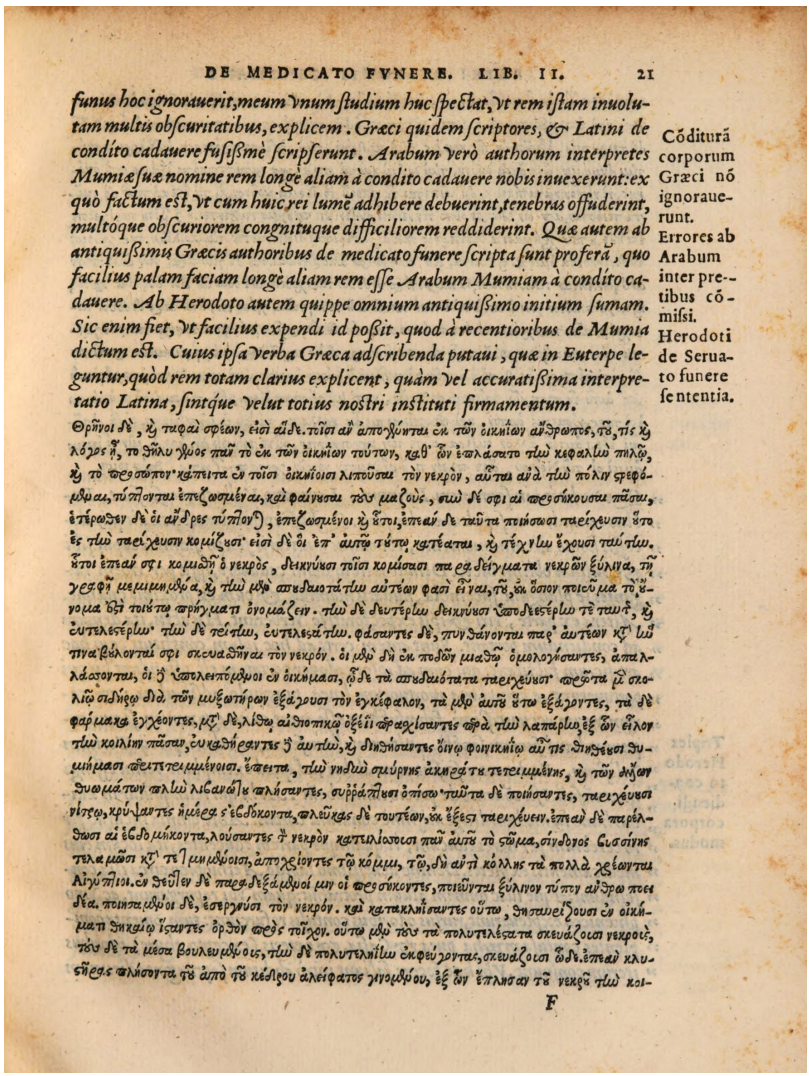
18 Translation by George Campbell Macaulay.

either through the Latin translation by Lorenzo Valla (1474) or through the Italian translation provided by Matteo Maria Boiardo (1533). He could also have known Pierre Belon's pioneering work on mummies. Belon, a physician who actually travelled to Egypt, was among the first Europeans to explore the Cheops pyramid. It is thanks to him that knowledge of the three modes of mummification given in the *Histories* became established among medical experts of the 16th century (Reetz 2019, 16; Dannenfeldt 1985, 174-5). In his book on ancient funerary practices, *De medicato funere* (Paris 1553), Belon cited the passage at length, first in Greek and then in Valla's Latin translation (see figs. 2a/b).

When Tommaso Porcacchi wrote his treatise on ancient funerary practices he remembered what he had read about the Egyptians in Herodotus's *Histories*. His *Funerali antichi di diversi popoli et nationi*, published in 1574, are designed as a dialogue between two earls: Vespasiano Cuovo from Soncino and his son-in-law Cesare Loccatello from Alzano, both in Lombardy. Tommaso set the scene carefully: Vespasiano visits his daughter Lavinia and her husband Cesare at their beautiful villa in Alzano. The two men enter Cesare's study, where Vespasiano admires his rich book collection. Then a number of copper plates lying on a table suddenly catch his attention and the conversation begins in earnest.

The artist of the images is introduced as a certain Girolamo Porro from Padua "a young man who in his profession astonishes everyone". Tommaso Porcacchi had already worked with him a few years earlier, when he engraved the maps in his "Isole piu famose del Mondo", first published in 1572 (Bryan 1889). Girolamo is characterised as being "accurate, patient, and intelligent". But what made people wonder was the fact that Girolamo was almost blind, a sort of *alter Homerus* among the artists, because he needed magnifying glasses to support his eyes.[19]

19 Porcacchi 1574, 3: *Di Girolamo Porro Padovano, giovane che in questa professione fa stupire ogni huomo: percioche è accurato, patiente, e intelligente: et (quel che maggiormente accresce lo stupore) essendo egli d'imperfetta vista d'occhi; intaglia con tanta sottigliezza, che puo essere annoverato fra quelli, c'hanno l'occhio acutissimo. È (come ho detto) di vista imperfetta: atteso che per non so qual difetto, havendo macchiato la luce d'un'occhio; quella dell'altro è poi così corta, che senza l'aiuto del cristallo egli non ci vede molto lontano.*



DE MEDICATO FVNERE. LIB. II. 21

funus hoc ignorauerit, meum vnum studium huc spectat, vt rem istam inuolutam multis obscuritatibus, explicem. Græci quidem scriptores, & Latini de condito cadauere fusissimè scripserunt. Arabum verò authorum interpretes Mumiæ suæ nomine rem longè aliam à condito cadauere nobis inuexerunt: ex quò factum est, vt cum huic rei lumè adhibere debuerint, tenebras offuderint, multóque obscuriorem congnituque difficiliorem reddiderint. Quæ autem ab antiquissimis Græcis authoribus de medicato funere scripta sunt proferã, quo facilius palam faciam longè aliam rem esse Arabum Mumiam à condito cadauere. Ab Herodoto autem quippe omnium antiquissimo initium sumam. Sic enim fiet, vt facilius expendi id possit, quod à recentioribus de Mumia dictum est. Cuius ipsa verba Græca adscribenda putaui, quæ in Euterpe leguntur, quòd rem totam clarius explicent, quàm vel accuratissima interpretatio Latina, sintque velut totius nostri instituti firmamentum.

Cõditurã corporum Græci nõ ignorauerunt.

Errores ab Arabum interpretibus cõmissi.

Herodoti de Seruato funere sententia.

Θρῆνοι δέ, ἢν τυφαὶ σφέων, εἰσὶ αἵδε. τοῖσι ἂν ἀποθάνῃσι ἐν τῶν οἰκηίων ἀνδρῶπος, τῶ, τίς ἡ λόγος ἦ, τὸ ἄλλο χρόος πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῶν οἰκηίων τούτων, καθ' ὧν ἐπλάσατο πλὴν κεφαλῆς πλῆν, ἢ τὸ θερσόπον· κάπειτα ἐν τοῖσι οἰκηίοισι λιποῦσα τὸν νεκρὸν, αὖτις αὖ τὴν πόλιν περφόμενοι, τύπτονται ἐπιζωσμένοι, καὶ φαίνουσαι τὸν μαζοὺς, σὺν δὲ σφι αἱ θερσόκουσαι παίουσι πᾶσαι, ἑτέρωθεν δὲ οἱ ἄνδρες τύπτονται, ἐπιζωσμένοι ἢ ἕτοι, ἐπεὰν δὲ ταῦτα ποιήσωσι παείχευσι ἄστο ἔξω τὴν παείχευσιν κομίζουσι· εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ ἐπ' αὐτῷ τούτῳ κατέαται, ἢ τέχνην ἔχουσι τοιύτην. ἅτοι ἐπεὰν στι κομιδῇ ὁ νεκρὸς, δεικνύουσι τοῖσι κομίσουσι παράδειγματα νεκρῶν ξύλινα, τῇ γραφῇ μεμιμημένα, ἢ τὴν μὲν ἀσεμνοτάτην αὐτέων φασὶ εἶναι, τὸν δὲ ὅσιον ποιεῦμαι τὸ ὄνομα δὲ τοιούτῳ πρήγματι ὀνομάζειν. τὴν δὲ δευτέρην δεικνύουσι ἀπολείουσαν τὸν τῶν, ἢ εὐτελεστέρην· τὴν δὲ τρίτην, εὐτελεστάτην. φράσαντες δὲ, πρὸς ἀπάγονται παρ' ἄυτῶν κατ' ἣν βούλονται σφι σκευασθῆναι τὸν νεκρόν. οἱ μὲν δὴ ἐν πολλῷ μισθῷ ὁμολογήσαντες, ἀπαλλάσσονται, οἱ δὲ ὑπολειπόμενοι ἐν οἰκήμασι, ὧδε τὸ ἀσεμνότατα παείχευσι· πρῶτα μὲν σκολιῷ σιδήρεῳ διὰ τῶν μυξωτήρων ἐξάγουσι τὸν ἐγκέφαλον, τὰ μὲν αὐτῷ ὕπο ἐξάγοντες, τὰ δὲ φαρμάκοισι ἐγχέοντες, κατὰ δὲ λίθῳ αἰθιοπικῷ ὀξείῃ πρήσχισαντες πρὰ τὴν λαπάρην, ἐξ ὧν εἶλον τὴν κοιλίην πᾶσαν, ἐυκαθήραντες ἢ αὖτὴν, ἢ διαθήσαντες οἴνῳ φοινικηίῳ αὖθις θυλέουσι σμύρνῃσι ἀκηράτοισι τετριμμένῃσι, ἢ τῶν ἄλλων θυωμάτων πλὴν λιβανώτου πλήσαντες, συῤῥάπτουσι ὀπίσω· τιλῦτα δὲ ποιήσαντες, παείχευσι νίτρῳ, κρύψαντες ἡμέρας ἑβδομήκοντα, πλείους δὲ τουτέων, οὐκ ἔξεστι παείχευειν. ἐπεὰν δὲ παρέλθωσι αἱ ἑβδομήκοντα, λούσαντες τὸν νεκρὸν κατειλέουσι πᾶν ἄυτῃ τὸ σῶμα, σινδόνος βυσσίνης τελαμῶσι κατὰ τε μηρούς, ἀπαρχέοντες τῷ κόμμι, τῷ, δὴ αὐτὴ κόλλησι τὰ πολλὰ χρέωνται Αἰγύπτιοι. ἐν δὲ τοῦτον δὴ παείχεσι ἀξιόμυροι μὲν οἱ θερσόκοντες, ποιεῦντα ξύλινον τύπον ἀνθρωπόειδέα. ποιησάμενοι δὲ, ἐσαγγύσι τὸν νεκρόν. καὶ κατακληίσαντες οὕτω, ὀπωρινείουσι ἐν οἰκήματι ὀπωρινῷ ἵστωντες ὀρθὸν θερὸς τοῖχον. οὕτω μὲν τὸν τὰ πολυτελέστατα σκευάζοισι νεκροὺς, τὸν δὲ τὰ μέσα βουλευμένους, τὴν δὲ πολυτελείην ἐκφεύγοντας, σκευάζοισι ὧδε. ἐπεὰν κλυσθῇσι φλόσοντα τῷ ἀπὸ τῆ κέδρου ἀλείφατος γινομένου, ἐξ ὧν ἔπλησαν τὰ νεκρᾶ τὴν κοι-

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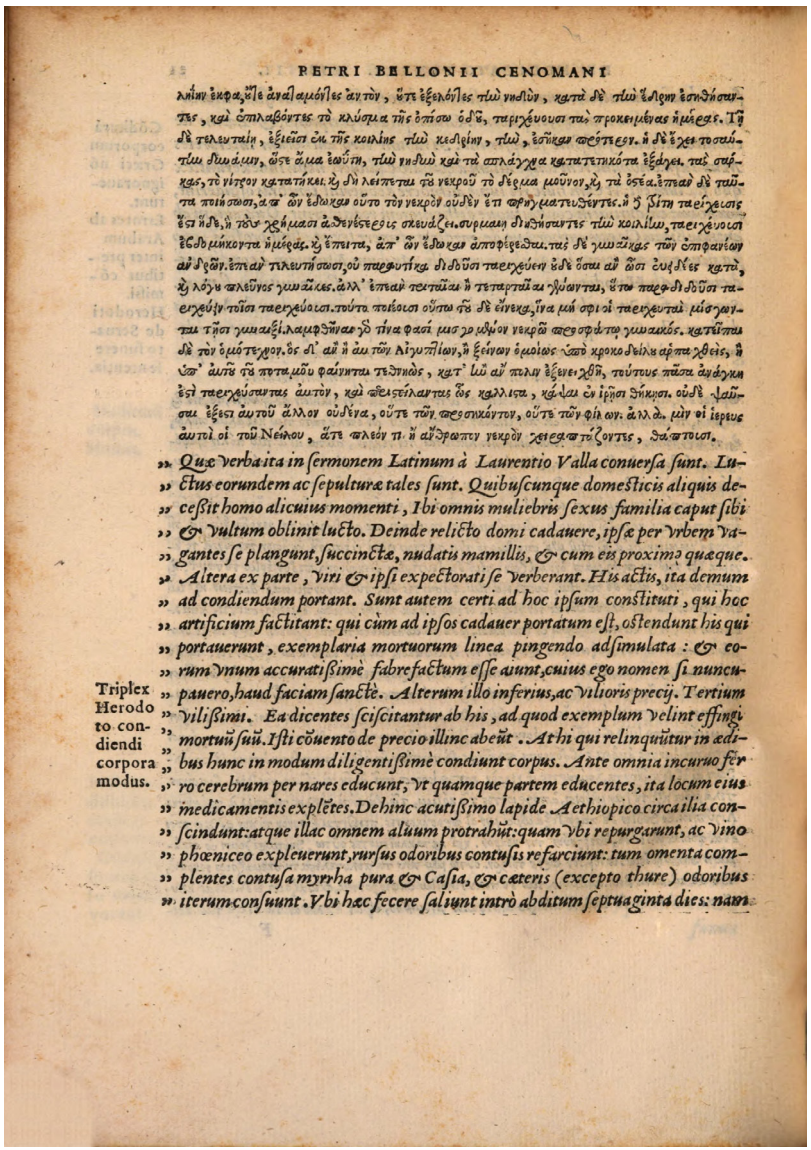
Fig. 2a: Pierre Belon, *De medicato funere* (book two of *De admirabili Operum Antiquorum . . . praestantia*), Paris 1553, 21r: *Histories* 2.86.

