

GOD IN HISTORY: READING AND REWRITING  
HERODOTEAN THEOLOGY FROM PLUTARCH  
TO THE RENAISSANCE

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EDITED BY  
ANTHONY ELLIS

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*Bern*

ANTHONY ELLIS  
17 December 2015

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## PREFACE

Anthony Ellis

Despite countless challenges to Herodotus' status as the 'father of history', his writing remained one of the most popular paradigms for Greek historians for two thousand years. Within several centuries, the appearance of his *Histories* was perceived as a watershed moment in the history of historiography,<sup>1</sup> and his influence is as visible as ever in the last great work of the classical historiographical tradition: Laonikos Chalkokondyles' account of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. At the same time, the *Histories* is soaked in the religious culture of archaic and classical Greece—theology is inextricably built into Herodotus' vision of historical causation and his dramatic art, and the divine influences human affairs in both momentous and trivial ways throughout the narrative.<sup>2</sup> Although many pre-modern readers wholeheartedly approved of Herodotus' acknowledgement of god's tangible role in history, the majority self-consciously subscribed to philosophical schools or religious groups which encouraged them to see Herodotus' view of 'God' as fundamentally opposed to their own. This combination of historical authority and theological alterity

<sup>1</sup> See particularly Cicero's oft-quoted sobriquet *pater historiae* (complete with reference to Herodotus' *fabulae*) at *De leg.* 1.1.5 and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' comments at *Thuc.* 5.1 with discussion in Fowler (1996). For the importance of Herodotus to Hellenistic historiography, see below, nn. 7 and 9. For attacks on Herodotus' veracity in antiquity see Evans (1968) and particularly Momigliano (1966) who traces the debate into the modern period.

<sup>2</sup> A point made forcefully by Harrison (2000), and emphasised in, e.g., Mikalson (2003) and Scullion (2006).

has caused perpetual controversy among Herodotus' admirers, imitators, and detractors.

One fact, above all, has dominated subsequent perceptions of Herodotus' theological ideas:<sup>3</sup> Herodotus belonged to the religious and literary culture rejected by Plato in his attack on tragic theology, which laid down a number of principles that would be fundamental to later Platonic and Christian conceptions of God, most importantly that god cannot be held responsible for any misfortune or ills (*κακά*) suffered by humans.<sup>4</sup> The first surviving work of criticism devoted to Herodotus—Plutarch's scathing essay *On the Malice of Herodotus* (*DHM*) which dominated the critical scene until the 18th century—rebukes Herodotus for his blasphemous abuse of the gods, and does so using theological arguments first heard in the mouth of Plato's Socrates and Timaeus (see further Chs. 1 and 2 of this collection). Consequently, the struggle to come to terms with Herodotus' religious ideas and his strikingly theological 'philosophy of history' has, for most Platonic and Christian readers, seemed fundamental to a proper evaluation of his historical achievement.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> My use of the word theology, which has fallen from fashion, requires comment. By theology (etc.) I refer to all verbal reflection which touches on the nature of the gods. It is thus a broad concept, overlapping to some degree with the term 'religion', but referring specifically to *thought* about the gods (where religion is typically associated with ritual and practice). It is important to point out that to talk of 'theology', in this sense, is not to imply that Herodotus was a systematic theologian or that only one 'theology' can be found in his work (though many commentators would have it so). The term *θεολογία* is first attested in Plat. *Rep.* 379a5 (where it refers to stories about the gods written by poets as well as the work of a philosopher: cf. Bordt (2006) 16–19); it enjoyed popularity in scholarship on Greek religion until the time of Jaeger (1947).

<sup>4</sup> For the wider context see *Rep.* 379a–80c. Although Plato's criticisms are directed primarily at 'poetry', they explicitly include texts not in metre: see *Rep.* 380c (*μήτ' ἐν μέτρῳ μήτε ἄνευ μέτρου μυθολογούντα*).

<sup>5</sup> I borrow the phrase 'philosophy of history' from Fornara (1971) 18, 64–5; the existence of any such thing has, however, been challenged—esp. by Gould (1989) 89, Harrison (2000) 39–40, and Versnel (2011) esp.

The reception of the religious and theological aspects of Herodotus' thought, however, has received almost no attention in scholarship, despite the blossoming of interest in both Greek religion and reception studies.<sup>6</sup> Recent years have seen scholars explore Herodotus' influence on the historiographical thought of his immediate successors,<sup>7</sup> Roman literature,<sup>8</sup> the Hellenistic world,<sup>9</sup> Byzantium,<sup>10</sup> the Renaissance and the early-modern period,<sup>11</sup> into more

190–201—on premises which I question in Ellis (2015). Crucially, to hold that the *Histories* contains a 'philosophy of history' (e.g. the inevitable and fundamental transience of all human affairs at the level of the individual and state) is not to insist that this more general philosophy holds the key to the interpretation of every episode in the work, nor that it is never in tension with other ideas presented.

<sup>6</sup> Over the last five years there has been an unprecedented interest in Herodotean reception, visible in a large number of conferences and colloquia, and the resulting edited volumes. In addition to the panel from which this volume arose see: *Hérodote à la Renaissance* (ed. S. Longo, resulting from a conference in March 2009, Paris); *Herodotus and the Long Nineteenth Century* (University of Liverpool, 12–14 Sept. 2012, proceedings currently in preparation, edited by T. Harrison and J. Skinner); *The Afterlife of Herodotus and Thucydides* (Warburg Institute, 6–7 Mar. 2014, proceedings currently in preparation, edited by P. Mack and J. North); and *The Reception of Herodotus in Antiquity and Beyond* (Bristol, 18–19 April 2013 and London, 12–13 August 2013, proceedings currently in publication, edited by J. Priestley and V. Zali. For the 'remarkable and ever-increasing growth of interest in Greek religion' in the last half-century' see Parker (2011) vii–ix.

<sup>7</sup> See Riemann (1967), Ellis (2016), and the contributions of Baron, Gray, Hawes, Węcowski, and Zali in Priestley and Zali (forthcoming). Hau (2007) also offers an excellent overview of the reappearance of Herodotean historical motifs in classical and Hellenistic Greek historiography.

<sup>8</sup> Scapini (2011) and Dunsch (2013).

<sup>9</sup> Priestley (2014).

<sup>10</sup> Fryde (1983) 24–7; Akışık (2013), Kaldellis (2004) and (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Fryde (1983) 91–4, Eleuteri (1996), Olivieri (2004), Kliege-Biller (2004), Grogan (2014), Earley (forthcoming, a) and (forthcoming, b); detailed discussion of Herodotus' influence on specific authors and cultures in the Italian, Spanish, and French renaissance can be found in the many fine essays collected in Longo (2012). For a brief introduction to (and list of) paintings illustrating stories from Herodotus, see Liuzzo (2014).

recent centuries;<sup>12</sup> these have examined the impact of diverse aspects of Herodotus' work, including his ethnographic inquiries into foreign peoples, his presentation of the Greco-Persian Wars, his intrusive narratorial persona and source-conscious methodology, and the infamous debate about his reliability. The rich and complex history of intellectual engagement with Herodotean theology and religion, by contrast, has yet to receive detailed study, a lack which this volume hopes, at least in part, to address.

This volume contains four talks given at the Classical Association annual meeting in Reading in April 2013,<sup>13</sup> revised for publication and with a new introductory essay.<sup>14</sup> Between them, these explore the reception of Herodotus' theological and historical views among some of his critics, admirers, and imitators between Plutarch and the Reformation. The volume is compiled in the conviction that the reception of these aspects of Herodotus' thought is best studied diachronically: if we fail to consider the writings of Plato, Plutarch, and Eusebius, it will be all but impossible to appreciate the complexities of later Herodotean interactions, whether in the expansive historiographical tradition of the Byzantine Empire (from Procopius to Laonikos Chalkokondyles), or in the writings of early-modern Hellenists, theologians, and historians in the Latin West. Understanding the reception of Herodotus' theological ideas will, it is hoped, allow us to perceive Herodotus' contribution to the close dialogue that has existed between theology and history throughout the ages. It is also a very

<sup>12</sup> Between them Momigliano (1966) and Bichler and Rollinger (2000) 114–69 provide broad outlines of Herodotus' reception from antiquity to the present. Kipf (1999) offers a valuable overview of Herodotus in school teaching between the 15th and 20th centuries, with particular focus on the latter centuries. Contributions to the volume edited by Harrison and Skinner (forthcoming) explore many facets of the 19th-century reception of Herodotus, e.g., the contributions of Hall (forthcoming) and Rood (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> The panel, chaired by Tom Harrison, was named 'Reading Herodotus' Gods from Antiquity to the Present'.

<sup>14</sup> It is, however, hoped that further contributions will be added, taking advantage of the possibilities of online publication format.

small step in the direction of understanding the complex and shifting perceptions of Presocratic Greek religion more generally between the classical period and the present.

From the wide range of potential subject matter, the essays collected here focus on four periods and authors, regretfully leaving aside much of interest.<sup>15</sup> The first introductory chapter ('Mortal Misfortunes, *θεὸς ἀνάτιος*, and *τὸ θεῖον φθονερόν*: The Socratic Seeds of Later Debate on Herodotus' Theology') offers a brief overview of the Socratic and Platonic background to later perceptions of Herodotus' views about the nature of god, and specifically the notion of divine *phthonos*. It then explores how the writings of Plato subtly influenced the theological discourse of subsequent classical, Hellenistic, and Christian historiography, and coloured reactions to Herodotus at all periods of scholarship.

In the second chapter ('Defending the Divine: Plutarch on the Gods of Herodotus') John Marincola discusses Plutarch, whose *On the Malice of Herodotus* contains the earliest explicit criticism of Herodotean theology.<sup>16</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> Herodotus' role as a paradigm for Josephus' biblical paraphrase has yet to be evaluated, and may yield interesting results. Writing on the influence of Attic tragedy on Josephus, Feldman (1998) notes many important links between the Greek literary tradition and the Jewish historian, but common elements of prose historiography from Herodotus to Plutarch are consistently identified as being primarily or exclusively 'tragic'. While tragedy is certainly an important source, Josephus' net of allusion drags on a much wider bed, and in many cases it is not exclusively or even necessarily concerned with fifth-century Athenian drama. Indeed, given Josephus' historiographical endeavours, his widespread knowledge of the Greek historiographical tradition, and the knowledge of Herodotus implied by the *Contra Apionem*, it seems likely that Herodotus and the Greek *historians* will have had an equal or greater influence than the tragedians. For one possible example, see Levine (1993); cf. Ek (1945–6). Likewise the reception of Herodotean oracles in Books IV and V of Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica*, or the concept of *συμφορά* in Theodoret's *Church History* may illuminate the influence of Herodotus on the early development of Ecclesiastical history.

<sup>16</sup> This may, of course, be due to the vicissitudes of survival. One wonders whether the commentary on Herodotus by Aristarchus of Samothrace during the 2nd century BC contributed to the debate on

importance of this work to the subsequent reception of Herodotus is hard to overestimate and this is equally true in the case of theology and religion: Plutarch's essay remained the explicit starting point for most scholarly discussion on the topic until the mid-19th century. After reviewing Plutarch's criticisms of Herodotus in the *DHM*, and placing these in the context of Plutarch's wider philosophical views, Marincola explores how Plutarch's theory relates to his practice by discussing his rewriting of Herodotus' dialogue of Solon and Croesus (in the *Solon*), and his presentation of the role of the divine in the Greco-Persian Wars, particularly in the battles of Artemisium, Salamis, and Plataea.

The third and fourth chapters focus on Herodotus' reception in Byzantine historiography, in most cases by erudite historians who drew heavily on ancient historical paradigms and presented their works to a largely or wholly Christian audience. In Chapter 3 ('Fate, Divine *Phthonos*, and the Wheel of Fortune: The Reception of Herodotean Theology in Early and Middle Byzantine Historiography') Vasiliki Zali discusses numerous engagements with Herodotus between the 6th and 13th centuries in Procopius' *Wars*, Psellus' *Chronographia*, and Choniates' *History*. Zali looks closely at the afterlife of some of the most debated concepts in Herodotean scholarship: 'chance', 'the cycle of human affairs', and 'the *phthonos* of the gods', and highlights a number of close engagements with these motifs as they appear in the *Histories*, as well as several striking and self-conscious departures from Herodotean precedents.

In Chapter 4 ('Explaining the End of an Empire: The Use of Ancient Greek Religious Views in Late Byzantine Historiography') Mathieu de Bakker explores the influence of the religious aspects of classical historiography (particularly, but not exclusively, Herodotus) on two late Byzantine historians who grafted their works onto the paradigms provided by Herodotus and Thucydides:

Herodotus' theological views, but surviving fragments shed no light on such issues; for a brief description of the commentary and further bibliography: Priestley (2014) 223–9.

Kritoboulos of Imbros and Laonikos Chalkokondyles, both in the latter half of the 15th century. De Bakker shows how these texts drew on the explanatory paradigms of antiquity in attempting to provide historical explanations for the great cataclysm of their day: the fall of the Greek Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Turks.

In the final chapter (*Herodotus Magister Vitae: or Herodotus and God in the Protestant Reformation*) I look at the reception of Herodotus' moral and theological ideas as the *Histories* began to be read again in the Latin West, focusing on 16th-century humanism north of the Alps. I examine Lutheran scholarship written and inspired by the classicist and reformer Philipp Melancthon, as well as the writings of two giants of sixteenth-century Francophone scholarship: the Calvinist Henri Estienne and his son-in-law Isaac Casaubon. This chapter explores the attempts of several of the most influential scholars of Protestant Europe to incorporate Herodotus and Greek historiography into humanist pedagogy and to defend Herodotus from his attackers (ancient and contemporary) by finding Christian beliefs and teaching in his work.

While the second and fifth chapters focus on direct criticism which names Herodotus as its subject, each essay also explores less explicit engagements: the way in which later authors borrowed from and rewrote the subject-matter of the *Histories*, or echoed Herodotus' own words. It is, therefore, important to establish the criteria which constitute an engagement with the *Histories*. Yet the stylistic traits and thematic motifs that mark Herodotus out from others depend largely on the company in which he is put: the quality of being 'Herodotean' thus varies according to the canon which any given reader has in mind. Once characteristically Herodotean traits enter the repertoire of the wider historiographical tradition, it becomes still harder, though not impossible, to tie their influence to a single work or writer. Yet motifs can be both common to the wider literary tradition, while retaining a distinctive link to a

particular author.<sup>17</sup> From a methodological perspective, the focus on the relationship of later writers to Herodotus (rather than the historiographical tradition as a whole) also requires us to be on guard against the natural tendency to exaggerate Herodotus' importance. These and the other difficulties are inherent to an interdisciplinary reception study focused on one author; they are, however, worth facing in order to gain a synchronic perspective on a crucial aspect of Herodotean thought.

The religious and theological content of the *Histories* continues to meet with radically different assessments today, above all due to the apparent diversity of opinions embedded within Herodotus' vast and generically varied work. The reformer Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the scholar-printer Henri Estienne (†1598) claimed that the *Histories* contained theological messages quite amenable to a true understanding of Christian doctrine, and many 18th- and 19th-century scholars strove to show that Herodotus subscribed to the main tenets of Christian or Platonic theology.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, many readers have put their energies into emphasising the foreignness of Herodotus' religious ideas and his gross theological errors. These have

<sup>17</sup> When Procopius writes about Constantine: ἀλλὰ ἔδει, ὅπερ ἐρρήθη, Κωνσταντίνῳ γενέσθαι κακῶς (*Wars* 6.8.18; cf. 6.8.7: Κωνσταντίνος, χρῆν γάρ οἱ γενέσθαι κακῶς, ...) he echoes Herodotean comments about, e.g., Candaules (1.8.1: χρῆν γάρ Κανδαύλῃ γενέσθαι κακῶς) and Apries (2.161: οἱ ἔδεε κακῶς γενέσθαι), as becomes clearer when contemplating the many further close echoes set out by Braun (1894) 41. Yet variants of this expression had also been used by others like Josephus (*Ant.* 5.312: ἔδει γὰρ αὐτὸν συμφορᾷ περιπεσεῖν) and mocked by Lucian as an overused trope among Herodotus' imitators (*Hist. Conscr.* 17: ἔδεε γὰρ Πέρσησι γενέσθαι κακῶς; cf. similar but not identical usages of ἔδει in Plut. *Ant.* 56.5, *Phil.* 17.2). Here, then, Procopius seems to be engaging with wider historiographical tradition but, in the context of his particularly 'Herodotean' phraseology here and elsewhere, the Herodotean lineage remains an essential part of the allusion.

<sup>18</sup> See, respectively, Ch. 5 (in this volume) and (from many possible examples) De Jongh (1833). See Ellis (forthcoming) for discussion of the 18th- and 19th-century reception of the archaic Greek concept of divine *phthonos*, in which Herodotus frequently features.

included Platonists like Plutarch (ca. 46–120 AD), Catholics like François Geinoz (1696–1752) and Pierre-Henri Larcher (1726–1812), and Protestants like Julius Müller (1801–1878). These two quite different impulses created opposing interpretative traditions that survive largely intact into the 21st century,<sup>19</sup> with the result that reception scholars are likely to find themselves investigating the genealogy of their own opinions. If the resulting circularity makes reception scholarship more confusing, it also makes it more important. Numerous interpretations of key scenes and concepts, adopted by formidable Christian commentators in the early years of Germany's *Altertumswissenschaft* and often mediated through anglophone scholarship in the 20th century, continue to exert a largely unacknowledged influence on many areas of scholarship today, despite the fact that the intellectual paradigms which gave rise to them are long discredited.<sup>20</sup> By learning how the inventory of the

<sup>19</sup> Thus Munson (2001) sees necessary 'ethically rational' *τίσις* and the 'divine retribution' for 'immoral [human] behaviour' as the defining feature of Herodotus' religious outlook, following a well-established approach to Herodotus (associated with an exclusive emphasis on divine justice) to be found in various forms in Lloyd (2007), Darbo-Peschanski (1987), Lloyd-Jones (1983), Macan (1895), Meuss (1888), De Jongh (1833), Baehr (1830–5), Schweighäuser (1816), and Lodewijk Valckenaer's 1763 notes on the *Histories*, a view anticipated in several aspects by Henri Estienne's *Apologia pro Herodoto* (1566). On the other hand the great Herodotean commentator David Asheri wrote ((2007) 39) that Herodotus' gods 'are the enemies of humankind': 'not driven by moral principles' but rather by 'envy, self-esteem, and self-love, and the desire to avenge and persecute'; the fundamental aspects of this view can be traced through Fornara (1971), Stein (1869/71), Dahlmann (1823), to the Abbé François Geinoz (1753), and this view of Herodotus' theology is intimately related to the Platonic criticisms of Herodotus' theology made in Plutarch's *DHM*.

<sup>20</sup> The importance of reception history to the study of Greek religion has been made forcefully in Renaud Gagné's seminal study of ancestral fault. Gagné rightly stresses '[t]he unique position of Greek religion in the history of the Western imagination, especially its crucial history at the very heart of the founts that defined early Christianity, and as a figure of reference to which, century after century, various currents of medieval and modern Christianity constantly returned to give shape to the differences of the past and the present'; hence 'a journey through

‘common conceptual store’ (as Robert Parker has called it) was formed, we can better identify those ideas that urgently require rethinking.<sup>21</sup>

As a whole, the volume aims to provide a number of case studies which show individuals from various theological and linguistic cultures interacting with the religious ideas of the archaic and classical Greek world, as represented by Herodotus’ *Histories*. By collecting them together, it also illustrates the convoluted afterlife of an iconic ancient text. The chronological cut-off point for this volume—the early 17th century—is chosen not because interest in Herodotean theology wanes after that point. Rather, the complexity and frequency of interactions with Herodotus post-1600 in the *Querelle*, the Enlightenment, and the early days of *Altertumswissenschaft* is so great and unexplored that it requires dedicated examination in its own right, which goes far beyond the scope of the panel in which this volume originated.

In conclusion, it is worth reflecting on one rarely discussed reason why theology continues to play a central role in most areas of Herodotean scholarship today. In considering quintessentially ‘literary’ questions, interpreters inevitably take a position on Herodotus’ theological worldview, whether or not this is made explicit. Those who think that Herodotus narrates the histories of Croesus, Polycrates, and Xerxes as monitory tales which illustrate the ethically rational consequences of good and bad behaviour must assume that the stories unfold in a world where the metaphysical powers-that-be steer events to their just and appropriate conclusion. Those who think that Herodotus narrates these same events as tragic tales which excite our pity at spectacles of undeserved suffering equally build theological, or metaphysical, ideas into their readings. It is clear that, for an author who recognised the influence of the

the *longue durée* of cultural memory is a precondition for understanding any aspect of Greek religion’ ((2013) 19–20, cf. 54–6).

<sup>21</sup> See Parker (2011) ix. Among the book’s many virtues is the depth of perspective it offers by discussing the origin and development of various debates about Greek religion.

divine on every aspect of human life, views about plot, characterisation, and ethics cannot be formed independently of views about the gods, their nature, and their modes of behaviour. If we can speak of ‘narrative patterns’ in the *Histories*, then we can speak of ‘narrato-theological’ patterns. Understanding early interpretations of Herodotean theology, then, allows us to understand much more than the interpretation of the *Histories*’ metaphysical content. It enables us to consider the reception of Herodotus’ narrative art more generally.

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I

INTRODUCTION

MORTAL MISFORTUNES, *ΘΕΟΣ*  
*ΑΝΑΙΤΙΟΣ*, AND *ΤΟ ΘΕΙΟΝ ΦΘΟΝΕΡΟΝ*:  
THE SOCRATIC SEEDS OF LATER  
DEBATE ON HERODOTUS' THEOLOGY\*

Anthony Ellis

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*Abstract:* This introduction offers a brief overview of the Socratic and Platonic background to later perceptions of Herodotus' views about the nature of god, and specifically the notion that god is *phthoneros* ('jealous', 'envious', 'grudging'). Following this theme through later centuries, it then argues that the writings of Plato subtly influenced the theological discourse of subsequent classical, Hellenistic, and Christian historiography, and coloured reactions to Herodotus at all periods, from the fourth century BC to 15th-century Byzantium. This diachronic approach reveals a long-standing tension between the presentation of the gods in Herodotean historiography, on the one hand, and Platonic and Christian theology, on the other.

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*Keywords:* Herodotus, Socrates, Plato, Plutarch, divine *phthonos*, religion, Byzantine historiography, Neoplatonism.

ὡς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι  
ζῶειν ἀχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.  
δοιοὶ γάρ τε πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει  
δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἑάων·  
ᾧ μὲν κ' ἀμμίξας δῶη Ζεὺς τερπικέραunos,  
ἄλλοτε μὲν τε κακῶ ὃ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλῶ.  
ᾧ δὲ κε τῶν λυγρῶν δῶη, λαβητὸν ἔθηκε,  
καὶ ἐ κακῇ βούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα διὰν ἐλαύνει,  
φοιτᾶ δ' οὔτε θεοῖσι τετιμένος οὔτε βροτοῖσιν.

*Iliad* 24.525–33

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The following article outlines the Socratic background to Plutarch's claim that Herodotus commits impiety (*βλασφημία*) and abuses the gods, an accusation which profoundly influenced subsequent debates on Herodotus' religious views, and provoked a range of apologetic responses which continue to influence the interpretation of Herodotus today. As we shall see, Plutarch's rebuke has roots in fifth- and fourth-century debates about the nature of god,<sup>1</sup> specifically whether god can feel the emotion of *phthonos* (common translations include 'envy', 'jealousy', and 'resentment') and whether god can be *παραχώδης* ('disruptive', 'troubling', or 'meddlesome').<sup>2</sup>

During the fifth century BC—and probably within the lifetime of Herodotus—it appears that the Socratic circle

<sup>1</sup> I use the terms 'god', 'the gods', 'the divinity', 'the divine' etc. in free alternation in many contexts, following the practice of Greek authors from Homer to Plato (and far beyond): cf. François (1957). For the sake of clarity, when talking about authors who self-identified as 'Christians', I use the singular, capitalised form 'God', although this modern typographic convention introduces an artificial distinction between the often identical terms used in classical and Christian Greek literature.

<sup>2</sup> I conduct the following discussion in terms of the '*phthonos*' of the gods rather than choosing any of the possible translations ('envy' etc.) because the afterlife of the Herodotean phrase itself is as important as the afterlife of the numerous subtly different ideas which the phrase communicated. As we shall see, divine *phthonos* is sometimes associated with god's insistence that humans should suffer misfortune and at other times with god's hatred of those who 'think big' (and its semantic range is much wider than these two examples); that Plato in the *Timaeus* may have had only one of these theological ideas in his sights is interesting but often irrelevant to our understanding of later debates on the topic, since most subsequent commentators followed Plato's pronouncement that 'divine *φθόνος*' was theologically incorrect, and consequently rejected it wholesale even where it referred to ideas of which they, in fact, approved. If we are to understand how commentators responded to this theological idea, we must be as attentive to its verbal clothing (and the rhetoric surrounding it) as we are to the underlying concept or 'script' in play in different contexts. For a fruitful analysis of the various 'scripts' of human *phthonos* in classical Greek literature see Sanders (2014).

introduced a number of revolutionary ideas which challenged established conceptions of god, and specifically the theology of much archaic and classical literature. Their criticisms struck at the heart of some of the most popular and enduring themes of the Greek literary tradition, and would subtly alter the mode of theological expression among later followers of Plato's thought, Christian and pagan alike.

The idea that the gods bestow both good and ill on every human being is found in archaic and classical Greek authors from Homer onwards. The idea, powerfully expressed in Achilles' speech on the jars of Zeus (*Iliad* 24.525–33, quoted above), was intimately connected with the notion that suffering is an intrinsic part of human life, and often holds the gods to be the ultimate cause of human ills.<sup>3</sup> By the fifth century, and probably earlier, this was often associated with the idea that the gods have a 'disruptive' (*tarakhōdēs*) and 'grudging' (*phthoneros*) disposition—that is, that they are unwilling to share with mortals the unmixed blessings which gods enjoy, and so intervene to disrupt human prosperity and happiness.<sup>4</sup> According to the testimonies of Plato and Xenophon, Socrates directly challenged this idea and the associated notion of divine

<sup>3</sup> For these themes more widely in Greek literature see Krause (1976).

<sup>4</sup> 'Disruptiveness' is an aspect often associated with divine (and human) *phthonos* in classical sources. Cf. Pind. *Isth.* 7.39: ὁ δ' ἀθανάτων μὴ θρασσέτω φθόνος, Hdt. 1.32: ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες (cf. Herodotus' description of the effects seemingly brought about by divine *nemesis*, which follows Croesus' encounter with Solon, at 1.44.1: ὁ δὲ Κροῖσος τῷ θανάτῳ τοῦ παιδὸς συντεταραγμένος), Hdt. 7.46.3–4: αἴ τε γὰρ συμφοραὶ προσπίπτουσαι καὶ αἱ νοῦσοι συνταράσσουσαι καὶ βραχὺν ἐόντα μακρὸν δοκέειν εἶναι ποιέουσι τὸν βίον. οὕτω ... ὁ δὲ θεὸς γλυκὺν γεύσας τὸν αἰῶνα φθονερός ἐν αὐτῷ εὐρίσκειται ἐὼν, Arist. *Rhet.* 1386b17–20: λύπη μὲν γὰρ παραχῶδης καὶ ὁ φθόνος ἐστίν. The classical association is echoed in Plutarch's simultaneous rejection of divine *phthonos* and the notion that god is *taraktikón* (*Non poss.* 1102d–e, on which see Marincola, below, Chapter 2), and in Eusebius' frequent association of *parátτω* (and cognates) with the workings of supernatural daimonic *phthonos* (see below, n. 41).

*phthonos*. In Plato's *Republic* Socrates insists that god is responsible only for the good things which humans enjoy, and not responsible for the bad; any ills which humans suffer therefore cannot be blamed on the gods (380a5–c3: μή πάντων αἴτιον τὸν θεὸν ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν); in Plato's *Timaeus*—in which later Christians saw so much of their own religion and which Plutarch prized above all other Platonic texts—Timaeus denies that god can feel *phthonos*, beginning from the premise that god is good and reasoning that no good being can ever feel *phthonos*.<sup>5</sup> In Plato's *Phaedrus* Socrates himself voices a similar claim (247a7: φθόνος γὰρ ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἴσταται). As I have argued elsewhere, a comparable aversion to divine *phthonos* is implicit in chapters 1.4 and 4.3 of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Socrates argues from the exceptional blessings which god has bestowed on humans that 'love of humanity' (*philanthrōpia*) is a central aspect of god's nature.<sup>6</sup> Equally, that Xenophon's Socrates associates *phthonos* with fools (*ἡλίθιος*, *Mem.* 3.9.8) makes it clear that the 'wise and creature-loving demiurge' described at *Mem.* 1.4.7 cannot possibly be *phthoneros* in his dealings with mortals.

These explicit and implicit attacks on the concept of divine *phthonos* (and the associated belief that god is sometimes the cause of arbitrary human suffering and misery) resound across subsequent centuries of Platonic thought. They are repeated or echoed by Aristotle (*Met.* 983a: ἀλλ' οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερόν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί), the *Corpus Hermeticum* (4.3), Celsus (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.21), Plotinus (*Enneads* 2.9.17), Proclus (*Comm. in Tim.* 2.362.17–365.5), and, of course, Plutarch, who cites the relevant Platonic passages several times in his writing (e.g. *Mor.* 1102D and 1086F) and seizes on Plato's words as yet another rebuke to hurl at

<sup>5</sup> *Tim.* 29c: Λέγωμεν δὴ δι' ἥντινα αἰτίαν γένεσιν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε ὁ συνιστὰς συνέστησεν. ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῶ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος. τούτου δ' ἐκτὸς ὢν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ.

<sup>6</sup> Ellis (2016).

Herodotus (*DHM* 857F–858A; further Ch. 2).<sup>7</sup> Similar conclusions were reached by early Christian authorities like Irenaeus and Theophilus of Antioch: in the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* the Devil argues to Eve that God prohibited the couple from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge out of *phthonos*, wishing to deprive humans of its benefits (141–52). Irenaeus and Theophilus were aware of such interpretations of Genesis 2–3 and both explicitly denied that god's prohibition was the result of *φθόνος* or *invidia* (see, respectively, *Adv. haer.* 3.23.6 and *Autol.* 2.25).<sup>8</sup> The denial of divine *phthonos*, like other elements of Platonic theology, ultimately worked its way into the Christian orthodoxy forged by the Church Fathers.<sup>9</sup>

The apparent theological conflict between the Herodotean notion of divine *phthonos* and the Socratic and later Christian belief in a 'good' and (at times) 'loving' god who cares providentially and generously for mankind has dogged Herodotus' pious readers and imitators for millennia.<sup>10</sup> The problem was particularly acute because Herodotus places divine *phthonos* at the centre of his dramatisation of the major events of the *Histories*. Today the concept is largely ignored, either on the grounds that it is merely one of several incompatible *gnōmai* ('proverbs') which Herodotus deploys reflexively and without any particular

<sup>7</sup> Roig Lanzillotta (2012) 144–7 discusses several of the principle Platonic and Christian texts.

<sup>8</sup> See discussion in Roig Lanzillotta (2007).

<sup>9</sup> For further denial of divine *phthonos* in the Church Fathers, echoing or citing Platonic authors, see: Athanasius, *Contra gentes* 41 and *De incarnatione verbi* 3 (both citing Plato's ἀγαθῷ γὰρ περὶ οὐδενὸς ἂν γένοιτο φθόνος); Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 5.4.24.1 (οὐ φθόνῳ—οὐ γὰρ θέμις ἐμπαθῆ νοεῖν τὸν θεόν—ἀλλ' ὅπως ...) and 7.2.7.2 (ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἄπτεται τοῦ κυρίου ἀπαθοῦς ἀνάρχως γενομένου φθόνος), Chrysostom, *De virginitate* 8 (Πλάτων μὲν γὰρ φησιν ὅτι ἀγαθὸς ἦν ὁ τόδε τὸ πᾶν συστησάμενος, καὶ ὅτι ἀγαθῷ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς ἐγγίνεται φθόνος). On denials of divine *phthonos* in Chrysostom see Nikolaou (1969) 44–51.

<sup>10</sup> Until very recently most readers have assumed that Herodotus' 'warners'—including Solon, Amasis, Artabanus—express the author's own theological and historical theories.

emphasis,<sup>11</sup> or on the grounds that it is, in fact, simply a synonym for divine justice and so requires no independent analysis (an approach innovated by early-modern humanists struggling to defend Herodotus from Plutarch's Platonic criticisms).<sup>12</sup>

Consideration of the *Histories*' structure, however, reveals why attentive readers have consistently placed the divine *phthonos* at the centre of Herodotus' philosophy of history and, to quote Edward Gibbon, considered it 'a first principle in the Theology of Herodotus himself'.<sup>13</sup> A speech warning a successful ruler about the *phthoneros* nature of god precedes the tragic misfortunes of Croesus, Polycrates, and Xerxes, and the decline of their kingdoms: Lydia, Samos, and Persia. These momentous calamities, in turn, are the primary illustrations of the transient nature of human prosperity mentioned by Herodotus in the proem (1.5.4). In the case of Xerxes, whose campaign is the main subject of the *Histories*, divine *phthonos* is mentioned in two speeches: one immediately before Xerxes resolves to invade Greece (7.10ε) and one just after he has reviewed his invasion force and before the army makes the symbolic crossing from Asia into Europe (7.46). Aside from their placement at structurally significant points, the speeches are given to the most authoritative characters of the work—Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus, who hail from three different countries (Athens/Greece, Egypt, and Persia)—and are written in

<sup>11</sup> See Versnel (2011) throughout his discussion of Herodotean theology (esp. 181–8), Gould (1989) 79–80, Lang (1984) 62. I discuss this view (and its origins in 19th- and 20th-century scholarship) in Ellis (2015).

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Darbo-Peschanski (1987) 54–74, Lloyd-Jones (1983) 69–70, Rohde (1901) 328–30, Meuss (1888) 19, Baehr (1830–5) IV.410–11, Schweighäuser (1816) *ad* 3.40, and Valckenaer's comments *ad* Hdt. 3.40 in Wesseling (1763). I discuss the development of this interpretation of divine *phthonos* in various stages over the last five centuries in Ellis (forthcoming, b).

<sup>13</sup> Gibbon, marginalia *ad* Hdt. 7.12, cited from Craddock (1972) 374.

Herodotus' most elevated register.<sup>14</sup> These warnings are among the most artful literary scenes of the *Histories*, and they accord the concept of divine *phthonos* a unique place in the work. Whether or not this gives us an unmediated insight into Herodotus' personal theological beliefs, there can be no doubt that the *Histories*, more than any other work of Greek literature,<sup>15</sup> structures its historical and literary vision around this concept.<sup>16</sup>

It appears that from the fourth century onwards, educated, philosophically inclined writers took pains to avoid describing god as *phthoneros* in their own literary works. This caused several complications, not least because themes closely associated with divine *phthonos* in Pindar, Aeschylus, and Herodotus—the mixed nature of human fortune and the supernatural disruption of human success and happiness—remained important in the genres of historiography and biography. From Xenophon onwards, authors preferred to couch these and similar ideas (for instance god's hatred of arrogance) within an alternative theological framework or vocabulary, and talked no longer of god's *phthonos*. But if we are to appreciate the theological nuances behind these later developments we must look a little closer at what Herodotus and his predecessors meant by divine *phthonos*, and the relationship that these ideas themselves had to the major schools of theological thought to which Herodotus' later readers subscribed.

A prominent idea associated with divine *phthonos* in the fifth century, as noted above, was that no individual,

<sup>14</sup> I hope to treat Herodotus' literary handling of divine *phthonos* elsewhere; for a discussion of the linguistic register of the warners' speeches see Ellis (forthcoming, a).

<sup>15</sup> Pace Hinterberger (2010b) 105, who suggests that (metaphysical) *phthonos* never receives such emphasis in classical literature as it does 10th-century Byzantine historiography.

<sup>16</sup> An analysis of Herodotus' philosophy of history and theology must, of course, go much further than divine *phthonos* (nor is the motif of the mutability of fortune in every case linked with these words), but, given the general neglect of the theme today, its importance bears stressing.

empire, dynasty, or city could enjoy perpetual good fortune without suffering some reversal (the classic reference being Hdt. 3.40; similar ideas seem to underlie Pind. *Pyth.* 8. 71–2; *Pyth.* 10.20–2; *Isth.* 7.39–45): the gods are prone to visit everyone with some misfortune at some point in their lives. The notion that god will inevitably break the power of temporal rulers was, of course, anything but alien to readers of the Christian gospels;<sup>17</sup> moreover, it has been self-evident to most historians that the power of rulers and empires wax and wane rather than remaining constant and unchanging. Platonic thinkers like Plutarch had to develop different theological and causational mechanisms to cope with these ideas, as we shall see. Yet many later authors state such ideas in words which echo Herodotus’ proem (Hdt. 1.5.4) and the words of warners such as Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus (see further Chs. 2, 3, and 4).

Extant classical literature also associates divine *phthonos* with the idea that god looks askance at those who ‘think big’, whether by failing to realise the limitations of their mortal status, by becoming arrogant and entertaining grandiose plans, or simply by allowing themselves to be the object of excessive praise by others (classic examples are Hdt. 7.106, Pind. *Olymp.* 13.24–5, Aesch. *Ag.* 946–7). Again, few Socratic or Christian thinkers would have quarrelled with such principles. They can be paralleled, in one form or another,<sup>18</sup> in the narratives of devoted followers of Socratic theology like Xenophon;<sup>19</sup> equally, god’s humbling of the ‘arrogant’ or ‘high-hearted’ is a commonplace in the Old

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Luke 1:52–3: *καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινοὺς, πεινῶντας ἐπέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.*

<sup>18</sup> The idea is often found with an extra link inserted (which is not, however, always present in archaic and classical sources): that arrogance or pride causes impious and unjust behaviour, which is then justly ‘punished’ by the gods.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Cyrus’ deathbed reflections at *Cyr.* 8.7.3, where he confesses his fear of ‘thinking above [what befits] a man’ (*οὐδεπώποτε ἐπὶ ταῖς εὐτυχίαις ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἐφρόνησα*). See Ellis (2016) for Xenophon’s adaption of Herodotus’ story of Croesus and Cyrus to fit a Socratic theological framework.

and New Testaments, and Pauline theology.<sup>20</sup> To judge from the rich trail of verbal and conceptual allusions that link speeches in Herodotus (by Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus) to historical writings from Xenophon to Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Herodotus' *Histories* was one of the most popular texts for historians exploring such themes. Crucially, however, the topic had to be handled with caution: Socratic, Platonic, and Christian authors could certainly say that god abominates all who 'think big' or become 'puffed up', but such ideas could not be linked (as they are in Pindar, Aeschylus, and Herodotus) with divine *phthonos*. If some supernatural power were to feel *phthonos* that power must, at least, not be the supreme 'god': it must be *tukhê* ('fortune'), or *moira* ('fate'), or perhaps some lesser divinity like a *daimôn*.<sup>21</sup>

Plutarch, as both a Neoplatonic theologian and literary critic and, at the same time, a historian and biographer who reworked narratives told by Herodotus, provides one of the most fascinating case-studies in the afterlife of both Herodotean historical causation and divine *phthonos*, as emerges from Chapter 2 in this volume. Although Plutarch often wishes to convey ideas strikingly similar to those discussed by Herodotus' warners, he is careful to avoid violating the Platonic dogma discussed above,<sup>22</sup> as

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., the LXX text of Proverbs 16:5 (ἀκάθαρτος παρὰ θεῷ πᾶς ὑψηλοκάρδιος); James 4:6 (ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσειται, ταπεινοὺς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν); and Rom. 11.17–21 (esp. 20) in Paul's Greek (μὴ ὑψηλοφρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ), Erasmus' Latin (*ne efferaris animo, sed timeas*) and Luther's German ('Sey nicht stoltz sondern fürchte dich') if not Jerome's Vulgate (*noli altum sapere, sed time*). Cf. Psalms 74:4–6; Isaiah 5:15; Proverbs 8:13. For the afterlife of Jerome's hyper-literal translation of Rom. 11.20 (*inter alia* as the motto of the Stephanus printing press from 1526–78), see references below, Ch. 5, p. 215 n. 103; p. 222 n. 125.

<sup>21</sup> Polybius, for example, talks of the *phthonos* of *tukhê* (39.8.2), as do later authors (further below). For a brief discussion of the *phthonos* of *tukhê* as a motif in Hellenistic historiography see Aalders (1979), and for an excellent overview of *tukhê* in Polybius (and its scholarly reception) Hau (2011).

<sup>22</sup> The essay *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, however, contains a puzzling exception. At *Mor.* 1106F Theon cites Artabanus' statements on divine *phthonos* (Hdt. 7.46) with apparent approval, as if it

Marincola shows, and in his *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* the conversants admiringly cite the relevant passages from the *Timaeus* (*Mor.* 1102D–E, citing *Tim.* 29e) and *Phaedrus* (*Mor.* 1086F, citing *Phaedr.* 247a7). Indeed, Plutarch’s commitment to the Platonic belief that God is good and cannot cause evil (or be the cause of bad things) seems to have had a decisive impact on the development of his theological thought. Dillon has argued that it was Plutarch’s concern to explain the existence of evil in a world created by this perfectly good god that led him to develop a quasi-dualist system, in which the good and eternal god (sometimes figured as the creator) is opposed to (although also superior to) another eternal divinity responsible for the existence of disorder and evil. In this Plutarch bucked the trend of contemporary Platonism (as he acknowledged),<sup>23</sup> demonstrating the extent to which he took the goodness of god—and god’s non-involvement in the creation of evil or disruption of what is good—to be a central and inviolable tenet of Platonism (and understandably so, in view of passages like *Republic* 379c and *Timaeus* 29e–30a). Here, then, we see a genuine opposition between Plutarch’s and Herodotus’ mode of theological expressions, for Herodotus gives no signs of a division in the metaphysical realm between a wholly good divinity and a negative divinity

were an affirmation that life is better than death (in contrast to Epicurean beliefs). This is odd for two reasons: first it is a gross misreading of Artabanus’ speech, whose climactic claim is that life is so miserable that every human frequently wishes for death in place of life. Plutarch’s reading only works as an interpretation of the phrase he cites in isolation from its original context. Since he seems to be citing from memory (Plutarch replaces Artabanus’ words *εὐρίσκεται ἕων* with *ὡν φαίνεται*), this seems the most likely explanation for the misreading. Second, Theon seems, to some degree, to approve of the Herodotean *bon mot* which describes god as *phthoneros*, despite the fact that both the Platonic passages denying divine *phthonos* were cited earlier in this same dialogue (1086F, 1102D–E). The explanation is, perhaps, that the praise is purely relative: that Herodotus is *σοφώτερος* than Epicurus does not indicate that Herodotus’ statement is theologically sound—it serves rather to indicate the extent of Epicurus’ folly: he is *even more* foolish than Herodotus.

<sup>23</sup> See Dillon (2002) 235 and *Proc. An.* 1012D–E.

responsible for the disruption and misery of human life. Indeed, Herodotus speaks in a way that most naturally presents the 'gods', 'the divine', and 'god' (terms which Herodotus uses interchangeably in such contexts) as directly responsible for arbitrarily inflicting misery on humanity (see, most strikingly, Hdt. 7.46, with its strong echoes of Achilles' speech to Priam at *Il.* 24.519–51).

Plutarch's theological criticisms of Herodotus are, then, intimately connected with Plato's criticisms of Homer and 'the poets'. Indeed, at the end of his *On the Malice of Herodotus* Plutarch even likens Herodotus to a bard (*aidos*), a term which in Plutarch's mind may have had Platonic theological overtones.<sup>24</sup> Plutarch follows Plato in criticising Achilles' speech on the 'jars of Zeus' (*On Isis and Osiris* 369B–D, echoing Pl. *Rep.* 379d),<sup>25</sup> and his rebuke of Herodotus' βλασφημία takes a quintessentially Platonic view of divine *phthonos*. But Plutarch was more drawn to aspects of the Greek literary tradition, both Herodotean history and Homeric epic, than his theological and polemical writings would suggest. Plutarch alludes extensively (and once refers explicitly) to the Homeric encounter of Priam and Achilles in the *Iliad* in his presentation of the encounter of Aemilius and Perseus (*Aem.* 27.1), observing that the human lot is 'mixed' (i.e., not κακῶν ἄκρατος, *Aem.* 34.8) and that no one can escape misfortune.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Plut. *DHM* 874B–C. That god should be *phthoneros* was, in fact, viewed as a quintessentially 'poetic' lie, as is clear from Aristotle *Met.* 983a (ἀλλ' οὔτε τὸ θεῖον φθονερόν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν πολλὰ ψεύδονται αἰοῖδοί). The connection is made as early as Euripides: Heracles asks in disgust whether anyone would worship a goddess who destroyed the guiltless (*anaitioi*) benefactors of Greece merely on account of sexual envy (λέκτρων φθονοῦσα, *Her.* 1307–10), an idea shortly afterwards linked with the lies of the 'poets' (*aidoi*, 1345–6). I am grateful to Bryant Kirkland for sharing with me an unpublished essay exploring, *inter alia*, Plutarch's *aidos* comparison, and for a stimulating discussion of this Plutarchan passage.

<sup>25</sup> As observed by Dillon (2002) 229–30; cf. Marincola's discussion in Ch. 2 of this volume, below, pp. 48–51.

<sup>26</sup> See discussion in Cairns (2014) 120–36, esp. 126–8. The reference to Homer (*Aem.* 34.8), however, is followed by a statement whose

Plutarch, in fact, manages to have his cake and eat it, since he adopts many of the same dramatic and theological motifs that Plato had denounced, presenting them in an only slightly modified form. Plutarch's Alcibiades, for example, when talking to the *ekklésia*, ascribes his personal misfortunes to 'a mean fortune and a *phthoneros daimôn*' (*Alc.* 33: *τινι τύχῃ πονηρᾷ καὶ φθονερῷ δαίμονι*). Since much of Plutarch's philosophical writing survives it is possible in Plutarch's case—where it is not in Herodotus—to know that Plutarch (or some of the most authoritative speakers in his philosophical dialogues) distinguished, as we have noted, between a wholly good primary god and an indefinite 'dyad' responsible for some of the less desirable aspects of creation (though the relationship of the demiurge and of the Olympian gods to this opposition is difficult to pinpoint precisely).<sup>27</sup> We might, then, assume that Plutarch thought it permissible to ascribe *phthonos* to a *daimôn* but not to the wholly good god (*theos*).<sup>28</sup> This distinction, enabled by a charitable comparison of Plutarch's historical writings with his philosophical, is all that saves Plutarch from precisely the criticism he levels at Herodotus (making a character

content (if not phraseology) most closely resembles, in extant classical literature, the advice of Amasis to Polycrates in Herodotus: *ὅπως μηδενὶ κακῶν ἄκρατος εἶη καὶ καθαρὸς, ἀλλὰ καθ' Ὅμηρον ἄριστα δοκῶσι πράττειν, οἷς αἱ τύχαι ῥοπήν ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω τῶν πραγμάτων ἔχουσιν*. Cf. *Hdt.* 3.40.2–3: *καὶ κως βούλομαι καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ τῶν ἄν κήδωμαι τὸ μὲν τι εὐτυχέειν τῶν πρηγμάτων, τὸ δὲ προσπταίειν, καὶ οὕτω διαφέρειν τὸν αἰῶνα ἐναλλάξ πρήσων ἢ εὐτυχέειν τὰ πάντα. οὐδένα γάρ κω λόγῳ οἶδα ἀκούσας ὅστις ἐς τέλος οὐ κακῶς ἐτελεύτησε πρόρριζος, εὐτυχέων τὰ πάντα*.

<sup>27</sup> On the uncertain identity of various gods within this system see Dillon (2002) and esp. 223–9 on another dualistic element in Plutarch's thought: the distinction between the demiurgic god and the first, eternal, intelligible god.

<sup>28</sup> For the tendency to consider the good, positive deity a *theos* and the negative, disruptive divinity a *daimôn*, see Zoroaster's speech in *On Isis and Osiris* (Plut. *Mor.* 369D) and Dillon (2002) 230. Swain (1989) 272–4, 301 however, sees important differences between the theological vocabulary of the *Lives* and that of Plutarch's religious and philosophical writings (noting, *inter alia* that the distinction between *δαίμων* and *θεός* is frequently 'blurred' in the *Lives*).

commit the blasphemy of describing god—τὸ θεῖον in Herodotus (1.32.1)—as *phthoneros*.<sup>29</sup>

As Marincola notes in Chapter 2 of this volume, Plutarch also criticises the superstitious man (δεισιδαίμων) for his fear of ‘the gods’, particularly for considering them ‘changeable’ (εὐμεταβόλους) and ‘savage’ or ‘cruel’ (ἄμοους, *Superstit.*, 170D–E).<sup>30</sup> Yet in the *Aemilius* the narrator describes the Romans shuddering at the ‘cruelty of fortune’ (*Aem.* 35: τὴν ἁμότητα τῆς τύχης) when they consider the death of Aemilius’ two sons at the crowning point in his career—his military triumph—so that ‘lamentations and tears mingled with victory songs and triumphs’ (καταμιγνύουσα θρήνους καὶ δάκρυα παιᾶσιν ἐπινικίους καὶ θριάμβους). By dwelling on the savagery with which the supernatural forces treat sympathetic characters, Plutarch imbues the story with a dramatic frisson and an explicitly Homeric allusion to the mixed nature of fortune, and yet avoids penning a direct criticism of ‘the gods’ (θεοί) by displacing the negative attribute of ‘cruelty’ onto ‘chance’ or ‘fortune’ (τύχη);<sup>31</sup> this practice had become standard among Hellenistic historians (e.g. *Pol.* 39.8.2), perhaps also due to Platonic influence,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Plutarch’s *apparent* hypocrisy seems particularly marked because, when referring to the divine in general terms, Herodotus uses ὁ δαίμων, τὸ δαιμόνιον, ὁ θεός, τὸ θεῖον, and οἱ θεοί interchangeably; cf. Harrison (2000) 158, Ellis (2013) 144. Plutarch generally does not do so in his philosophical works, but occasionally does in his *Lives* (see previous note): on Plutarch’s daimonology see Soury (1942), Russell (1973) 75–8, and Brenk (1977).

<sup>30</sup> Further Marincola, below, Ch. 2, pp. 51–3.

<sup>31</sup> This is very similar to Plutarch’s rather confused approach in *De audiendis poetis* 23E–24C, as analysed by Brenk (1977) 155, in the discussion of *pronoia*, *heimarmenē*, and *tukhē*: Plutarch blames ‘fate’ not ‘Zeus’ for the unjust fates of virtuous men (but immediately afterwards fudges the issue by insisting that the virtuous do not suffer unjustly), and then insists that the poverty that often afflicts the virtuous is to be attributed to *tukhē* and not to divine *pronoia*.

<sup>32</sup> Contrast Rakoczy (1996) 269, who resists the idea that the philosophical ideas of Plato and Aristotle had the power to alter centuries of poetic tradition. The fact remains, however, that *phōnos theōn* disappears from the literary record after the early 5th century

and would be continued in Byzantine historiography (e.g. Proc. *Wars* 6.8.1, where *tukhê* appears loth to allow humans to enjoy good fortune without also mixing in ‘something bad’).<sup>33</sup> Yet the dualistic theology developed in Plutarch’s philosophical dialogues is only partially satisfactory as an answer to the problem constituted by the malignancy of certain elements of the divine world in his *Lives*. Aemilius himself says that he always feared *τύχη* ‘as the most faithless and changeable of all divine beings’ (τῶν δὲ θεῶν ὡς ἀπιστότατον καὶ ποικιλώτατον πρᾶγμα τὴν Τύχην ἀεὶ φοβηθείς, *Aem.* 36.3). If we wish to reconcile this with Plutarch’s own theological views, we must assume that *tukhê* is divine (θεῖος) but is to be distinguished from the ultimate good god (θεός) who is neither ‘changeable’ nor ‘cruel’, but yet allows *tukhê* to operate freely in accordance with its savage nature. This raises the unanswered question of how the providence of a good god relates to the variously cruel or envious metaphysical powers (particularly *tukhê*, *daimones*, and the *daimôn*) which often seem to dominate historical causation in Plutarch’s *Lives*.<sup>34</sup>

(leaving aside the numerous protestations by philosophers that divine *phthonos* is false).

<sup>33</sup> The context verbally echoes Herodotus in other ways (see esp. the phrases ἐρῶν ἔρχομαι and λόγον ἀξίας). On Procopius’ use of the ‘*phthonos* of *tykhê*’ see further Zali in Chapter 3 of this volume, with discussion of other classicising terms like φθονερῶν δαιμόνων; Cameron (1966) 477 identifies the ‘envy of fortune’ as an archaic ‘affectation’ on Procopius’ part, but crucially Procopius selects the post-classical variant on this theme (whether out of Christian or Platonic piety); the link Cameron observes to Aeschylus, Pindar, and Herodotus is, therefore, indirect and mediated. On whether Procopius’ classical allusions should be viewed as affectations, see the thoughtful discussion in Kaldellis (2004) 5–14.

<sup>34</sup> For an extensive discussion of Plutarch’s treatment of the relationship between *pronoia* and *tukhê* in his historical writings, see Brenk (1977) 155–83 (esp. 153–5, 163–6), who observes the wildly incompatible views found in Plutarch’s philosophical treatises (which, with few exceptions, largely dismiss *tukhê* and associate its glorification with Epicurean denials of *pronoia*) and the *Lives* where *tukhê* is frequently given a central role. Brenk concludes that ‘Plutarch is schizophrenic when it comes to *tyche*’ (163–4).

These and other difficulties suggest that, in balancing the competing claims of Platonic piety and the Greek literary tradition,<sup>35</sup> Plutarch's historical and biographical works often adopt more from the latter (both drama and historiography) than his theological beliefs would seem to comfortably admit, leading him (on occasion) to sail rather too close to the wind.<sup>36</sup> To say this is not to doubt Plutarch's conviction to Platonism, or the depth of his thought; rather, it reflects a genuine tension between his theological or philosophical and his dramatic or literary interests.<sup>37</sup>

Plutarch was not alone in exerting himself to reconcile the story patterns and theological motifs of the classical historiographical tradition (often shared with epic, tragedy, and epinician) with the very different conceptions of god which he derived from his philosophical predecessors. This can, in fact, be seen as one of the central literary struggles in post-Platonic Greek historiography and literature, where authors often wrote for audiences whose theological views lay at the centre of their cultural and intellectual identity. This would seem to be equally true of 'pagan' Platonists like

<sup>35</sup> Brenk (1977) 163 suggests that Plutarch's inconsistency arises from conflict between his 'philosophical speculation' and 'the hard realities of history as he came to examine it ever more closely'.

<sup>36</sup> It might seem unfortunate to continue the three-century-old tradition of writing about Herodotus while simultaneously observing Plutarch's hypocrisy, but the case of Plutarch makes for a genuinely instructive comparison with Herodotus, particularly thanks to the happy survival of many of his theological works, and the way in which this changes our reading of his historical writing. Inevitably, Plutarch's fondness for pointed rebukes of others for their deficient piety forces us to consider how far and in what respect these views differ from Plutarch's own.

<sup>37</sup> Brenk (1977) 9–15 provides a useful discussion of popular approaches to reconciling inconsistencies between the *De superstitione* and later works: (i) Plutarch did not understand the arguments he assembled from other sources; or (ii); his more polemical treatises may have been written as rhetorical exercises (that is, one of two set pieces); or (iii) inconsistencies represent the development in Plutarch's own thought (traditionally viewed as a move from the scepticism of the Academy to a Neoplatonic mysticism more compatible with the Delphic priesthood he held in later life).

Porphyry and of Jewish authors with wholly moralised conceptions of God resembling Platonic thought (cf. *Jos. Ant.* 1.23–4), and of Christian Platonists like Eusebius. Contrary to what we might expect (led by the polarising ‘Christian’/‘Pagan’ dichotomy ubiquitous since the early days of Christian apologetics), the historiographers of the Judeo-Christian tradition were not the first to face the formidable task of combining a theology predicted on the notion of a good and just god with the two intractable forces that complicated their endeavours: the messy reality of the events themselves, and the conventions of the Greek literary tradition (in addition to the dramatic and literary power that the spectacle of unjust suffering provides). This struggle is distinctively Socratic and Platonic, and early Christian writers like Eusebius inherited it (along with so much else) from their Platonic predecessors.

Eusebius’ refashioning of divine *phthonos* is an instructive case in point. As a Christian and Origenist,<sup>38</sup> Eusebius could no more talk of the *phthonos* of god than Plutarch, yet the motif of supernatural ‘envy’ plays a prominent role in his *History of the Church* and *Life of Constantine*.<sup>39</sup> When the church is in a state of peace and concord, the narrative is propelled forward by the disruptive intervention of ‘good-hating *phthonos* and an evil-loving *daimôn*’ (μισόκαλος φθόνος καὶ φιλοπόνηρος δαίμων).<sup>40</sup> In Eusebius, as in Plutarch,

<sup>38</sup> For an excellent introduction to the theological aspects of Eusebius’ historical thought, Chesnut (1986) chs. 1–5.

<sup>39</sup> Chesnut (1986) 30–1, 106 somewhat misleadingly suggests that the displacement of *phthonos* from God to the *daimôn* (or, as Chesnut puts it, οἱ δαίμονες) was Eusebius’ own innovation to reconcile his classical historiographical models with his Christian theology. This is, however, part of a wider tendency to ignore the importance of Platonic thought in shaping the theology of later Greek historiography; for a man of Eusebius’ prodigious learning (particularly in the realm of Middle Platonism) it seems unlikely that the Christian historian was unaware of the way this trope had been mediated through later classical historians.

<sup>40</sup> The two entities are generally mentioned together in the *Ecclesiastical History* (8.1.6, 10.4.14.1, 10.8.2.2; cf. *Life of Constantine* 2.73) but in the *Life of Constantine* we find references to either (μισόκαλος) φθόνος alone (1.49.2, 3.1.1 (where it is τοῖς τῆς ἐκκλησίας βασκαίνων καλοῖς),

Aristotle, Herodotus, and Pindar, the emotion of *phthonos* is associated with a tendency to disrupt the happiness of others. The *Life of Constantine* in particular follows in a long tradition of associating the word *παράττω* and its cognates with *phthonos*.<sup>41</sup> Divine (or rather daimonic) *φθόνος* would subsequently flourish in Byzantine Christian literature, implicitly associated with the devil, and would be integrated with Christian theology in various creative ways, even in that most Christian of genres, hagiography.<sup>42</sup>

To follow the particular theme of this chapter—the afterlife of divine *phthonos*, which makes its historiographical debut in Herodotus' *Histories*—into later centuries, the studies assembled here offer other valuable findings. Zali notes numerous close engagements with Herodotus which wax lyrical on the mutability of fortune, but observes that the characteristically Herodotean motif of divine *phthonos* is entirely absent, even where Herodotus' warner scenes are

3.59.1, 4.41.1), and on one occasion in the *HE* we also find *μισόκαλος* applied to the *daimōn* (5.21.2: τῷ μισοκάλῳ δαίμονι βασκάνῳ ὄντι), suggesting that we are not dealing with two distinct and specific metaphysical powers.