Cesare goes on to say that the man engraved the Gospel of John and several psalms on a small silver coin despite his severe visual impairment – a miracle similar to writing Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* on so little paper that both works fit into a nutshell (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.85; for this imagery see Squire 2011).



PETRI BELLONII CENOMANI

λείψιν ἐκφαίνειν ἀναλαμόντες αὐτὸν, ὅτε ἐξελόντες πλὴν νηδύν, κατὰ δὲ πλὴν ἕλκος ἐσπάσαντες, καὶ ὀπλαβόντες τὸ κάλυμμα τῆς ὀπίσω ὁδοῦ, παρέχουσι τὰ προκείμενα ἡμέρας. Τῇ δὲ τελευταίῃ, ἐξιέσι ἐκ τῆς κοιλίης πλὴν καρδίην, πλὴν ἐσπάκας φοίτησεν. ἡ δὲ ἔχει τοσοῦτον ἄλυμα, ὥστε ἅμα ἐωθίῃ, πλὴν νηδὺν καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα καταπεπόνται ἐξάγει. τὰς σάρκας, τὸ νίτρον κατατήκει. ἢ δὲ λείπεται τὰ νεκροῦ τὸ δέρμα μοῦνον, ἢ τὰ ὀστέα. ἐπεὰν δὲ ταῦτα ποιήσωσι, ἀπὰ ὧν ἔδωκαν οὔτο τὸν νεκρὸν οὐδὲν ἔτι φροντίζουσιν. ἡ δ' ἧτη ταριχεύσις ἔστι ἥδε, ἢ τὸν χρήμασι ἀδυνατώτερος σκευάζει. συρμαίη διηθήσαντες πλὴ κοιλίῃ, ταριχεύουσι ἡμέρας μάλιστα ἑπτά, ἀπ' ὧν ἔδωκαν ἀποφέρεσθαι. τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας τῶν ὀνομαστέων ἀν' ἓξ ἡμέρας. ἐπεὰν τελευτήσωσι, οὐ παραυτίκα διδοῦσι ταριχεύειν ἐδὲ ὅσαι ἀν ὦσι εὐειδέες κατὰ, ἢ λόγω πολύνος γυναῖκες. ἀλλ' ἐπεὰν τετάλαι ἢ τετράταλαι ἡλίωνται, ἔπω παραδιδοῦσι ταριχεύειν τοῖσι ταριχεύουσι. τοῦτο ποιέουσι οὕτω τὰς δὲ εὐγενέας, ἵνα μὴ σφι οἱ ταριχευταὶ μίσγωνται τῇσι γυναιξί. καμφθῆναι γὰρ φασὶ μισγόμενον νεκρῷ πεσόντα γυναικός. κατέπεσε δὲ τὸν ὁμότεχνον. ὃς δ' ἂν ἢ ἄλλων Αἰγυπτίων, ἢ ξείνων ὁμοίως τοῦ κροκοδείλου ἁρπαχθείς, ἢ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποταμοῦ φανῇται τεθνηὼς, κατὰ λύ αὐ πόλιν ἐξεινεχθῇ, τούτους πᾶσα ἀνάγκη ἐστὶ ταριχεύσαντας ἀυτὸν, καὶ θεοειδέλατους ὡς κάλλιστα, κάψαι ἐν ἱρῇσι σήκοισι. οὐδὲ θάψασι ἐξέστι αὐτοῦ ἄλλοι οὐδένα, οὔτε τῶν πεσσικόντον, οὔτε τῶν φίλων. ἀλλὰ μὲν οἱ ἱερεῖς αὐτοὶ οἱ τοῦ Νείλου, ἄτε πολεόν τι ἢ ἀνδρωπεν νεκρὸν χρεσσωτίζοντες, θάπτουσι.

» *Quæ verba ita in sermonem Latinum à Laurentio Valla conuersa sunt. Lu-*
» *ctus eorundem ac sepulturæ tales sunt. Quibuscunque domesticis aliquis de-*
» *cesſit homo alicuius momenti, Ibi omnis muliebris sexus familia caput sibi*
» *& vultum oblinit luctu. Deinde relicto domi cadauere, ipsæ per vrbem va-*
» *gantes se plangunt, succinctæ, nudatis mamillis, & cum eis proximi quæque.*
» *Altera ex parte, viri & ipsi expectorati se verberant. His actis, ita demum*
» *ad condiendum portant. Sunt autem certi ad hoc ipsum constituti, qui hoc*
» *artificium factitant: qui cùm ad ipsos cadauer portatum est, ostendunt his qui*
» *portauerunt, exemplaria mortuorum linea pingendo adsimulata: & eo-*
» *rum vnum accuratissimè fabrefactum esse aiunt, cuius ego nomen si nuncu-*
Triplex Herodoto condiendi corpora modus. » *pauero, haud faciam sanctè. Alterum illo inferius, ac vilioris precij. Tertium*
» *vilissimi. Ea dicentes sciscitantur ab his, ad quod exemplum velint effingi*
» *mortuũ suũ. Isti cõuento de precio illinc abeũt. At hi qui relinquũtur in ædi-*
» *bus hunc in modum diligentissimè condiunt corpus. Ante omnia incuruo fer-*
» *ro cerebrum per nares educunt, vt quamque partem educentes, ita locum eius*
» *medicamentis explẽtes. Dehinc acutissimo lapide Aethiopico circa ilia con-*
» *scindunt: atque illac omnem aluum protrahũt: quam vbi repurgarunt, ac vino*
» *phœniceo expleuerunt, rursus odoribus contusis refarciunt: tum omenta com-*
» *plentes contusa myrrha pura & Casia, & cæteris (excepto thure) odoribus*
» *iterum consuunt. Vbi hæc fecere salsunt intrò abditum septuaginta dies: nam*

Fig. 2b: Pierre Belon, *De medicato funere* (book two of *De admirabili OperumbAntiquorum . . . praestantia*), Paris 1553, 21v: *Histories* 2.86 with Latin translation.


68 FVNERALI

TAVOLA SECONDA SEPOLCRALE
DE GLI EGITTII.
XI.

CO. VES. Non hauete voi di sopra detto, che i Re d'Egitto si fabricarono le piramidi per loro sepolture? Come dunque possono star queste contrarietà insieme?

CO. CES. Intorno a cio douete sapere, che coloro, i quali hanno veduto fuora del Cairo le piramidi, che di sopra v'ho nominate; essi manifestamente testificano, d'hauerle trouate vote dentro, & d'hauerui mandato gente con torce accese. Costoro all'entrar della porta hebbero vna strada pendente all'ingiu, tutta di marmo liscio, stretta, & lunga C L XXV. passi: & non vi poteuano andar, se non carponi, o almeno ben chinati. In capo d'essa trouarono vna camera fatta in volta, di grandezza di dodici passi, con due camerini attaccati. Nella grande era vna gran sepoltura, & d'intorno v'haueuano altri sepolcri piccoli: talche si stima, che nella grande il Re, & ne' piccioli, o i figliuoli, o le concubine, o altri tali fossero riposti. Per que-

lio

Fig. 3: Tommaso Porcacchi, *Funerali antichi di diversi popoli et nationi*, Venice 1574, 68: engraving illustrating the Egyptian embalming practice according to *Histories* 2.86.

His engravings of ancient funerary practices, an artistic miracle, were a wonderful and detailed starting point for learned discussion. Among them appear careful renderings of both of the favorite Herodotean passages that we already found in Guarino's letters: an illustration of Mycerinus's cow-figured coffin (Hdt. 2.129-33) and an accurate visual translation of the account on Egyptian embalming practices (see fig. 3). The latter is introduced and described in the dialogue of the two earls as follows:

> Co. VES . . . a vostro beneplacito esponetemi l'altro lor costume, che da Herodoto havete appreso.
>
> Co. CES Dopo le cerimonie sudette; gli Egittij portavano il corpo del morto Personaggio, a casa d'uno, c'haveva molte forme di legno dipinte a somiglianza di morti, di maggiore & di minor prezzo: et fatto mercato d'una d'esse; facevano al corpo morto queste cose. Prima con un ferro a uncino gli cavavano il cervello per le nari del naso, & riempivano il luogo voto d'odori. Dipoi con una pietra Ethiopica acutissima gli tagliavano intorno a'fianchi, & del corpo gli estrahevano tutte le interiora, lavando, & nettando diligentemente il corpo con vino di Fenicia, & riempiendolo d'odori pesti, e incorporati insieme; cioè mirra pura, cassia, & altri odori, fuor che incenso: & cosi serravano il luogo aperto, facendolo cucire. Cio fatto; lo tenevano settanta giorno in sale, & non piu: indi lavatolo; tutto lo fasciavano con fasce di bisso; & l'ungevano di gomma: & cosi i parenti lo serravano dentro in quella forma di legno, c'havevano comprato: & quivi lo tenevano riposto; secondo che potete vedere in quest'altro disegno. (Porcacchi 1574, 67)

> [EARL VESPASIANO . . . please explain to me that other custom of theirs that you have taken from Herodotus. / EARL CESARE After those ceremonies that I explained above, the Egyptians carried the body of the deceased person to the house of someone who had many wooden figures painted like the dead and with higher and minor prices. And when they had bought one of those, they did the following things to the dead body: First, they pulled out the brain with a little iron hook through the nostrils of the nose and filled the empty space with herbs. Then, with a very sharp Ethiopian stone they cut around the hips and extracted all the guts from the body, diligently washing and cleaning the body with

> Phoenician wine and refilling it with grinded and amalgamated herbs, namely pure myrrh, cassia and other herbs, save incense. And like this they closed the open [wound] by sowing. After this was done, they kept it in salt for no more than seventy days. Then they washed it and bandaged it completely with strips of precious linen and rubbed it with gum. And like this the relatives locked it up inside this wooden figure that they had bought: and there they held it enclosed, as you can see on this second drawing.]

Cesare's explanation resembles a summary and partially even a precise translation of the Herodotean passage, book 2 chapter 86. However, comparison shows that it is an original translation into Italian, which was created independently of Boiardo's *Herodoto Alicarnasseo Historico delle guerre de Greci & de Persi* that had been published in Venice in 1539 (52*r*-52*v*). In the illustration, the individual steps of the embalming process are depicted in an imaginative ancient architectural landscape.[20] On the right, a structure that looks like half a triumphal arch provides a view of two floors, like a doll's house. The first two scenes of the text can be found here: on the ground floor the shopkeeper receives the family of the deceased to sell one of his wooden figures that are on display. On the upper floor, four people are busy removing the brain of the deceased through his nose. To the left there is a second building, presumably an ancient temple, with a porticus that supports a frieze carrying a balcony and a roof structure with a statue on top of the pediment. Between the two buildings the background is filled by a hilly landscape with pointed roof tops and a tree with two crossed trunks that remind of Christian iconography. In the front, we find the scene in which the guts of the deceased are taken out: a woman with a needle and several vessels in the foreground that are probably filled with herbs make this identification clear. But three further people standing at the head of the body that lies on an ancient stone table with the feet towards the onlooker do not correspond with anything mentioned in the Herodotean text. Rather, they

20 See the drawings of antiquities in ancient Rome in Giovanni Marcanova's *Collectio antiquitatum* at Princeton (Marcanova 2023), esp. fol. 5*r* (triumphal arch).

resemble Christian imagery, such as the lamentation of Christ that was often depicted with a perspective distortion of the dead body. This is even more true for the last step of the embalming process located in the temple porticus. The bandaging of an upright body between two columns at the left edge of the picture leaves open whether the strips of linen are being put on or taken off. Thus, the scene bears a strong resemblance to the resurrection of Lazarus who was already depicted as a swaddled corpse in early Christian times (Meurer 1971).

As we have seen, the Egyptian practice of embalming as it is described by Herodotus was one of the most interesting passages to its very first early modern readers. Guarino, who translated and read Herodotus with his students, was struck by the rhetorical beauty of the passage. Tommaso Porcacchi and the engraver Girolamo Porro were eager to know about the Egyptian technique itself: although they had obviously never seen a real mummy before their eyes, they closely followed the Herodotean textual description and tried to understand each of its steps.[21] In order to do so, they blended 15th-century antiquarian knowledge on ancient buildings with scenes from Christian iconography as it was common in northern Italy. This was a convenient way to solve the complicated task of illustrating Herodotus's description. Moreover, it could be a hint to a Christian reading of Herodotus as a welcome supplement to what Scripture says about Egypt – in this case about the alleged embalming of Jacob and Joseph (Genesis 50.2 and 50.26).[22] Although a better understanding of this interpretation of the *Histories* is very much lacking, this unfortunately lies outside the scope of this contribution.

21 Until the 16th century only parts of mummies were transported to Europe to produce the medicine *mumia*. Note, however, that in the course of the battle of Lepanto a mummy passed Venice and arrived in Frankfurt. A picture of this mummy was published by Joachim Strupp in his *Consensus super Mumia* in 1574 (Reetz 2019, 40-4).

22 On the Hebrew translation of the Egyptian word for 'embalming' in Genesis 50 see Ebach 2007, 646; Görg 1990. On the *interpretatio Aegyptiaca* in the Septuagint, see Morenz 1959 (review of the seminal *Joseph en Égypte* by Jozef Vergote); and Morenz 1975, 426-7.