<sup>41</sup> Eusebius *VC* 3.1.1 (Ὁ μὲν δὴ μισόκαλος φθόνος ᾧδὲ πη τοῖς τῆς ἐκκλησίας βασκαίνων καλοῖς χειμῶνας αὐτῇ καὶ παράχους ἐμφυλίου ... εἰργάζετο); 4.41.1 (Μισόκαλος δὲ κὰν τούτῳ φθόνος οἶονεὶ σκότιον νέφος ... τὰς κατ' Αἴγυπτον αὐθις ἐκκλησίας ταῖς αὐτοῦ παράττων ἐρεσχελίας), cf. *VC* 2.73, 3.59.1. For classical and Hellenistic precedents, see above, p. 19 and n. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Hinterberger (2010b) discusses the evocation of the supernatural forces of *phthonos*, *baskanos*, and *nemesis* (in various combinations, often associated with *tukhē*) in the tenth-century *History* of Leo the Deacon and the *Vita Basilii*. Through a sensitive examination of both the classical and Christian resonances of the terms, he explores how contemporary audiences might have interpreted these ideas. Several theological mechanisms emerge: *phthonos* is, of course, distinct from God (characterised by *pronoia*) yet the devil/*phthonos* still operates as part of God's providential plan either because *phthonos* serves God's will by preventing the successful from becoming arrogant at their unmitigated successes (as Leo the Deacon would have it), or because God fairly compensates those who suffer (in the story of Job as told in Niketas Paphlagon's praise of Gregory Nazianzus). For the increasing tendency to associate *phthonos* with the devil see Hinterberger (2013) 61–5.

clearly evoked. As she observes, in Procopius' case this seems to be related to his statement that god is 'entirely good' (a view which would sit comfortably within Platonic and Christian meditation on the nature of the divine).<sup>43</sup> Like other late antique or early Byzantine historians, Procopius does not describe god as *phthoneros* but follows Plutarch and Polybius in talking instead of the *phthonos* of *tukhê* or of *phthoneroi daimônes*.<sup>44</sup>

In a passage which closely evokes Herodotus in a number of ways, Psellus (as a character in his own work) muses on the nature of the divine in terms that seem to emphatically correct the Herodotean 'blasphemy' Plutarch had criticised. This may suggest that his reading of Herodotus was mediated through Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus*, a distinct possibility given Psellus' interest in Platonic thought (particularly that of Proclus and Plutarch) which has persuaded some that he was first and foremost a Platonist.<sup>45</sup> Where Herodotus' Artabanus states that god was 'grudging' (*phthoneros*) in giving a taste of the sweet life (Hdt. 7.46), Psellus states that 'the divine does not grudge (*baskainô*) in his giving' (*οὐ βασκαίνει τὸ θεῖον ἐν οἷς δίδωσιν*, 7.41). This fits the pattern established in Psellus' speech to

<sup>43</sup> Further Zali, below, Ch. 3, pp. 89–93; see particularly Procop. *Wars* 5.3.7–9: *ἀνθρώπων γὰρ οὐδὲ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς οἶμαι καταληπτὰ, μὴ τί γε δὴ τὰ εἰς θεοῦ φύσιν ἤκοντα. ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἀκινδύνως σεσιωπήσθω μόνῳ τῷ μὴ ἀπιστεῖσθαι τὰ τετυμημένα. ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲν ἄλλο περὶ θεοῦ ὀτιοῦν εἴποιμι ἢ ὅτι ἀγαθὸς τε παντάπασιν εἶη καὶ ξύμπαντα ἐν τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τῇ αὐτοῦ ἔχει.*

<sup>44</sup> Further Zali, below, Ch. 3, pp. 93 n. 17, 95–6; cf. Lib. *Orat.* 18.2 (*ἐπεὶ δὲ μεῖζον μὲν ἴσχυσεν ὁ φθονερός δαίμων τῶν εὐλόγων ἐλπίδων ...*).

<sup>45</sup> For Plutarch's influence on Psellus see Meeusen (2012) 101–5; on the extremely complex question of Psellus' religious and theological affiliations see Kaldellis (1999). The fact that Christian theology is so influenced by Platonic thought—even after Justinian's condemnation of Origen's creative attempts to blend the two theological systems—and the fact that Orthodox society demanded conformity combine to produce extremely muddy waters. With Psellus, as with Procopius, one can plausibly see a Platonist writing cautiously within a fiercely Christian society, or a Christian with an unusually developed interest in Platonism.

Isaac of echoing but subverting Herodotean tropes; although modelled on the Herodotean 'wise advisor' speech, and confronting the same themes of the mutability of fortune, Psellus insists that it *is* possible to enjoy a good fortune that suffers no reversal *if one can avoid arrogance*, turning on its head the view known to Homer and Herodotus that no mortal can avoid a reversal of extremely good fortune.<sup>46</sup> Choniates, too, is careful to attribute any negative or destructive powers not to the supreme god but rather to lesser divine beings or forces: he talks, in highly poetic classicising vocabulary, of the ὄμμα βάσκανον (10), ἀλάστορες φθονεροὶ (576), and Ἐριννύων καὶ Τελχίνων φθονερῶν (310), phrases not used in Herodotus, but part of the wider stock of archaic and classical religious thought (particularly evocative of Aeschylus).

De Bakker, though his focus is elsewhere, notes that the stress on μέγα φρονεῖν in Laonikos recalls Artabanus' speech in Herodotus (7.10ε), but that Laonikos, again, edits out the accompanying Herodotean reference to divine *phthonos*. This tallies with other indications that the circle around the controversial Neoplatonic thinker Gemistos Plethon (Laonikos' teacher) was troubled by Herodotus' mention of divine *phthonos*, particularly in view of their great admiration for the ancient historian.<sup>47</sup> In an early 14th-century copy of Herodotus' *Histories* that circulated among Plethon and his students (and bears an inscription by Laonikos himself) we find a remarkable intervention: a hand, seemingly that of Plethon's student Kabakes, rewrites the first sentence of

<sup>46</sup> Contrast the views of Solon and Amasis in the *Histories* (1.32–3, 3.40–4); in the story of Croesus (cf. esp. 1.34) as elsewhere (e.g. 7.10ε) it is clear that 'thinking big' or arrogance *can* cause a reversal of fortune, but that does nothing to undermine the express statements by Solon and Amasis that *no human* can enjoy uninterrupted run of good fortune, a view linked with divine *phthonos*, and expressly contradicted in Psellus' narrative. Psellus' theological treatment of human fortune here is, in fact, much closer to the writings of the Socratic Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia*; see further Ellis (2016).

<sup>47</sup> See Akışık (2013), Kaldellis (2014).

Solon's speech at 1.32.1 so as to remove all reference to divine *phthonos*.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, among Herodotus' Protestant admirers, Plutarch's criticisms of Herodotus' inclusion of divine *phthonos* continued to raise eyebrows: as briefly noted in Chapter 5 of this volume, the theme is ignored by most scholars (often specifically edited out of quotations or translations), although several awkward attempts are made, with limited success, to rehabilitate the concept and present it as compatible with contemporary Christianity or ancient pagan piety.<sup>49</sup>

Having followed just one of the many threads of Herodotean religious thought from his own day to the early modern period, one can see clearly that the complex and often tortuous afterlife of historical and theological texts must be studied diachronically; it is hoped that the essays assembled here will be able to shed light on the reception of other aspects of Herodotus' theological thought (for instance, his statement about wise divine *pronoia* and divine *nemesis*, the view that god is *tarakhódês*, and the rich Herodotean narratives of ambiguous, deceptive, and bullying prophecies and dreams). In this way we may be able to gain a clearer perspective on the religious aspects of Herodotus' *Histories* themselves, and better appreciate the influence of his monumental writing on the development of European historiography and on later imaginings of archaic and classical Greek culture.

<sup>48</sup> I discuss this striking incident further in Ellis (forthcoming, b); Details of the manuscript (Plut. Gr. 70.06, Laurentian Library, Florence) and its links to Laonikos and Plethon can be found in Akışık (2013) 8–10. See Alberti (1959), (1960); Pagani (2009) identifies another erasure in this manuscript (on the Persian conception of Zeus at 1.131.2) as the work of Plethon, but does not discuss this passage (nor, hence, this hand). I am grateful to Ashhan Akışık for a productive correspondence on the identification of this censorious hand, and hope to explore this issue further.

<sup>49</sup> See further Ellis (forthcoming, b).

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## DEFENDING THE DIVINE: PLUTARCH ON THE GODS OF HERODOTUS\*

John Marincola

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*Abstract:* Plutarch's attack on Herodotus' characterisation and portrayal of the gods in the *de Herodoti malignitate* and Plutarch's own portrayal of the divine in his Persian-War *Lives* show a similar approach and orientation, arising from Plutarch's belief that Herodotus had either not treated the divine in an appropriate way (e.g., Solon's remark on the jealousy of the divinity, which was a serious affront to Plutarch's Platonist beliefs) or that Herodotus had not included enough of the divine in his narrative of the Persian Wars, omitting the clear signs and indications of divine involvement that could so easily be found in other authors

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*Keywords:* Herodotus, Plutarch, divine *phthonos*, religion, Persian Wars.

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The texts of Plutarch cited in this article are from the Teubner editions of the *Lives* and *Moralia* (unless otherwise noted); the translations of Herodotus and Plutarch's *Lives* are from the respective Penguin editions, sometimes modified; those of the *Moralia* are from the Loeb editions, again sometimes modified.

## I

Platonist and priest at Delphi, Plutarch was much interested in the workings of the divine, as both the *Moralia* and the *Lives* attest. As might be expected, Herodotus' history does not loom large in Plutarch's many musings on the divine, but there are several places where Plutarch does engage with the historian and his gods, and, in doing so, reveals not only much about how his own sense of the gods informs his work, but also about the way in which a 'canonical' work in antiquity could continue to provoke thought and criticism.

The most sensible place to begin is with Plutarch's essay, *de Herodoti malignitate* (*On the Malice of Herodotus*), for it is here that Plutarch directly engages with Herodotus' history. A number of scholars have seen Plutarch's criticisms in this essay as misguided, unfair, and tendentious; but even so, the work remains valuable for what it can tell us about a particular approach to the writing of history in antiquity.<sup>1</sup> For our present purposes the work furnishes a number of criticisms of Herodotus' approach to the divine. In just over a dozen passages of the *de Malignitate*, Plutarch finds fault with the way in which Herodotus has treated the gods in his history, whether by misrepresentation, confusion, or omission. It may be significant that the divine is the very first item with which Plutarch introduces his 'prosecution' of Herodotus,<sup>2</sup> and even when he treats other aspects of Herodotus' work, the divine is never far from Plutarch's thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This work has been judged differently by different scholars, and for a long time was thought to be spurious; today it is generally considered genuine. The most recent contributions to the debate (where further bibliography can be found) are Seavey (1991); Bowen (1992); Hershbell (1993); Marincola (1994); Grimaldi (2004); Pelling (2007); Dognini (2007); Baragwanath (2008) 9–20; and Marincola (2015).

<sup>2</sup> This is a good example of the priority of the divine, a phenomenon to be found everywhere in Greek culture, whereby divine business is always taken up before human business: Mikalson (1983) 13–17.

<sup>3</sup> No more than five chapters separate one discussion of religion from the next. For the divine as the first item, see next note.

We may begin by listing in order the passages in the *de Malignitate* where Herodotus is faulted.

1. Herodotus has slandered Io, whom all the Hellenes consider to have been deified and the ancestor of the most distinguished races and families. He says that her seduction was voluntary and thus that the Trojan War was fought for a worthless woman. He suggests that the gods do not care when men violate women, although other evidence suggests differently. (856D–857A)
2. Herodotus acquits Busiris of human sacrifice and the murder of a guest, and he asserts that the Egyptians have a strong sense of religion and justice. (857A–B)
3. Herodotus claims that the Greeks learnt their processions and festivals, including those for the twelve gods, from the Egyptians. He observes a religious silence for the Egyptian gods but has no such scruples about Heracles and Dionysus: for the former he claims that the Egyptians worship the god but the Greeks a human ‘grown old’; he says similar things about Pan. In all this he uses Egyptian ‘braggadocio and mythic accounts’ (*ἀλαζονεία καὶ μυθολογία*) to overturn what is most revered and most hallowed in Greek religion (*τὰ σεμνότατα καὶ ἀγνότατα τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἱερῶν*). (857C–D)
4. Herodotus tries to make Heracles a foreigner by having the Persians trace his ancestry back to the Assyrians, yet none of the ancient and learned poets know of this Heracles. (857E–F)
5. He uses Solon, in his meeting with Croesus, as a mouthpiece for the abuse of the gods, compounding blasphemy with malice (*κακοθήθειαν τῇ βλασφημίᾳ προστίθεισι*). (857F–858A)
6. He presents Croesus’ dedications to Apollo as a most impious deed (*πάντων ἀσεβέστατον ... ἔργον*) because Croesus made the dedications from a

- man who had supported his brother and whom Croesus had flayed. (858E)
7. He claims that Cleisthenes bribed the priestess at Delphi and thus links a noble deed—the expulsion of the tyrants from Athens—with impiety and fraud; he also thereby denies credit to the god for his excellent instruction. (860C–E)
  8. Though he treats the battle of Marathon, Herodotus does not mention the vow made by the Athenians to Artemis before the battle, nor the procession and sacrifice made by the Athenians in the aftermath of their victory. (862B–C)
  9. Herodotus claims that Leonidas and the Thebans were hostile towards each other, but one can demonstrate that they were friends by the fact that Leonidas requested, and received, permission to sleep in the temple of Heracles, where he saw and reported a dream that concerned the future fate of Thebes. (865E–F)
  10. In Herodotus' treatment of the battle of Artemisium he takes what almost all agree to have been a Greek victory and has the Greeks fleeing south, thereby suggesting that the verses the Greeks inscribed to Artemis Proseoea were empty words and boasting. (867B–F)
  11. In his attack on Corinth, Herodotus fails to mention the inspired prayer of the women of Corinth to the goddess, although the tale is told everywhere and Simonides wrote the epigram for the dedication of the bronze statues. (871A–C)
  12. Herodotus claims that Apollo demanded from the Aeginetans the *aristeia* they had won at Salamis, thereby using the god to deny Athens pride of place in the battle. (871C–D)
  13. Herodotus suggests that the dedications made to the gods by the Greeks after their victories are full of lying words. (874A–B)

The criticisms on view here concern a variety of aspects of the gods and religion, but can perhaps be divided into three types. First, Herodotus deliberately misrepresents<sup>4</sup> the true nature of individual deities or heroes; related to this is the charge that he deliberately confuses the relationship of Greek religion to that of foreign peoples, especially the Egyptians. Second, Herodotus misrepresents the true nature of the divine, as can be seen most clearly in the Solon story. Third, Herodotus omits evidence of the importance of the divine for the historical participants whose actions he narrates.<sup>5</sup>

My focus in this paper will be on the second and third items. As to the first, we can note that Plutarch treats religious syncretism differently in different works: in the *On Isis and Osiris*, for example, he is respectful of Egyptian religion and willing to countenance that Greek gods have Egyptian equivalents; at other times, he is less tolerant of this kind of thing. And although he appreciates Egyptian wisdom, he was usually far too much a partisan of Hellenic culture to allow the Egyptians, as Herodotus did, to be the source of Greek beliefs and practices.<sup>6</sup>

## II

The second criticism that Plutarch offers of Herodotus' attitude towards the gods is far more substantial and has more serious consequences: namely, that he misrepresents the true nature of the divine. This can be seen most clearly in his narrative of the meeting of Solon with Croesus, where

<sup>4</sup> I say 'deliberately misrepresents' rather than 'misunderstands' or the like because deliberate falsehood is a precondition for the ascription of malice, and justifies the kind of on-going hostile attack mounted by Plutarch in this essay: for the important difference between intentional and accidental falsehood see Marincola (1997) 231.

<sup>5</sup> I do not categorise here Plutarch's remarks on Croesus, Cleisthenes, and the dedications of the Persian wars (nos. 6, 7, and 13) since the main purpose of these is to suggest dishonest action on the part of human beings rather than anything about the divine itself.

<sup>6</sup> On Plutarch and Egyptian religion see Griffiths (1970) 18–33.

‘Solon’ offers an unacceptable view of divinity. The story is the first extended narrative in Herodotus’ *Histories* (1.29–33), and scholars have long observed the important role that it plays in setting out some of the major themes and concerns of the historian’s work.<sup>7</sup> For Herodotus, the story of Croesus’ meeting with Solon comes as part of his *logos* about Croesus and his capital Sardis which Solon visits, Herodotus tells us, when it is at the height of its prosperity (*ἀκμαζούσας πλούτῳ*, 1.29.1)—a detail that can hardly be coincidence since prosperity and its perils loom so large in this particular story. Herodotus notes that many Greek teachers of the time visited Sardis (1.29.1), though Solon is the only one on whom he focuses.

Having entertained Solon for several days Croesus then orders his servants to give his visitor a tour of the royal treasuries, at the end of which he asks Solon a question, prefacing it by saying that Solon had a reputation for wisdom and knowledge. The famous question, of course, is who is the ‘most prosperous’ (*ὀλβιώτατος*) man whom Solon has ever seen.<sup>8</sup> Solon frustrates Croesus by giving two answers: first, Tellus the Athenian (1.30.3) and then the Argives Cleobis and Biton (1.31.1). The ‘insult’ is compounded for Croesus by the fact that all three of these men were commoners who could not in any way aspire to the power and wealth of a Lydian king. Croesus, therefore, demands to know what Solon thinks of Croesus’ own prosperity, and Solon gives him a long reply, full of musings on the divine, on the span and scope of mortal life, and on human happiness. At the beginning of this speech Solon utters one of Herodotus’ most famous remarks about the divine (1.32.1):

<sup>7</sup> Harrison (2000) 33–41 and Asheri (2007) 97–104 discuss the passage at length and cite the relevant bibliography.

<sup>8</sup> Hdt. 1.30.2: *νῦν ὃν ἐπειρέσθαι σε ἕμερος ἐπήλθέ μοι εἴ τινα ἤδη πάντων εἶδες ὀλβιώτατον*. For the terminology here see de Heer (1969) 71–2 and Mikalson (2010) 7–9. I have followed the latter in translating *ὀλβιώτατον* as ‘most prosperous’.

<sup>3</sup>Ω Κροῖσε, ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες ἐπειρωτᾶς ἀνθρωπῆϊων πρηγμάτων πέρι.

Croesus, you ask me—who understand that the divine is completely jealous and disruptive—about human affairs.

In the course of what follows, Solon advises Croesus that human beings are subject to fortune, and that one's present condition is often not one's last, nor is it the case that great wealth is always superior to the ability simply to meet one's daily needs (1.32.2–9). Croesus does indeed have the outward appearance (*φαίνεαι*, 1.32.5) of one who is wealthy and king over many, but Solon cannot estimate Croesus' happiness until he knows how his life ends; one must 'look to the end in every matter' (1.32.9), for it is the end that confers meaning, and until then a man can only be called 'fortunate' (*εὐτυχής*), not 'happy' (*ὄλβιος*).

As commentators have noted, the remark that the divine is jealous and disruptive can be paralleled in many passages of early Greek literature and is quite consonant with Solon's own poetry; indeed, for Herodotus' original audience, it may be doubted whether the remark would have caused any stir at all.<sup>9</sup> But for Plutarch this was an abominable statement, and one which calls for particular censure (*DHM* 857F–858A):

τοῖς δὲ θεοῖς λοιδορούμενος ἐν τῷ Σόλωνος προσωπίῳ ταῦτ' εἶρηκεν· “<sup>3</sup>Ω Κροῖσε, ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες ἐπειρωτᾶς ἀνθρωπῆϊων πραγμάτων πέρι”· ἃ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐφρόνει περὶ τῶν θεῶν τῷ Σόλωνι προστριβόμενος κακοήθειαν τῇ βλασφημίᾳ προστίθησι.

<sup>9</sup> For similar sentiments in Greek literature see Harrison and Asheri as cited in n. 7, above. For the interconnection here between the Herodotean Solon and Solon's own work see Chiasson (1986).

Abusing the gods in the persona of Solon, he says as follows: ‘Croesus, you ask me—who understand that the divine is completely jealous and disruptive—about human affairs’. By attributing to Solon his own ideas about the gods he compounds his blasphemy with malice.

The remark rankled because it struck at the very heart of Plutarch’s beliefs about the divine and about its relationship to human beings. For Plutarch, the god is the source of all goodness for mankind, ‘for it is impossible, where the god is responsible for everything, for anything evil to come into being, or for anything good to come where God is responsible for nothing’ (*ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἢ φλαῦρον ὀτιοῦν, ὅπου πάντων, ἢ χρηστόν, ὅπου μηδενὸς ὁ θεὸς αἴτιος, ἐγγενέσθαι*, *de Isid. et Osir.* 369A–B). Such a remark betrays Plutarch’s clear intellectual debt to Plato as can be seen from Socrates’ words at *Rep.* 2.379c2–5:

οὐδ’ ἄρα, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ὁ θεός, ἐπειδὴ ἀγαθός, πάντων ἂν εἴη αἴτιος, ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ ὀλίγων μὲν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις αἴτιος, πολλῶν δὲ ἀναίτιος· πολὺ γὰρ ἐλάττω τὰγαθὰ τῶν κακῶν ἡμῖν, καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀγαθῶν οὐδένα ἄλλον αἰτιατέον, τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἄλλ’ ἅττα δεῖ ζητεῖν τὰ αἴτια, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὸν θεόν.

Therefore, since the god is good, he is not—as most people claim—the cause of everything that happens to human beings but only of a few things, for good things are fewer than bad ones in our lives. He alone is responsible for the good things, but we must find some other cause for the bad things, not the god. (trans. Reeve)

In his essay, *That Epicurus Makes Even a Pleasant Life Impossible*, Plutarch, quoting Plato, argues that the divine is not subject to the baser human feelings (*Non poss. suav.* 1102D–E):

... σκεψόμεθα τὸ βέλτιστον ἀνθρώπων καὶ θεοφιλέστατον γένος ἐν ἡλίκαις <καθεστᾶσιν> ἡδοναῖς, καθαραῖς περὶ θεοῦ δόξαις συνόντες, ὡς πάντων μὲν ἡγεμῶν ἀγαθῶν πάντων δὲ πατὴρ καλῶν ἐκεῖνός ἐστι, καὶ φαῦλον οὐθὲν ποιεῖν αὐτῷ θέμις ὥσπερ οὐδὲ πάσχειν. ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ἐστίν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ περὶ οὐδενὸς ἐγγίνεται φθόνος, οὔτε φόβος οὔτε ὀργὴ ἢ μῖσος· οὐδὲ γὰρ θερμοῦ τὸ ψύχειν ἀλλὰ <τὸ> θερμαίνειν, ὥσπερ οὐδ' ἀγαθοῦ τὸ βλάπτειν. ὀργὴ δὲ χάριτος καὶ χόλος εὐμενείας καὶ τοῦ φιλανθρώπου καὶ φιλόφρονος τὸ δυσμενὲς καὶ ταρακτικὸν ἀπωτάτω τῇ φύσει τέτακται· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετῆς καὶ δυνάμεως τὰ δ' ἀσθενείας ἐστὶ καὶ φαυλότητος. οὐ τοίνυν ὀργαῖς καὶ χάρισι συνέχεται τὸ θεῖον, ἀλλ' ὅτι χαρίζεσθαι καὶ βοηθεῖν πέφυκεν, ὀργίζεσθαι καὶ κακῶς ποιεῖν οὐ πέφυκεν.

... let us examine that best class of men, those dearest to god, and discover in what great pleasures they find themselves, since their beliefs about god are pure: that he is our guide to all blessings, the father of everything honourable, and that he may no more do than suffer anything base. 'For he is good and in none that is good arises envy about anything' [Plat. *Tim.* 29e] or fear or anger or hatred; for it is as much the function of heat to chill instead of warm as it is of good to harm. By its nature anger is farthest removed from favour, wrath from goodwill, and hostility and the tendency to disturb from love of man and kindness. For on one side there are virtue and power, on the other weakness and wretchedness. The nature of the divine 'is not subject to feelings of anger and favour', but since it is the nature of the divine to bestow favour and lend aid, it is *not* its nature to be angry and do harm.

It may be no more than coincidence that both envy<sup>10</sup> and disruptiveness, the two qualities Herodotus' Solon attributes to the gods, appear here, but the remarks make clear how deeply Plutarch believed that the gods were the source of goodness in human life.

At the same time, Plutarch is not so foolish as to deny that there is evil in the world, but he suggests that nature herself is responsible for this, since nature contains nothing unmixed, and he invokes warring principles (*de Isid. et Os.* 369B–D):<sup>11</sup>

διὸ καὶ παμπάλαιος αὕτη κάτεισιν ἐκ θεολόγων καὶ νομοθετῶν εἷς τε ποιητὰς καὶ φιλοσόφους δόξα, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀδέσποτον ἔχουσα, ... ὡς οὐτ' ἄνουν καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἀκυβέρνητον αἰωρεῖται τῷ αὐτομάτῳ τὸ πᾶν, οὐθ' εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ κρατῶν καὶ κατευθύνων ὥσπερ οἶαξιν ἢ τισὶ πειθηνίοις χαλινοῖς λόγος, ἀλλὰ πολλὰ καὶ μεμιγμένα κακοῖς καὶ ἀγαθοῖς· μᾶλλον δὲ μηδὲν ὡς ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν ἄκρατον ἐνταῦθα τῆς φύσεως φερούσης, οὐ δυεῖν πίθων εἷς ταμίας ὥσπερ νάματα τὰ πράγματα καπηλικῶς διανέμων ἀνακεράννυσιν ἡμῖν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ δυεῖν ἐναντίων ἀρχῶν καὶ δυεῖν ἀντιπάλων δυνάμεων, τῆς μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ δεξιὰ καὶ κατ' εὐθείαν ὑψηλομένης, τῆς δ' ἔμπαλιν ἀναστρεφούσης καὶ ἀνακλώσης, ὃ τε βίος μικτὸς ὃ τε κόσμος, εἰ καὶ μὴ πᾶς, ἀλλ' ὁ περίγειος οὗτος καὶ μετὰ σελήνην ἀνώματος καὶ ποικίλος γέγονε καὶ μεταβολὰς πάσας δεχόμενος. εἰ γὰρ οὐθὲν ἀναιτίως πέφυκε γενέσθαι, αἰτίαν δὲ κακοῦ τὰγαθὸν οὐκ ἂν παράσχοι, δεῖ γένεσιν ἰδίαν καὶ ἀρχὴν ὥσπερ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν. καὶ δοκεῖ τοῦτο τοῖς πλείστοις καὶ σοφωτάτοις. νομίζουσι γὰρ οἱ μὲν θεοὺς εἶναι δύο καθάπερ ἀντιτέχνους, τὸν μὲν ἀγαθῶν, τὸν δὲ φαύλων δημιουργόν· οἱ δὲ τὸν μὲν ἀμείνονα θεόν, τὸν δ' ἕτερον δαίμονα καλοῦσιν ...

<sup>10</sup> Earlier in the dialogue (1086F) Plutarch had cited Plato's remark (*Phaedr.* 247a6–7) that 'envy stands outside the divine chorus' (*φθόνος γὰρ ἔξω θείου χωροῦ ἵσταται*).

<sup>11</sup> Text and translation as in Griffiths (1970) 190–1.

There has, therefore, come down from theologians and lawgivers to both poets and philosophers this ancient belief which is of anonymous origin, ... namely that the universe is not kept on high of itself without mind and reason and guidance, nor is it only one reason that rules and directs it in the manner of rudders or curbing reins, but that many powers do so who are a mixture of evil and good. Rather, since nature, to be plain, contains nothing that is unmixed, it is not one steward that dispenses our affairs for us, as though mixing drinks from two jars in a hotel. Life and the cosmos, on the contrary—if not the whole of the cosmos, at least the earthly one next to the moon, which is heterogeneous, many-hued and subject to all changes—are compounded of two opposite principles and of two antithetic powers, one of which leads by a straight path to the right, while the other reverses and bends back. For if nothing comes into being without a cause, and if good could not provide the cause of evil, then nature must contain in itself the creation and origin of evil as well as good. This is the view of the majority and of the wisest; for some believe there are two gods who are rivals, as it were, in art, the one being the creator of good, the other of evil; others call the better of these a god and his rival a daemon ...

Much has been written about Plutarch's daemonology, in particular whether or not Plutarch thought of *δαίμονες* as always evil, and the evidence is, as so often in these matters, far from conclusive.<sup>12</sup> We shall see in a moment that Plutarch sometimes assigns a *δαίμων* a positive role. It would be more profitable for our purposes here to focus on some remarks Plutarch makes in the *On Superstition*, which have important points of intersection with Plutarch's treatment of Herodotus' Solon. For Plutarch, superstition—

<sup>12</sup> The fullest treatment of the topic is Brenk (1977) who gives a comprehensive discussion of earlier approaches.

δεισιδαιμονία—is the opposite side of the coin of atheism, and both equally are false notions of the divine (*Superst.* 165B):

... ἡ μὲν ἀθεότης κρίσις οὐσα φαύλη τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον ... τὴν δὲ δεισιδαιμονίαν δὲ μηνύει καὶ τοῦνομα δόξαν ἐμπαθῆ καὶ δέους ποιητικὴν ὑπόληψιν οὐσαν ἐκταπεινούντος καὶ συντρίβοντος τὸν ἄνθρωπον οἰόμενον μὲν εἶναι θεούς, εἶναι δὲ λυπηρούς καὶ βλαβερούς.

... atheism is a worthless judgement that there is nothing blessed or incorruptible ... but superstition, as the name indicates, is an emotional idea and an assumption productive of a fear which utterly humbles and crushes a man, who thinks that there are gods but that they are the cause of pain and injury.

The superstitious man is tormented, ‘for superstition alone makes no truce with sleep, and never gives the soul a chance to recover its breath and courage by putting aside its bitter and despondent notions regarding God’.<sup>13</sup> Equally, he sees the gods as responsible for everything (*Superst.* 168A–B):

οὔτε γὰρ ἄνθρωπον οὔτε τύχην οὔτε καιρὸν οὔθ’ αὐτὸν ἀλλὰ πάντων τὸν θεὸν αἰτιᾶται, κάκεῖθεν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἤκειν καὶ φέρεσθαι ῥεῦμα δαιμόνιον ἄτης φησί, καὶ οὐ δυστυχῆς ὢν ἀλλὰ θεομισῆς τις ἄνθρωπος ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κολάζεσθαι καὶ δίκην δίδόναι καὶ πάντα πάσχειν προσηκόντως δι’ αὐτὸν [τὸν νοῦν] ὑπονοῶν.

For he puts the responsibility for his lot upon no man nor upon fortune nor upon occasion nor upon himself, but lays the responsibility for everything upon god, and says that from that source a divine stream of mischief

<sup>13</sup> *Superst.* 165F: ἡ δεισιδαιμονία μόνη γὰρ οὐ σπένδεται πρὸς τὸν ὕπνον, οὐδὲ τῇ ψυχῇ ποτε γοῶν δίδωσιν ἀναπνεῦσαι καὶ ἀναθαρρῆσαι τὰς πικρὰς καὶ βαρείας περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ δόξας ἀπωσαμένη.

has come upon him with full force; and he imagines that it is not because he is unlucky but because he is god-hated that he is being punished by the gods, and that the penalty he pays and all this he is undergoing are deserved because of his own conduct.

And he assumes the worst about the gods (*Superst.* 170D–E):

ὄρῳ δ' οἷα περὶ τῶν θεῶν οἱ δεισιδαίμονες φρονοῦσιν, ἐμπλήκτους ἀπίστους, εὐμεταβόλους τιμωρητικούς ὤμοιους μικρολύπους ὑπολαμβάνοντες, ἐξ ὧν ἀνάγκη καὶ μισεῖν τὸν δεισιδαίμονα καὶ φοβεῖσθαι τοὺς θεούς. πῶς γὰρ οὐ μέλλει, τὰ μέγιστα τῶν κακῶν αὐτῷ δι' ἐκείνους οἰόμενος γεγονέναι καὶ πάλιν γενήσεσθαι;

You see what kinds of thoughts the superstitious have about the gods; they assume that the gods are rash, faithless, fickle, vengeful, cruel, and easily offended; and, as a result, the superstitious man is bound to hate and fear the gods. How could he not, since he thinks that the worst of his ills are due to them, and will be due to them in the future?

Plutarch strongly separates this kind of approach to religion from the true knowledge of the gods, which, he says, is the only thing that allows us to escape from such superstition.

For Plutarch, then, the notion that the divine could be anything but good was simply unacceptable. And indeed his criticism of Herodotus for the portrayal of the divine as 'jealous and disruptive' might be the end of the story. But it so happens that Plutarch himself treated the visit of Solon with Croesus in his *Life* of Solon, and he treats it, in fact, at greater length than Herodotus does. His account of this incident is clearly dependent upon Herodotus, as can be seen by the similarity of the details.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Plutarch

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Manfredini and Piccirilli (1998) 268–71. Pelling (2002) 267–8 points out that Plutarch assumes a good knowledge of Herodotus' version in his own account.

clearly liked the story, as can be seen from several references to it in the *Moralia*, and from the strenuous (and infamous) arguments he makes before narrating it against those who have doubted its historicity on chronological grounds.<sup>15</sup> So it is very clear that Plutarch wanted the story in his *Life* and that he based himself on Herodotus in telling it. And yet—not surprisingly—Solon’s ‘slandorous’ remark about the jealousy and disruptiveness of the divine does not make it into Plutarch’s account. Instead, Plutarch, by a sophisticated recasting and refocusing, manages to keep the majority of Herodotus’ sentiments, while eliminating the one that he found most problematic.

As one would expect in a biography (as opposed to a history), Plutarch’s treatment of the incident is focalised through the subject of the biography, Solon himself. Plutarch begins by using a simile to express the wonder that Solon encountered as he entered this ‘foreign’ realm (*Solon* 27.2–3):

τὸν δ’ οὖν Σόλωνά φασιν εἰς Σάρδεις δεηθέντι τῷ Κροίσῳ παραγενόμενον παθεῖν τι παραπλήσιον ἀνδρὶ χερσαίῳ κατιόντι πρῶτον ἐπὶ θάλατταν. ἐκεῖνός τε γὰρ ὄρων ἄλλον ἐξ ἄλλου ποταμὸν ὤετο τὴν θάλασσαν εἶναι, καὶ τῷ Σόλωνι τὴν αὐλὴν διαπορευομένῳ καὶ πολλοὺς ὄρωντι τῶν βασιλικῶν κεκοσμημένους πολυτελῶς καὶ σοβούοντας ἐν ὄχλῳ προπομπῶν καὶ δορυφόρων, ἕκαστος ἐδόκει Κροῖσος εἶναι, μέχρι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἦχθη, πᾶν ὅσον ἐν λίθοις, ἐν βαφαῖς ἐσθῆτος, ἐν τέχναις χρυσοῦ περὶ κόσμον ἐκπρεπῆς ἔχειν ἢ περιττὸν ἢ ζηλωτὸν ἐδόκει περικείμενον, ὡς δὴ θέαμα σεμνότατον ὀφθείη καὶ ποικιλώτατον.

So then the story goes that Solon came to visit Sardis at Croesus’ invitation, and there experienced much the same feeling as a man from the interior of a country travelling to the sea for the first time, who supposes that

<sup>15</sup> *Sol.* 27.1 with the important remarks of Pelling (2002) 143; though I would hesitate to describe Plutarch’s attitude here as ‘cavalier’.

each river, as it comes into sight, must be the sea itself. In the same way Solon, as he walked through the court and saw many of the king's courtiers richly dressed and walking proudly about amid a crowd of guards and attendants, thought that each of them must be Croesus, until he was brought to the king himself, whom he found decked out in jewels, dyed robes, and gold ornaments of the greatest splendour, extravagance, and rarity, so as to present a most majestic and colourful spectacle.

This plausible detail of Solon's growing astonishment serve both to focus the reader's attention on the gulf between the Greek sage and the Persian prince, and to concentrate attention on the figure presented last as the climax of the series. As in Herodotus, Croesus gives the order to show Solon around the treasuries, though Plutarch adds the detail that Solon hardly needed such confirmation of what he could already see was incredible wealth. After the tour Croesus asks Solon a question similar to that found in Herodotus (*Solon* 27.6):

ὡς δ' οὖν αὖθις <εἰς>ήχθη γεγονῶς ἀπάντων θεατής,  
ἠρώτησεν αὐτὸν ὁ Κροῖσος εἴ τινα οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων  
ἑαυτοῦ μακαριώτερον.

When he had seen everything, however, and was again brought before the king, Croesus asked him whether he knew anyone more blessed than he.

I say a 'similar' rather than the same question because the interplay of vocabulary in Plutarch is not quite the same as in Herodotus. In Herodotus the king asks Solon who is ὀλβιώτατος of all those whom he has known, and Solon, of course, names first Tello and then Cleobis and Biton. Herodotus says that Solon assigned to these latter two 'the second place in εὐδαιμονίῃ' (εὐδαιμονίης δευτερεῖα ἔνεμε τούτοισι, 1.32.1), to which Croesus then asks whether his own εὐδαιμονίῃ is so contemptible as to not even compare

with private citizens (ibid.: ἡ δ' ἡμετέρη εὐδαιμονίη οὕτω τοι ἀπέριπται ἐς τὸ μηδέν, ὥστε οὐδὲ ἰδιωτέρων ἀνδρῶν ἀξίους ἡμέας ἐποίησας;). And it is *this* that brings forth Solon's remark about the 'jealousy of the divine'. After that, in the course of his explanation, Solon draws a distinction between being εὐτυχής and being ὄλβιος. The latter term can only be applied to a man when his manner of death is known. Importantly, for Solon, although wealth can be one factor in such a determination, it cannot in any way be the determining factor. The wealthy man is not ὀλβιώτερος than the man of modest means unless τύχη grants that he end his life with his good things intact (εἰ μὴ οἱ τύχη ἐπίσποιο πάντα καλὰ ἔχοντα εὖ τελευτῆσαι τὸν βίον, 1.32.5). Many who have wealth are ἄνολβοι while those of moderate means are εὐτυχεές. So then one cannot call a man ὄλβιος before knowing how he ended his life; until that time he can only be called εὐτυχής.

Plutarch clearly knows this passage well and much of the same spirit is present in his own Solon (*Solon* 27.8–9):

καὶ ὁ Σόλων, οὔτε κολακεύειν βουλόμενος αὐτὸν οὔτε περαιτέρω παροξύνειν, "Ἐλλησιν", εἶπεν, "ὦ βασιλεῦ Λυδῶν, πρὸς τε τὰλλα μετρίως ἔχειν ἔδωκε ὁ θεὸς, καὶ σοφίας τινὸς ἀθαρσοῦς ὡς ἔοικε καὶ δημοτικῆς, οὐ βασιλικῆς οὐδὲ λαμπρᾶς, ὑπὸ μετριότητος ἡμῖν μέτεστιν, ἢ τύχαις ὀρώσα παντοδαπαῖς χρώμενον αἰεὶ τὸν βίον, οὐκ ἔᾶ τοῖς παροῦσιν ἀγαθοῖς μέγα φρονεῖν οὐδὲ θαυμάζειν ἀνδρὸς εὐτυχίαν μεταβολῆς χρόνον ἔχουσαν. ἔπεισι γὰρ ἐκάστῳ ποικίλον ἐξ ἀδήλου τὸ μέλλον. ᾧ δ' εἰς τέλος ὁ δαίμων ἔθετο τὴν εὐπραξίαν, τοῦτον εὐδαίμονα νομίζομεν. ὁ δὲ ζῶντος ἔτι καὶ κινδυνεύοντος ἐν τῷ βίῳ μακαρισμὸς ὥσπερ ἀγωνιζομένου κήρυγμα καὶ στέφανός ἐστιν ἀβέβαιος καὶ ἄκυρος.'

Solon had no desire to flatter the king, but he did not wish to exasperate him further, and so he replied: 'King of the Lydians, the god has given the Greeks a moderate share in other things too, and especially in being able to share through moderation in a cautious

(so it seems) and demotic sort of wisdom, not regal or magnificent, and it perceives that human life is subject to shifts of fortune of every kind and forbids us to think big about the good things of the present, or to admire a man's prosperity while there is still time for it to change. For the future will come to each man differently, and unforeseen, and we can only count a man as faring well (εὐδαιμόνα) when the *daimôn* has granted him success (εὐπραξίαν) to the end. To call someone blessed (μακαρισμός) while he is still alive and contending with all the perils of the mortal state is like proclaiming an athlete the victor and crowning him before the contest is decided: it is neither certain nor authoritative.<sup>16</sup>

Plutarch begins by noting Solon's disposition towards the king: he is politic (we can understand how he was successful as an arbitrator at Athens) and is willing, while not abandoning his principles (he will not stoop to flattery),<sup>17</sup> to moderate nonetheless his speech so that it will be acceptable to the king. In this he shows himself an accomplished teacher, even if in this case Croesus will not learn his lessons.

Solon begins by drawing a distinction only implied in Herodotus in this episode, that between the demotic and the regal.<sup>18</sup> The contrast, as Thomas Schmidt has pointed out, is one that is especially effective in delineating Greek from barbarian, and serves to allow Solon's specifically *Greek* wisdom to stand out.<sup>19</sup> And as Christopher Pelling has

<sup>16</sup> The earlier part of this translation follows Pelling (2011) 42 closely.

<sup>17</sup> In this he is like the Herodotean Solon: Σόλων δὲ οὐδὲν ὑποθωπεύσας, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἐόντι χρησόμενος λέγει, κτλ. (1.30.3). See Pelling (2006) on the challenges inherent in talking to tyrants.

<sup>18</sup> It is implied in the contrast between the man of moderate means and the wealthy man, but also, and more importantly, in the contrast between royalty and commoners, as seen in Croesus' angry question, ἢ δ' ἡμετέρη εὐδαιμονίη οὕτω τοι ἀπέρριπται ἐς τὸ μηδέν, ὥστε οὐδὲ ἰδιωτέρων ἀνδρῶν ἀξίους ἡμέας ἐποίησας; (1.32.1).

<sup>19</sup> Schmidt (1999) 130–1.

shown, the use of the terms *μετριότης* and *δημοτικός* are crucial for interpreting the passage.<sup>20</sup> As in Herodotus, so too in Plutarch, Solon begins with the divine, but now emphasising its gifts, even if those gifts are moderate (*μετρίως, ὑπὸ μετριότητος*). The detail is, again, not haphazard: for as we all know, such ‘moderate’ gifts are sufficient for discerning how one should live and how one should look at the world.<sup>21</sup> Having in this way placed a positive ‘spin’ on the gods, Solon then goes on to attribute the variant fortunes of each human life not to jealous and disruptive gods but to *τύχη*.<sup>22</sup> We remember here the superstitious man who ascribes everything to the gods and does not consider himself or circumstance to blame. Plutarch, by contrast, knows the disruptive effects of chance and has his Solon carefully separate this from the work of the gods. Indeed, as the sentence is here written, *τύχη* is not even personified so as to be a force; rather, it is characterised as something that *life* ‘employs’ (*χρώμενον*) or, more blandly, ‘has’.

This notion of *τύχη* is then reinforced by *εὐτυχία* in the next sentence, which again is not ascribed to any kind of agent. Then, in the following sentence, what ‘comes upon’ men is again devoid of divine agency, and is simply ‘the future’, *τὸ μέλλον*. Only with the last part of his speech does Solon again refer to a deity—now it is *ὁ δαίμων*—and again this *δαίμων* appears precisely where the positive notion of success (*εὐπραξίαν*) is in question: it is the *δαίμων* who affords *εὐτυχία*, and the one to whom he affords this we

<sup>20</sup> Pelling (2011) 41–4.

<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Solon in Herodotus had emphasised that the man of moderate means has advantages, in fact, over the wealthy man who is not *ὄλβιος*: *οὗτος δὲ [sc. ὁ ἐπ’ ἡμέρην ἔχων] πλουσίου καὶ ἀνολβίου πολλοῖσι [sc. προέχει]* (1.32.5–6).

<sup>22</sup> Here again, such a thought is not absent in Herodotus’ Solon, for he states it as necessary that *τύχη* be present to a man in order to end his life well (1.32.5: *οὐ γάρ τι ὁ μέγα πλούσιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ἐπ’ ἡμέρην ἔχοντος ὀλβιώτερός ἐστι, εἰ μὴ οἱ τύχη ἐπίσποιτο*); and of course it is present in the word *εὐτυχής* throughout.

consider to be *εὐδαίμων* (a nice play on words, amongst other things).<sup>23</sup>

The shifts are hardly major, yet one must admire Plutarch's artistry in maintaining so many of the points of the Herodotean story about the nature of human success and failure, while significantly modifying the divine mechanism that lies behind the alternation of fortune experienced by human beings. For Plutarch, there is no jealous and disruptive god, there is only *the* god (ὁ θεός or ὁ δαίμων) who gives us good things—including, importantly, wisdom sufficient for success.

### III

The final section of Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus* is mainly concerned with the historian's narratives of the Persian-War battles: mentioned there are Marathon, Artemisium, Thermopylae, Salamis and Plataea. Plutarch, at least in the *Lives*, did not treat all of these battles equally: for Thermopylae we have nothing;<sup>24</sup> for Marathon, we have but a short passage in the *Aristides*; for Artemisium, a short passage in the *Themistocles*. We fare somewhat better with Salamis and Plataea, both of which receive substantial treatment in the *Themistocles* and *Aristides*.

Not surprisingly, given Plutarch's brief treatment of Marathon in the *Aristides*, there is no mention of the vow and sacrifice to Artemis Agrotera (no. 8 above), although he does mention an inscription to Artemis Proseoea (no. 10 above) in the short narrative on Artemisium (*Them.* 8.3):

<sup>23</sup> See Mikalson (2002) for evidence of the continued relevance of the notion of *δαίμων* in *εὐδαιμονία*; he points out the persistence of the idea that a *δαίμων* is responsible for one's *εὐδαιμονία*.

<sup>24</sup> A *Life* of Leonidas is promised at *DHM* 866B, but the only evidence for it are the remarks collected under Leonidas' name in *Sayings of Spartans*, 224F–225E. Presumably Thermopylae would have featured as the largest portion of such a *Life*.

ἔστι δὲ τῆς Εὐβοίας τὸ Ἀρτεμίσιον ὑπὲρ τὴν Ἑστίασαν αἰγιαλὸς εἰς βορέαν ἀναπεπταμένος, ἀνταίρει δ' αὐτῷ μάλιστα τῆς ὑπὸ Φιλοκτήτη γενομένης χώρας Ὀλιζών. ἔχει δὲ ναὸν οὐ μέγαν Ἀρτέμιδος ἐπίκλῃσιν Προσηφίας, καὶ δένδρα περὶ αὐτὸν πέφυκε καὶ στηλαὶ κύκλῳ λίθου λευκοῦ πεπήγασιν· ὁ δὲ λίθος τῇ χειρὶ τριβόμενος καὶ χροάν καὶ ὄσμῃν κροκίζουσιν ἀναδίδωσιν. ἐν μιᾷ δὲ τῶν στηλῶν ἐλεγείον ἦν τόδε γεγραμμένον

παντοδαπῶν ἀνδρῶν γενεὰς Ἀσίας ἀπὸ χώρας

παῖδες Ἀθηναίων τῷδέ ποτ' ἐν πελάγει

ναυμαχίῃ δαμάσαντες, ἐπεὶ στρατὸς ὤλετο Μήδων,

σήματα ταῦτ' ἔθεσαν παρθένῳ Ἀρτέμιδι.

δείκνυται δὲ τῆς ἀκτῆς τόπος ἐν πολλῇ τῇ πέριξ θινὴ κόνιν τεφρώδη καὶ μέλαιναν ἐκ βάρους ἀναδιδούς, ὥσπερ πυρίκαυστον, ἐν ᾧ τὰ ναυάγια καὶ <τοὺς> νεκροὺς καῦσαι δοκοῦσι.

Artemisium is a beach of Euboea which stretches away to the north above Hestiaea. On the Thessalian shore opposite, Olizon rises up, in the territory which was once ruled by Philoctetes. Here there is a small temple of Artemis, named Proseoea, which is surrounded by trees and pillars of white stone in a circle. This stone, when rubbed with the hand, gives off the colour and odour of saffron. On one of these pillars the following elegiac verses are engraved:

The races of varied men coming from the land of Asia / the children of the Athenians once on this sea / defeated in a naval battle, when the army of Medes perished / and they dedicated these tokens to the virgin Artemis.

There is also a place on the beach that is pointed out, where deep down, mingled with the thick sand, there is a dark ashy powder, which seems to have been produced by fire, and it is believed that the wrecks and dead bodies were burned here.

Plutarch clearly attempts to set right here Herodotus' omission of the role of Artemis in the battle, even though he

follows Herodotus carefully in the other details,<sup>25</sup> and this is one of the chief ways in the Persian-War narratives that Plutarch ‘defends’ the gods from Herodotus’ treatment, as further examination will show.

For Salamis it may be helpful first to summarise Herodotus’ references to the gods or the divine in his narrative. He certainly does not shy away from such references.<sup>26</sup> For example, in the build-up to the battle, he mentions the ‘wooden wall’ oracle and the Athenians’ discussion about how best to interpret the god’s remarks (7.141–3). He also notes the disappearance of the sacred snake on the Acropolis, and the subsequent announcement of this event by the priestess, which caused the people to conclude that the goddess herself had abandoned the city (8.41). Herodotus narrates in addition (and at some length) an event which Dicaeus, an Athenian exile, claimed to have witnessed in the presence of the Spartan king Demaratus (to whom, Herodotus adds, Dicaeus often appealed to validate the truth of the story): being in the Thriasian plain after the evacuation of Attica, Dicaeus said that he and Demaratus saw an enormous cloud of dust emanating from the direction of Eleusis along with the sounds of people singing the ‘Iacchus’ song, and he explained to Demaratus that since all of Attica was empty, this must be a divine voice coming from Eleusis to help the Athenians against their

<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy, for example, that although finding fault with Herodotus’ narrative because it suggested a defeat at Artemisium, Plutarch does not in the *Themistocles* actually call the battle a victory: what he says is that the battle, although not producing a decisive result (*κρίσιν μὲν εἰς τὰ ὅλα μεγάλην οὐκ ἐποίησαν*, 8.1) benefitted the Greeks by giving them a strong sense of bravery; and he interprets even his quotation of Pindar, which names Artemisium as the place ‘where the sons of the Athenians set down the bright corner-stone of liberty’, not in terms of victory (though that could easily be inferred) but in terms of psychological benefit, since he interprets the lines as meaning ‘confidence is truly the beginning of victory’ (*Them.* 8.2).

<sup>26</sup> I do not consider here the most explicit statement of belief in oracles found at Hdt. 8.77, since a number of scholars have made forceful arguments that this entire chapter is interpolated: see Bowie (2007) ad loc. but see Asheri (1993) for a defence of its genuineness.

enemies. Demaratus enjoined Dicaeus not to tell anyone of the event and while they were speaking the cloud of dust rose high in the air and drifted away towards Salamis, and the two men knew by this that Xerxes' navy would be destroyed.<sup>27</sup> In addition, when the battle begins, a divine voice is heard urging the men not to row astern but to plunge into battle.<sup>28</sup> Finally, when the Corinthian squadron has deserted the alliance at the beginning of the battle, an unknown boat appears and tells the men that they are abandoning Greece but that the Greeks are victorious; and since no one could account for the boat, the Corinthians reckoned it as divinely sent.<sup>29</sup>

Thus it can hardly be said that Herodotus ignores the divine in his narrative of Salamis. Plutarch, for his part, is selective in what he chooses to use and how. For example, he does not have the divine voice reprimanding the Greeks at the outset of the battle, but this is no doubt because he accepts the version, known from the time of Aeschylus' *Persians*, that the Greeks sailed straight against the enemy without hesitation.<sup>30</sup> Nor does Plutarch employ the story of Corinthian desertion and the appearance of the miraculous boat; although he knows it, it is clear that he does not

<sup>27</sup> Hdt. 8.65, with Bowie (2007) 151–3.

<sup>28</sup> Hdt. 8.84: λέγεται δὲ καὶ τάδε, ὡς φάσμα σφι γυναικὸς ἐφάνη, φανείσαν δὲ διακελεύσασθαι ὥστε καὶ ἅπαν ἀκοῦσαι τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων στρατόπεδον, ὀνειδίσασαν πρότερον τάδε, “ὦ δαιμόνιοι, μέχρι κόσου ἔτι πρύμνην ἀνακρούεσθε;”

<sup>29</sup> Hdt. 8.94.2–3: ὡς δὲ ἄρα φεύγοντας γίνεσθαι τῆς Σαλαμινίης κατὰ ἱρὸν Ἀθηναίης Σκιράδος, περιπίπτειν σφι κέλητα θείῃ πομπῇ, τὸν οὔτε πέμψαντα φανῆναι οὐδένα, οὔτε τι τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς στρατιῆς εἰδῶσι προσφέρεσθαι τοῖσι Κορινθίοισι. τῆδε δὲ συμβάλλονται εἶναι θεῖον τὸ πρῆγμα. ὡς γὰρ ἀγχοῦ γενέσθαι τῶν νεῶν, τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ κέλητος λέγειν τάδε. Ἄδειμαντε, σὺ μὲν ἀποστρέψας τὰς νέας ἐς φυγὴν ὄρμησαι καταπροδοὺς τοὺς Ἕλληνας· οἱ δὲ καὶ δὴ νικῶσι ὅσον αὐτοὶ ἡρώτων ἐπικρατήσαντες τῶν ἐχθρῶν.

<sup>30</sup> Aesch. *Pers.* 394: εἰς μάχην ὀρμῶντες εὐψύχῳ θράσει. Cf. Groeneboom (1960) II.93: ‘die Darstellung, die Aischylos hier von der Bereitwilligkeit der Griechen zur Seeschlacht gibt, ist geschmeichelt, jedenfalls verglichen mit dem Bericht bei Hdt. VIII 84.’

believe it, and thinks, on the contrary, that the Corinthians fought amongst the foremost.<sup>31</sup>

He does employ, however, the stories of the ‘wooden wall’ oracle, the disappearing snake, and the cloud from Eleusis, although (in true Plutarchan fashion) he gives these stories his own spin. The story of the snake, for example, he couples with that of the oracle as part of Themistocles’ fervent attempt to persuade the Athenians to abandon their city (*Them.* 10.1–3):

ἔνθα δὴ Θεμιστοκλῆς, ἀπορῶν τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους  
 λογισμοῖς προσάγεσθαι τὸ πλῆθος, ὥσπερ ἐν τραγαδία  
 μηχανὴν ἄρας, σημεῖα δαιμόνια καὶ χρησμούς ἐπήγγεν  
 αὐτοῖς· σημεῖον μὲν λαμβάνων τὸ τοῦ δράκοντος, ὃς  
 ἀφανῆς ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκ τοῦ σηκοῦ δοκεῖ  
 γενέσθαι, καὶ τὰς καθ’ ἡμέραν αὐτῷ προτιθεμένας  
 ἀπαρχὰς εὐρίσκοντες ἀψαύστους, οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐξήγγελλον  
 εἰς τοὺς πολλούς, τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους λόγον  
 <δια>διδόντος ὡς ἀπολέλοιπε τὴν πόλιν ἢ θεὸς  
 ὑφηγουμένη πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν αὐτοῖς· τῷ δὲ χρησμῷ  
 πάλιν ἐδημαγώγει, λέγων μηδὲν ἄλλο δηλοῦσθαι ξύλινον  
 τεῖχος ἢ τὰς ναῦς· διὸ καὶ τὴν Σαλαμῖνα θείαν, οὐχὶ  
 δεινὴν οὐδὲ σχετλίαν καλεῖν τὸν θεόν, ὡς εὐτυχήματος  
 μεγάλου τοῖς Ἑλλησιν ἐπώνυμον ἐσομένην. κρατήσας δὲ  
 τῇ γνώμῃ ψήφισμα γράφει, κτλ.

<sup>31</sup> Herodotus’ story of Corinthian desertion is recounted by the Athenians alone, he says, whereas the rest of Greece avers that the Corinthians fought in the battle (*μαρτυρεῖ δὲ σφι* [sc. the Corinthians] *καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Ἑλλάς*, 8.94.4). Plutarch attacks Herodotus seriously on this score at *DHM* 870B–871B and scholars who defend Herodotus generally see the story as evidence of anti-Corinthian bias at Athens at the time of the Peloponnesian War. Bowie (2007) 182 says that the inclusion of the story is evidence of Herodotus’ claim that he sees his role as to tell stories and does not necessarily himself believe it; but such naïveté on the part of the historian is hardly likely here: for Herodotus has written a narrative of the battle of Salamis in which the Corinthians play no role in the fighting, and he thus shows that, on some level, he agrees with the Athenian version.

It was at this point that Themistocles, seeing no hope of winning over the people to his plans by any power of human reasoning, introduced to them signs and oracles from heaven, as if raising the crane in a tragedy. He seized upon the sign of the snake, which was believed to have disappeared at this time from its sacred enclosure on the Acropolis, and treated it as a divine portent. When the priests discovered that the first-fruits which were offered to it every day had been left untouched, they told the people on Themistocles' instructions that the goddess had abandoned her city and was showing them their way to the sea. In his efforts to sway the people he again invoked the famous oracle from Delphi, and insisted that the 'wooden wall' could only refer to their ships and that the god had spoken of Salamis in his verses as 'divine', not as 'terrible' or 'cruel', for the very reason that its name would one day be associated with great good fortune for the Greeks. At last his proposal carried the day and he proposed a decree, etc.

In Herodotus' account of the snake (8.41.2–3), Themistocles plays no role, and it is the priestess who reports the disappearance and the people who conclude that the goddess has abandoned the city. When he comes to tell of the oracle Themistocles does appear, it is true, but only to provide a detail that finally persuades the Athenians; Themistocles does not himself come up with the interpretation that 'the wooden wall' was the ships.<sup>32</sup> Now it is not unusual for Plutarch to ascribe to an individual what in his source is ascribed to a collective or to an unnamed actor: there are innumerable examples of this in the *Lives*. What is unusual, however, is the somewhat negative light in which Themistocles' actions are portrayed: he 'introduced to' (ἐπήγγειν) the Athenians divine portents and oracles 'as if raising the crane in a tragedy' (ὥσπερ ἐν τραγωδίᾳ μηχανήν

<sup>32</sup> Hdt. 7.142–3; this is a minor point, of course, but one that is consistently missed in the scholarly literature, which regularly attributes to Themistocles the interpretation of the oracle *tout court*.

ἄρας), a reference, of course, to the appearance of the *deus ex machina* at the end of a play. It is clear from other places in Plutarch where this simile is employed that Plutarch disapproves of such activity.<sup>33</sup> The oracle too is considered part of Themistocles' 'trickery' here.

It may seem strange that Plutarch in his presentation of these incidents seems to characterise them in a way that is less respectful than Herodotus had been, since the latter does not suggest any kind of 'manipulation' on the part of Themistocles or other leaders. Indeed, Themistocles' actions here resemble closely those of Lysander later on, when he is trying to get the Spartans to cease appointing their kings from the Heracleidae (*Lys.* 25.1–2):

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ἐπεχείρησε καὶ παρεσκευάσατο πείθειν δι' ἑαυτοῦ τοὺς πολίτας, καὶ λόγον ἐξεμελέτα πρὸς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν γεγραμμένον ὑπὸ Κλέωνος τοῦ Ἁλικαρνασσέως. ἔπειτα τὴν ἀτοπίαν καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ καινοτομουμένου πράγματος ὁρῶν ἰταμωτέρας δεόμενον βοηθείας, ὥσπερ ἐν τραγωδία μηχανὴν αἴρων ἐπὶ τοὺς πολίτας, λόγια πυθόχρηστα καὶ χρησμούς συνετίθει καὶ κατεσκευάζεν, ὡς οὐδὲν ὠφελησόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς Κλέωνος δεινότητος, εἰ μὴ φόβῳ θεοῦ τινι καὶ δεισιδαιμονίᾳ προεκπλήξας καὶ χειρωσάμενος ὑπαγάγοι πρὸς τὸν λόγον τοὺς πολίτας.