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5

Sir Walter Ralegh's Herodotus

Carlo M. Bajetta and Francesco Dall'Olio[1]

Abstract

Our chapter explores the presence of Herodotus' work in Sir Walter Ralegh's *History of the World* (printed 1614). This work offers a unique perspective on the reception of the historian in Renaissance England: it allows us to observe how an author intent on writing history in that period would have read Herodotus. Which text would he use? Would he use it merely a source of information, or would it become a source of inspiration on how to read the facts he is narrating? How influential and what sort of *auctoritas* would Herodotus represent for a Renaissance writer? The answers to these questions represent the core of our work. We start by offering a survey of the presence of Herodotus in the private libraries of notable members of the Elizabethan and Jacobean court, thus highlighting the extent of Herodotus' diffusion among the cultured audience of Ralegh's time. We then offer an identification of the edition of Herodotus used by Ralegh while writing *The History of the World*, and move on to discuss Ralegh's reading of Herodotus within the framwork of his reception in 16th-century England and Europe.

Keywords: reception of Herodotus; Walter Ralegh; *History of the World*; Renaissance historiography; private libraries

1. *Historiae* and Ralegh's *History of the World*

While not based on a documented historical circumstance, John Everett Millais's famous painting *The Boyhood of Raleigh* (1870) powerfully visualizes one crucial element of Ralegh's character. Young Walter is portrayed here as raptly listening to the tale of a mariner, his back to the azure sea, his gaze fixed on the narrator's gestures as if he could soar above those lands in his mind's eye. No doubt, even in his later days Sir Walter could hardly resist a good story. His works are replete with enticing anecdotes, many

1 Carlo M. Bajetta contributed sections 1-2 and the graphs, Francesco Dall'Olio wrote sections 3-4 and updated the bilbliography.

of which taken from his extensive reading; quite significantly, the antiquarian John Aubrey remarked that Ralegh "carried always a Trunk of Books along with him", in his sea voyages (Aubrey 2018, 1.231). Interestingly, as witnessed by many passages in his prose essays, Sir Walter also loved to consult and quote from multiple sources when trying to ascertain the truth as to legend, history or hearsay (see e.g. Ralegh 1591; 1602; 1829, 8.299-316). It is no surprise, then, that Herodotus's *historiē*, with their title bearing the connotation of 'research' or 'investigation, enquiry' (Herodotus 2008, xxii), were for him a congenial source. It was quoted, in the 1460-odd pages of Ralegh's *History of the World* (1614), more than one hundred times.

No naïve historiographer, in his book Ralegh frequently establishes an intense dialogue with the ancients. He often cites different opinions, sometimes even deploying an array of citations in an attempt to build a detailed analysis of the existing, often contrasting, narratives of a given event. Mostly for chronological reasons, Herodotus is frequently quoted first, followed by other sources. A good instance may come from book 2, in the paragraph discussing the origins of the Trojan war, and in particular the episode of the abduction of Helen:

> *Herodotus* fetcheth the cause of this rape from very farre; saying, That whereas the *Phoenicians* had rauished *Io,* and carried her into *Aegypt,* the *Greekes* to be reuenged on the *Barbarians,* did first rauish *Europa,* whom they brought out of *Phoenicia* into *Creta,* and afterward *Medaea,* whom they fetcht from *Colchos,* denying to restore her to her father, till such time as they might be satisfied for the rape of *Io.* By these deedes of the *Greekes, Paris* (as the same *Herodotus* affirmes) was imboldened to doe the like; not fearing such reuenge as ensued. But all this narration seemes friuolous. For what had the King of *Colchos* to doe with the iniurie of the *Phoenicians?* Or how could the *Greekes,* as in reuenge of *Io,* pleade any quarrell against him, that neuer had heard the name of *Phoenicians? Thucydides*, a writer of vnquestionable sinceritie, maketh it plaine, that the name of *Barbarians* was not vsed at all in *Homers* time, which was long after the warre of *Troy;* and that the *Greekes* themselues were not then called all by one name, *Hellenes,* as afterwards. So that it were vnreasonable to think, that

> they should haue sought reuenge vpon all Nations, as barbarous, for the iniu|rie receiued by one: or that all people else should haue esteemed of the *Greekes,* as of a people opposed to all the world; and that euen then when as the *Greekes* had not yet one common name among themselues. Others with more probabilitie say, that the rape of *Helen* was to procure the redeliuery of *Hesione,* King *Priamus* his sister, taken formerly by *Hercules,* and giuen to *Telamon.* This may haue beene true. (Ralegh 1614, 2.14.2, 2Q4)

By stating that this 'may have been true', Ralegh appears very cautious in his evaluation of sources. This may seem to contrast quite starkly with some other passages in the *History of the World*, such as when he makes use of a section of Herodotus without even quoting him explicitly. In book 2 (chap. 25.4, 2E6*v*), in fact, the beginning of the story of Candaules and Gyges appears as follows:

> *Candaules* the sonne of *Myrsus* was the last of his race, who doated so much vpon the beautie of his owne Wife, that hee could not bee content to enjoy her, but would needs enforce one *Gyges,* the sonne of *Dascylus,* to behold her naked bodie; and placed the vnwilling man secretly in her chamber, where he might see her preparing to bed-ward.

This is an almost verbatim translation of Herodotus's *Histories* 1.8, the famous passage which narrates the folly of Candaules and the beginning of the new line of the Lydian kings with Gyges, from which Croesus descended. While the story is also narrated by Plato in the *Republic* (2.359d) and in Iustin's *Epitome* (1.7.14-15), Ralegh makes no mention of any of these, but tacitly reproduces what he considers the best version of this episode. These apparently contrasting ways of dealing with his sources suggest, in fact, a tendency to recur not merely to *auctoritas*, but to credibility. When the existing versions of a historical event are not at odds, Ralegh seems content with a generally accepted text: Herodotus is frequently the perfect vulgate which most readers will find both adequate and pleasant.

The Greek historian had no doubt the additional bonus of being regarded by protestant theologians as the first man who expanded on history as set down in the Bible. In his

seminal *De lectione historiarum recte instituenda* the Lutheran theologian David Chytraeus stated that "Deus ipse primam et antiquissimam Historiam per Mosen edidit: et Herodotus, qui e vestigio Propheticis monumentis succedit" ("God presented that pristine and most ancient history through Moses, and then Herodotus succeeded in the footsteps of the Prophets") and went as far as to state that because Herodotus's histories frequently agreed with the Bible he "non modo lucem multis in locis historiae sacrae adfert: verum etiam autoritatem et certitudinem totius doctrinae in bonis mentibus confirmat" ("not only sheds light on many places of sacred history, but indeed confirms the authority and certainty of all doctrine in good minds"; Chytraeus 1579, 559, 516; see also Popper 2012, 69-74). Ralegh owned a copy of this work as well as one of Chytraeus's *Chronologia historiae Herodoti et Thucydidis*, and also owned a Latin copy of *Histories* (Oakeshott 1968, 304; 327 nos. 131 and 501; 307, No. 180). The presence of these volumes in his library is a clear witness to the crucial role of both the Greek author and of its Renaissance interpreters in the shaping of the *History of the World*: no doubt Ralegh saw many parts of Herodotus's work as a confirmation of the historical account provided by the Scriptures, and acted accordingly in many sections of his work (see Popper 2012).

2. Ralegh, Herodotus, and the Court

It is interesting to note that at the Elizabethan and Jacobean court, Ralegh was not alone in his admiration for Herodotus. During the past three years we have been researching the collections of classical texts present in the libraries of the men and women with established links with the Privy Chamber.[2] To this purpose we have visited libraries in the UK and USA, carried out research on the *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* database and on other contemporary book lists, as well as examined numerous sales catalogues (details as to these

2 This excludes scholars and non-courtiers such as Ben Jonson, who owned a 1618 Greek copy, now in the Cambridge University Library. For a definition of 'courtier' in this sense see May 1991, and Lawson 2013.

sources will be provided in a separate, forthcoming publication). The results concerning the diffusion of Herodotus, which we have included in our *CoLEEn* (*Courtiers' Libraries in Elizabethan England*) database, show that at least 16 copies of the *Histories* were circulated at the English court between 1558 and 1625. Beside Ralegh, owners included King James himself (with three copies in the Royal Library, one of which coming from his mother Mary, Queen of Scots, and one from James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton, among the regents of Scotland during the minority of James); the diplomat Sir Thomas Roe, who acted for a while as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire; the political writer and influential Clerk of the Council Robert Beale (*de facto* Secretary of State during his father-in-law Sir Francis Walsingham's absence on various occasions); Ralegh's chief accuser during the 1603 trial Sir Edward Coke, Attorney-General of England; the Elizabethan bluestockings Mildred and Elizabeth Cooke (respectively, Lady Cecil and Lady Russell); the Earl of Oxford, who owned a copy of Boiardo's Italian version, *Delle guerre de greci, et de persi* (1565), as well as bibliophiles such as John, Lord Lumley, Keeper of Nonsuch Palace (one of his two copies had once belonged to archbishop Thomas Cranmer; see Fig. 1 and 2).

Interestingly, no copy of the English translation of the first two books of Herodotus (published by Thomas Marshe in 1584) appears in this list. We find six Latin editions (mostly depending on Lorenzo Valla's original translation), three Greek and three bilingual volumes, which is quite intriguing. That the Greek-only texts and Greek/Latin versions are so numerous, in fact, is a witness to the diffusion of the classical languages among the Elizabethan élite, and of the Court women in particular. While being frequently admired among their contemporaries for their learning. The Cooke sisters, who owned two of the copies mentioned above (see Fig. 1), were in good company in their knowledge of Greek: Queen Elizabeth herself had been taught this language at an early age (cf. Allen 2014 and Bajetta 2017, xxiv-xxviii, xxxi, lx). Quite significantly, Roger Ascham could praise the learning of the women of England, stating that "we now have many honorable women who surpass the daughters of Thomas More in all kinds of learning. Amongst them the shining star, not

so much for her brightness as for the splendor of her virtue and her learning, is my lady Elizabeth" (Ascham 1989, 166).

The copies of Herodotus we were able to locate are no doubt significantly inferior in number to those of authors which figured prominently in the educational curriculum or in the typical reading-lists of the time, such as Aristotle, Plutarch, Aesop, Xenophon, Homer, Thucydides (cf. e.g. Allen 2013, 20; Stewart 2011, 45). They are outnumbered even by some medical treatises such as Galen's (the latter owned, incidentally, by both Ralegh and Mildred Cooke), and of other 'reference' history or science books commonly held in the libraries of English noblemen. It is very interesting to note, however, that Herodotus appears in the 'top-10' list of the Greek authors owned by the Elizabethan and Jacobean courtiers. That the *Histories* appear often alongside and in a similar proportion to books by Flavius Josephus, Thucydides, and Lucian no doubt signals that all of these authors were just expected to be on the bookshelves of those noblemen with an interest in ancient history (see Figg. 4 and 5).

3. Ralegh's Copy of the *Historiae*

In Ralegh's case, given the amount of quoted material that, as seen above, one finds in the *History of the World*, one would like to be able to identify 'which' Herodotus he was reading. Luckily for us, there are enough elements in the *History* to justify the hypothesis of its being, almost certainly, the edition possessed by Ralegh. At the beginning of the Book 1, when arguing that the mythical garden of Eden once could be found in ancient Mesopotamia,[3] Ralegh presents as a proof Herodotus's words about how fertile the land of Babylon is:

> Yet his I finde written of it: First in *Herodotus*, who was an eye-witnesse, and speaketh of the very place itselfe, for the *Isle* of *Eden* is but twelve miles or thereabout from *Ninive*, and so from *Mosal. Ex Euphrate exiens in Tigrim, alterum flumen, juxta quod*

3 See Popper 2012, 152-62 on the importance of this issue in Renaissance historiography and its relevance for Ralegh's *History*.

> *Vrbs Ninus sita erat, Hæc regio, omnium quas nos vidimus, optima est*, &c. *Where Euphrates* runneth out into *Tigris, not farre from the place where Ninus is seated, This Region, of all that we have seene, is most excellent*; and he added afterward. *Ceteris autem fructu procreando adeo ferax est, ut nunquam non fere ducenta reddat*, &c. (that is) *It is so fruitfull in bringing forth Corne, that it yieldeth two hundred fold : The leaves of Wheate and Barley being almost foure fingers broade : As for the height of Millet and Sesame, they are even in length like unto trees, which although I know to be true, yet I forbere to speake hereof, well knowing, that those thinges which are reported of this fruitfulnesse, will seeme very incredible to those, which never were in the Countrie of Babylon. They have commonly in all the Countrie Palme-trees growing of their own accord, the most of them bearing fruit, out of which they make both meats, and wine, and honnie, ordering them as the Fig-trees.* Thus farre Herodotus. (Ralegh 1614, 1.3.12, 1F4*v*)

Only a few chapters later, Ralegh once again quotes Herodotus directly, when mentioning the mountain of Atlas (1.7.11, 1M2*v*):

> There are also in *Mauritania* neare the Sea, the famous mountaines of *Atlas*, of which *Herodotus. Extat in hoc mari Mons, cui nomen Atlas, ita sublimis esse dicitur, ut ad illius verticem oculi mortalium pervenire non possint*, *Vpon this coast there is a mountaine called Atlas, whose height is said to be such, as the eye of no mortall man can discern the top thereof.*

In both cases, Ralegh is quoting passages from the *Stories* (respectively Hdt. 1.193.2-4 and 4.184.3) in Lorenzo Valla's Latin translation (our emphasis):

> *Ex Euphrate exiens in Tigrim alterum flumen, iuxta quod ubrs Ninus sita erat. Haec regio omnium quas nos vidimus,* longe *optima est* dumtaxtat ferendo frumento. Nam in arboribus ferendis, ficu, vite, oleo nequaquam de principatu contendit. *Ceteris aut fructum procreando adeo ferax est, ut nunquam non fere ducenta reddat*: et ubi bonitate se vincit, etiam ad tricena, quaternum fere digitorum latitudine triticeis atque hordeaceis foliis milii vero vel sesami proceritatem instar arborum, etsi mihi copertam, tamen memorare supsedeo: probe sciens, his qui nunquam Babyloniam regionem adierunt qui de frugiferis dicta sunt, perque incredibilia visum

> iri. Oleo neutiquam utuntur, nisi quod ex sesamis faciunt. Sunt eis passim per regionem palma sua sponte nascentes, pleraque fructiferae: ex quibus cibos, et vinum, et mel conficiunt, curantes more ficorum. (Herodotus 1583, 90-1)

> *Cui* confinis est mons, *nomine Atlas*, exilis, et undique teres: et (ut fertur) adeo celsus, ut eius cacumen nequeat cerni. (326)

> [From the Euphrates, another river flows out into the Tigris, alongside which the city of Nineveh was situated. This region is by far the best of all those we have seen, particularly for producing grain. However, when it comes to bearing fruit trees – such as fig trees, vines, and olives – it in no way competes for preeminence. Still, in producing other crops, it is so fertile that it almost always yields two hundredfold. And where the soil is especially rich, the wheat and barley leaves are about four fingers wide, and the millet and sesame grow as tall as trees. Although this seems unbelievable to me, I will refrain from going into further detail, knowing well that for those who have never visited Babylonia, these accounts of its fertility may seem incredible. They do not use olive oil at all, except for what they make from sesame seeds. Throughout the region, palm trees grow abundantly and naturally, most of them bearing fruit, from which they make food, wine, and honey, treating them in the manner of figs.
>
> Bordering it is a mountain called Atlas, slender and rounded on all sides; and (as it is said) so high that its summit cannot be seen.]