First of all, then, he prepared to try to win over his countrymen by his own powers of persuasion, and he studied carefully a speech written on the subject by Cleon of Halicarnassus. He soon saw, however, that any scheme of reform so far-reaching and so unexpected as this called for more daring measures to carry it through. And so, just as in a tragedy, he raised the crane on his fellow-countrymen, by collecting and arranging various oracular prophecies and responses of Apollo. He felt that Cleon's skilful rhetoric would be of little use to him, unless he could first alarm and

<sup>33</sup> Plutarch's view of tragedy is very much informed by Plato's: see De Lacy (1952).

overwhelm the Spartans' minds with a certain fear of the god and superstitious terror before trying to lead the citizens to reason.

Each case is similar: the leader, fearing that rational argument will not be successful, is 'compelled' to turn to the divine so that, as Plutarch makes clear, he may manipulate the population into doing the right thing by an effective employment of *deisidaimonia*.<sup>34</sup> As we have seen in the previous section, Plutarch had strong beliefs about this, and it seems clear that in these two stories at least, Plutarch means to portray the statesman as knowledgeable in the ways of manipulating the populace. It should be noted that Plutarch is not in any way questioning the oracle or its 'accuracy'; and even the snake's disappearance (though couched with the guarded *δοκεῖ*) is not questioned outright, but rather is brought forward as evidence of Themistocles' brilliance because he 'interpreted' it in a particular way and managed to combine this portent with the warnings of the oracle. Plutarch's desire, therefore, to display Themistocles' brilliance at this, the apex of his career,<sup>35</sup> has caused him to show how adept Themistocles was at recognising the nature of the common people and exploiting it for the common good.<sup>36</sup> But it must also be pointed out that any manipulation of the populace has to be done towards good ends; thus Themistocles' 'laudable' goal contextualises his manipulation, just as Lysander's 'revolutionary' goal contextualises his.<sup>37</sup>

The story of the cloud and din from Eleusis shows Plutarch manipulating Herodotus in an important but different way. In Herodotus, the story is told right after mention of the fact that the Greeks had decided to fight at

<sup>34</sup> See Duff (1999) 126 n. 95 for other examples in the *Lives*.

<sup>35</sup> See Marr (1998) ad loc.

<sup>36</sup> For the importance of the leaders' manipulation of the commons, see Marincola (2010) 135–9 and (2012) 107–11.

<sup>37</sup> Lysander's actions include the attempt to corrupt three different oracles; for the moral ambiguity surrounding Plutarch's portrayal of Lysander see Duff (1999) 184–93.

Salamis and had sent to Aegina for the Aeacids (8.64.2). While Herodotus does not express any disbelief in the story, he narrates it entirely in indirect discourse (introduced by ἔφη ... Δίκαιος, 8.65.1) and the appearance seems to occur (though the exact time is not specified) at some point before the battle. It is focalised through Dicaeus and Demaratus who hear the din and see the dust rise from the area of Eleusis and move in the direction of Salamis. In his actual narrative of the battle Herodotus does mention the report that a voice was heard admonishing the Greeks not to back water, but thereafter does not portray any figures actually fighting other than the human ones. In Plutarch, by contrast, there is no earlier mention of Dicaeus or Demaratus, and the story is reserved for a crucial moment in the battle itself, i.e., when the Persian admiral Ariamenes has been killed and pitched into the sea by the Athenians Ameinias and Socles (*Them.* 15.1–2):

ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τοῦ ἀγῶνος ὄντος φῶς μὲν ἐκλάμψαι μέγα λέγουσιν Ἐλευσινόθεν, ἦχον δὲ καὶ φωνὴν τὸ Θριάσιον κατέχειν πεδίον ἄχρι θαλάττης, ὡς ἀνθρώπων ὁμοῦ πολλῶν τὸν μυστικὸν ἐξαγόντων Ἰακχόν. ἐκ δὲ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν φθεγγομένων κατὰ μικρὸν ἀπὸ γῆς ἀναφερόμενον νέφος ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς ὑπονοστεῖν καὶ κατασκήπτειν εἰς τὰς τριήρεις. ἕτεροι δὲ φάσματα καὶ εἴδωλα καθορᾶν ἔδοξαν ἐνόπλων ἀνδρῶν ἀπ' Αἰγίνης τὰς χεῖρας ἀνεχόντων πρὸ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν τριηρῶν, οὓς εἵκαζον Αἰακίδας εἶναι παρακεκλημένους εὐχαῖς πρὸ τῆς μάχης ἐπὶ τὴν βοήθειαν.

At this point in the battle they say that a great light suddenly shone out from Eleusis and a loud cry filled the Thriasian plain down to the sea, as though an immense crowd were escorting the mystic Iacchus in procession. Then, from the place where the shouting was heard, a cloud seemed to rise slowly from the land, drift out to sea, and descend upon the triremes. Others believed that they saw phantoms and the shapes of armed men coming from Aegina with hands

outstretched to protect the Greek ships. These they reckoned to be the sons of Aeacus, to whom they had offered prayers for help just before the battle.

In Plutarch's telling, the event becomes more vivid both because he saves the story for a crucial point in the battle itself and because it is now focalised through the Greeks' own eyes.<sup>38</sup> In Herodotus the story, removed as it is from the battle proper, has mainly a sense of foreboding; in Plutarch, by contrast, the story is dramatic and validates the belief that the gods had a direct interest in the outcome.<sup>39</sup>

These, then, are the stories Plutarch inherited from Herodotus and which he uses in the account of Salamis. It is noteworthy, however, that Plutarch adds two incidents not found in Herodotus. The first occurs during the debate between Themistocles and Eurybiades, the Spartan commander, about where to fight the Persians.<sup>40</sup> Eurybiades wishes to sail for the Isthmus but Themistocles is insistent that they must fight where they are. An omen seems to confirm the wisdom of Themistocles' advice (*Them.* 12.1):

λέγεται δ' ὑπό τινων τὸν μὲν Θεμιστοκλέα περὶ τούτων ἀπὸ τοῦ καταστρώματος [ἄνωθεν] τῆς νεῶς διαλέγεσθαι, γλαῦκα δ' ὀφθῆναι διαπετομένην ἐπὶ δεξιᾶς τῶν νεῶν καὶ τοῖς καρχησίοις ἐπικαθίζουσιν· διὸ δὴ καὶ μάλιστα προσέθεντο τῇ γνώμῃ καὶ παρεσκευάζοντο ναυμαχήσοντας.

<sup>38</sup> Plutarch has, in a sense, 'continued' the story from Herodotus, where the last that Dicaeus and Demaratus saw of the apparition was its journey towards Salamis (Hdt. 8.65.6: ἐκ δὲ τοῦ κονιορτοῦ καὶ τῆς φωνῆς γενέσθαι νέφος καὶ μετασιωθὲν φέρεσθαι ἐπὶ Σαλαμῖνος ἐπὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων).

<sup>39</sup> This is true even though the story has certain 'distancing' features such as the introductory λέγουσιν along with ἔδοξεν and ἔδοξαν.

<sup>40</sup> As Marr (1998) 98 points out, Plutarch has made Eurybiades the foil for Themistocles, although in Herodotus it is the Corinthian Adeimantus. But this makes no difference to the point I wish to make above.

Some writers say that while Themistocles was engaged in this argument from the deck of his ship, an owl was seen to fly on the right of the fleet and perch at his masthead. Because of this they especially favoured his advice and began to prepare for battle.

Yet their acceptance of Themistocles' view is short-lived, and when they see the vast number of the Persian forces, they completely forget Themistocles' arguments and would, then and there, have sailed straightway for the Peloponnese if Themistocles had not then engaged in his stratagem whereby he tricked the Persian king into surrounding the Greek forces. But the point in any case has been made clear that the gods were 'indicating' that Themistocles' advice was the best and the one that should be followed.

The other incident not mentioned by Herodotus but narrated by Plutarch is the infamous account of the human sacrifice performed before Salamis (*Them.* 13.2–4 = Phantias, F 25 Wehrli = *FGrHist* 1012 F 19):

Θεμιστοκλεῖ δὲ παρὰ τὴν ναυαρχίδα τριήρη σφαιγιαζομένῳ τρεῖς προσήχθησαν αἰχμάλωτοι, κάλλιστοι μὲν ιδέσθαι τὴν ὄψιν, ἐσθῆτι δὲ καὶ χρυσῷ κεκοσμημένοι διαπρεπῶς. ἐλέγοντο δὲ Σανδάκης παῖδες εἶναι τῆς βασιλέως ἀδελφῆς καὶ Ἄρταύκτου. τούτους ἰδὼν Εὐφραντίδης ὁ μάντις, ὡς ἅμα μὲν ἀνέλαμψεν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν μέγα καὶ περιφανὲς πῦρ, ἅμα δὲ πταρμὸς ἐκ δεξιῶν ἐσήμνηε, τὸν Θεμιστοκλέα δεξιωσάμενος ἐκέλευσε τῶν νεανίσκων κατάρξασθαι καὶ καθιερεῦσαι πάντας ὠμηστῆ Διονύσῳ προσευξάμενον· οὕτω γὰρ ἅμα σωτηρίαν καὶ νίκην ἔσεσθαι τοῖς Ἑλλησιν. ἐκπλαγέντος δὲ τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους ὡς μέγα τὸ μάντευμα καὶ δεινόν, οἷον εἴωθεν ἐν μεγάλοις ἀγῶσι καὶ πράγμασι χαλεποῖς, μᾶλλον ἐκ τῶν παραλόγων ἢ τῶν εὐλόγων τὴν σωτηρίαν ἐλπίζοντες οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν θεὸν ἅμα κοινῇ κατεκαλοῦντο φωνῇ καὶ τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους τῷ βωμῷ προσαγαγόντες ἠνάγκασαν, ὡς ὁ μάντις ἐκέλευσε, τὴν θυσίαν συντελεσθῆναι. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἀνήρ φιλόσοφος καὶ

γραμματῶν οὐκ ἄπειρος ἱστορικῶν Φανίας ὁ Λέσβιος  
εἶρηκε.

Meanwhile, Themistocles was offering sacrifice alongside the admiral's trireme. Here three remarkably handsome prisoners were brought before him, magnificently dressed and wearing gold ornaments. They were reported to be the sons of Sandace, the King's sister, and Artaÿctus. At the very moment that Euphrantides the prophet saw them, a great bright flame shot up from the offerings on the altar and a sneeze on the right gave a sign. At this, Euphrantides clasped Themistocles by the right hand and commanded him to dedicate and sacrifice all the young men to Dionysus, the Eater of Raw Flesh, for if this were done, it would bring deliverance and victory to the Greeks. Themistocles was struck by the greatness and terribleness of the prophet's command, but the majority, as customarily happens in great contests and in difficult affairs, expected that safety would come more from irrational actions than well-reasoned ones, and called upon the god simultaneously with one voice; and leading the prisoners to the altar, and they forced the sacrifice to be carried out as the prophet had demanded. This, at any rate, is the account we have from Phantias of Lesbos, who was a philosopher and knowledgeable in history.

Much has been written about this story, not least because it seems to be an important *testimonium* for the practice of human sacrifice in Greece.<sup>41</sup> Again, it may seem odd that Plutarch should introduce a story about which he himself may have had qualms,<sup>42</sup> and one which, it is clear, causes

<sup>41</sup> Scholars are divided on the possible historicity of this event. See Mikalson (2003) 78–9 who on balance accepts the story; he surveys other opinions at 216 nn. 259–60. See also the detailed commentary by Engels ad *FGrHist* 1012 F 19.

<sup>42</sup> Marr (1998) 106 sees the *μὲν οὖν* as distancing (he compares 7.7), which, of course, it can be; but the characterisation of Phantias as

revulsion in Themistocles (here, of course, mirroring Plutarch's own revulsion). Yet Plutarch must have included the incident (which is mentioned elsewhere in his works)<sup>43</sup> because he had found it in the tradition and was sufficiently convinced of at least its possibility. Here, as with the story of Themistocles' manipulation of the snake and the oracle, the common people (here *οἱ πολλοί* (13.4) must be the rank and file of the soldiers) do as they commonly do in great dangers, and are led astray by irrational beliefs: it is they who 'force' (*ἡνάγκασαν*) the sacrifice to take place.

The incident is complicated by the fact that it is the seer, Euphrantidas, who interprets the flame and sneeze as indicating the need to sacrifice the prisoners and Themistocles, though appalled, is unable or unwilling (Plutarch's text suggests the former) to prevent the sacrifice from occurring; and given that Euphrantidas' interpretation is that such a sacrifice would bring 'salvation and victory' to the Greeks, the actual performance of the sacrifice does in fact validate the seer's interpretation. This story, then, despite its troubling aspects, actually reinforces the notion of divine presence and interest in the affairs of the Greeks and of the hand of heaven in the Greek victory over the Persians.

Turning now finally to Plataea, we should, as in the case of Salamis, first say something of Herodotus' narrative, which certainly does not lack for evidence of the divine: Herodotus mentions the omens before battle, in which each side is promised victory only if it does not attack first (Hdt. 9.36); he tells at length the background stories of the two seers, Teisamenus and Hegesistratus (9.33–7); he narrates

*γραμμάτων οὐκ ἄπειρος ἱστορικῶν* would seem to indicate confidence, not hesitation.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Arist.* 9.2 where we are given the detail, which is not in the *Themistocles*, that the prisoners were sent to Themistocles by Aristides who had captured them on Psyttaleia (a detail that argues against the historicity of the incident, as commentators have noted). See also *Pelop.* 21.3, where it is mentioned (not by the narrator but by some speakers who adduce it as a parallel) together with the self-sacrifice of Leonidas at Thermopylae.

Pausanias' dramatic look towards the temple of Hera and his prayer for divine assistance at the crucial moment of battle (9.61.3); and he expresses the belief—one of the rare remarks on the divine that he makes in his own person—that no Persians fell in the sacred precinct of Demeter because the goddess herself prevented them on the grounds that they were impious men.<sup>44</sup>

Yet even here Plutarch outdoes Herodotus. He mentions the prophecies and Pausanias' prayer, but he adds fully half a dozen other incidents not mentioned by Herodotus. Two of these concern oracles given to the Athenians and the first is given impressive treatment indeed, the more remarkable in that no other source mentions it. Though lengthy, it must be quoted in full (*Arist.* 11.3–8):

Παυσανία μὲν οὖν καὶ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι κοινῇ Τεισαμένος ὁ Ἥλειος ἔμαντεύσατο, καὶ προεῖπε νίκην ἀμυνομένοις καὶ μὴ προεπιχειροῦσιν· Ἀριστείδου δὲ πέμψαντος εἰς Δελφοὺς, ἀνεῖλεν ὁ θεὸς Ἀθηναίους καθυπερτέρους ἔσεσθαι τῶν ἐναντίων εὐχομένους τῷ Διὶ καὶ τῇ Ἥρᾳ τῇ Κιθαιρωνίᾳ καὶ Πανὶ καὶ νύμφαις Σφραγίτισι, καὶ θύοντας ἥρωσιν Ἀνδροκράτει, Λεύκωνι, Πεισάνδρῳ, Δαμοκράτει, Ὑψίονι, Ἀκταίῳ, Πολυεῖδῳ, καὶ τὸν κίνδυνον ἐν γὰρ ἰδίᾳ ποιουμένους ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ τῆς Δάματρος τῆς Ἐλευσινίας καὶ τῆς Κόρας. οὗτος ὁ χρησμὸς ἀνενεχθεὶς ἀπορίαν τῷ Ἀριστείδῃ παρέιχεν. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἥρωες οἷς ἐκέλευε θύειν ἀρχηγέται Πλαταιέων ἦσαν, καὶ τὸ τῶν Σφραγιτίδων νυμφῶν ἄντρον ἐν μιᾷ κορυφῇ τοῦ Κιθαιρωνός ἐστιν, εἰς δυσμὰς ἡλίου θερινὰς τετραμμένον, ἐν ᾧ καὶ μαντεῖον ἦν πρότερον ὡς φασι καὶ πολλοὶ κατεῖχοντο τῶν ἐπιχωρίων, οὓς νυμφολήπτους προσηγόρευον. τὸ δὲ τῆς Ἐλευσινίας Δῆμητρος πεδίον, καὶ τὸ τὴν μάχην ἐν ἰδίᾳ χώρᾳ ποιουμένοις τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις νίκην δίδοσθαι, πάλιν εἰς τὴν Ἀττικὴν ἀνεκαλεῖτο καὶ μεθίστη τὸν πόλεμον. ἔνθα τῶν

<sup>44</sup> On this see 9.65 with Flower and Marincola (2002) ad loc. and Boedeker (2007) 70–1. This passage, unlike 8.77 (above, n. 26), is not suspected as an interpolation.

Πλαταιέων ὁ στρατηγὸς Ἀρίμνηστος ἔδοξε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ὑπὸ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Σωτήρος ἐπερωτώμενον αὐτόν, ὅτι δὴ πράττειν δέδοκται τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, εἰπεῖν, ἄρριον εἰς Ἐλευσίνα τὴν στρατιὰν ἀπάξομεν ὧ δέσποτα, καὶ διαμαχοῦμεθα τοῖς βαρβάροις ἐκεῖ κατὰ τὸ πυθόχρηστον. τὸν οὖν θεὸν φάσαι διαμαρτάνειν αὐτοὺς τοῦ παντός· αὐτόθι γὰρ εἶναι περὶ τὴν Πλαταικὴν τὰ πυθόχρηστα, καὶ ζητοῦντας ἀνευρήσειν. τούτων ἐναργῶς τῷ Ἀριμνήστῳ φανέντων, ἐξεγρόμενος τάχιστα μετεπέμψατο τοὺς ἐμπειροτάτους καὶ πρεσβυτάτους τῶν πολιτῶν, μεθ' ὧν διαλεγόμενος καὶ συνδιαπορῶν εὗρεν, ὅτι τῶν Ὑσιῶν πλησίον ὑπὸ τὸν Κιθαιρῶνα ναὸς ἐστὶν ἀρχαῖος πάνυ Δῆμητρος Ἐλευσινίας καὶ Κόρης προσαγορευόμενος. εὐθύς οὖν παραλαβὼν τὸν Ἀριστείδην ἤγεν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, εὐφύεστατον ὄντα παρατάξαι φάλαγγα πεζὴν ἵπποκρατουμένους διὰ τὰς ὑπωρείας τοῦ Κιθαιρῶνος, ἄφιππα ποιούσας τὰ καταλήγοντα καὶ συγκυροῦντα τοῦ πεδίου πρὸς τὸ ἱερόν. ταύτῃ δ' ἦν καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἀνδροκράτους ἠρώων ἐγγύς, ἄλσει πυκνῶν καὶ συσκίων δένδρων περιεχόμενον. ὅπως δὲ μηδὲν ἐλλιπὲς ἔχη πρὸς τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς νίκης ὁ χρησμός, ἔδοξε τοῖς Πλαταιεῦσιν, Ἀριμνήστου γνώμην εἰπόντος, ἀνελεῖν τὰ πρὸς τὴν Ἀττικὴν ὄρια τῆς Πλαταιίδος καὶ τὴν χώραν ἐπιδοῦναι τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐν οἰκείᾳ κατὰ τὸν χρησμὸν ἐναγωνίσασθαι.

Now for Pausanias and the Greeks in general, Teisamenus of Elis was the seer, and he foretold that they would win a victory provided that they did not advance to the attack, but stayed on the defensive. And when Aristides sent to Delphi, his messengers received an answer from the god that the Athenians would overcome their adversaries on condition that they prayed to Zeus, Hera of Cithaeron, Pan and the Sphragitic nymphs; that they sacrificed to the heroes Androcates, Leucon, Peisandrus, Damocrates, Hypsion, Actaeon, and Polyeidus; and that they risked a battle on their own territory in the plain of Eleusinian

Demeter and Kore. This oracle was reported to Aristides, who found it bewildering in the extreme. Certainly, the heroes to whom he was ordered to sacrifice were founders of Plataea, and the cave of the nymphs of Sphragis was situated on one of the peaks of Cithaeron, facing the point on the horizon where the sun sets in summer. In the past this cave was said to have contained an oracle, and many of the inhabitants nearby became possessed of oracular powers and were known as *nympholepti*. But the mention of the plain of Demeter, and the promise of victory to the Athenians if they fought a battle on their own soil appeared to summon them back to Attica and transfer the seat of the war there. At this point the Plataean commander, Arimnestus, had a dream, in which he was questioned by Zeus the Saviour as to what the Greeks had decided to do, and he replied: 'Tomorrow, Lord, we shall lead our army back to Eleusis and fight it out with the Persians there, as the Delphic oracle has commanded us.' At this the god declared that they had missed the whole meaning of the oracle, for the places which it mentioned were all in the neighbourhood of Plataea, and they would find them if only they searched. All this was revealed so clearly to Arimnestus that as soon as he awoke, he sent for the oldest and most experienced of his fellow-countrymen. When he had discussed his dream and questioned them, he discovered that under Mount Cithaeron near Hysiae there was a very ancient temple dedicated to Eleusinian Demeter and Kore. He at once took Aristides with him and led him to the place, which offered an excellent position in which to station a body of heavy infantry against a force that was superior in cavalry, since the spurs of Cithaeron, where they adjoin the temple and run down into the plain, make the ground impassable for cavalry. Close by, too, stood the shrine of the hero Androcrates in the midst of a thick and shady grove. Finally, to make sure that the conditions for victory which the oracle had mentioned should be fulfilled in every detail, Arimnestus put

forward a motion, which the Plataeans then passed, that they should remove their boundary stones on the side facing Attica, and give this territory to the Athenians, to enable them to fight in defence of Greece on their own soil, as the oracle had laid down.

It is noteworthy that Plutarch introduces the incident without any fanfare, simply as part of a *μὲν ... δέ* clause, the first element of which is the prophecy known from Herodotus, and in a way which suggests that the story was equally well known. One slight difference, however, is that in Herodotus the prophecy that the Greeks would be successful if they awaited rather than initiated battle, was for all the Greeks, whereas Plutarch characterises it as given to Pausanias and the Greeks, a subtle change that then allows him to introduce another prophecy, this one specifically for the Athenians. Scholars have been at a loss to explain where this incident comes from, and for our present purposes the source is immaterial.<sup>45</sup> Nor is it relevant here to determine whether or not the oracle is ‘genuine’.<sup>46</sup> It is important instead to emphasise what the incident contributes to Plutarch’s overall portrait of the divine in the victories of the Persian Wars.

The story is a complicated one because although the prophecy is given to Athens,<sup>47</sup> it requires both a second divine intervention (to a Plataean) and the Plataeans’ knowledge of their own territory to ensure that the

<sup>45</sup> See Marincola (forthcoming) for the argument that Plutarch’s source must be the Atthidographer Cleidemus.

<sup>46</sup> The oracle is no. 102 in Parke and Wormell (1956) and Q154 in Fontenrose (1978); the latter calls it ‘partly genuine’, accepting the genuineness of the order to worship the particular gods and heroes, while seeing the stipulation of the battle location as ‘a *post eventum* addition’ (Fontenrose (1978) 319–20). In accordance with his suspicion of all post-Herodotean sources, Hignett (1963) 419–20 dismisses the incident as unhistorical; for a brief but good recent discussion see Mikalson (2003) 78–9, with earlier references there; he is inclined to accept its historicity and integrates it with Herodotus’ account (95).

<sup>47</sup> Plutarch says that the oracle prophesied victory *for the Athenians* over their foes: Ἀθηναίους καθυπερέρους ἔσεσθαι τῶν ἐναντίων.

Athenians (and the Greeks) ultimately do the right thing. This familiar oracular pattern—uncertainty and error followed by eventual clarity and fulfilment of the god’s wishes—usually occurs slowly, sometimes taking generations to work out. Plutarch has accelerated this process by a nearly immediate second divine intervention, which sets the Greeks on the right path.<sup>48</sup> The oracle together with the ‘clarifying’ dream indicates both the importance of the battle and the gods’ care for the Greeks. Once again, the hand of heaven is made manifest in the kind of overt way usually avoided by Herodotus. Finally, the Plataeans’ generosity in making over their territory to the Athenians is the kind of sacrifice for the general good that is a consistent feature of Plutarch’s treatment of the Persian Wars.<sup>49</sup>

The story of Aristides and Delphi also has the important function of tying Delphi closely to the ultimate victory over the barbarians. By giving detailed instructions to the Athenians (and, by extension of course, to all the Greeks), the oracle ensures that the correct strategy is employed, and divine guidance is made explicit and real. We need not here attribute conscious apologetic purposes to Plutarch<sup>50</sup> but rather may observe that such a story would have strongly suggested itself to him as characteristic of the gods’ interest in Greek success over the barbarians.

The next two incidents are more minor. Plutarch’s story of the attack by some Lydians during Pausanias’ sacrifice before the battle and their subsequent rout seems to be told as an *aition*, mainly to explain the unusual Spartan custom of beating young men with rods at the altar at Sparta.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Mikalson (2003) 207 n. 111 notes the uniqueness of Arimnestus’ ‘very helpful’ dream which ‘is unparalleled in Herodotus’ *Histories*’.

<sup>49</sup> Marincola (2010) 136–8.

<sup>50</sup> For the role of Delphi in the Persian Wars see Elayi (1978) and (1979); Harrison (2000) 122–57; and Mikalson (2003) 111–35; we need not posit conscious apologetic because, as Mikalson (2003) 121 points out, the ancients did not question the positive role of Delphi in the Persian Wars: ‘[n]ot until modern scholarship do we find criticism of Apollo’s behavior in the Persian Wars coming to the fore.’

<sup>51</sup> *Arist.* 17.10, with Sansone (1989) and Calabi Limentani (1964) ad loc.

Pausanias' prayer to Hera, given briefly in Herodotus as a request that the goddess 'not deceive them of their hope' (*χρηζοντα μηδαμῶς σφέας ψευσθῆναι τῆς ἐλπίδος*, 9.61.3) is expanded by Plutarch in two ways: first, the prayer is made to Hera 'and the other gods who watch over the Plataean land' (*Arist.* 18.1), and, second, by giving a 'fuller' version of Pausanias' prayer in which he prays 'that if it were not the gods' will that the Greeks should conquer, they might at least do some great deed before they fell and prove to their enemies that they had taken the field against brave men who knew how to fight' (*ibid.*).

The treatment of Mardonius' death reveals important differences between the two authors. In Herodotus, there are intimations of Mardonius' death already in the council at Persia that decides to invade Greece: there Artabanus, opposing Mardonius' strong desire to attack the Greeks, says that 'the day will come when many a man left at home [sc. in Persia] will hear the news that Mardonius has brought disaster upon Persia, and this body lies a prey to dogs and birds somewhere in the country of the Athenians or the Spartans, if not upon the road thither' (7.108.3). Later, when the Lacedaemonians receive an oracle from Delphi that they should demand reparation for the death of their king Leonidas, they are told by Xerxes with a laugh (and with deep irony) that 'they will get all the satisfaction they deserve from Mardonius here' (8.114). Indeed, in Herodotus' account it is clear that Mardonius' death is retribution for the death and mutilation of Leonidas.<sup>52</sup> Plutarch, of course, has not the narrative space to work something like this out, even if he were inclined to do so, and so contents himself with a brief and compact account (*Arist.* 19.1–2):

*καὶ τὸν Μαρδόνιον ἀνὴρ Σπαρτιάτης ὄνομα Ἀείμνηστος ἀποκτίννουσι, λίθῳ τὴν κεφαλὴν πατάξας, ὥσπερ αὐτῷ προσήμανε τὸ Ἀμφιάρεω μαντεῖον. ἔπεμψε γὰρ ἄνδρα Λυδὸν ἐνταῦθα, Κᾶρα δὲ ἕτερον εἰς τὸ Πτῶον ὁ*

<sup>52</sup> See Hdt. 9.64.1 with Flower and Marincola (2002) 10–11, 219.

Μαρδόνιος καὶ τοῦτον μὲν ὁ προφήτης Καρικῆ γλώσση προσεῖπεν, ὁ δὲ Λυδὸς ἐν τῷ σηκῷ τοῦ Ἀμφιάρεω κατευνασθεὶς ἔδοξεν ὑπηρετήν τινὰ τοῦ θεοῦ παραστήναι καὶ κελεύειν αὐτὸν ἀπιέναι, μὴ βουλομένῳ δὲ λίθον εἰς τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐμβαλεῖν μέγαν, ὥστε δόξαι πληγέντα τεθνάναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον· καὶ ταῦτα μὲν οὕτω γενέσθαι λέγεται.

Mardonius was killed by a Spartan named Aeimnestus, who struck his head with a stone, just as the oracle at the shrine of Amphiaraüs had prophesied to him. Mardonius had sent a Lydian to this oracle and also a Carian to the Ptoön. The latter was actually addressed by the prophet in the Carian tongue, but the Lydian, when he lay down to sleep in the sacred enclosure of Amphiaraüs, dreamed that one of the god's attendants stood at his side and commanded him to be gone, and when he refused, hurled down a great stone on his head, so that in his dream he was killed by the blow. These things then are said to have happened in this manner.