Although the text in Ralegh's work is not a precise reprisal of Valla, still the similarities are strong enough to dispel any doubt about their origin, and to prove that Oakeshott was right when he conjectured that Ralegh's copy of Herodotus was "a Latin translation . . . that of Valla" (1971, 307).

But this is only the beginning. In the second book, Ralegh says that "*Herodotus* finds *Homer* flourishing 622 yeares before *Xerxes* enterprises against the *Graecians*" (2.16.7, 2S4*v*). This is technically incorrect: not only is this information absent in Herodotus, but the historian clearly states that Ἡσίοδον γὰρ καὶ Ὅμηρον ἡλικίην τετρακοσίοισι ἔτεσι δοκέω μευ πρεσβυτέρους γενέσθαι καὶ οὐ πλέοσι (Hdt. 2.53.2; Hesiod and Homer preceded

[him] by four hundred years, and no more).[4] However, the chronological notation Ralegh reports is at the end of the pseudo-Herodotean *Life of Homer*, first translated by Conrad Heresbach as a companion piece to his revised edition of Valla's translation (1537): "Ab Homero autem nato anni sunt sexcenti vigintiduo ad Xerxis usque in Graeciam traiectum" (Herodotus 1537, 174; But from the birth of Homer to Xerxes' crossing over into Greece there are six hundred and twenty-two years). This text would later be included in many of the later editions of Herodotus, including the one by Henri Estienne published in Geneva in 1566, whose rendition of Valla's translation would become the standard text in subsequent printings all across Europe. However, if we compare the text of the first quotation with Estienne's edition of Valla's translation, we find the two have a slightly different opening: while Ralegh opens his quotation with a participle ("ex Euphrate exiens in Tigrim alterum flumen"), Estienne's text begins with an active verb (Herodotus 1595, 35; "Exit autem ex Euphrate in Tigrim alterum flumen"). Though this could easily be viewed as just a change on Ralegh's part, we would argue that it instead provides us with another important element which would narrow down our field even further and lead us to a more precise identification of Ralegh's edition. More specifically, the text quoted by Ralegh is identical in its beginning to the version present in Sebastian Châteillon's Latin edition of Herodotus (also containing Heresbach's translation of the *Life of Homer*) printed in 1583. As seen above, the section of the text corresponding to the one quoted by Ralegh begins with a sentence constructed in the same way as the text quoted in the *History*, down to the use of the same active participle. It should be noted that Châteillon's edition lacks Ctesias' fragments; however, since no direct quotation of the fragments can be found in the *History*, we may reasonably assume that, as far as the question of Ctesias is concerned, Ralegh is reporting information from other sources, such as anthologies or previous universal histories. It does not really prevent us from identifying Châteillon's edition as the most likely candidate for the text in Ralegh's possession while he was in the Tower.

4 Greek references are from Herodotus 2005; all translations are ours.

But how did Ralegh read Herodotus? How did he approach the *Historiae* as a historical source?

4. Lies and Truth: Herodotus' Renaissance Reception

Throughout the first half of the 16th century, Herodotus was often considered a notoriously unreliable writer, one more keen to tell a pleasant, if unrealistic, tale rather than to relate a truthful account of historical events (see Earley 2016). In this respect, Renaissance writers were reprising and repeating an opinion which could already be traced in some prominent texts from classical antiquity, such as Plutarch's *On the Malignity of Herodotus* (see Vattuone in this same volume). This bad reputation, although challenged by several scholars,[5] had serious consequences on the reception of the *Historiae*: while it did not stop Renaissance historians from using Herodotus' work as a source, it did give Herodotus the aura of an author unsuitable for educational purposes, not on a par with more prestigious *auctoritates* such as Thucydides and, most of all, Xenophon. This state of things began to change around 1566, when Henri Estienne prefaced his new edition of the *Historiae* with an *Apologia* where he strove to refute the traditional accusations of mendacity (see Earley 2016, 133-6). He pointed out that just because Herodotus reported some narratives that seemed far-fetched or incredible, it did not mean he believed them; after all, many incredible things still happened in their time. Herodotus' way of writing history was that of a different, and ancient, era and represented a starkly different perspective from that of the 16th century. For all these reasons, Estienne argued, contemporary readers had no reason to dismiss and belittle Herodotus' account only because it did not conform to their standards. On the contrary, instead of uncritically trusting those ancient writers who deemed Herodotus unreliable they should read him carefully and with a mind open to alternative ways of describing historical

5 Philipp Melanchthon sought to defend Herodotus' trustworthiness through collaboration of his facts in biblical sources; Aldus Manutius and Joachim Camerarius both defended the historian. Also, his reputation and place as 'father of history' was never questioned.

events (133-7).

While it was not the first attempt to defend and reinstate Herodotus' reputation as a historian, Estienne's *Apologia* represented the first time Herodotus was defended not just as a reliable source, but as an historian with a valid and respectable research method, which could make him a model for writing history. In the following decades, this reassessment of Herodotus continued to evolve. In 1598, Lancelot Voisin de La Popelinière, in his treatise *L'histoire des histoires*, for the first time officially recognised Herodotus as "a foundational figure" (141) for the development of historiography, as the first author to try to condense human history within a single universal narrative with recognizable patterns. Contextually, he also went back to and developed the interpretation of Herodotus as a secular continuator of the writings of the Old Testament. While in both cases, he was following a cultural and historical view well-established in the Protestant area,[6] La Popelinière's analysis had the distinction to put these affirmations in a perspective that was not strictly religious, proposing instead a more secular evaluation of the *Histories* inside the development of history as a literary genre. A few years later, in 1601-1602, Isaac Casaubon, Henri Estienne's son-in-law, highlighted Herodotus' proximity in style and in the topics he dealt with to ancient Near Eastern literary and cultural traditions (139-40). He thus proposed a new interpretation of Herodotus' scandalous 'otherness' from the canons of Western historiography by seeing it as the product of a historical and cultural perspective of non-European origin. This revaluation of Herodotus would have important consequences for his reputation in Western culture. Firstly, it marked the definitive end of charges of mendacity. While Herodotus would continue to be regarded as an unreliable author, the accusation of having deliberately lied would turn into one of naivety and 'primitivism'. Secondly, as the first author of a universal history, and thus the first to investigate how the various states and empires of the world came

6 The view of Herodotus' work as a secular continuation of the universal history began in the Bible was an idea promoted and sustained by the Protestant historian David Cythraeus: see Earley 2016, 138.

into being, developing and declining according to set patterns, Herodotus would become a model for those who, from the seventeenth century onwards, would attempt to write a universal history. Finally, this new evaluation justified the use of his text for educational purposes, giving official sanction to a trend that was already underway in some parts of English Renaissance culture,[7] but that now received a new impetus.

This new status of Herodotus can be seen in another important literary work of the 1610s, which does present some relevant similarities to Ralegh's *History*. Between 1604 and 1607, during the same period as Ralegh was writing the *History*, William Alexander Earl of Stirling wrote a historical tetralogy, the *Monarchicke Tragedies*, whose purpose was to provide a general overview of universal history and its dynamics for educational reasons. Like Ralegh's *History*, Alexander's tetralogy is organized according to a traditional pattern of Renaissance historiography, the *translatio imperii*. According to this pattern, whose foundation was a prophecy contained in the Bible (Dan 2.36-45), ancient history was seen as a succession of four great ancient empires (Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome) leading to the eventual establishment of a final universal power whose kingdom will never end (see Hill 1992, 419-23; for Ralegh, see Popper 2012, 26). The four dramas stage a pivotal moment in the course of such empires, as seen through the vicissitudes of four tyrannical

7 The most relevant example may be that of the 'Persian plays', dramatic works written for either staging or reading in English universities or for a cultured audience, with subjects set in ancient Persia and often reprised by the works of classic authors. In this respect, Herodotus' *Historiae* held a place of particular prominence, both as a source of subjects for these plays and as a literary influence on the way Persia was represented in these dramas. For the first point, we know of three plays (two of which are lost) more or less based on Herodotus, written and staged during the 1560s and the 1570s: Thomas Preston's tragedy *Cambises* (1560-1561, printed 1569; see Dall'Olio 2020 on the relationship between this play and Herodotus), *Astiages* (performed in 1568 at St John's College, Cambridge) and *King Xerxes* (performed on 6th January 1575 by the Children of Windsor before the Queen at Hampton Court). For the second, the influence of Herodotus' description of Persia has been recognised in works such as Richard Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus* (1594) and Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1587-1588): see Grogan 2014, 120-2.

figures, i.e. rulers who mismanaged power, whose behaviour announces the decay and eventual fall of the four empires (see Chapters 3 and 4 of Cadman 2016; Lovascio 2016).

The first of these dramas, *Croesus* (whose position makes it as a sort of prologue, where Alexander states the political, ethical and poetic principles underlining the entire cycle) is a theatrical adaptation of the famous story of Croesus and Solon in the first book of Herodotus' *Histories*. The drama depicts the downfall of Croesus, the king of Lydia who refuses the advice of the wise man Solon not to trust in his present fortune and wages a war against the Persian king Cyrus; the war ends with Croseus' defeat and with the Lydian kingdom being conquered by the Persians. Through the staging of this story in a way that is very close to Herodotus' narrative, Alexander presents a condemnation of the sovereign who, like Croesus, decides to rule based only on his own will and pleasure, without considering the advice of his subjects, such advice being the only way to ensure that a king rules with justice ("Of all men else great monarchs have most need / To square their actions, and to weigh their words, / And with advice in all things to proceed", says Solon; Alexander 1870, 222; see Cadman 2016, 131). In doing so, Croesus shows himself to be a bad sovereign, and he will end up causing not only his personal ruin, but that of his entire kingdom, as he himself will admit in the final scene of the play: "O! had this precious with enrich'd my minde . . . / I had disdain'd new dangers to embrace / . . . Had liv'd with pleasure, and had dy'd in peace" (Alexander 1870, 298). This is the same moral and political perspective that can be found in Ralegh's historical work; in fact, Ralegh's tendency to openly condemn and chastise the behaviour of kings and sovereigns was so well known that it ended up damaging his reputation with James I (see Popper 2012, 217-20). It is therefore telling that Alexander chose to present this message, which was rather important for the English culture of the first decade of the 17th century, through the staging of a story derived from Herodotus: it is a signal of the relevance Herodotus had acquired in British literature around the time Ralegh was writing the *History*, as both an historian and a political thinker.

5. A Multifaceted Presence: Herodotus in the *History*

So, to come back to the question which started the previous paragraph, how did Ralegh read Herodotus? Surprisingly, the answer is not univocal: it changes according to the issue he is dealing with at that point in the narrative, exhibiting a wide arrangement of different positions. Given both the breadth of the work and the vast number of issues, events and themes covered in the *History*, we could say that this is only natural. On the one hand, in writing a universal history, Ralegh knew he had to deal with many different events, sources and questions, some of them very complex or downright problematic. It is therefore no surprise that he changed his perspective according to the different issue at hand. On the other, Herodotus was a controversial author, whose particular features questioned Renaissance assumptions and ideas about history and how it should be written, and as a consequence, demanded special care on part of the historian who used his work as a source. Also, as we noted in paragraph 1, discussion and criticism of the sources is an integral part of Ralegh's historical method, where the need arises to determine which is the most credible version of historical events. This explains why Herodotus is never mentioned by Ralegh in the three chapters of book 3 where he recounts the Persian Wars: since Herodotus is indisputably the main (if not only) source for those events, Ralegh simply offers a survey of the events following Herodotus' version, without venturing to offer a more general discussion.

Much more interesting, for us, are those instances in which Ralegh discusses Herodotus, either by criticising him or by praising him. We have a good instance of the first attitude in book 2, in a passage we already quoted: Ralegh's almost *verbatim* reprisal of Herodotus' tales about the kidnappings of women as the cause of the wars between Greece and Asia, from Europa to Helen (see above). In that passage, while Ralegh is open to accepting that there may be some truth to the idea that Paris kidnapped Helen in retaliation for the kidnapping of his aunt Hesion, he is instead thoroughly firm in rejecting the rest of Herodotus' narration, deeming it frivolous and recalling how Thucydides remarked that in Homer's time the term 'barbarians' was not used, and

the Greeks did not call themselves Hellenes (see above). We find here a trace of the traditional comparison, already common in Renaissance historical culture, between Herodotus and Thucydides as two diverse models for writing history – a comparison which Herodotus usually got the worst of due to his reputation as a liar. This also happens in this passage of Ralegh's *History*, where the authority of the 'sincere' Thucydides is contrasted with and ultimately supplants that of Herodotus as the most realistic and likely version of the story of the origin of the Trojan War.

Something similar happens later in book 3, where Ralegh is faced with another traditional historical comparison, that between Herodotus' *Historiae* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in relation to which is the most credible version for the life of Cyrus the Great, the first Persian emperor. To cut a long story short, the two ancient texts gave very different depictions of the ruler: Xenophon crafted a narrative whose purpose was to have Cyrus emerge as an ideal sovereign, while Herodotus gave a more ambivalent account of his personality. What followed was the birth of an ambiguous literary tradition about Cyrus' character, depicting him at the same time as an ideal ruler and a haughty tyrant (see Grogan 2007; 2014, 32-4). The difference can already be seen in the way the two texts describe Cyrus' origins and his rise to power. In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus is the legitimate offspring of a dynastic wedding between Cambises, king of the Persians, and Mandane, daughter of Astiages, king of the Medes, and he is educated at both his grandfather's and father's court in a way that illustrates what are supposed to be the qualities of a good king. In the *Historiae*, Astiages forces Mandane to marry his vassal, Cambises, because he fears an eventual nephew may usurp his throne; when Cyrus is born, he orders that he be abandoned in the wild to be devoured. Spared by the shepherd tasked with carrying out the order, Cyrus grows up to eventually discover his origins and lead a revolt against his grandfather, deposing him.

When faced with these contrasting accounts, Ralegh opted to discard Herodotus' version in favour of that of Xenophon as the most realistic version. He even quoted Herodotus himself to prove this, using the historian against the historian and this time openly accusing him of crafting a deceptive narrative:

> We may better give credit to *Xenophon*, who affirmeth, That *Cambyses* the father of *Cyrus* was king of *Persia*, than to those that make him a meane man, and say, that *Astyages* gave him his daughter *Mandane* in marriage, to the end that her sonne (whose nativitie he feared) might be disabled from any great undertaking by his fathers ignobilitie . . . The same *Herodotus*, who is the first Author, and as I thinke the deviser of the mischiefe intended against *Cyrus* by his grandfather, doth confesse, that the line of the *Achemenidae* was so renowned, that the great King *Xerxes* in the height of his prosperity did thence derive himselfe, and vaunt of it: which he would never have done, had they been ignoble, or had they been the vassals of any other King or Monarch. (Ralegh 1614, 3.2.4, 3C3*r*)

The reminder of Xerxes' vaunt of his origins is indeed to be found in Herodotus' text (Hdt. 7.11), thus confirming the careful reading of the *Historiae* by Ralegh – but also his wilful misreading of the situation. As a descendant of Cyrus and the fourth heir to his throne, Xerxes could still present himself and his family as royalty and nobody would question it, even with the assertion of the supposedly low-class origin of the Achemenidae family. Unlike what happened with Thucydides earlier, this time Ralegh's apparent choice for a more realistic version hides his preference for the idealistic version of Cyrus' story as present in Xenophon rather than the morally ambiguous portrayal of Herodotus.

However, in this particular instance Ralegh had, in a sense, his hands tied. The *Cyropaedia* was one of the most important educational texts of the Renaissance: the description of the virtues of Cyrus there contained had been the model on which several Renaissance educational texts were based (see Grogan 2007, 65-70; Humble 2017, 424-6). In 1567, William Barker translated the text into English in order to make it accessible to a wider audience, presenting it as a text which could not only teach princes how to justly rule, but also subjects how to properly obey (see Grogan 2014, 50-6). About the time Ralegh was writing the *History*, James I had commissioned the renowned scholar Philemon Holland to produce a new translation of the text dedicated first to his son and heir, Henry; after he died, the translation was re-dedicated to his other son, Charles (the future Charles I), and first appeared in

print in 1632 (see Grogan 2007, 73-4; 2013, 44-5). This was not the first time James displayed such affection for Xenophon's text. The *Cyropaedia* had been a model for James I's own educational manual for princes, *Basilikon Doron* (1598), where the sovereign affirmed that there one could find "a faire paterne, for the education of a yong king, vnder the supposed name of Cyrus" (1616, 48-9). In this particular instance, then, Ralegh had to discard Herodotus' Cyrus in favour of Xenophon's, otherwise he might have seemed to directly contradict the king whose favour he was trying to regain on a subject of which the sovereign was particularly fond.

In other places in the text, however, Ralegh presents a radically different attitude towards Herodotus, and on one occasion even arrives at the point of defending him against his critics. It happens in book 2, where he reprises an anecdote on the origins of the Persian Wars from Hdt. 3.134-5:

> Questionlesse it is, that the warre commenced by *Darius*, and pursued by *Xerxes* against the *Greekes*, proceeded from desire of the Persians to enlarge their Empire: howsoever the enterprize of the *Athenians* upon *Sardes*, was noised abroad as the ground of that quarrel: yet Herodotus telleth us, that the wanton desire of Queene *Atossa*, to have the *Grecian* dames her bondwomen, did first move *Darius* to prepare for this warre before he had received any iniurie; and when he did not yet so much desire to get more, as to enjoy what was already gotten. I will not here stand to argue whether Herodotus be more iustly reprehended by some, or defended by others, for alleadging the vain appetite, and secret speech of the Queene in bed with her husband, as the cause of those great evils following; this I may boldlie affirme, (having, I think, in every estate some sufficient witnesses) that matters of much consequence, founded in all seeming upon substantiall reasons, have issued indeed from such pettie trifles, as no Historian would either thinke upon, or could well search out. (Ralegh 1614. 2.2.16, 2Z5*v*)

We find here a paramount example of that change in historical perspective that Estienne demanded of Herodotus' readers, as well as of Ralegh's historical method and principles. In alluding to his and other experiences of royal courts as a proof of Herodotus'

credibility on this point, Ralegh defies the historical patterns of his time by emphasizing the importance and the relevance of what we might call the 'human factor' – the vane desires, actions and secret words of men, which can cause great things in spite of their apparently little relevance.

Incidentally, this is very Herodotus-like. As is often recognized by classical scholars, *autopsia* (seeing something with one's own eyes) is a key element of Herodotus' historical method, often used by the historian to affirm the credibility of his account of events. After the rediscovery of his work in the Latin world, this historical principle had become an increasingly stronger foundation for a reformation of historical methods in the new wave of historical writing in Renaissance France (see Miglietti 2010), represented by works such as François Baudouin's *De institutione historiae universae* (1561) and Jean Bodin's *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566). In those texts, a new model of historiographical writing was proposed, based upon a critical reading of sources in their original context in order to better understand their meaning (see Grafton 2007, 68-9), as well as reliance on collective and personal experience. Herodotus became a very important and carefully studied historian for this new culture, and it is not a coincidence that the development of such a theory coincided with the rehabilitation of his figure (as we saw above). Ralegh in this passage is thus conforming his text to what was the new standard for historical writing in his time, while also defending Herodotus against any charge of slander. He accepts it as questionable whether Herodotus should have disclosed the dialogue between the royal Persian couple, but this does not change the fact that his account may be true, as Ralegh and many others have seen confirmed by their own *autopsiai*.

Nor is this the only time when Ralegh follows Herodotus' account, arguing for his reliability. Coming back to the matter of the origins of the Trojan War, we saw how Ralegh dismissed as frivolous Herodotus' retelling of the various kidnappings of women as the explanation for the ancient wars between Greece and Persia. Only a few lines later, though, he is much keener to accept Herodotus' take on another side of the question; namely, why the Trojans simply did not give Helen back:

> *Paris*, in his returne with *Helen*, being driuen by foule weather unto the coast of *Aegypt*, was accused for the rape of *Helen* by some bondmen of his, that had taken Sanctuarie. *Proteus* then king of *Aegypt*, finding the accusation true by examination, detained *Helen*, and the goods taken with her, till her husband should require them; dismissing *Paris* without further punishment, because hee was a stranger. When therefore the *Greekes* demanding *Helen*, had answere, that she was in *Aegypt*: they thought themselves deluded, and thereupon made the warre, which ended with the ruin of *Troy*. But when after the Citie taken, they perceived indeed she had not been there, they returned home, sending, *Menelaus* to ask his wife of *Proteus* . . . One great argument *Herodotus* brings to confirm the saying of the *Aegyptian* priests, which is, that if *Helen* had been at *Troy*, it had beene utter madness for *Priamus* to see so many miseries befall him, during the warre, and so many of his sonnes slaine for the pleasure of one, who neither was heire to the Kingdome (for *Hector* was elder) nor equall in virtue to many of the rest. (1614, 2.14.3, 2Q5*r*)

Once again, as in the passage about Darius and his Queen, Herodotus becomes the representative and recipient of a historical account presented as realistic and credible. While this time no *autopsia* is evoked, the simple acknowledgment that what Herodotus says is a "great argument" for Ralegh's choice of which historical version to report certifies the status of the historian as an authority, whose word is sufficient to give credibility to a historian's work based on his text.

To sum up and conclude, Ralegh's use of Herodotus as a historical source represents one of the most complete examples of early modern England's cultural attitudes towards Herodotus, and surely the most pre-eminent when it comes to the use of Herodotus in historical writing of the time. While some traces of the earlier consideration of Herodotus as a fanciful, unreliable liar can still be found, the historian is quoted and referred to as an important authority and model in some passages where Ralegh comes closer to presenting in a more in-depth way his methods and beliefs as a historian – especially in the passage about Darius and his Queen, where Herodotus' account is confirmed by recalling the general experience of people of Ralegh's time. This is not only

in tune with the contemporary developments in the history of Herodotus' reception in Renaissance European culture (specifically with Herodotus' newfound place as a model of a different kind of history), but it also provides us with an intriguing insight into the way English culture reacted to both the author himself and continental developments in historical writing in between the second half of 16th century and the first decade of the 17th. One is left to wonder whether this operation could also be done with other ancient historians – and what the results would be.

Owner	Dates	List Entry	Editor	Title	Pb. Date	Language	Place	Format
Beale, Robert	1541-1601	Herodotus Gr. Lat.	Henri Estienne	*Historiae libri IX*	1584	Gr + Lat	Frankfurt	8°
Beale, Robert	1541-1601	Herodotus, Theucydides, Xenophon, Latine	Henri Estienne		1566	Lat		
Coke, Edward, Sir	1552-1634	Herodotus./			1566	Gr + Lat	Paris	
Conway, Sir Edward	1564-1631	Histoire des neuf livres de Hesiodote d'allicarnasse...	Pierre Saliat	*Histoire de neuf livres*	1580	Fr	Paris	16°
Cooke, Mildred, Lady Cecil	1526-1589	Herodotus graece cum Thucydide				Gr		
Cooke, Elizabeth, Lady Russel	1540–1609		Henri Estienne	*Erodotu Alikarnassēos ... Herodoti Halicarnassei Historiarvm Lib. IX*	1570	Gr + Lat	Geneva	2°
De Vere, Edward, Earl of Oxford	1550-1604		Boiardo, Matteo (tr)	*Delle guerre de greci, et de persi*	1565	Ita	Venice	8°
James I, king of England	1566-1625	Herodotus in frenche	Pierre Saliat	*Histoire de neuf livres*	1580	Fr	Paris	16°
James I, king of England	1566-1625	Herodotus gr., fol.	Georgius Plethо, Joachim Camerarius	*De iis, quae post pugnam... herodotou logoi ennea*	1557	Gr	Basel	2°
James I, king of England	1566-1625	Herodotus en francoys.	Pierre Saliat	*Histoire de neuf livres*	1580	Fr	Paris	16°
Knyvett, Sir Thomas	1538-1619	Herodoti Halicarnassei historiae libri IX 1566. fol.	Laurentius Valla, Conrad Heresbach, Sebastien Châteillon	*Herodoti halicarnassei historiographi libri novem*	1562	Lat	Köln	2°
Lumley, Lord John	1533-1609	Herodoti Halycarnassei libri novem, Musarum nominibus inscripti	Lorenzo Valla, Conrad Heisenbach	*De genere vitaque homeri libellus herodoti*	1526	Lat	Köln	2°
Lumley, Lord John	1533-1609	Herodoti Halycarnassei libri novem, Musarum nominibus inscripti	Georgius Plethо, Joachim Camerarius	*De iis, quae post pugnam... oiper epikaluntai musai*	1541	Lat	Basel	2°
Paget, William	1572-1629	Herodoti Clio graece.				Gr		4°
Ralegh, Sir Walter	1552-1618	Herodotus	Sebastien Châtillon	*Herodoti halicarnassei historia libri IX*	1559	Lat	Basel	8°
Roe, Sir Thomas	1581-1644	Herodoti libri ix in one booke Latine				Lat		

Fig. 1 Copies of Herodotus's works in Courtiers' libraries,1558-1625 (*CoLEEn database*).

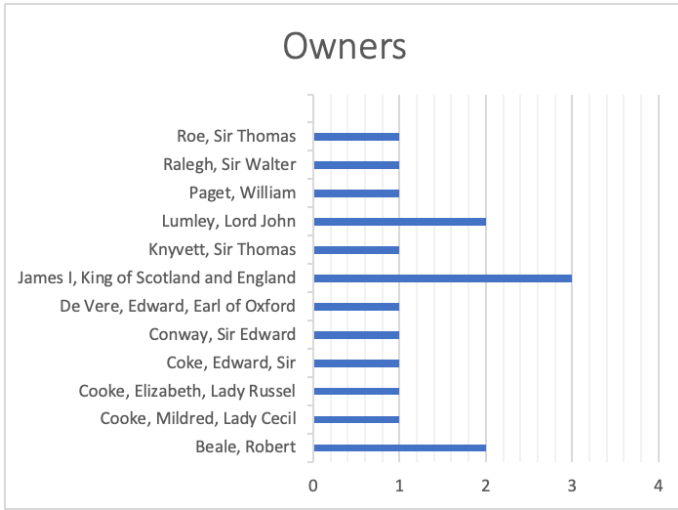

Fig. 2 Copies of Herodotus's texts arranged (in reverse order) by owner.