In Herodotus, Mardonius sends the Carian Mys to consult the oracles throughout Greece and Mys visits the shrine of Amphiaraus as well as the Ptoön, where the priestess gives the god's response in the Carian language, a marvel that Herodotus makes a particular point of noting (8.133–5). But whereas Herodotus distinctly fails to say what the prophecies revealed to Mardonius,<sup>53</sup> Plutarch has Amphiaraüs indicate clearly the manner of his death. So once again Plutarch offers a narrative in which there are clear indications of the role of the divine in the working out of the Greek victory over Persia.

Finally, Plutarch details a number of religious activities after the battle. He mentions the Athenians' sacrifice to the

<sup>53</sup> Hdt. 8.136.1; the only thing Herodotus tells us is that as a result of the prophecies Mardonius sent Alexander of Macedon to the Athenians to offer an alliance.

Sphragitic Nymphs, which takes us back to the prophecy given to Aristides before the battle, and is an indication of Plutarch's care to mention such things.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, he mentions a Delphic pronouncement (the Greeks are said specifically to have inquired of the oracle: *περὶ δὲ θυσίας ἐρομένοις αὐτοῖς*, 20.4) which enjoined the establishment of an altar to Zeus Eleutherios as well as a purification after the battle, the extinguishing of all fire and the conveyance of pure fire from Delphi. The latter injunction leads to the story of the Plataean Euchidas, who, like Pheidippides at Marathon, performs a marvellous deed, in Euchidas' case running a thousand stades from Delphi to Plataea on the same day so as to bring the sacred fire as quickly as possible and then expiring upon completion of the deed (*Arist.* 19.7–9, 20.4–8). In this way Plutarch has very carefully ensured that the gods figure in the battle of Plataea before, during, and after the conflict.

#### IV

To sum up, then: Plutarch's attack on Herodotus' characterisation and portrayal of the gods in the *de Herodoti malignitate* and Plutarch's own portrayal of the divine in his Persian-War *Lives* show a similar approach and orientation. Although Herodotus in no way left the divine out of his history (quite the contrary, in fact), Plutarch believed nonetheless that Herodotus either had not treated the divine in an appropriate way (as in the case of Solon's remark on the jealousy and meddlesomeness of the divinity, which was a serious affront to Plutarch's Platonist beliefs) or had not included enough of the divine in his narrative of the Persian Wars, omitting the clear signs and indications of divine involvement that could so easily be found in other authors. We must remember, of course, that half a millennium separates Plutarch from the Persian Wars, and that by his time the events had long taken on a 'heroic'

<sup>54</sup> Recall that he faults Herodotus for not including these things (above, no. 8).

colouring in which a united Greece had turned back the whole power of Asia, and had done so, moreover, with scant resources. Plutarch in no way minimises the human contribution to this success—indeed his *Lives* and *Moralia* celebrate it—but he also consistently makes clear in his narratives that the gods had been necessary throughout the struggle, and that it was they, as much as Themistocles, Pausanias or Aristides, who ensured that Greece should be free.

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FATE, DIVINE *PHTHONOS*, AND THE  
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*Abstract:* Herodotus enjoyed wide popularity among Byzantine historians. Within a Christian society, his complicated religious outlook and his moral viewpoint were of interest to the historians while at the same time presenting difficulties for their perception of historical causation. This article traces the responses of three early and middle Byzantine historians to Herodotus' religious views. I focus in particular on the significance which three concepts central to Herodotus' religious and historical thought—fate, divine *phthonos*, and the wheel of fortune—hold in selected passages from Procopius' *Wars*, Michael Psellus' *Chronographia* and Nicetas Choniates' *History*. I argue that these three concepts are not merely employed as literary devices but can help elucidate the theological and historical views of the Byzantine historians.

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*Keywords:* Choniates, Christian, Greek religion, Herodotus, pagan, Procopius, Psellus.

Byzantine historians engaged systematically with and responded to their classical predecessors.<sup>1</sup> This process involved creativity and innovation and

<sup>1</sup> This is a revised, and much improved, version of a paper delivered at the Classical Association Conference 2013 panel 'Reading Herodotus' Gods, from Antiquity to the Present', organised by Anthony Ellis. First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank Anthony Ellis for his sharp and instructive comments, and the excellent job he did as the editor of this volume. I would also like to thank Mathieu de Bakker and the anonymous reviewer for reading earlier drafts and offering helpful feedback. Finally, I am grateful to the *Histos* team, and John Marincola in particular, for offering a most suitable home for all four papers.

served the authors' literary, cultural, and political purposes. A landmark work such as Herodotus' *Histories*, which inaugurated the genre of history writing, was a seminal text to grapple and compete with. On account of its varied nature, the *Histories* was received in different ways, ranging from imitation to forthright criticism.<sup>2</sup> In a Christian context and in a society so deeply preoccupied with religion, Herodotus' complex religious standpoint and moral outlook made him an appealing model, but also posed challenges to the historians' perceptions of historical causation. This article tackles a selection of responses of early and middle Byzantine historians to Herodotus' religious outlook.

A comprehensive discussion of such a rich topic would require more space. I will therefore limit myself to a few indicative cases that can give us insight into the engagement of three Byzantine historians with Herodotus. I shall examine the role that three concepts central to Herodotean theological and historical thinking—divine *phthonos* (envy),<sup>3</sup> fate, and the wheel of fortune—play in passages selected from the following historiographical works: Procopius' *Wars* (6th century), Michael Psellus' *Chronographia* (11th century) and Nicetas Choniates' *History* (12th to early 13th century).

All three works have survived in complete form. Each carries particular significance for the history of the periods it narrates (in particular because the three historians claim to have participated in and/or witnessed the events they describe). The three works between them, moreover, demonstrate Herodotean influence in the following aspects: subject matter, vocabulary, style, ethnography, geography, dramatic presentation, and digressions.

I should like to start with some caveats. First, given that Byzantine historians often follow more than one classical

<sup>2</sup> See the brief overviews of the Byzantines' preoccupation with Herodotus' text by Bichler and Rollinger (2006) 181–3 and Rapp (2008) 129–34. Cf. also, more generally, Greatrex (1996) on the engagement of 5th- and 6th-century historians with the classical past, and Kaldellis (2012) on the Byzantine interest in ancient Greek historians.

<sup>3</sup> On envy in ancient Greece, see Konstan (2006) 111–28; Sanders (2013).

model<sup>4</sup> and their reception is in addition mediated through other pagan or Christian authors, it is not an easy task to detect direct influence and we must therefore proceed with care. Second, we must bear in mind that not only for Herodotus but also for other historians after him, such as Thucydides and especially Polybius, chance played a significant role in the explanation of historical events. However, the ideas of the reversal of fortune and of divine *phthonos*, at least in the field of historiography, appear for the first time in Herodotus and remain strongly associated with his work (reversal: Hdt. 1.5.4; 1.207.2; divine *phthonos*: Hdt. 1.32; 3.40; 4.205 (*epiphthonos*); 7.10ε; 7.46; 8.109.2 (*epiphthonos*)). Furthermore, in Herodotus there is a distinctive ambiguity in terms of the interference of the divine in human affairs. A degree of scepticism as to whether the divine is responsible for the turn of events in human life and also the openness to a range of historical explanations (fortune, human will, god) that we find in Herodotus' *Histories*<sup>5</sup> may be detected with variations in the works of the Byzantine historians. I suggest here that, among other things, it is in particular this openness to different explanations that brings these two intellectual cultures closer together.

But were these two worlds in essence so different after all? It is not the aim of this article to elaborate on the relationship between ancient Greek and Christian religion, but some brief comments will help build the background to my analysis. Viewing ancient Greek religion as the exact opposite of Christianity is a simple but unhelpful reflex. Christian thought incorporated numerous ideas from the complex and dynamic set of elements that comprised ancient Greek religion. Yet despite ample examples of overlap, the attempt to merge elements of these two

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Procopius is demonstrably influenced by Thucydides in his speeches and digressions. For an example of Thucydidean *aemulatio* in Procopius' *Wars*, see Aerts (2003) 93–6.

<sup>5</sup> On the diversified character of Herodotus' religious stance and handling of religious material, see Harrison (2000); Mikalson (2003). Cf. also Baragwanath (2008) for Herodotus' depiction of complex human motivation which further enriches the levels of historical interpretation.

religions was not always uncomplicated. When it came to historiography, Greek historians presented their Christian successors with a whole range of difficulties, especially in terms of historical causation. The major role of fortune in historical events, the jealous and vengeful deity, the importance of human decisions in the unfolding of events, and the centrality of fate in particular (all dominant in various pagan historiographical texts) would not seem easily compatible with the good and just nature of the Christian God who directed the course of events and all human affairs. Nevertheless, not everyone found this problematic. While some openly rejected and attacked certain ideas, others tried to adapt and assimilate them to Christian viewpoints. Most importantly, several Greek concepts, such as the role of fortune in human life or the supernatural force of envy, continued to be an integral part of Christian popular beliefs which facilitated their inclusion in the works of Byzantine historians.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason we must guard against the easy assumption that Byzantine historians who incorporated what we would label ‘pagan ideas’ into their works were necessarily going against Christian theology. Equally, that these historians are Christian and write in a Christian context and for a Christian audience, does not mean that they cannot flirt intellectually with ancient authors, or that their literary interactions with ancient authors are somehow not serious. Unless they openly attack the theology of classical historiography (most common in the case of ecclesiastical historians or hagiographers),<sup>7</sup> Byzantine historians do not seem to be heavily exercised about these matters. Acknowledging this fact can help us better understand the use of Greek theological concepts by Byzantine historians, and to break free of the preconception that the use of Greek texts consisted only of literary

<sup>6</sup> On how the first Christian historians coped with prominent religious notions of classical historiography, see Chesnut (1986).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Eusebius of Caesarea, on whose work see e.g. Chesnut (1986) ch. 3. Note, however, that these authors often use the same means they are criticising to attack pagan concepts.

imitation aiming at superficial rhetorical effect. Reading the Byzantine engagement with classical authors as an aesthetic device is a handy but overly simplistic way to do away with such complexities (and with the complexities of Christian thought itself). Tempting though it is, we must resist the urge to develop smooth, consistent narratives of the theological discourse of Byzantine historiography.

My aim in this article is to examine how the Herodotean concepts of chance, the cycle of human affairs, and the envy of the gods shed light on the theology and, subsequently, the historical perspective of the three Byzantine historians under scrutiny. I will explore how these concepts interact with Christian beliefs; whether and how the use of these religious notions enables the historians to better realise their narrative purposes; and how the use of such concepts reflects the historians' personal conception of historical reality. Tracing the relationship between Herodotus and these Byzantine historians will help to disclose some of the intricacies of their theological thinking and the construction of their narratives. Scholars are becoming progressively more aware of, and interested in, the preoccupation of Byzantine historians with narrative and literary techniques,<sup>8</sup> and this paper attempts to contribute to this tendency by demonstrating that, in Byzantine historiography, religious concepts associated with Herodotus can be more than mere rhetorical devices.<sup>9</sup>

### **Procopius' *Wars***<sup>10</sup>

Procopius witnesses the challenging and difficult times of Justinian's reign. Justinian limited freedom of expression, did not tolerate religious diversity, prohibited pagans and heretics from holding public offices, and persecuted

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Macrides (2010); Nilsson and Scott (2012) 328–32.

<sup>9</sup> For such concepts as mere literary devices in e.g. Procopius, see Cameron (1966); Brodka (2004).

<sup>10</sup> Translations of Procopius (occasionally slightly adapted) are from Dewing (1914–40).

religious dissidents. All these could have influenced Procopius' religious beliefs and the way these are expressed in his works, especially since Procopius writes contemporary history. Fear for his life could have dictated a certain distancing and ambiguity when it came to religious (and political) topics, in an effort not to give offence to the emperor and endanger himself. Whether this was the case or not, the contemporary context is important in understanding why Procopius' religious views have stirred up so much controversy. Things become even more complex because Procopius, as a profoundly classicising historian,<sup>11</sup> freely combines pagan with Christian elements. He has been called a Christian, a pagan, a Platonist, a sceptic, a fatalist, and an agnostic. He was, however, raised an orthodox Christian, he respected monks, and believed in miracles, demons, omens, and prodigies (e.g. *Wars* 1.4.9; 1.7.5–11; 7.35.4–8).<sup>12</sup>

The *Wars* of Procopius tells the story of Justinian's military engagements in Persia, Africa, and Italy (527–553/4 AD). Fortune (τύχη) dominates Procopius' historical explanation. It features either as 'circumstances', 'accident', 'chance' or 'situation', or as a key and unforeseeable factor in the unfolding of events, and is often linked or even identified with God. However, fortune is most frequently subordinate to God.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there is one example where an unfortunate fate is considered to be God's vengeance for a harmful or unjust action: the speech of

<sup>11</sup> On Herodotean, Thucydidean and other classical influence in Procopius' works, see e.g. Braun (1885) and (1894); Cameron (1985) 33–46, 217–19; Kaldellis (2004) 17–61; Karpozelos (1997) 380–1, 384; Treadgold (2007) 213–18 (*passim*); Gilmer (2013); Pazdernik (2006); Bornmann (1974); Adshead (1990); Cresci (1986).

<sup>12</sup> On Procopius' religious beliefs, see Kaldellis (2004) 165–221 and Treadgold's brief remarks (2007) 222–6.

<sup>13</sup> Fortune as 'circumstances', 'accident', 'chance' or 'situation': e.g. 2.11.33; 3.11.6; 3.25.25; 5.5.19; 5.18.15; 7.31.13; 7.13.19. Fortune as a key factor in the unfolding of events: e.g. 6.28.2; 8.33.24–5. Fortune linked with God: e.g. 2.9.13. Fortune subordinate to God: e.g. 3.18.2; 3.25.11–18; 7.8.21–4. Fortune identified with God: e.g. 8.12.33–5. On fortune as identified with divine providence in the *Wars*, see Downey (1949).

Totila, leader of the Goths, to his soldiers (7.8.15–24). Here Totila says that under the leadership of the unjust Theodatus, former king of the Goths, they behaved unfairly (7.8.21–2). They therefore caused God (θεός) not to be favourable towards them and as a result they are experiencing bad fortune (τύχη). Now that they have suffered enough for their sins (νῦν δὲ τὴν δίκην παρ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεὸς ὧν ἐξημάρτομεν ἱκανῶς ἔχων), God is giving them good fortune by making them victorious (οἷς γε ὑπὲρ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν δύναμιν νενικηκέναι τοὺς πολεμίους τετύχηκε).<sup>14</sup> A Christian theological scheme of sin and punishment is outlined here, while fortune features as part of a divine plan. The same scheme of sin and punishment (God punishes injustice and rewards justice), but without a specific reference to fortune, is not only embedded in the speeches ascribed to characters (3.19.6; 2.4.17; 7.16.32) but also found in the narrative (e.g. 1.25.36, 41; 2.11.25).

In other passages Procopius cannot tell whether a certain event happened because of God or fortune, for example, in the Gothic Wars, when he relates Belisarius’ plan against Totila and the defeat of the Romans (7.13.15–19).<sup>15</sup> Given

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Nicias’ speech of encouragement to his troops in Thuc. 7.77.2–3 (note esp. 7.77.3: ἱκανὰ γὰρ τοῖς τε πολεμίους ἠτύχηται, καὶ εἴ τῳ θεῶν ἐπίφθονοι ἐστρατεύσαμεν, ἀποχρώντως ἤδη τετυμωρήμεθα ‘the enemy have had their full share of success, and if the gods resented our launching this expedition, we have already been punished enough’). Translations of Thucydides (occasionally slightly adapted) are from Hammond (2009).

<sup>15</sup> ‘And to me it seemed either that Belisarius had chosen the worse course because it was fated (χρῆν) at that time that the Romans should fare ill, or that he had indeed determined upon the better course, but God, having in mind to assist Totila and the Goths, had stood as an obstacle in his way, so that the best of the plans of Belisarius had turned out utterly contrary to his expectations ... However, whether this is so or otherwise, I am unable to say’. Cf. 2.23.16 (on the Byzantine plague): ‘this disease, whether by chance or by some providence (εἴτε τύχη τινὶ εἴτε προνοίᾳ), chose out with exactitude the worst men and let them go free’. The latter example is very close to the Herodotean εἴτε ... εἴτε formula which is frequently used in depiction of double motivation (e.g. Hdt. 3.121.2: εἴτ’ ἐκ προνοίης ... εἴτε καὶ συντυχίῃ τις τοιαύτη ἐπεγένετο

Procopius' classical take on historical writing and his strong interest in causation, putting fortune and God side by side could be seen to reveal a tendency to broaden the web of historical causation. This strategy is especially favoured by Herodotus, who often allows for both divine and natural or human explanations of events without taking sides or engaging in any kind of argument. For example, at 7.129.4 the historian's remark as to how the Tempe valley was formed leaves room for interpretation on the divine and the natural level and does not provide a single answer: 'The Thessalians say that Poseidon himself made the ravine through which the Peneius flows, and the story is plausible; for if one believes that Poseidon is responsible for earthquakes, and therefore that rifts formed by earthquakes are caused by him, then the sight of this place would make one say it was the work of Poseidon. For it seems to me that this rift in the mountains was caused by an earthquake'.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the Athenian defeat at the hands of the Aeginetans and the Argives is attributed by the Athenians to divine intervention but for the Aeginetans and Argives it comes down to human agency (Hdt. 5.85–87.2). If Procopius is indeed appropriating here a distinctly Herodotean technique, he might be aiming at detaching himself from any one interpretation, thus both giving the impression of a more objective viewpoint and leaving it up to his readers to decide for themselves which interpretation they agree with or find more convincing. One important difference is, of course, that both of Procopius' explanations, fortune and God, are supernatural.

Procopius states that God is altogether good (e.g. 5.3.7–9) and, unlike Herodotus, cannot ascribe envy to God. Throughout the *Wars* φθόνος ('envy', 'jealousy') mostly appears as a human emotion, but it is also attributed to evil spirits (δαίμονες, identified in Christian belief most frequently with the Devil) and to fortune. This supernatural

'whether deliberately or whether some chance occurrence happened') (see Baragwanath (2008) 97–8 and esp. 122–59).

<sup>16</sup> Translations of Herodotus (occasionally slightly adapted) are from de Sélincourt (2003) and Waterfield (1998).

envy occurs when someone enjoys too much good fortune (4.8.1). We also find the closely related notion of *βασκανία*, malice, on the part of humans—a word also associated with the Devil in Christian thought.<sup>17</sup>

Procopius' preoccupation with the theme of reversal in human life represents a marked affinity with Herodotus. Change of fortune is recurrently emphasised in the *Wars* and related to the will of God.<sup>18</sup> Herodotus does not always attribute a change of fortune to the divinity, but when he does the change is often linked with divine *phthonos*. Procopius' slightly modified stance seems to be a consequence of his Christian beliefs. In an interesting piece of narrative Procopius reworks the Persian council scene in Herodotus' Book 7.<sup>19</sup> There Herodotus narrates the discussion about whether the Persians should undertake an expedition against Greece. Xerxes announces his decision

<sup>17</sup> Envy as human emotion: e.g. 2.2.12; 2.2.15; 5.1.33; 7.8.23; 7.25.23; 8.11.9; 8.24.28. Envy attributed to evil spirits: e.g. 7.19.22 (*φθονερῶν δαιμόνων*). Envy attributed to fortune: e.g. 6.8.1 (*τῆς δὲ τύχης ὁ φθόνος*). Envy as *βασκανία*: e.g. 6.30.1. It is worth bearing in mind that the notions of 'envious fate' and 'envious demon' appear first in Hellenistic writers and are picked up by imperial period writers (e.g. Pol. 39.8.2: *τὴν τύχην ὡς ἔστιν ἀγαθὴ φθονῆσαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις*; Plut. *Alc.* 33.2: *τινὶ τύχῃ πονηρᾷ καὶ φθονερῷ δαίμονι*), and that the words *βασκανία* and *βάσκανος* are used frequently in Hellenistic literature as synonyms for *φθόνος* and *φθονερός* (e.g. Paus. 2.33.3: *δαμόνιον ... βάσκανον*). On the envy of fate in Hellenistic literature, see Aalders (1979). On the usage and meaning of *baskanos tuxhê* and *phthonos* in Byzantine historiography (esp. in the 10th century) and the association of *phthonos* with the devil, see Hinterberger (2010b); cf. Hinterberger (2010a) on emotions, including envy, in Byzantine literature; (2004) (on envy). On the huge overlap between *phthonos* and *baskania*, established by the time of the Cappadocian Fathers, see Hinterberger (2010b) 197.

<sup>18</sup> Reversal of fortune: e.g. 3.5.10 (*τύχαις ... ξυμμεταβάλλεσθαι*); 1.17.30 (*οὐ πάντα ... χρεῶν ἔστι πιστεύειν τῇ τύχῃ οὐδὲ τοὺς πολέμους οἴεσθαι δεῖν κατορθοῦν ἅπαντας. οὐδὲ γὰρ εἰκὸς τοῦτό γε οὐδὲ ἄλλως ἀνθρώπειον*); 4.6.24 (*ἢ οὐχ ὁμοίως τοῖς φλαύροις ἀναγκαῖά γε ἡμῖν καὶ τὰ παρὰ τῆς τύχης ἀγαθὰ λογιστέον*); 7.25.5 (*τὰ γὰρ ἀνθρώπεια καὶ σφάλλεσθαι ποτε πέφυκεν*). Reversal of fortune related to the will of God: e.g. 5.24.1–17; 3.4.13 (*τὰ ἀνθρώπεια τοῖς τε θείοις σφάλλεσθαι*).

<sup>19</sup> The correspondence has been noted by e.g. Evans (1971) 85–6; Kaldellis (2004) 180–1; Scott (2012a) 73–4.

to attack Greece but Artabanus, his uncle, tries to change his mind by talking about the dangers of such an enterprise and divine *phthonos* that brings down those who entertain grand designs and think big. In the follow-up to the Persian council scene, Herodotus narrates the dream that appeared to both Xerxes and Artabanus and eventually convinced them to carry out the campaign (Hdt. 7.8–18).

The relevant piece in Procopius (3.10.1–17) opens with a speech by John the Cappadocian who, like Artabanus, asks the emperor Justinian to reconsider an expedition against the Vandals and Gelimer in North Africa. The contexts are very similar: in both cases everyone is silent, although they disagree with the king's decision, and only the wise advisors dare to speak (cf. 3.10.7–8 with Hdt. 7.10.1).<sup>20</sup> What is more, the advisors talk about obstacles posed by sea and land,<sup>21</sup> recommend that the king proceed only after careful consideration and prudent planning, and urge the king to learn from past failures.<sup>22</sup> The events following the

<sup>20</sup> John's casting as a wise advisor at this point strikes us as strange because elsewhere in the *Wars* he is portrayed in dark colours (he had no regard for God and was punished for his crimes: e.g. 1.24–5). But perhaps given his close relationship with Justinian (e.g. 1.25–33) Procopius deems him the right person to admonish the emperor. Scott ((2012a) 73–4) suggests that Procopius' desire to adhere to the classical model in order to delicately stress his opposition to the expedition overpowered his negative view of John.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 3.10.14 to Hdt. 7.10a.3–β.2 and also to Hdt. 7.49 (Artabanus' words in his discussion with Xerxes at the Hellespont).

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. 3.10.13–16: 'But if in reality these things lie on the knees of God, and if it behoves us, taking example from what has happened in the past, to fear the outcome of war, on what grounds is it not better to love a state of quiet rather than the dangers of mortal strife? ... it will not be possible for you to reap the fruits of victory, and at the same time any reversal of fortune will bring harm to what is well established'. Cf. Hdt. 7.10β.1–δ.2: '... the men are said to be valiant, and indeed one might well judge as much from the fact that the Athenians alone destroyed so great an army that came to Attica with Datis and Artaphrenes ... I conjecture thus not of any wisdom of my own, but just such a disaster did, in fact, almost overtake us when your father built a bridge across the Thracian Bosphorus and bridged the Danube to attack the Scythians ... You should not choose to run that kind of risk when there is no necessity to do so ... In my experience nothing is more

discussion further recall the Herodotean narrative sequence: a priest comes and says that God appeared to him in a dream and asked him to tell the emperor that he must go to war (3.10.18–20).

John's speech is important in reflecting Procopius' theological framework as are the differences between this speech and its Herodotean foil. Herodotus' Artabanus attributes a reversal of good fortune to the jealous divinity (ὁ θεὸς φθονήσας) blasting anything preeminent (Hdt. 7.10ε). The reversal of fortune is emphasised in Procopius, as is the responsibility of God for all that happens in human life, but there is no sign of divine *phthonos*. Procopius also alludes to the Byzantine belief that the emperor is God's representative on earth and is therefore at least partly able to control the fortunes of his subjects (3.10.8). The Herodotean parallel, moreover, reinforces the comparison—which persists in the *Wars*—of Justinian to barbarian despots.

Procopius evokes Herodotus again when relating the fate of the city of Antioch (2.10.4–5):

But I become dizzy as I write of such a great calamity and transmit it to future times, and I am unable to understand why indeed it should be the will of God to exalt on high the fortunes of a man or of a place, and then to cast them down and destroy them for no cause which we can perceive (τί ποτε ἄρα βουλομένῳ τῷ θεῷ εἶη πράγματα μὲν ἀνδρὸς ἢ χωρίου του ἐπαίρειν εἰς ὕψος, αὐτοῖς δὲ ρίπτειν τε αὐτὰ καὶ ἀφανίζειν ἐξ οὐδεμιᾶς ἡμῶν φαινομένης αἰτίας). For it is wrong to say that with Him all things are not always done with reason (αὐτῷ γὰρ οὐ θέμις εἰπεῖν μὴ οὐχὶ ἅπαντα κατὰ λόγον αἰεὶ γίνεσθαι), though he then endured to see Antioch brought down to the ground at the hands of a most unholy man, a city

advantageous than good planning. For, even if a set-back happens, that does not alter the fact that the plan was sound; it is just that the plan was defeated by chance. However, if someone who has not laid his plans properly is attended by fortune, he may have had a stroke of luck, but that does not alter the fact that his plan was unsound'.

whose beauty and grandeur in every respect could not even so be utterly concealed.

Procopius' language and imagery are equally reminiscent of Artabanus' speech to Xerxes about the envy of the divine that cuts off anything excessive (*ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν*), like great living creatures, tall trees, and buildings (Hdt. 7.10ε). Similar is the picture Solon paints in his conversation with Croesus: the divine is entirely jealous and tends to confound humans (1.32.1: *τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες*); hence, having given many men a glimpse of happiness, it then utterly ruins them (1.32.9: *πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε*).<sup>23</sup>

Rather than employing the notion of divine *phthonos*, Procopius cannot explain the reversal in Antioch's fortune but professes to be certain that God had his reasons. Fortune's role in reversing human affairs is especially stressed in the life of Totila, whose wretched end is completely incongruous with his former glory. Procopius finds the capriciousness of fortune incomprehensible (8.32.28–30) but the start of the next chapter clearly shows that he considers this part of God's plan. In 8.33.1 the narrator enters his text to comment that Justinian's general Narses was right to believe that the Byzantine victory and Totila's death, as well as everything else, was the work of God. Nevertheless, divine intervention—highlighted in the case of Antioch by a portent (2.10.1–3)—does not exclude human will, which the historian mentions as a factor operating alongside God's will (5.24.1–17).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Amasis' advice to Polycrates (Hdt. 3.40): 'the divinity is jealous (*τὸ θεῖον ... ἔστι φθονερόν*) ... I have never yet heard of someone doing well in everything who did not end up utterly destroyed (*ὅστις ἐς τέλος οὐ κακῶς ἐτελεύτησε πρόρριζος*)'. Cf. also the similar sentiments expressed in Pindar (*Pyth.* 10.20–1: *φθονεραῖς ἐκ θεῶν μετατροπίαις*; 8.76–8: *δαίμων δὲ παρίσχει ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὑπερθε βάλλον, ἄλλον δ' ὑπὸ χειρῶν μέτρῳ καταβαίνει*) and Simonides (fr. 527 *PMG*: *ὀλίγω δὲ χρόνῳ πάντα μεταρρίπτει θεός*). On Herodotus' rhetoric of advice, see Pelling (2006a); (2006b) 104–6.

Another motif which might well be borrowed from Herodotus is the use of a letter to express one's thoughts on human affairs. Amasis' letter to Polycrates about divine jealousy and the instability of fortune (Hdt. 3.40) could have provided the background of Pharas' letter to Gelimer (4.6.15–26) about the changeability of fortune being part of the human condition. Both letters advise the recipient to embrace or cause a change of fortune because some kind of balance is needed to avoid total misfortune and utter disaster. A comparably prudent attitude is advocated in Belisarius' letter to Justinian, where the general states that 'achievements which transcend the nature of things may not properly and fittingly be ascribed to man's valour, but to a stronger power' (5.24.5). This stronger power is described as 'some chance' which is soon identified with the will of God.

As Averil Cameron has argued, Procopius' use of classical vocabulary, tendency to avoid Christian terms, and adoption of an external perspective when commenting on Christian matters are closely linked to the fact that the *Wars* are written in the tradition of classical historiography.<sup>24</sup> This language creates a forceful rhetorical effect, corroborates Procopius' authority and objectivity, and would be easily recognised by the audience as a valid technique for a classicising Christian author.<sup>25</sup> Kaldellis, on the other hand, explains Procopius' inconsistencies and detachment by proposing that he is not a Christian; he further argues, reasoning from the historical context, that Procopius employs classical models to veil his criticism of the emperor and express his non-Christian outlook while avoiding

<sup>24</sup> E.g. 3.10.18: τῶν δέ τις ἱερέων οὓς δὴ ἐπισκόπους καλοῦσιν 'but one of the priests whom they call bishops'; 4.21.21: αὐτὸν ὀμείσθαι τὰ Χριστιανῶν λόγια ἔφασαν, ἅπερ καλεῖν εὐαγγέλια νενομίκασιν 'they said that he would swear by the sacred writings of the Christians, which they are accustomed to call Gospels'. Cf. Herodotus' assuming an external stance when discussing Greek religion, e.g. Hdt. 1.131.1; 2.53.