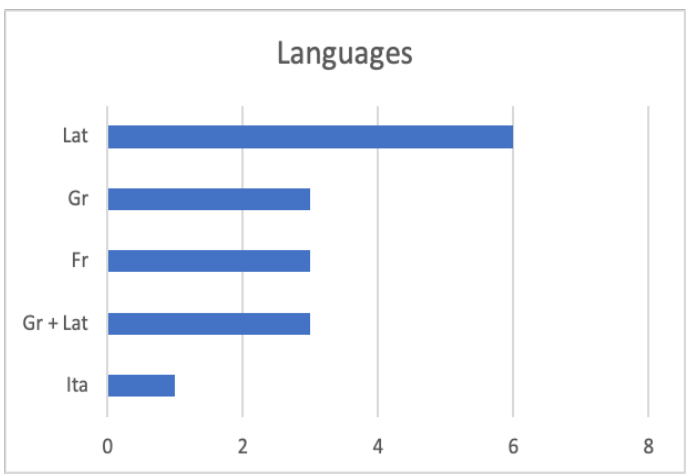

Fig. 3 Copies in the database arranged by language.

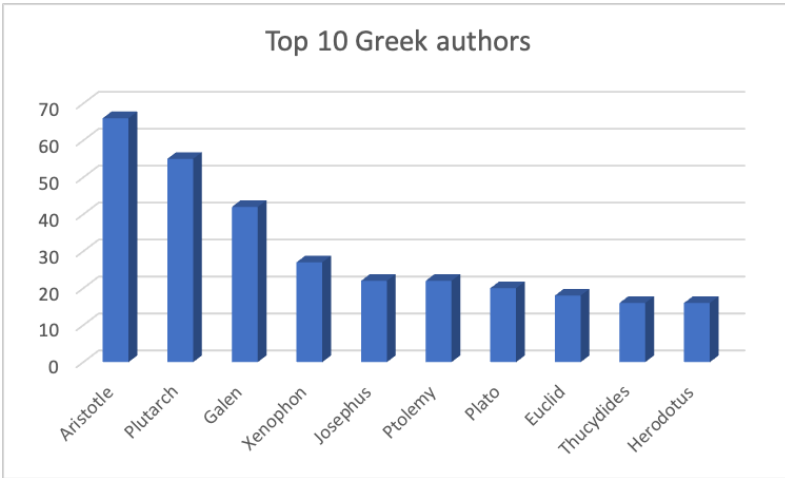

Fig. 4 Most popular Greek authors in *CoLEEn* (selected).

Aristotle	66
Plutarch	55
Galen	42
Xenophon	27
Josephus	22
Ptolemy	22
Plato	20
Euclid	18
Thucydides	16
Herodotus	16
Homer	15
Lucian	15
Hippocrates	13
Curtius Rufus	12
Dionysius of Halicarnassus	12

Aelianus Tacticus	11
Aesop	10
Diodorus Siculus	10
Dioscorides	10
Isocrates	10
Diogenes Laertius	9
Polybius	9
Demosthenes	8
Heliodorus	8
Strabo	7
Philostratus	6
Pindar	6
Appian	5
Archimedes	5
Aristophanes	5

Fig. 5 Copies of Greek authors in *CoLEEn* – top 30.

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6

Herodotus in Early Modern Travel Literature

Marco Duranti

Abstract

This essay begins by discussing Arnaldo Momigliano's thesis on the connections between Herodotus and early modern travel writers. According to Momigliano, even though Herodotus was not read by early modern explorers, their explorations allowed them to revive a 'Herodotean' method for investigating far countries and their history, thus paving the way for Herodotus' rehabilitation as a reliable historian in the sixteenth century. Examining important travel books on Far East countries, the chapter shows that there was instead a two-way process. On the one hand, early modern authors quoted Herodotus (together with geographers like Pliny or Pomponius Mela) less as a source and more as an illustrious precedent that legitimised travel writing. On the other hand, early modern explorations and discoveries led to the reappraisal of Herodotus' method. These two arguments, from authority and from experience, alternated and interacted as strategies aimed at persuading the reader to believe the *mirabilia* that were contained in travel books. The presence of such details, which could hardly be believed by those who had not seen them, involved epistemological issues of autopsy, authority, and credibility that had been at the core of Herodotus' investigation.

Keywords: Herodotus; early modern travel writings; early modern explorers; Arnaldo Momigliano; Henri Estienne

This essay focuses on a crucial example of the dialectic between the Old and the New which took place in early modern Europe: that is, between the ancient literary and cultural tradition, which was being revived by humanist scholars, and the novelties of this historical period. I shall describe the encounter between an ancient historiographer, but also geographer, ethnographer, travel writer – Herodotus – and travel writers of the early modern age. I will explore Herodotus' presence in early modern travel relations as well as, more generally, in works that refer to the European explorations, especially toward the East: Mesopotamia, Persia, and further.

The starting point is Arnaldo Momigliano's 1958 seminal article entitled *The Place of Herodotus in the History of Historiography*, which is still a critical landmark attesting Herodotus' presence in early modern historiography.[1] Momigliano argues that European travellers, merchants or diplomats who visited the Americas in particular and wrote reports of their travels re-discovered aspects of Herodotus' method of writing history even without knowing Herodotus. Although most of them were not trained as classicists and had not read Herodotus at all, or not systematically, the practical needs of writing travel reports led them to adopt a method which was similar to Herodotus' own method. As Momigliano writes, "they vindicated Herodotus, because they showed that one could travel abroad, tell strange stories, enquire into past events, without necessarily being a liar" (10). As a result, they created the conditions for the reappraisal of Herodotus as a historian: "If Herodotus did not inspire the students of America, students of America and other foreign countries inspired the defenders of Herodotus" (ibid.). My article is centred on the question whether Momigliano's thesis can also be applied to travel writers focusing on the Far East. The analysis of their works will reveal that, in this respect, inspiration was not one-directional but bi-directional. Herodotus was beneficial to early modern travel writers, not only as a source for the understanding of the Eastern world, but also, and more significantly, as a model and a precedent that legitimised travel writings. In their turn, early modern travel reports were, as it were, beneficial to Herodotus, as they paved the way for the reappraisal of his work in the sixteenth century.

As a premise to our enquiry, it is useful to make a point on the connection between Herodotus and other classical authors. In the historiographic tradition, the former is usually juxtaposed with Thucydides, following a trend of comparison that began with Thucydides himself, who criticised and challenged Herodotus'

1 The issue of the presence of Herodotus in early modern travel literature has not received enough attention since Momigliano's times. Frank Lestringant's article (2012) examines the neighbouring genre of cosmographic literature and presents only some introductory remarks, focusing on the works of André Thevet (1516-90).

method (on Herodotus and Thucydides see Foster and Lateiner 2012). However, we shall see that Herodotus, as a geographer and ethnographer, was not associated with Thucydides, but with other ancient authors, such as Pliny, Pomponius Mela, Strabo. Nor, indeed, should he be associated with Thucydides, as this latter restricted the focus of his historiographical work on Greece and on political and military topics, as different to the thematic variety of Herodotus. As a result, we shall see how, in early modern travel literature, the question of the reliability of Herodotus is often posed in different ways than it is in the historiographic tradition. Whereas a long tradition regarded Herodotus as an unreliable historiographer (see Hornblower 2006; Marincola 1994), as a travel writer and ethnographer he was generally not treated separately from the other ancient authors. In other words, the question of the reliability of ancient ethnographers and travel writers was usually posed for all authors alike. This issue was relevant with special regard to the presence of *mirabilia*, wondrous things, peoples, habitudes, which were reported in ancient sources. As Europeans made new explorations all over the world, their travel accounts contained things no less wondrous than those which could be read in the ancient authors. Both ancient and new *mirabilia* were at risk of not being believed. Thus, when modern authors asked their readers to believe the marvellous facts they recounted, they could call in their favour the example of the ancients; conversely, modern wonders could be mentioned in order to justify the *mirabilia* of ancient sources. The best way to get their readers to accept what appeared as incredible and new was to insert it in a group of books that contained similar wonders, whether this belonged to the established classical tradition or the growing modern genre of travel books.

1. Ancient Authors and Modern Merchants

The link between classical literature and early modern explorations is neatly expressed in a volume collecting the reports of several travels made by Venetian merchants or diplomats toward the East, published by the heirs of Aldus Manutius firstly in 1543 and then

in 1545 (I will quote from this second edition). In his preface (A2*r* – A2*v*), Antonio Manuzio draws a balance of the explorations of modern merchants in comparison with the ancient geographical knowledge. He says that the world owes much to the merchants' travels, as they have renewed and are renewing the knowledge of many places that had been known to the ancients, but had then been forgotten:

> Grandissima obligatione veramente ha oggidì il mondo alla industria de Mercatanti, non tanto per la commodità, che esso si gode per la participatione di molte cose utili allo uso della vita humana, quanto per la cognitione che tutto giorno di nuovo s'acquista di molti luoghi et paesi, mediante la loro peregrinatione: de quali, se bene alcuni furon già domestici o familiari ne passati secoli, agli antichi nostri sono poi divenuti strani et incogniti, et quasi come nuovi interamente alle orecchie de moderni; per le varietà degli stati, diversità de religioni, et per la novità de nomi barbari: in tanto che tale cognitione è molto confusa. (A2*r*)

> [Nowadays, the world owes much to the resourcefulness of merchants: not so much for the comfort it enjoys, thanks to the sharing of many things useful to human life; but for the knowledge of many places and countries, which grows every day thanks to their travels. Many of these countries, although they were already known in past centuries, have since become unknown to our ancestors and almost new to modern ears, due to the variety of states, the diversity of religions and the strangeness of foreign names; to the point that knowledge of all this is very confused.][2]

This depiction of the merchants' discoveries reminds us of the activity of humanist philologists, who took great pride in rediscovering the texts of the ancients, which lay forgotten in Medieval libraries. Manuzio then further develops the comparison between modern merchants and ancient authors:

> Tuttavia non per ciò siamo noi tenuti alle loro fatiche punto di meno, per quel tanto ch'ei n'hanno insegnato, poscia che a tempi nostri non si truova un altro Alessandro Magno, che induca

2 All translations in this essay are mine.

> Aristotele a scrivere l'istoria delle cose naturali, né un altro Plinio che le dichiari et ritorni alla memoria de nostri. (Ibid.)
>
> [But we owe no lesser debt to the labours of the merchants, for what they have taught us, because in our time we cannot find another Alexander the Great, who would induce Aristotle to write a history of natural things, nor another Pliny to expound them and recall them to the memory of contemporaries.]

The modern age cannot boast such writers as Aristotle or Pliny; nevertheless, this does not diminish the importance of the merchants' activity. On the contrary, it is precisely the merchants who compensate for the lack of the prestigious writers of antiquity. Among modern merchants, Manuzio then (ibid.) especially praises the Venetians, who are said to have played the most important role in the rediscovery of the world. As a matter of fact, Venice, being not only the maritime city par excellence, but also one of the main cities of the European printing industry, was home to some of the most important publications in the field of travel literature, including Ramusio's *Navigazioni e viaggi*, which will be examined below.

2. The Rediscovery of Herodotus' Method

Modern travellers re-discovered not only geographical areas that were known to the ancients, but also the methods for studying and describing distant places and cultures, which had been spelled out and employed first in Herodotus' *Histories*. A good example of this re-discovery is John Cartwright's *The Preacher's Travels* (published in 1611). A former student of Magdalene College, Oxford (as is spelled out in the extended title), John Cartwright began his travel in Aleppo in 1600 and ended up to India, via Mesopotamia and Persia (on Cartwright, see Parker 1999, 106-27). In the preface of his book, he declares that he has decided to narrate his voyage to the Eastern countries because of the recent war between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Cartwright's account is mainly focused on contemporary concerns, as most travel writing is; accordingly, an ancient author like Herodotus is quoted only three

times. Nevertheless, one in particular of these infrequent references is interesting (1611, 94). Cartwright discusses the location of the earthly paradise, mentioning the theories of those who have located it "beyond our knowne world, or in the middle region of the aire; or nere the Moone; or as far as the South-line; or the North-pole". Cartwright rejects these hypotheses and argues that the Eden was located in Mesopotamia, drawing on Herodotus. He translates or summarises lines from the *Histories*' 1.193 on the exceptional productivity of Babylonian fields and on the spontaneous growth of palm trees that feed men with their fruit:

> Herodotus speaketh as an eye-witnesse, that the place where Euphrates runneth out into Tigris, not farre from the place where Ninus is seated, is a Region, of al others most excellent, which bringeth forth corne so aboundantly, that the ordinary fields in his time did returne the seed sowne in them two hundreth fold: the better places three hundreth, that is three hundreth bushels for one, or at the least three hundreth graines for one corne. And there is nothing that better proueth the excellency of this soile, then the aboundant growing of Palm-trees, in these places, without the care & labor of man. (Ibid.)

In this passage, it is notable that Herodotus is described as an eyewitness and therefore a reliable writer. The idea of the eyewitness can probably be traced back to the reading of Valla's Latin translation of Herodotus' text:

> ἔστι δὲ χωρέων αὕτη ἁπασέων μακρῷ ἀρίστη τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν Δήμητρος καρπὸν ἐκφέρειν.
> (Her. 1.193.11-12)

> Haec regio omnium, quas nos vidimus, longe optima est, duntaxat ferendo frumento.

> [This region is by far the best of all those which we have seen, at least in producing crops.]