<sup>25</sup> See Cameron (1966); (1985). On Procopius purely aiming at *mimesis* of a superior writing style, see also Cameron and Cameron (1964); Brodka (2004).

exposing himself.<sup>26</sup> Neither Cameron's nor Kaldellis' views are unproblematic. Both scholars seem to start from the false premise that paganism and Christianity constitute entirely separable belief systems. *Mimesis* and facilitation of the audience's understanding based on familiar language and thematic patterns are only two aspects of Procopius' employment and remoulding of classical models. But to admit that Procopius' engagement with classical models is more than surface interaction does not indicate that Procopius rejected Christianity. The same can be said of his occasional ambiguity in religious matters and the central and complex role given to *tukhê* in the *Wars*. For all his occasional scepticism, shunning of Christian diction, and emphasis on chance, Procopius' historical causation bears strong Christian colours;<sup>27</sup> we notice that when he is unable to explain things in any other way he attributes them to a higher power, God. And when human responsibility (usually the emperor's) is at play, it mingles with the will of God.<sup>28</sup>

Pagan and distinctly Herodotean notions are adapted to current beliefs, and chance is made part of a Christian

<sup>26</sup> See Kaldellis (2004) 165–221, who argues that *tukhê* is a dominant feature of Procopius' non-Christian world-view. Cf. also Elferink (1967) who proposes that Procopius believed in both a rational God and an irrational fate.

<sup>27</sup> On Procopius' Christianity, see Evans (1971) (cf. esp. 100: 'he [i.e. Procopius] did not assign a large portion of historical causation to a purely pagan *τύχη*. Rather, he kept a place for contingency in historical causation, because he refused to see any real incompatibility between an omnipotent God and Divine foreknowledge on the one hand, and free will and contingency on the other ... [A]t least we may say that Procopius' concept of *τύχη* was a product of his own time and education. It was not reused lumber from the pagan past, ill-digested and imperfectly comprehended by him'); Cameron and Cameron (1964) 317–22; Cameron (1966); (1985) 113–33; Treadgold (2007) 222–6; Downey (1949), who argues that Procopius was a sceptical Christian.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Cameron (1986), who also thinks that the significance of the emperor's (i.e. Justinian's) personality in historical causation links together Procopius' *Wars*, *Secret History*, and *Buildings*, three works that may serve different purposes but are not contradictory as is commonly held.

interpretative framework. Procopius' very ambiguity may, in fact, be a conscious literary choice that furthers his goal of reporting historical events accurately following the example of his classical predecessors.<sup>29</sup> In taking into account a range of factors that affect historical events (God, chance, envious demons, human will), Procopius seems to adhere to his Herodotean model, especially at those points where he is reluctant to pass a judgement as to the accuracy of omens and signs, or to the actual nature of God even if he accepts unconditionally God's goodness. He thus says about God (5.3.6–9):

As for the points in dispute [i.e. points of disagreement and controversy among the Christians], although I know them well, I shall by no means make mention of them; for I consider it a sort of insane folly to investigate the nature of God, enquiring of what sort it is. For man cannot, I think, apprehend even human affairs with accuracy, much less those things which pertain to the nature of God. As for me, therefore, I shall maintain a discreet silence concerning these matters, with the sole object that old and venerable beliefs may not be discredited. For I, for my part, will say nothing whatever about God save that He is altogether good and has all things in His power. But let each one say whatever he thinks he knows about these matters, both priest and layman.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Karpozelos (1997) 381–5.

<sup>30</sup> Some of Procopius' ideas about God, for example that God is free from envy and is the cause of good things only, are perfectly Platonic (e.g. *Tim.* 29e: ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῶ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγγεται φθόνος 'God was good and the good can never have any envy of anything'; *Rep.* 379b–380c); for further discussion of this broader topic, see the Introduction to the volume. This line of interpretation has been taken, especially by Kaldellis (2004), to argue for Procopius' non-Christian outlook. But Platonic ideas are not necessarily inconsistent with Christian beliefs and Platonism had a strong impact on Christian theology (see e.g. Ferguson (2003)).

We may compare this with Herodotus' reluctance to speak about the gods (2.3):

Besides this story of the rearing of the children, I also heard other things at Memphis in conversation with the priests of Hephaestus; and I visited Thebes and Heliopolis, too, for this very purpose, because I wished to know if the people of those places would tell me the same story as the priests at Memphis; for the people of Heliopolis are said to be the most learned of the Egyptians. Now, such stories as I heard about the gods I am not ready to relate, except their names, for I believe that all men are equally knowledgeable about them; and I shall say about them what I am constrained to say by the course of my history.

or with Herodotus' hesitancy to reveal the content of the *ἱρὸὶ λόγοι* that he gathered in Egypt (2.45.3):

Besides this, if Heracles was a mere man (as they say he was) and single-handed, how is it conceivable that he should have killed tens of thousands of people? And now I hope that both gods and heroes will forgive me for saying what I have said on these matters.<sup>31</sup>

### **Psellus' *Chronographia***<sup>32</sup>

With Psellus and Choniates we are well into the Middle Ages, when the role of irrational powers, notably envy, has been significantly enriched. These powers have been transformed into independent passions, very often

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Hdt. 2.48.3: 'The Egyptians have a sacred story as to why these figures have oversized genitals, and why this is the only part of the body that can move'.

<sup>32</sup> Translations (occasionally slightly adapted) are from Sewter (1966). In quoting passages from the *Chronographia*, when accounts of the reign of different emperors are given in the same book, I give the name of the emperor first, e.g. Michael VII, 7.8.

associated with the Devil,<sup>33</sup> that conquer and misguide individuals and set historical events in motion.

Psellus' style is highly complex and he enjoys the interaction with ancient Greek literature.<sup>34</sup> He was fond of pagan philosophers and held philosophical and theological views that have been considered contradictory;<sup>35</sup> so much so that it has been argued he was only superficially Christian.<sup>36</sup> He received a broad education, was interested in horoscopes, became a high-ranking political advisor, and also served as a monk. His *Chronographia*, a work distinguished for its rich character portraits, is a history of the Byzantine emperors from Basil II to Michael VII (976–1077) and Psellus features in it as a historical actor.

In Psellus' theological framework fortune (*τύχη*) is most often subordinate to divine providence, or closely linked with it. But fortune also features by itself, with certain nuances of meaning depending on the context. Sewter<sup>37</sup> translates the term variably in different passages as 'fate', 'calamity', 'status', 'importance', 'origin', 'condition', 'circumstances'. The power of fortune is evident when Psellus says that a man can become a plaything of fortune (4.27: *τῆς τύχης γινόμενον παίγνιον*) or may be blessed with good fortune (Constantine IX, 6.96: *τύχης τινὸς δεξιᾶς*). Bad luck is often ascribed to a demon.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> On the close connection between *phthonos* and the Devil, see Hinterberger (2010b); (2013).

<sup>34</sup> On Psellus and classical literature and thought, see Wilson (1983) 156–72.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Karpozelos (2009) 98–9.

<sup>36</sup> See Kaldellis (1999).

<sup>37</sup> See Sewter (1966).

<sup>38</sup> Fortune as subordinate to divine providence: e.g. Michael VII, 7.20. Fortune as closely linked with divine providence: e.g. Constantine IX, 6.195. Fortune as 'fate': e.g. 1.3; 1.15; Constantine IX, 6.15; 6.100. Fortune as 'calamity': e.g. Constantine IX, 6.18. Fortune as 'status': e.g. 4.28; 4.45. Fortune as 'importance': e.g. 3.10. Fortune as 'origin': e.g. Zoe and Theodora, 6.11. Fortune as 'condition' or 'circumstances': e.g. 3.8. Fortune as a higher power: e.g. 4.27; Constantine IX, 6.96. Bad luck linked with a demonic power: e.g. 1.28 (*δαιμονίαν τύχην*).

*Φθόνος*, as well as *βασκανία*, is a human emotion<sup>39</sup> but also a supernatural power. The personification of the jealousy that divided the two sisters, Zoe and Theodora, seems to have a metaphysical dimension (Michael V, 5.34: *φθόνος τὰς ἀδελφὰς διελών*). And when Psellus wishes that the darts of *βασκανία* (malice) and *νέμεσις* (retribution)<sup>40</sup> may never harm his friendship with Michael VII (Michael VII, 7.8), these two emotions turn into independent malicious powers that rise above the secular world.

But can God be envious? Comparing the passage Constantine IX, 6.74 with its Herodotean parallels might provide an answer to this. In 6.74 Psellus intrudes into his text to comment on the nature of envy and the emperors. Quoting a proverb ascribed to Solon ('Goodness is scarce') the historian talks about the 'creeping paralysis of envy' from which even the few (i.e. the emperors) are not immune. The envious man cuts off with his knife every part of a plant that might produce a fine bloom of natural fertility, courage, or any other good quality, while he is not bothered with the shoots that run to wood and produce no flowers at all.<sup>41</sup> Anything good inspires envy (*φθόνος*), an emotion which the emperors also feel since they want to excel above everyone else.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Φθόνος* as human emotion: e.g. Constantine IX, 6.62; 6.191. *Βασκανία* as human emotion: e.g. Theodora, 6.6.

<sup>40</sup> On the meaning of *nemesis* and its close affiliation with *phthonos* and *baskania* in near-contemporary Byzantine historiography, see Hinterberger (2010b).

<sup>41</sup> 6.74: ἀλλὰ καὶ οὕτως ἐχόντων ἔρπει καὶ κατὰ τῶν ὀλίγων ὁ φθόνος, καὶ εἴ ποῦ τις ἄνθη, λέγω δὴ ἐν πᾶσι τὸ πλεῖστον καιροῖς, ἢ γονίμου ἀναβλαστήσειε φύσεως, ἢ φρονήσεως ἀκριβοῦς, ἢ μεγαλοφυΐας, ἢ ψυχῆς καρτερᾶς καὶ ἀνδρείας, ἢ ἀγαθοῦ τινος ἄλλου, εὐθύς ἐφέστηκεν ὁ τομεύς, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν τὸ μέρος τῆς βλάστης ἐκκέκοπται, παραβλαστάνουσι δὲ τὰ ὑλώδη καὶ ἄκαρπα, καὶ ὑλομανεῖ ἐπὶ πλεόν ἢ ἄκανθα.

<sup>42</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἀρκεῖ τούτοις ἡ ταινία καὶ ἀλουργίς, ἀλλ' ἦν μὴ τῶν σοφῶν σοφώτεροι εἶεν καὶ τῶν ἀκριβούντων δεινότεροι, καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν ὑπερτελεῖς κορυφαὶ τῶν ἀπασῶν ἀρετῶν, ἐν δεινῷ ποιοῦνται τὸ πρᾶγμα ('it is not enough that they should have their diadems and their purple, for unless they are wiser than the wise, cleverer than the experts—in

Psellus' diction and imagery<sup>43</sup> here recall the advice of the Herodotean Thrasybulus to Periander as to how a tyrant should secure his power, and Periander's consequent conduct (Hdt. 5.92ζ.2–η.1):

Thrasybulus led the man who had come from Periander outside the town, and entered into a sown field. As he walked through the corn, continually asking why the messenger had come to him from Corinth, he kept cutting off all the tallest ears of wheat which he could see, and throwing them away, until he had destroyed the best and richest part of the crop (ἐκόλουε αἰεὶ ὄκως τινὰ ἴδοι τῶν ἀσταχύων ὑπερέχοντα, κολούων δὲ ἔρριπτε, ἐς ὃ τοῦ λήιου τὸ κάλλιστόν τε καὶ βαθύτατον διέφθειρε τρόπῳ τοιούτῳ) ... Periander perceived that Thrasybulus had counselled him to slay those of his townsmen who were outstanding in influence or ability; with that he began to deal with his citizens in an evil manner.

The diction and imagery also recall the Herodotean Artabanus' words that the envious god puts down everything that is exalted (ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν) and does not allow anyone but himself to feel pride (οὐ γὰρ ἐὰ φρονέειν μέγα ὁ θεὸς ἄλλον ἢ ἑωυτόν) (Hdt. 7.10ε). The envy in Psellus' passage (6.74) seems not to be divine by contrast to Herodotus' passage 7.10ε. Moreover, passage 5.92ζ.2–η.1 of the *Histories* makes no reference to envy but we do find a link between tyrants and envy in the speech of Otanes in the Constitutional Debate: φθόνος is said to be an essential characteristic of all tyrants who feel jealous of 'the best who thrive and live' and are thus led to reckless actions (Hdt. 3.80.3–4). The verbal and visual resonances between the two Herodotean passages, 5.92ζ.2–

short, if they are not placed on the highest summit of all the virtues—they consider themselves grievously maltreated?).

<sup>43</sup> For an overview of Psellus' use of imagery in the *Chronographia* and his debt to classical literature, see Littlewood (2006).

7.1 and 7.10ε, supported by Otanes' comments, in my view, reinforce the link between rulers/emperors and God, popular in Christian Byzantine thought and to which Psellus also refers indirectly in the same passage when he says: 'Either they must rule over us like gods or they refuse to govern at all'. But Psellus is careful to distinguish between the good nature of God and the bad nature of emperors as he points out that 'just when they should have rejoiced that God had raised up for them a helping hand, they chose rather to cut it off, simply because of the quarter from which that help was coming'. As with Procopius, envy may be attributed to fortune but not to God (e.g. 1.31: *ὑπερηφάνου καὶ βασκάνου τύχης*).

A most interesting passage redolent of Herodotus is the conversation between Isaac Komnenos and Psellus in the reign of Michael VI. Here Isaac, after his victory over Michael VI and his triumphant entry into the capital, is worried about the future, ponders the unpredictability of fortune, and doubts he will have a happy ending. Psellus—whom Isaac calls a 'philosopher'—replies that this view is truly philosophical and good beginnings are not necessarily followed by bad endings, and he continues (Michael VI, 7.41):

If Fate has set a limit, it is not for us to probe. In fact, my acquaintance with learned books and propitiatory prayers tells me that if a man betters his condition, he is merely following his destiny. When I say that, I am, of course, expressing the doctrine of the Hellenes, for according to our Christian Faith, nothing is predetermined, nothing foreordained in our lives. Nevertheless, there is a logical connection between effects and their immediate causes. Once you change that philosophic outlook, however, or become elated with pride (*τὴν σὴν ψυχὴν ἐπαρθείς*) because of these glories, justice (*δίκη*) will assuredly oppose your plans, and very quickly at that. So long as your heart is not filled with pride, you can take courage. For God is not jealous where He gives us blessings; on the contrary,

He has often set men on an uninterrupted path of glory  
 (ὡς οὐ βασκαίνει τὸ θεῖον ἐν οἷς δίδωσιν, ἀλλὰ πολλοῖς  
 καὶ πολλάκις κατ' εὐθείαν ἤνεγκε τὴν γραμμὴν τῆς  
 λαμπρότητος).

Here Psellus brings Hellenic/pagan and Christian views quite close together: leading a good life secures long-lasting prosperity, while leading a bad life and being arrogant results in the opposite. The schema of arrogance and punishment outlined here is common in classical Greek (e.g. drama) and Byzantine (e.g. Procopius above) literature.<sup>44</sup> But the use of the wise advisor motif in particular as well as the philosophical touch unmistakably calls to mind the Herodotean dialogue between Solon and Croesus on human happiness, the mutability of fortune, divine *phthonos*, and the need to wait till the end before one deems anyone happy (Hdt. 1.30–2).<sup>45</sup> They also evoke Artabanus' comments on divine *phthonos* in the Persian council scene (Hdt. 7.10ε), and the conversation between Xerxes and Artabanus on the inevitability of human misfortune on account of divine jealousy (Hdt. 7.45–6).

The basic idea underlying both the Psellan and Herodotean contexts seem to be the same: 'thinking big' causes divine punishment. In Herodotus, however, there is one more stage which precedes divine punishment, and that is divine *phthonos*. Psellus elides divine *phthonos* altogether because, as we have seen, God cannot be envious. Psellus moreover replaces the notion of the punishment of the malicious divine with that of divine justice. And in what seems to be perhaps the most fascinating aspect of a masterly reworking of Herodotus, Psellus goes on to expressly say not only that God is not jealous of the blessings he gives us but also that God does not always bring about a reversal of fortune: if man avoids arrogance

<sup>44</sup> On arrogance in archaic and classical Greek literature, see Fisher (1992); Cairns (1996). On tragic patterns in Psellus' *Chronographia*, see e.g. Dyck (1994).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Kaldellis (1999) 194–5.

then God will reward him with constant prosperity. In other words, man is responsible for his own misfortunes. This turns Herodotus' theological schema on its head: in the *Histories* the envy of the divinity makes unbroken happiness impossible and reversal of fortune inescapable. The vulnerability of humans to divine envy and the brief taste of the sweetness of life described in Herodotus (7.46.4: ὁ δὲ θεὸς γλυκὴν γεύσας τὸν αἰῶνα φθονερός ἐν αὐτῷ εὐρίσκεται ἔων) are displaced in Psellus by human accountability and a benevolent God.

This sort of reworking of the Herodotean precedents represents Psellus' creative Christian response to Herodotus' pagan historiography. It further underlines not only Psellus' wisdom and foresight as an advisor in the text but also the wisdom of Isaac in his reflecting on the fickleness of fortune—we notice that Psellus calls Isaac's thought 'philosophical' (φιλόσοφον ... τὸ ἐνθύμημα). At the same time Psellus' reworking of Herodotus points to Isaac's ignorance as he is placed in a line of rulers who cannot really understand the meaning of the counsels of their advisors correctly and eventually fail: Isaac does not succeed in his attempt to reform the finances of Byzantium and suffers an untimely death.

The reversal of fortune appears as an overarching theme in the biographies of most Byzantine emperors where rise (accompanied by excessive pride) is followed by a precipitous fall. We have seen that Isaac Komnenos is well aware of this, as is empress Zoe, who tries to protect herself from any sudden change of fortune (Zoe and Theodora, 6.18: τὴν τοῦ καιροῦ εὐλαβουμένη ὀξύτητα οὐ πόρρωθεν). The motif is best exemplified in the story of Michael V when Psellus comments: 'the emperor would be punished for his tyrannical arrogance not in the distant future but immediately and suddenly'.<sup>46</sup> Psellus also muses on the incomprehensible ways in which divine providence (ὁ τε νοῦς οὐ χωρεῖ τῆς Προνοίας τὸ μέτρον) engineered Michael's

<sup>46</sup> Michael V, 5.23: ἔμελλε δὲ ἄρα οὐκ εἰς μακρὸν τινα χρόνον, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς καὶ ἐξ ὑπογυίου δίκας τοῦ τυραννικοῦ δώσειν φρονήματος.

fall from power, pride, and luxury (Michael V, 5.24). As he builds his narrative around the succession, rise, and fall of emperors tracing the gradual decadence of the empire, Psellus vividly evokes Herodotus' narrative of the rise and fall of the Persian empire which conforms to the arrogance-punishment theme.<sup>47</sup>

Interestingly, the *Chronographia* finishes with a narrative device familiar from Herodotus and which we have also come across in Procopius: a letter from Michael VII to Phocas. Among other things, the letter warns about the omnipotence and overseeing role of divine providence that pays everyone what he deserves (Michael VII, 7.20).

Psellus often denounces pagan practices, horoscopes, and divination. He finds fault with some of the privileges of the monks and the feigned piety of the emperors (e.g. 3.13–16). Even if he leaves room for the workings of fortune, he believes that God rules over everything and he attributes positive turns of events in difficult circumstances or unexpected victories to God (e.g. 3.9; Constantine IX, 6.84; Isaac Comnenus, 7.88). Psellus moreover acknowledges the power of passions such as envy, which help him to describe the virtues and vices of the emperors. Besides, he had experienced first-hand the dire consequences of envy as he himself fell victim to the *βασκανία* ('jealousy', Constantine IX, 6.191) of the emperor Constantine Monomachus and joined the monastic life because his position was insecure (Constantine IX, 6.191–200). The influence of the contemporary historico-political, social, and cultural climate

<sup>47</sup> Two things are worth noting here. First, the concept of divine providence (*πρόνοια*) appears in Herodotus also (3.108: divine providence is wise and maintains a certain balance and order in the world) but by the 6th century it has become thoroughly Christianised. Psellus' ideas of divine providence, therefore, are not to be viewed as a Herodotean borrowing but, given Herodotus' pervasive influence on Psellus, it would be meaningful to explore Psellus' use of a theological concept that is both Herodotean and Christian—a topic which I hope to treat in detail elsewhere. Second, the rise and fall of empires could also be linked to examples from the Bible, but this is not the place to pursue this further; for brief comments on this topic, see the Introduction to this volume, above, pp. 24–5 and n. 20.

on Psellus is clearly significant. In a context of rapid social mobility and political as well as military decline, envy was openly promoted,<sup>48</sup> while there was an increasing interest in the individuals and their emotions in Byzantine art and literature especially from the 11th century onwards.<sup>49</sup> *Phthonos* is a forceful emotion and a power which operates outside God's will and is often closely joined with the Devil. Herodotean strands of thought—notably the envious divinity—are not just adapted to Christian ways of thought but wholly reinterpreted. Despite his openness to Greek literature and philosophy as well as his occasional scepticism, Psellus has a fundamentally Christian outlook.<sup>50</sup> Defending himself and his Christian outlook, Psellus says (Theodora, 6.12):

Nobody with any sense would find fault with a man who knew these theories [i.e. astrology and horoscopy], but gave them no credence. On the other hand, where a man rejects Christian Doctrine, and turns to such hypotheses, his studies are useless and may well be regretted. For my own part—and this is the truth—it was no scientific reason that made me give up these ideas, but rather was I restrained by some divine force. It is not a matter of logical argument—and I certainly pay no attention to other methods of proof. But the same cause, which, in the case of greater and more learned intellects than mine, has brought them down to a level where they accept Hellenic culture, in my case

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. Hinterberger (2010a) 131.

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein (1985) 197–230.

<sup>50</sup> On Psellus' religious beliefs, see Karpozelos (2009) 102–4 (rationality that does not undermine the religious feeling); Harris (2000) 25: 'That is not to say that Psellus and other Byzantine historians had a secular outlook, which sought only human causes for events. In criticising the actions of God's appointed emperor, they were providing a deeply religious explanation'. *Pace* Kaldellis (1999), who interprets the *Chronographia* as an ironic, subversive philosophical and political work, which is essentially Platonic and questions Christian theology. As with Procopius, there is a Platonic aspect to Psellus' thought but in my view this does not compromise his Christian beliefs.

exercises a compulsion upwards, to a sure faith in the truth of our Christian Theology. If then my deeds have not always harmonised with what I profess, may I find mercy with the Mother of the Word, and with the Son born of no earthly father, with the sufferings He endured with the crown of thorns about His Head, the reed and the hyssop, the Cross on which He stretched out his Hands, my pride and my glory!

Drawing on Herodotean wise advisor scenes aids Psellus' somewhat apologetic goal of exaggerating his own involvement in contemporary political developments. Psellus associates himself with wise advisors at the same time as he distances himself from incompetent advisors (e.g. Constantine IX, 6.177–88). He does this to such an extent that he emerges as one of the most capable advisors—if not *the most* capable advisor—in his *Chronographia* (e.g. Constantine IX, 6.47–8; Michael VI, 7.18), even if he proved unable to influence the impetuous emperor Constantine Monomachus positively.<sup>51</sup> As the author of his work, Psellus points out the merits and disadvantages of the Byzantine rulers. And he presents himself, Psellus the historical actor, as being often responsible—at least partly—for the rise and fall of rulers. In that sense, he might be aiming to show that he operates under some kind of divine guidance, or that he is capable of understanding the workings of divine providence better than anyone else.

The way in which Psellus portrays himself as wise advisor and plays upon theological notions may be taken to associate him with Herodotus and his fundamental motif of ascent and decline. And as Psellus' focus on the individual and human responsibility—via his delineation of weak and flawed emperors—becomes intertwined with divine interference,<sup>52</sup> his world resembles that of Herodotus with its interplay between divine forces and human

<sup>51</sup> On the literary merits of the autobiographical nature of the *Chronographia*, see Pietsch (2005); (2006).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Hussey (1935) 87–8.

accountability. The interlacing of human and divine responsibility is most certainly a recurring theme in Greek historiography and Psellus may be harking back to this tradition rather than to individual authors. Hence this similarity by itself cannot support a strong connection between Psellus and Herodotus. But viewed in the context of Psellus' creative recasting of Herodotean religious concepts and scenes, it is not implausible that Herodotus might have been one of Psellus' most influential models when it came to joining together divine and human liability.

Psellus' thought and the patterns of historical causation found in his work are complex. His *Chronographia* is suffused with literary innovations and a distinctly personal narrative style, also evident in elaborate descriptions of imperial psychology. Possible links with Herodotus are encouraged by the narrative of the *Chronographia* and can enhance the scope of interpretation and contextualise Psellus' contribution to Byzantine politics more effectively. Of course Herodotus was but one of the sources Psellus seems to have drawn on or to have had in mind when composing his work, along with, for example, Thucydides, Xenophon (as far as the defensive character of the *Chronographia* is concerned), or Plutarch (in terms of structuring his biographies). Psellus clearly revered Herodotus and in his writings he displays an appreciation of Herodotus' style, his sweetness (*Orationes pan.* 1.154: τῆς Ἡροδότου γλυκύτητος) as well as his charm and pleasantness (*Orationes pan.* 8.41–2: τὴν Ἡροδότειον χάριν καὶ ἡδονήν). He even compares the narrative and rhetorical style of the Byzantine hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes to that of Herodotus and other Greek historians and orators (*Or. hag.* 7.207–29, 350–7). And he puts patristic and classical authors side by side as he draws parallels between John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus and, among others, Herodotus in terms of digressions and simplicity of style that produces a captivating result.<sup>53</sup> Psellus even juxtaposes himself with

<sup>53</sup> See *Michaelis Pselli Characteres Gregorii Theologi, Basilii Magni, S. Ioannis Chrysostomi et Gregorii Nysseni* in Boissonade (1838) 124–31. For brief

Herodotus and, although he castigates him for reporting the worst deeds of the Greeks (*Chronographia* Constantine IX, 6.24),<sup>54</sup> it is significant that it is Herodotus whom he tries to improve upon and whose methods he attempts to better.

### **Choniates' *History***<sup>55</sup>

Choniates' *History* is the most important source for 12th- and early 13th-century Byzantine history and the capture of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The work, rich in biblical and mythological *exempla*,<sup>56</sup> is permeated by criticism of emperors and interspersed with forceful character portraits and imagery in classical language. Choniates often employs a dramatic and epic tone, digressions and fictitious speeches, and composes quotations combining secular and theological discourse.<sup>57</sup> Many of these features, together with a balanced handling of Byzantines and barbarians,<sup>58</sup> the theme of the changeability of fortune, and the didactic role of history (praise or censure of leading personalities) bring Choniates close to ancient historical works<sup>59</sup> and Herodotus' *Histories* in particular.

comments on Psellus' literary criticism of Christian authors, see Wilson (1983) 166–72.

<sup>54</sup> Very likely echoing Plutarch's accusations in his treatise *On the Malice of Herodotus*.

<sup>55</sup> Translations (occasionally slightly adapted) are from Magoulias (1984).

<sup>56</sup> On Choniates' employment of paradigms from Greek mythology and the Bible, see Efthymiadis (2009b).

<sup>57</sup> On Choniates' historical methods, see Simpson (2009). On his literary qualities, see e.g. Fatouros (1980); Kazhdan (1983); Kazhdan and Franklin (1984) 256–86; Efthymiadis (2009a); Angelou (2010). On his reliance on earlier tradition, both Greek and Christian, see e.g. the passages listed by Christides (1984).

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. Lilie (1993) 282–4; Harris (2000) 27–8.

<sup>59</sup> Similarly Simpson (2009) 27: 'The praise and censure of leading individuals, the dominant role assigned to divine providence, the instability of fortune and the sudden reversals in the lives of men, the examples of virtue and vice cited for ethical instruction and the

In Choniates the reversal of fortune (202: τὸ συμπίπτειν τῆς τύχης)<sup>60</sup> is central in the fate of both emperors and nations and most often occurs due to the will of God. Choniates laments for the protosebastos Alexios who was blinded by Andronikos: ‘O, how the course of events is reversed and sometimes is altered quicker than thought...’ (249: ὃ πραγμάτων παλινστροφῶν φορᾶς καὶ θάττον ἢ λόγος μετακλινομένης ἐνίστοε). When relating the story of Isaac Angelos, Choniates is at a loss whether what happened to him (the plotting against him, his blinding, and incarceration) was retribution (δίκη) instigated by divine *nemesis* but he still concedes that divine providence does everything for the best (452):

As to whether divine *nemesis* (θείαν νέμεσιν) exacted retribution from him at this place, I leave for others to ponder. Providence (πρόνοια), which administers everything for the best, desires that avengers treat their most despicable enemies with humaneness, since they must suspect that power is never permanent, that one political action which ungirds sovereignty often is reversed with a new throw of the dice (προσφέρεσθαι ὑφορωμένους τὸ μὴ ἀειπαγῆς τῆς ἰσχύος καὶ τὴν τοῦ κράτους ἀπόζωσιν καὶ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κινήματος εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ κατάντημα πολλάκις μετακύβευσιν ἢ παλινδρόμησιν).

Two points in this passage deserve special attention as they seem to closely interact with Herodotus’ text among others. The reference to divine *nemesis* possibly exacting punishment for Isaac Angelos’ conduct calls to mind a Herodotean parallel in the story of Croesus and Solon, which revolves around similar matters: the instability of

continual moralising of the historian, all point the ancient principles of public utility, moral instruction and didactic function of historical narratives’.