The Greek verb ἴδμεν, which is now normally translated "we know" (first plural person of the perfect οἶδα), is instead interpreted by Valla as "we saw" (*vidimus*), with supposed reference to Herodotus' own first-hand experience as traveller in

Mesopotamia. This passage is also contained in Walther Ralegh's *The History of the World*, published in 1614:

> Herodotus, who was an eye-witnesse, and speaketh of the very place it selfe, for the Ile of Eden is but twelue miles or thereabout from Niniue, and so from Mosal. *Ex Euphrate exiens in Tigrim, alterum flumen, iuxta quod Urbs Ninus sita erat. Haec regio, omnium quas nos vidimus, optima est. Where Euphrates runneth out into Tigris, not farre from the place where Ninus is seated, this Region, of all that we have seene, is most excellent.*[3] (1614, 48)

There are some similarities in the translation of Herodotus' text between Raleigh and Cartwright, which suggest that probably Raleigh had read Cartwright. But Raleigh is more accurate in quoting: he also writes down the Latin text and he translates the Latin *quas nos vidimus* into "of all that we have seen".[4]

Apart from translation subtleties, this passage seems interesting in that it brings to the fore that criterion of *autopsia* which was at the core of Herodotus' method and is again relevant to a traveller and travel writer as Cartwright is. Let us return to Momigliano's idea that travellers revived Herodotus' method even without knowing his work directly. Momigliano argued that "Herodotus did not inspire the students of America", whereas "students of America and other foreign countries inspired the defenders of Herodotus". This does not seem to be the case of travel writers of the Far East. At least in this case, the practical experience of travellers on the one hand and the reading and study of Herodotus on the other had a mutual influence and it is often hard to distinguish, in each case or in general, which came first. While some travel writers were not educated enough to use Herodotus as a guide to their

3 I keep in italics both the Latin text and the translation, as it is in Ralegh's original text.

4 Neither Cartwright nor Raleigh depend on the 1584 English translation attributed to Barnabe Rich (on this attribution, see Grogan's chapter in this book) where the phrase is roughly rendered as "of all others" (*scil.* soils; 61); the Greek τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν is not translated by Rich (who anyway is almost certainly not translating from the Greek but rather from the French translation of Saliat or at most the Latin by Valla).

travels, others had at least a sense of Herodotus as the first author who had written about distant places and distant times. Practical experience undoubtedly revived the idea that being an eyewitness, or relying on possibly accurate information from others, was the only reliable criterion for describing distant places, cultures, histories. Thanks to this field experience, early moderns became willing to reappraise the method of Herodotus. However, it is also true that the ancient authors – and Herodotus more than others – offered a precious lesson in method to those who could read them. They were a powerful source of inspiration and – crucially – legitimation for early modern travel writers, geographers and historiographers. As in any intellectual field, in travel writing, too, the model of the ancients legitimized analogous modern enterprises. On the one hand, early moderns admit their inadequacy with respect to the ancient writers, as the Venetian merchants are said by Manuzio to be inadequate in comparison to Aristotle or Pliny. On the other hand, the moderns are proud of having re-discovering the lands which the ancients had known and had been then forgotten. They seek a link with the ancients as forerunners of their own enterprises.

3. Herodotus Helps Modern Writers of *Mirabilia*

The example of Herodotus could also be used as an argument against detractors. This is the object of the second part of this article, which deals with the so-called *mirabilia*, the incredible wonders from distant places. I will introduce it from a side viewpoint, that is from a rhetorical treatise. In his 1593 *The Garden of Eloquence* on rhetorical tropes, the English writer Henry Peacham deals also with the figure of paradox. He writes that:

> Paradoxon, is a forme of speech by which the Orator affirmeth some thing to be true, by saying he would not have beleeved it, or that it is so straunge, so great, or so wonderfull, that it may appeare to be incredible. . . . This figure is then to be used, when the thing which is to be taught is new, straunge, incredible, and repugnant to the opinion of the hearer, which this exornation

> confirmeth by the formes of speech before rehearsed. It is well resembled in two kindes of men, that is, in old men and travellers, from the one sort we have the benefit of tradition, and from the other the frute of Geographie, the one kind of these men are messengers of auncient times, the other are Ambassadors of farre places. (112-13)

In this passage, Peacham argues that paradox has a special connection with distance: either in space, or in time. Things which appear incredible in our daily life can be accepted as possible if they are believed to have happened in the past or in faraway countries, of which we have no experience. This combination of time and space distance is exactly the one which we have in Herodotus, the narrator par excellence of remote histories taking place in the most distant parts of the world. We will find this combination of time and space distance in the defenders of Herodotus. But sticking to Peacham, it is notable that he sets two conditions for a credible paradox: that those who utter them have a good reputation and that they tell the truth.

> In the use of this figure the speaker ought to be a man knowne of credit, lest that which he affirmeth, be either lightly regarded, or ridiculously scorned: also regard ought to be had, that the things which he reporteth or teach by the forms of this figure be true. A far traveller that is a lyar, filleth the world full of wonders, and an old man delighting in reporting untruthes, leaveth many vanities, and false traditions behind him. (Ibid.)

The problem of reliability is an old one and it concerned all those who write about incredible things which take place in far countries. This problem is well known to the Venetian aristocrat Giosafat Barbaro, ambassador to Persia in 1474-8. In the preface of his *Viaggio alla Tana e in Persia*, he reveals that he has long delayed writing about his experience in the Eastern countries, fearing that the wondrous things that he had seen would be considered lies (*bugie*):

> La terra (secondo quello che con evidentissime demostrationi pruovano li geometri) in comparatione del firmamento, è tanto piccola, quanto un punto fatto nel mezzo della circonfenza d'un

> circolo: della quale (per esser una buona parte coperta d'acque, overo intemperata per troppo freddo, o caldo) quella parte che si habita è ancora molto minore. Nientedimeno tanta è la piccolezza degli huomini che pochi si trovano, che ne habbiano visto qualche buona particella: niuno è (s'io non m'inganno) il quale l'habbia vista tutta. . . . [G]randissima parte di questa poca la qual è habitata, saria incognita, se la mercatantia et marinarezza de Vinetiani non l'havesse aperta et fatta chiara. Tra li quali (se alcuno è al dì d'hoggi che ne habbia visto qualche parte) posso certamente dire, di esser io uno di quelli: conciosiaché quasi tutto il tempo della gioventù mia, o buona parte della vecchiezza, habbia speso in luoghi lontani, e fra genti barbare, et huomini alieni al tutto dalla civilità, et da costumi nostri: tra i quali ho provato et visto molte cose che per non esser usitate di qua, a quelli che, per modo di dire, mai non furono fuori di Vinetia, forse pareriano bugie: et questa è stata principalmente la cagione, per la quale non ho mai troppo curato, né di scrivere quello che ho visto, né etiandio di parlarne molto. (Manuzio 1545, 3*r*–3*v*)
>
> [The earth (according to the geometrists' very clear demonstrations), in comparison with the firmament, is as small as a point in the centre of a circle. But since a large part of the earth is covered by water or is not temperate because the climate is too cold or too hot, the inhabited part is even smaller. Nevertheless, the smallness of men is such that there are few who have seen a significant portion of it, and none (if I am not mistaken) who have seen it all . . . The great part of this small part that is inhabited would be unknown, if the mercantile and naval activity of the Venetians had not unveiled it and made it known. And if there is someone nowadays that has seen some part of it, I can say that I am among them. Indeed, I have spent almost my entire youth and much of my old age in distant places and among barbaric peoples, far from civilization and from our customs. Among them, I have experienced and seen many things that are not customary here and therefore will perhaps appear as lies to those who, as it were, have never been outside Venice. And this was the main reason why I did not bother to write what I saw and not even to talk much about this.]

Herodotus too has forms of reticence. In the passage on Mesopotamia which we have already mentioned (1.193.4), he

declares that he will avoid describing the anomalous size of some Babylonian plants, as they would not be believed. But how does Barbaro solve this problem? Why did he resolve to write his travel account and how does he think that he will persuade the reader to believe him? Barbaro explains that he decided to write his memories in order to please the dedicatee of the prefatory letter, to thank God for saving him from so many dangers, and to be useful both to future travellers in general and to Venetians in particular. But one further reason for writing his account is the awareness that wondrous things, *mirabilia*, are found in all authors who wrote about faraway lands:

> Ma essendo astretto dalle preghiere di chi mi può commandare, et havendo inteso che molto più di queste cose, che paiono incredibili, si truovano scritte in Plinio, in Solino, in Pomponio Mela, in Strabone, in Herodoto, in Diodoro, in Dionisio Halicarnasseo, in altri moderni: come era Marco Paulo, Nicolo Conte, nostri Vinetiani, Giovanni da Vandavilla ingilese, et in altri novissimi: come è Pietro Quirini, Alvise da Mosto, Ambrogio Contarini; non ho potuto fare che io non scrivi tutte quelle cose le quali ho viste, ad honore di nostro Signore Idio il qual m'ha campato da infiniti pericoli; et oltra ch'io l'ho fatto per contento di colui che mi ha astretto, più volontieri, l'ho fatto, per dare ancora qualche utile a coloro che verranno dopo noi, se haveranno ad andare in quelle parti ove sono stato io, et ancora per dare qualche utile et commodo alla nostra inclita città, se mai per qualche tempo per lo avvenire li occorresse mandare in quelle parti alcuno de suoi. (Ibid.)

> [However, I have been compelled by the prayers of a person who can command me. I also found out that many more of these apparently incredible things are found in Pliny, Solinus, Pomponius Mela, Strabo, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus; moreover, in other modern authors: Marco Polo and Nicolò de' Conti (our Venetian writers), the Englishman John Mandeville; finally, in contemporary writers such as Pietro Quirini, Alvise da Mosto, Ambrogio Contarini. Therefore, I could not avoid writing all things that I have seen, for the glory of our Lord God who saved me from many dangers. And beside doing that in order to please the person who compelled me, I did that

> more willingly in order to be useful to those who will come after us, in case they need to go where I have already been. Moreover, I did that in order to be useful to my renowned city, in case it needs to send any of its citizens there.]

Barbaro divides travel authors into three groups on a chronological basis: 1) the ancient writers; 2) the modern ones; 3) the contemporary ones. All these authors alike are regarded as authorities who justify and legitimise the new account written by Barbaro; especially because their works contain *more* wonders than Barbaro's account. The problem of reputation, which is also posed by Peacham, is solved here by relying on the authority of previous writers, Herodotus included.

A similar strategy is adopted by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, the editor of a monumental collection of travel accounts in three volumes, published by the Giunti printers between 1550 and 1559. In the preface to Marco Polo's *Milione/Devisament du monde*, included in the second volume, Ramusio defends Polo against the charge of unreliability (I quote from the 1980 edition):

> E benché in questo libro siano scritte molte cose che pareno fabulose e incredibili, non si deve però prestargli minor fede nell'altre ch'egli narra, che son vere; né imputargli per così grande errore, percioché riferisce quello che gli veniva detto. E chi leggerà Strabone, Plinio, Erodoto e altri simili scrittori antichi, vi troverà di molto più maravigliose e fuor d'ogni credenza. Ma che diremo degli scrittori de' nostri tempi, che narrano dell'Indie occidentali, trovate per il signor don Cristoforo Colombo? Non dipingono monti d'oro e d'argento incredibili? arbori, frutti, e animali di forma maravigliosa? (Ramusio 1980, 23)

> [Although many things are written in this book that seem fabulous and incredible, one should not trust him [scil. Marco Polo] any less with respect to the other things that he narrates, as they are true. Nor should such a great error be blamed on him, as he reported that which he was told. And if one reads Strabo, Pliny, Herodotus, and other similar ancient writers, one will find much more incredible and unbelievable things. And what should we say of nowadays writers, who write on the Western Indies, which have been discovered by Don Christopher Columbus? Do they not

> depict incredible mountains of gold and iron? Trees, fruits, and animals of wonderful shape?]

According to Ramusio, Polo is not to be blamed for narrating incredible things, as he just reported what he heard from the locals. The problem of hearsay evidence is not a minor one in Herodotus' *Histories*: suffice it to quote a passage in book 7 where Herodotus states that he is obliged to *say what is said* (*legein ta legomena*), but not obliged to *believe* what is said (7.152.3). The question of hearsay evidence is one of the methodological issues that connect early moderns to Herodotus and it is reasonable to assume that it was suggested both by the practical experience of travellers and by the reading of Herodotus himself.

Ramusio then defends Polo, a modern (or medieval, as we would rather say) author, by pointing out that *more* wonders can be seen both in ancient authors and in contemporary ones (according to the same division which we have seen in Barbaro). Among contemporary travellers, Ramusio mentions Cristopher Columbus and Hernán Cortés, the explorers (and conquerors) of the New World. Here Ramusio adds a further argument for defence. He points out that the wondrous animals, fruits, and plants which are described by travellers are often brought together with American gold to Europe, so that it is possible to ascertain that travellers are actually telling the truth:

> E pur dell'oro e argento non s'ingannano, e l'età nostra l'ha con suo grave danno sentito, per le tante guerre state tra principi cristiani. Degli animali, frutti e piante, ogni ora ne vengono copiosamente portate in Italia, e si conosce ch'hanno scritto la verità. E sopra l'altre, la grandezza della città di Quinsai, nella Provincia di Mangi, non si vede esser simile alla gran città di Temistitan della Nuova Spagna, trovata per il signor Hernando Cortese, dove erano i palazzi e giardini del Re Mutezuma, così grandi e famosi? (Ibid.)

> [Nonetheless, they [*scil.* writers of travels in America] are not wrong about the gold and iron, and our age has experienced it to its great detriment, due to the numerous wars which have been fought between Christian princes. Animals, fruits, and plants are

> constantly brought in Italy, so that we are able to ascertain that they told the truth. And above the other examples, is it not true that the size of the city of Quinsai in the province of Mangi is comparable to that of the great city of Temistitan in New Spain, which was discovered by Hernán Cortés, where the big and famous palaces and gardens of King Moctezuma were found?]

In Ramusio's view, this opportunity to ascertain *autoptice* that apparently incredible things are real should encourage the reader to accept that also the *mirabilia* which are narrated by Polo can be true. It may be added that also the *mirabilia* of ancient texts can be justified in this way. The way was paved for using modern *mirabilia* writings in order to defend Herodotus, as we will see in the next section.

Besides being used in order to advocate the credibility of one's own account, classical models could also be invoked to justify errors and exaggerations. This is the way followed by Richard Hakluyt, the editor of the massive collection of voyages entitled *The Principal Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Over-Land, to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth* (firstly printed in 1589 and then, in a much-expanded edition in three volumes, in 1598-1600). He addresses the issue of *mirabilia* in the preface to the first volume, where he presents, among others, the voyage made by two English friars among the Tartars. He defends the reports of the two travellers against the charge of unreliability with the following words:

> [I]f any man shall obiect that they have certaine incredible relations: I answere, first, that many true things may to the ignorant seeme incredible. But suppose there be some particulars which hardly will be credited; yet thus much I will boldly say for the Friers, that those particulars are but few, and that they doe not avouch them under their owne names, but from the report of others. Yet farther imagine that they did avouch them, were they not to be pardoned as well as Herodotus, Strabo, Plutarch, Plinie, Solinus, yea and a great many of our new principall writers, whose names you may see about the end of this Preface; every one of which hath reported more strange things then the Friers between them both? Nay, there is not any history in the world (the most

> Holy writ excepted) whereof we are precisely bound to beleeue ech word and syllable. (1598-1600, **1*r*)

Hakluyt first justifies the friars by pointing out that those details which may seem incredible are reported from others. He then admits that some of the contents of their reports may be false, but he observes that the same applies to all writers of geographical books, Herodotus included. Thus, even if the friars vouched for these false reports themselves, they would still be as deserving of pardon as the ancient authors. Hakluyt's defence is interesting in that he both addresses the problem of the reliability of sources and proves to be aware that historiographical accounts are inevitably bound to contain details which are not credible. As in Ramusio's preface, here too we see methodological stances on the crucial issue of reliability, which connect Herodotus with the early moderns. On these problems Herodotus was invoked as a legitimising precedent for early modern travel literature. But the opposite direction was also possible: that is, modern travel accounts could be used in order to justify Herodotus.

4. Modern Writers of *Mirabilia* Help Herodotus

Henri Estienne's *Apologia pro Herodoto* – first published in Latin in 1566 and then translated and enlarged in French in the same year[5] – is usually credited as the first speech which defends Herodotus by comparing his *Histories* with the accounts of modern travellers. However, this strategy is already used in Joachim Camerarius' edition of 1541,[6] where we read the following statements:

5 The original French edition was entitled *L'introduction au traite de la conformite des merveilles anciennes avec les modernes* (Genève: François Estienne). I will quote from the 1980 edition.

6 On Camerarius' defence of Herodotus, see Ellis 2017. Ellis focuses on other aspects of Camerarius' preface, such as the comparison with Thucydides, the emphasis on the moral utility of Herodotus' work, or the rejection of Plutarch's accusation of impiety. He points out also the connections with Aldus' preface in the 1502 *princeps* edition of Herodotus, where Aldus argued that *non recte mendacii arguitur Herodotus. Quandoquidem res pure et simpliciter ut accepit, posteritati tradidit* (1502, AA AA 1*v*; Herodotus is not

> Sed de iis quae memoratur ab Herodoto propter magnitudinem nobis incredibilia, periniquum fuerit iudicium, si non vera esse ideo statuemus quod notis cuique rebus, moribus, disciplinae non similia nec rationibus nostris congruentia esse videatur, sique non nisi iis quae facile intelligere et animo complecti possimus, fidem habenda esse ducemus. Quam multa illi ipsi qui haec antiquiora falsa fictaque esse affirmare audent, se vidisse referunt et pro certis commemorant, a quibus assensio legentium refugit? Etiam posteris hoc nostris accidet, ut multa quae nunc nimis vere fiunt atque geruntur, expositione inflata et amplificata esse suspicentur. Sunt sane quaedam inaniora, non enim nego, in talibus, ut in peregrinatorum, et qui adiere illa loca, quae *Tellus extrema refuso summovet oceano*[7] sermonibus, cuius inhumanitatis tamen fuerit, universum genus narrationum istarum semel abicere ut futile et vanum? Quod si fiat, omnes historiae ratione confundi, habitusque perverti necesse fit. (A3*r*)
>
> [However, as regards the things Herodotus recounts that appear incredible to us due to their grandeur, it would be unfair to judge negatively if we were to declare them false simply because they do not resemble what is familiar to each of us, our customs, our teachings, or because they do not conform to our reasoning. And if we were to place trust only in what we can easily understand and grasp with our minds, we would fall into error. How many things, indeed, are reported as certain even by those who dare to claim that the oldest accounts are false and fabricated, and are met with the rejection of readers? The same will happen to our descendants: many things that are real and truly happening today will be suspected of having been exaggerated and amplified in their narration. Certainly, I do not deny that there are rather frivolous things in these accounts, as is the case in the reports of travellers and those who have visited *those places at the edges of the earth, where the land is pushed back by the retreating ocean.* However, would it not be an act of nonsense to dismiss this entire genre of narration as futile and vain? If such a criterion were adopted, every order of history would be confused, and the entire historical framework would be overturned.]

rightly accused of falsehood, since he transmitted to posterity the events just as he received them, plainly and simply).

7 Quotation from *Aeneid* 7.225-6.

Camerarius mentions modern travel accounts in order to emphasise that it is incorrect to dismiss the *mirabilia* of Herodotus. Those accounts contain details that can be barely believed now and will not be believed by future readers, as Herodotus is not believed by many modern readers. Camerarius then mentions the example of the extraordinary fertility of the soil of Babylon (the same example which would then be quoted by Cartwright, see *above*): this information will not be believed by those who have never visited that country (*Intellego enim eos qui in regione Babyloniorum non fuere minime crediturос vel ea quae de frugibus modo diximus*) but this is not a valid reason to deem it false. According to Camerarius, Herodotus includes wondrous details for two possible purposes: for the utility of the readers, as exemplified by the size and the fertility of Babylon; or for their delight, as in the case of the gryphons, the giant ants of India, the phoenix. But even for such hardly credible aspects of Herodotus' stories, Camerarius does not exclude that they may be true:

> Horum, ut illa omni equidem mendacii crimine plane libero, ita haud facile concessero, in horum ullo mendacii manifesti autorem redarguendum esse, cum tot derisa quondam et exsibilata, pene iam comperta esse existimentur, cumque non minus istis a veritate abhorrentia multa asseverentur ab iis, qui non audivisse de aliis, sed se ipsos aspexisse dicunt, ut nihil tam sit absurdum, quin fidem reperire posse videatur. (A3*v*)
>
> [As for these tales, as I fully absolve them of every charge of falsehood, I would not easily concede that their author should be accused of clear deceit with respect of any of them, since so many things once ridiculed and disapproved are now thought to be almost verified; and many things no less removed from the truth than these are asserted by people who claim not to have heard them from others, but to have seen them with their own eyes – so that nothing is so absurd that it does not seem capable of finding belief.]

Camerarius here reverses the argument of time. In the passage quoted above, he observed that many stories that are credible in a given age can be then considered false in the subsequent centuries; here, he argues that many things that in the past

seemed incredible have then been proven true. As in the previous passage, he then underlines how many *mirabilia* are reported to be true by modern travellers, on the basis of a criterion of autopsy. The underlying reasoning is that, if we accept the claim of truthfulness of the modern explorers, we have no reason not to accept the analogous claims of Herodotus.

After Camerarius, the task of defending Herodotus was taken on by Estienne (on his long commitment with the defence of Herodotus, see Girot 2012). In most of his apologetic treatise, Estienne employs that which we may call a strategy of proximity. That is, in order to get the readers to admit that Herodotus' wonders can be true, he reminds them that customs and usages change even between one country and its neighbours: for instance, between France and Germany or Italy. Therefore, he says, if we bear in mind these differences, we will not be surprised by the strange things which are found in distant countries, according to Herodotus' *Histories*:

> [S]i entre peuples si voisins et qui sont du mesme temps, les façons de faire sont si discordantes, nous ne devons trouver incroyable la difference entre nous et ceux dont parle Herodote, estans si eslongnez de nous non feulemet de distance de lieu mais aussi de temps. Au demeurant je ne donne point d'exemples de la diversité entre nos façons de faire et celles de nos predecesseurs, pource qu'on s'en peut facilement aviser. (1980, 142)

> [If customs are so different between peoples so close to each other and in the same historical period, we should not wonder about the difference between us and those about whom Herodotus speaks, who are so distant from us not only in space but also in time. Moreover, I will not give examples of the difference between our customs and those of our ancestors, because the reader can easily realise it.]

Moreover, Estienne also underlines that customs change in the same country over time. He nicely combines the two dimensions of paradox which we have found also in Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence*: space and time distance.

Only at the end of his defence of Herodotus, as a last argument, does Estienne refer to the accounts of a contemporary traveller in a distant country. Not only ancient historiographers, he says, but also modern ones narrate more incredible things than Herodotus did. However, no one doubts these stories because their authors do not have the reputation of being liars that Herodotus has:

> Ie passe encore plus outre: car ie di que les autres historiographes, et ceux mesmement qui ont escrit les histoires modernes, racontent quelques choses plus estranges que tout ce qui a donné mauvais bruit aux escrits d'Herodote: qui toutesfois ne sont point tenues suspectes, pourceque les auteurs ne sont point suspects. Mais ceux specialement qui escrivent pour le iourd'huy les histoires des pays barbares, nous recitent aucunes merveilles desquelles n'approchent point celles d'Herodote: j'enten merveilles tant es faicts de nature qu'es faicts des hommes, et en leurs moeurs et complexions. Dequoy nous voyons des exemples en ceux qui ont escrit de la Moschouie, qu'on appeloit anciennement Scythies: et entr'autres en Sigismundus Liber. (1980, 148)

> [I go further. I say that other historiographers, and even those who have written modern histories, tell stranger things than those that have given Herodotus' writings a bad reputation; however, these things are not suspected because their authors are not suspected at all. And especially those who nowadays write the histories of barbarian countries tell us wonders that go far beyond those of Herodotus. I mean wonders both in the facts of nature and in the facts of men and their customs and aspects. We see some examples of these in the authors who have written about Muscovy, which was named Scythia in antiquity; among others, Sigismundus Liber.]

Estienne's words remind us of Peacham's prescription that the paradox must be used by a person who is considered reliable. Estienne seems to imply that there is a prejudice against Herodotus which does not affect modern travel authors. Among modern travel writers, Estienne choses Sigismundus Liber, that is Siegmund Freiherr von Herberstein, imperial ambassador to Russia, who in 1549 had published a book entitled *Rerum moscovitarum commentarii*. Estienne reports from this book an episode related

to the husband-wife relationships in Russia which is likely to shock the French reader. We are reminded that the region of Moscow is what Herodotus would have called Scythia. If such conspicuous differences between Russian and French customs exist now, Estienne implies, no wonder that even bigger differences from present customs are found in Herodotus' accounts.

5. Conclusion

This article has explored Herodotus' presence in early modern travel literature, pointing out that he was less relevant as a source and more as a precedent that legitimised modern descriptions of faraway and exotic countries. Early moderns (re)discovered the world, with its immense natural and human variety, thus becoming aware of the methodological problems posed by historic-geographical research. But at the same time, they rediscovered the ancient geographical literature, where those same problems had already been addressed. The practical experience of the world and the theoretical reacquisition of the intellectual categories of the ancients went hand in hand.

The fact that the name of Herodotus is mainly found in prefaces to the readers is telling. This is precisely the part of the book where the aims and methods of the book itself were discussed and where the author oriented the reader in the reception of the content. Mentioning the names of the ancient authors undoubtedly added to the prestige of the editorial enterprise by suggesting that it was in continuity with an established tradition. This use of Herodotus did not necessarily imply a direct or in-depth acquaintance with his text, as it was based less on specific passages of his work and more on the long-lasting image of the first of a long tradition of writers (Strabo, Pomponius Mela, Pliny to name a few).

One of the most relevant issues which travel literature had to face was credibility. As travel writers described things and people which did not align to the normal European experience of the world, they ran the risk of not being believed. The most effective strategy to avoid this risk was to cite the examples of previous

authoritative writers who had written similar things. In the works that we have examined, we have seen a sort of chain of reliability that united ancient and modern writers. If you believe the oddities that are contained in ancient works – this is the modern author's argument – you can believe the oddities which you read in my book. But the chain could work also in the opposite direction: modern *mirabilia* and the possibility to ascertain their actual existence provided evidence that the *mirabilia* of ancient authors were credible too. This is Ramusio's argument in defending Marco Polo, as well as Camerarius' and Estienne's argument in defending Herodotus.

Whilst in the first case (from the ancients to the moderns) the argument was based on authority, in the second (from the moderns to the ancients) it was based on experience. Estienne's defence of Herodotus is especially effective in that it involves not only the modern *mirabilia* which were found in the explorations of distant lands and could not be easily verified by those who remained in Europe. On the contrary, Estienne focuses mostly on variations in customs and usages that could be found between neighbouring countries, or in the same country between different time periods. He highlights, as it were, domestic *mirabilia*, that were common in everyone's experience, thus making the readers aware of the extreme variability of human behaviour. Thanks to this awareness, modern readers will no longer be suspicious of the oddities described by an author like Herodotus, who spoke from an immense time distance and wrote about immensely distant countries. If Herodotus had been useful to travel writers, now Camerarius and Estienne returned the favour, in what we may call a kind of solidarity between colleagues.

Overall, our journey in early modern travel literature in the company of Herodotus has provided us with valuable insights into the making of a genre that was momentous in an age in which the horizons of Europeans broadened to an unprecedented extent. This expansion brought about bewilderment due to the disconcerting variety of the world, raising epistemological questions that had no simple answer. But when similar questions arise, Herodotus is always ready to lead the way.

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