<sup>60</sup> On reversals, including reversals of fate, in Choniates’ *History*, see Kaldellis (2009).

human prosperity and divine castigation. Herodotus writes that, following Solon's departure, 'great divine *nemesis* fell upon Croesus' (1.34: ἔλαβε ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη Κροῦσον). The second point of interest is Choniates' next sentence on the workings of divine providence. Choniates' reflections on the kindness of avengers towards their enemies in view of the fickleness of fortune strongly recall the reflections of the Herodotean Cyrus when Croesus is on the pyre. It is the realisation of their shared humanity, the unpredictability of human affairs, and the fear of retribution that make Cyrus change his mind and spare his opponent (cf. δείσαντα τὴν πίσιν, 1.86.6). There is no direct reference to the divine in the Herodotean context but it is certainly implied that Cyrus is thinking of divine retribution. Such Herodotean parallels may have been noted by educated readers and could have provided a point of comparison which helpfully illustrated Choniates' thoughts. But the links also work the other way round, that is, promoting affinities between Greek and Christian ideas.

The greatest reversal of fortune, and the overarching theme of Choniates' *History*, is the rise and fall of Constantinople. There were no advance signs of the fate that befell the City. This was justice (*δίκη*) that manifested itself without warning (586). This was not 'an event without meaning, a fortuitous circumstance, or a coincidence, but the will of God'.<sup>61</sup> The fall of the City was the result of the sins of the emperors that provoked divine punishment. Like Psellus, Choniates removes the Herodotean *phthonos* of the divine from the pattern of sin and punishment. It is worth noting at this point that, while Choniates generally acknowledges a range of historical explanations, when it comes to such a momentous event as the fall of Constantinople, the historian rejects any other kind of explanation in favour of the will of God. It is very tempting to read this as a reflection on the most forceful factor that sets history in motion. This makes an interesting contrast to

<sup>61</sup> 589: κατὰ θεῶν οἶμαι καὶ μὴ περίπτωσιν τυχηρὰν ἢ συγκυρίαν οὕτως ὡς συμβᾶν ἄλογον.

the Procopian model of sketching alternative motives and explanations, a model resonating with Herodotean narrative habits.

Fortune is powerful<sup>62</sup> and tips its scales in favour of whomever it wishes. It is also an unstable power<sup>63</sup> and, despite the fact that sometimes divine providence and fortune are disconnected (e.g. 426), Choniates often reminds us that everything happens according to the will of God (e.g. 154: stars and omens do not really matter).

But God cannot be envious. Envy (*φθόνος*) is a human emotion triggered by someone else's good fortune, and constantly causes intrigues and plotting within the court (227, 330, 333). Envy is also labeled as the 'evil eye' (10: ὄμμα βόσκανον). In the English translation of Magoulias the word 'envy' is often written with a capital 'E' to indicate the supernatural element. Envy occupies a key position in the fate of Theodore Styppeiotēs who suffered at the hands of John Kamateros and was unjustly blinded. Choniates personifies *phthonos* as a supernatural power which brings about a change of fortune (111):

Envy, which looks askance (*ἀεὶ ἐνορῶν φθόνος*), not only at the great rulers of nations and cities, but also at those of more modest rank, and which is forever near at hand nurturing traitors, did not deign to allow Theodore Styppeiotēs to remain in his position of trust with the emperor; this elusive enemy inflicted many blows and removed him from his stable post and, in the end, overthrew (*ἀνέτρεψε*) him and caused him to suffer a most piteous fall (*πτῶμα ... οἴκτιστον*).

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. 59, 123, 302, 433.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. 611: ἀλλοπρόσαλλος ἢ μάχη, πεπτευτὰ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα, καὶ νίκη ἐπαμείβεται ἄνδρας. οὐδ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ φασὶ τὰ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἀπρόσκοπα, οὐδ' ἀδιάπτωτος ἡ τύχη παράπαν τοῦ Καίσαρος 'the battle is undecided, human affairs are determined by the throw of the dice, and victory shifts from man to man. Neither were Alexander's successes without obstacles, nor Caesar's fortune absolutely infallible'.

Significantly, two words in this passage recall vocabulary and themes employed by Herodotus in the context of divine *phthonos*, the force that disturbs human happiness. The verb *ἀνέτρεψε* ('overthrew') echoes the use of the same word by the Herodotean Solon: *πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε* (Hdt. 1.32.9). The second Herodotean resonance is Choniates' reference to pity (*πτῶμα... οἴκτιστον*) in Styppaiotes' reversal of fortune. In Herodotus, Artabanus speaks of the pitiable suffering that characterises all human life (7.46.2: *ἕτερα τούτου παρὰ τὴν ζόην πεπόνθαμεν οἴκρότερα*) as a consequence of divine jealousy.<sup>64</sup> The Herodotean intertext bolsters the metaphysical dimension of *phthonos* as well as highlighting the greatness of its power.

Choniates wonders how the justice of God allows these wicked deeds to happen, but then concedes that God is wise and that, although men should refrain from devising evil plans, God can forgive them if they show genuine repentance (113). The supernatural aspect of envy as well as its attribution to malevolent powers, demons (576: *ἀλάστορες φθονεροί*), who are occasionally named as 'Telchines' or 'Furies' (310: *Ἐριννύων καὶ Τελχίνων φθονερώων*), indicates the merging of pagan and Christian ideas.<sup>65</sup> What is particularly thought-provoking is that in Choniates we come across a link between envy, as a supernatural power, and reversal of fortune that we have not seen in Procopius or Psellus. This causal relationship between envy and instability of fortune resonates clearly, I

<sup>64</sup> Ellis ((2013) 255–61) argues that pity is a typical key theme in Herodotean reversals of fortune.

<sup>65</sup> These malevolent supernatural powers, the 'Telchines' and the 'Furies', do not occur in Herodotus. They do occur, however, in one of the more classicising of the Ecclesiastical historians, namely Socrates Scholasticus (*HE* 3.21; 4.19); so although they might still have sounded rather classicising, it is likely that they had already been embedded to some degree within the Christian literary tradition.

believe, with the Herodotean concept of the envious divinity that causes a change of fortune.<sup>66</sup>

Choniates assumes a quasi-Herodotean outlook in that he admits many factors in his historical causation (envy, fortune, divine providence, human responsibility) and constructs his history on the basis of a causal relationship between abuse of power and punishment. His attitude towards prophecy and divination shows interest in the classical tradition and respect towards the Christian tradition. He opposes astrology but mentions portents, prophecies, and other types of divination and he trusts in the prophecies of holy men (e.g. 219–20). That he pinpoints wrongs in emperors and false prophets does not make him less of a Christian. Choniates believes that people make their own choices but everything is down to the will of God.<sup>67</sup> We have seen that the intertwining of human and divine responsibility reappears to varying degrees in all three historians explored here. This becomes a recurrent motif in Choniates' *History*, where time and again emperors make errors of judgement as they misinterpret or ignore prophecies. For example, Isaac Angelos consults the seer Basilakios, who correctly prophesies his blinding and deposition, but does not heed the warning (448–50). In so far as they act in this way, Choniates' characters seem to hark back to Herodotus' kings who fail to understand divine signs and recognise sensible guidance at their own expense—a pattern introduced by Croesus and his misinterpretation of Apollo's oracles (Hdt. 1.53–5).

Choniates' history is even more dramatic<sup>68</sup> and personal than Psellus', and his criticism of the emperors is much

<sup>66</sup> It is hard to say if Choniates is borrowing directly from Herodotus. Given that the same connection between *phthonos* and instability of fortune is already traced in Eusebius of Caesarea (see briefly the Introduction to the volume, above, pp. 32–3), the foregrounding of metaphysical *phthonos* in Choniates could also be mediated through Christian historiography.

<sup>67</sup> On Choniates' beliefs and interest in religious affairs, see Magoulias (1987); Magdalino (2009).

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. Magoulias (2011) on modelling the story of Andronikos on Greek tragic patterns.

more powerful.<sup>69</sup> Saxey observes that ‘[i]n blending dramatic and oratorical elements into his history, Choniates follows the most dramatic of historians, Herodotus’.<sup>70</sup> Consider, for example, the narrative of the fall of Constantinople: Choniates describes the monks feasting and dining while the Crusaders are camped outside the City (558). Here the dramatic character of the composition is clear, as is the responsibility of these supposedly ‘holy’ men, which is inextricably connected with God’s punishment soon after.

Choniates’ prolific use of *exempla* both from Greek mythology and the Bible more often than not blurs the boundaries between the pagan and Christian traditions, and between these and contemporary historical individuals and events. Drawing on the past to throw light on contemporary society is a favourite practice of Herodotus,<sup>71</sup> who often seeks to show how messy reality is.<sup>72</sup> Choniates’ examples and equally his deployment of Greek and Christian theological concepts operate along similar lines: they demonstrate what a messy business modern history really is.

### Conclusion

Chance and the cycle of human affairs play an important role in all three historical works. In Procopius both are equally important while Choniates builds his narration around a pattern of rise and fall. *Phthonos* (‘envy’, ‘jealousy’), both as a human emotion and, primarily, as a supernatural power, is especially prominent in Psellus and Choniates. But none of the three historians considers God capable of envy, and in place of Herodotus’ envious and vengeful deity we find divine providence that punishes injustice. Procopius’ incorporation of pagan and especially Herodotean religious ideas, rather than being simply a literary convention, shows

<sup>69</sup> See e.g. Magdalino (1983).

<sup>70</sup> See Saxey (2009) 126.

<sup>71</sup> See most recently Bowie (2012); Baragwanath (2012).

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. Pelling (2006a); Baragwanath (2008).

that affinities with the classical world were still very much in evidence, and elements appropriated from pre-Christian thought remained an important part of contemporary Christian thought in the 6th century as at all periods. As we move on to the 11th century, human emotions and personal motivation take centre stage in the search for causes, and the interplay between human responsibility and divine interference, one of Herodotus' favourite themes, becomes a shaping factor in the construction of historical narratives. In the 12th and 13th centuries the writing of history becomes increasingly rhetorical and dramatic and systematically exploits the language of classical historiography.<sup>73</sup> This tendency towards tragic/dramatic history in the face of the Fourth Crusade is most evident in Choniates' Herodotean-like reversals.

Pagan terms associated with Herodotus are interestingly charged with double significance which not only points to imitation and the need for literary effect but also to the occasional scepticism, or open-mindedness, of the Byzantine historians. Historical thought had certainly changed considerably from the time of Herodotus as the Byzantines subscribe to a linear world-view (i.e. a history developing from Creation to the Day of Judgement) which directly opposes the cyclical world-view of historians of classical antiquity. Despite their belief in the goodness and superior will of God, these Byzantine historians do not limit their view by considering divine providence as the only causal factor in history. The diversity of factors influencing historical events (even if these are in most cases ultimately presided over by the will of God) helps to convey the complexities of their thought and their contemporary world. By allowing a plurality of historical explanations Procopius, Psellus, and Choniates show a striking resemblance to the 'father of history', who is often at a loss whether to ascribe an event to chance, human will or the deity.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein (1985) 197–230 (11th century onwards). On dramatic elements in historiographical works of this period, see Katsaros (2006).

This approach moreover facilitates historians such as Choniates in describing their contemporary history as chaotic and futile, dominated by disorder and corruption. Others, like Procopius, also aspire to higher standards of reliability in expanding their net of historical causation. For Psellus, passions such as envy help to paint detailed portraits and praise and blame individual emperors. At the same time, the advice on envy and the nature of God that Psellus himself gives (as a character in his work) casts him in a better light because it links him to the figure of the ‘wise advisor’, the character who gives prudent counsel in Herodotus’ *Histories*. Interaction with classical models in manifold and innovative ways<sup>74</sup> also enhances the status and impartiality of the Byzantine historians.

How would have audiences reacted to this interaction with classical and Herodotean models? The Byzantines had a predilection and an eye for narrative and storytelling strategies<sup>75</sup> and, with Herodotus enjoying wide reputation, learned audiences would very likely expect and be able to recognise engagement with the *Histories*. The employment of well-known motifs would help readers better comprehend modern historical events, hence it would assist the chief goal of history writing, the instruction of the audience.<sup>76</sup> The links with Herodotus, the initiator of the Greek

<sup>74</sup> On the combination of tradition and innovation/improvement upon classical models, see Hunger (1969/1970); Aerts (2003); Hinterberger (2010b) 195–203; Scott (2012b) 252–4.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Choniates *History* 1–3.

<sup>76</sup> See e.g. Procopius *Wars* 1.1.1: ‘Procopius of Caesarea has written the history of the wars which Justinian, Emperor of the Romans, waged against the barbarians of the East and of the West ... The memory of these events he deemed would be a great thing and most helpful to men of the present time, and to future generations as well, in case time should ever again place men under a similar stress’; Choniates *History* 1: ‘Historical narratives indeed have been invented for the common benefit of mankind, since those who wish are able to gather from many of these the most advantageous insights’.

historiographical tradition, would also augment the importance of these events and the works recording them.<sup>77</sup>

The merging of Christian and classical strands of thought does not hamper the historians' explanation of events nor need it necessarily undermine their Christian identity. Classical Greek, and in particular Herodotean, theological concepts are recast in an inventive manner that reveals elaborate historical thinking, reinforces the seriousness of these historical narratives, enriches their explanatory framework, and is indicative of the authors' tolerance and also confusion in the face of a hectic reality, full of intrigues and corruption.

<sup>77</sup> On Byzantine audiences, see Croke (2010); Scott (2012b); Nilsson and Scott (2012) 324–32.

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EXPLAINING THE END OF AN EMPIRE:  
THE USE OF ANCIENT GREEK  
RELIGIOUS VIEWS IN LATE  
BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY\*

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*Abstract.* This article studies the reception of the religious views of Herodotus and Thucydides in the works of the late-Byzantine historiographers Kritoboulos and Laonikos Chalkokondyles. Both reflect upon the great changes that took place during their lives, most notably the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans under their Sultan Mehmed II in 1453. In their evaluations of these events, they—unlike their contemporaries—avoided Christian doctrine and preferred explanatory models that found their origins in Herodotus and Thucydides and that favoured ‘fortune’ (τύχη) as the primary force in historical causation. In their narratives, they adopted caution (Herodotus) and discretion (Thucydides) on matters of religious doctrine and chose to ascribe more explicit views, for instance about divine retribution, to their characters. Their use of classical models can be considered to result from attempts to ‘anchor’ an innovative approach towards the past within contemporary intellectual debate.

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*Keywords:* Herodotus, Thucydides, Kritoboulos, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Religion, Fall of Constantinople, Anchoring Innovation

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## 1. Introduction

The Byzantines possessed a strong tradition of historiography whose representatives used classical Greek historians like Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and their Hellenistic successors like Polybius and Arrian as templates.<sup>1</sup> In this article I will focus upon the last pair of these classicising historians, Kritoboulos (ca. 1410–1470) and Laonikos Chalkokondyles (ca. 1423–1465?), and attempt to assess their explanatory models against the backdrop of the historiographical tradition as it was shaped by Herodotus and Thucydides some nineteen centuries earlier.<sup>2</sup>

Kritoboulos and Laonikos were active when Constantinople fell into Ottoman hands in 1453. Kritoboulos was a local ruler on the island of Imbros, and was responsible for its peaceful transition to Ottoman rule after the fall of Constantinople. He structured his *Histories* around this watershed in history and dedicated his work to Sultan Mehmed II (Mehmed henceforth), whom he made his protagonist, and whose political and military intuition he praises. In portraying the Sultan, Kritoboulos alludes to Thucydides, for instance by ascribing a harangue to Mehmed (Krit. 1.14–16) that echoes his predecessor's version of Pericles' funeral oration (Thuc. 2.35–46).<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> For the length and strength of the historiographical tradition see Bury et al. (1966–7) 4–5: 'The continuity which links the fifteenth century AD with the fifth BC is notably expressed in the long series of Greek historians, who maintained, it may be said, a continuous tradition of historiography. From Critobulus, the imitator of Thucydides, and Chalcocondyles, who told the story of the last days of the Empire, we can go back, in a line broken only by a dark interval in the seventh and eighth centuries, to the first great masters, Thucydides and Herodotus'. Important studies on the reception of ancient Greek historiography in the Byzantine era are Moravcsik (1966), Scott (1981), and Reinsch (2006).

<sup>2</sup> The *terminus ante quem* for Laonikos' *Demonstrations* used to be placed around 1490, but is now believed to be earlier, ca. 1463. For discussion and arguments, see Wurm and Gamillscheg (1992) and Kaldellis (2012a), Akışık (2013) 4, Kaldellis (2014) 1–22.

<sup>3</sup> Reinsch (2003) 303, (2006) 765.

autograph and only copy of the *Histories* was gifted to the Sultan and remained in Istanbul's Topkapı palace, only to be rediscovered by Tischendorf in 1859.<sup>4</sup> Laonikos Chalkokondyles (Laonikos henceforth) was born in Athens but had to leave when his father fell out with its local Florentine rulers, the Acciaiuoli. His family moved to the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea and lived on in Mistras, where Laonikos became a student of the neo-Platonist philosopher Gemistos Plethon.<sup>5</sup> Laonikos' work, the *Demonstrations of Histories* (*Apodeixeis Historiōn*), has a much broader scope than Kritoboulos' *Histories*, which focuses mainly upon the fall of Constantinople and its immediate aftermath. The *Demonstrations* are structured around the rise of Ottoman power in Asia and Europe, but they are presented as a universal history. The work includes digressions upon states and tribes that became involved in, or were affected by, the developments in Eastern Europe and Asia Minor. Laonikos owes this structure to Herodotus' *Histories*, which takes the rise of Persian power as its overarching narrative strand and digresses upon peoples and tribes that live in the areas that fall under or are threatened by the Achaemenid Empire. His indebtedness is also reflected in the title of his *Demonstrations*, *Apodeixeis Historiōn*, the plural of Herodotus' definition of his project as *historiēs apodexis* ('a demonstration of a quest for knowledge',

<sup>4</sup> For Kritoboulos' biography see Raby (1938), Emrich (1975) and Reinsch (2003). His work has been edited by Greco (1963) and Reinsch (1983). The latter is used in this article. Reinsch has also translated the *Histories* within the *Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber* series (1986). Less satisfying is the English translation of Riggs (1954), which contains omissions (of, e.g., subtitles) and errors in translation. A striking example is the translation of Kritoboulos' plundering 'Jews' (Ἰουδαῖοι, Krit. 1.62.2) with 'the most wicked men'. Why not lay bare Kritoboulos' antisemitism, typical of this era?

<sup>5</sup> It was in Mistras that Laonikos was met by Cyriacus of Ancona, who visited the place in 1447. Direct evidence about his further life is lacking. For more extensive discussions of his biography see Miller (1922), Darkó (1923–4), (1927a), Wifstrand (1972), Hunger (1978), Wurm and Gamillscheg (1992), Nicoloudis (1996), Kaldellis (2012a), Akışık (2013) 4–21, and Kaldellis (2014) 1–22.

Hdt., *proem*). Laonikos indicates contemporary peoples by their classical Greek names and speaks of the Byzantines as Ἕλληνες instead of Ῥωμαῖοι.<sup>6</sup> Like Herodotus he stages stories within the courts of monarchs, and occasionally uses autopsy claims to create an impression of historiographical authority (see below, n. 18). In contrast to Kritoboulos' *Histories* Laonikos' *Demonstrations* became widely known in Europe. It survives in dozens of manuscripts and was translated in Latin and French already in the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Both Kritoboulos and Laonikos reflected—like so many others—upon the great changes that took place during their lives. The end of the Byzantine Empire is nowadays analysed as the inevitable result of the relatively unchecked growth of Ottoman power in the East, and the fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire into smaller principalities and despotates in the course of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries.<sup>8</sup> Contemporaries, however, struggled to give the events a place within their worldview. How could it be that a devoutly Christian city like Constantinople had fallen into the hands of the infidel? How could this be made compatible with the presupposed benevolence of the god of the Christians?

Some framed their responses in typically Christian terms and saw Ottoman victory as punishment for the sins of the

<sup>6</sup> See Ditten (1963–4), Kaldellis (2012b) and (2014) 63–5 for his use of classical Greek names for contemporary peoples and (2014) 177–88 for the question of whom exactly Laonikos indicates as 'Romans'.

<sup>7</sup> Darkó is responsible for the standard edition of Laonikos' *Demonstrations* (1927b). In this article I follow the section division in the new translation of Kaldellis (2014). Parts of his work have earlier been translated by von Ivánka (1954) and Nicoloudis (1996). Obscurities in Laonikos' Greek suggest a problematic manuscript tradition (Wurm (1995)) or the lack of a final round of revision by the author (Kaldellis (2014) 18–22). For aspects of Herodotus' reception by Laonikos see Aerts (2003) and Kaldellis (2014) 38–45, and for the reception of the *Demonstrations* in the Renaissance see Kaldellis (2014) 237–42.

<sup>8</sup> For the fragmentation see a.o. Reinert (2002). For recent historical studies of the fall of Constantinople see Harris (2010) and Philippides and Hanak (2011).

Byzantines. Such is the view of the chronicler Doukas (1400–1462), who blames the Byzantines for their reluctance to support the unification of the western and eastern churches when threatened by growing Ottoman power. He reasons from an explanatory framework based on Christian belief in divine retribution, considering for instance the fall of Thessalonike to the Ottomans (1430) a punishment for Byzantine sins (Doukas, *Hist.* 29.5):

καὶ τὰ πάντα κακά, τί καὶ πῶς καὶ διὰ τί; διὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν. Ἐν μιᾷ οὖν ἡμέρᾳ κενωθεῖσα ἡ τοσαύτη πόλις ἔμεινεν ἔρημος.

And all this evil, what, how and why? Because of our sins. In one single day such a great city was emptied and left stripped of its possessions.<sup>9</sup>

Gennadios Scholarios (1400–1472), appointed as patriarch in Constantinople after the fall, reasoned along similar lines, but added an eschatological viewpoint in considering the demise of the Byzantine Empire an indication of the approaching end of time and Day of Judgement.<sup>10</sup>

Others couched their responses in terms that were derived from classical antiquity. Soon after the fall of Constantinople anecdotes emerged in Italy in which the brutality of the Ottoman invaders was highlighted. Their crimes echoed those ascribed to the Greeks upon the capture of Troy. The Sultan, for instance, was said to have raped the defenceless children of the late emperor Constantine Palaeologus on the altar in the Hagia Sophia, a story inspired by the heinous crimes of the Greeks in Troy,

<sup>9</sup> For other contemporary sources that hold similar views or express their agony by referring to god, see Papayianni (2010). For the idea of divine retribution in the case of the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204 see Zali's discussion of Choniates' *History* in this volume, above, pp. 111–17.

<sup>10</sup> For more thorough discussions and overviews of Christian responses to the fall see Turner (1964) 356–72, Harris (2003) 153–4, and Moustakas (2011) 215–6, with references to further scholarship.

such as the rape of Cassandra by the lesser Ajax, the sacrifice of Polyxena at the request of Achilles, and the killing of Priam at the altar in his palace by Neoptolemus. Such rumours were invented and propagated by Greeks in the Latin West with an eye to encouraging the political and ecclesiastical elite to launch a crusade against the Ottomans.<sup>11</sup> Mehmed himself, meanwhile, may unwittingly have contributed to such traditions by framing the Ottomans (Turci) as avengers of their almost-namesake Trojans (Teuceri), for instance by his visit to the historical site of Troy, at that time already a *lieu de mémoire*.<sup>12</sup>

Kritoboulos and Laonikos, however, stand out among their contemporaries in evaluating Ottoman victory in neutral terms. They are exceptional, too, in their degree of engagement with models from the ancient Greek historiographical tradition, and in particular with Herodotus and Thucydides, whose stylistic traits and thematic concerns they imitate, and, as I will argue below, whose authorial methods and explanatory schemes they appear to have studied closely in reflecting upon contemporary events.<sup>13</sup> Typically, Laonikos refuses to

<sup>11</sup> See Philippides and Hanak (2011) 193–214 for an overview of the sources and a discussion of the tales that flared up after the fall of Constantinople (and their ancient models).

<sup>12</sup> The visit is mentioned by Kritoboulos (4.11.5–6), according to whom Mehmed said, ‘God appointed me as avenger of this city and its inhabitants after so many cycles of years’ (ἐμὲ τῆς πόλεως ταύτης καὶ τῶν αὐτῆς οἰκητόρων ἐν τοσοῦτοις περιόδου ἐτῶν ἐκδικητῆν ἐταμειύετο ὁ θεός). Within Kritoboulos’ work the anecdote fits into a pattern in which Mehmed copies the behaviour of other conquerors like Xerxes, of whom Herodotus tells that he visited Troy when he campaigned against Greece (7.43), and Alexander the Great, whose visit to Troy is mentioned by Arrian in his *Anabasis* (1.12). That Troy was actually visited as a historical site in the 15th century is confirmed by Cyriacus of Ancona, the tutor of young Mehmed, who claims in his *Commentarii* to have visited the site on 28th October 1448 and to have seen numerous monuments and inscriptions.

<sup>13</sup> On Thucydides as main model for Kritoboulos, see Reinsch (2003) 303 and Harris (2003) 154. For Laonikos, see Kaldellis (2014) x: ‘His *Histories* is ... modeled structurally and in its digressions on Herodotos, but stylistically on Thucydides’.

commit himself to the view that Constantinople fell as retribution for Troy (Laon. 8.30; see below), but his own ideas remain difficult to gauge and have led to controversy in scholarship. In Kritoboulos' case, the debate is further complicated by his presumed Ottoman bias. Below, I will discuss the religious views that can be discerned in both authors' evaluations of the end of the Byzantine Empire against the backdrop of the earliest representatives of the ancient Greek historiographical tradition. I will argue that, in terms of religious outlook, Kritoboulos and Laonikos each in his own way followed these ancient models more closely than often assumed. Finally, I will assess their use of ancient metanarrative concepts in explaining the course of history as attempts at 'anchoring innovation', and argue that in their attempt to shed a novel—and possibly dissident—light upon the events of their time, they deliberately used presentational methods that had throughout the ages proven to be popular and powerful tools to resist religious doctrine.

## **2. Definitions, Methods, and Caveats**

Before attempting to compare Kritoboulos and Laonikos with their illustrious predecessors, some observations need to be made on definitions and methods. To begin with the latter, it is worth asking how best to make a comparison between two pairs of historians that stand almost two millennia apart and what to do with the intervening historiographical tradition. Though it is not my intention to ignore the developments in this tradition, my focus will be on its beginning and the end, which necessitates explaining why I believe this approach will yield valuable results.

First, the direct influence of Herodotus and Thucydides upon the works of Kritoboulos and Laonikos by far exceeds that of other authors. This is evidenced not only by numerous verbal and thematic parallels,<sup>14</sup> but also by such

<sup>14</sup> For Laonikos and Herodotus and Thucydides, see the valuable discussion in Kaldellis (2014) 23–48, and the appendix, 253–8. For

subtleties as their use of the Ionic inflexion of Ottoman proper names or the Atticising use of ξυν(-) instead of συν(-),<sup>15</sup> the structure of their proems,<sup>16</sup> and the voicing of similar methodological statements. Both historians take an empirical approach towards their material, which they phrase in terms derived from their distant predecessors, for instance by juxtaposing autopsy (ὄψις) and the use of informants (ἀκοή)<sup>17</sup> or stressing their ambition to report the

verbal parallels between Kritoboulos, Laonikos and Thucydides, see Rödel (1905) 12–34.

<sup>15</sup> Observe the use of the genitive ending in -εω in the case of proper names of the first declension., e.g. Krit. 1.4.3: Μωράτεω; Laon. 1.58: Ἀμουράτεω. Cf. Reinsch (2003) 305. I thank Anthony Ellis for pointing out to me the Atticising use of ξυν(-).

<sup>16</sup> They describe their historiographical activities in Thucydidean terms as ξυγγράφειν ('compose') and paraphrase Herodotus' programmatic statement that 'great and marvellous events' (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θαυμαστά) should remain known to later generations. Kritoboulos replaces Herodotus' ἐξίτηλα ('extinct') with the synonymous word ἀνήκουστα ('unheard of'), and Laonikos recycles Herodotus' litotes (μηδὲν ... ἀκλεῶς ≈ μήτε ... ἀκλεᾶ, 'not(hing) ... without fame').

<sup>17</sup> In Laonikos' proem (Laon. 1.1) τῶν ... ἐς ἐπὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἀκοὴν ἀφιγμένων echoes Hdt. 2.29.1 and 2.99.1, where the historian juxtaposes autopsy and the testimonies of others as the sources upon which his account relies. The precedence of autopsy above informants is implied in the typically Herodotean formulae that modify superlative expressions, such as Ἀσσυρίους μὲν τὸ παλαιότατον ἐπυθόμεθα ἀκοὴ ἐπὶ τὸ μνήμης μακρότατον ἀφικόμενοι ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς Ἀσίας ἀρχὴν προεληλυθέναι (Laon. 1.4 'From inquiries that went back as far into the past as memory goes I have gathered that the Assyrians were the oldest people that rose to power in Asia') and στρατόπεδον κάλλιστα πάντων δὴ στρατοπέδων, ὧν ἡμεῖς ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ ἀκοὴ ἐπυθόμεθα (Laon. 7.22: 'a camp most beautiful of all camps that we have witnessed and been informed about'). Meanwhile Laonikos' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρεγενόμεν at the end of his proem (Laon. 1.2) echoes Thucydides' formulation of the same principle in his methodological chapter (οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρήν, 1.22.2). In Kritoboulos' case observe his comment upon Mehmed's lifting of ships from the Sea of Marmara into the Golden Horn as an event 'rather incredible for one to see and to hear about' (Krit. 1.42.7, παραδοξότερον καὶ ἰδεῖν καὶ ἀκοῦσαι).

events with accuracy (*ἀκρίβεια*).<sup>18</sup> The quantity of similar formulations is such that it proves that Kritoboulos and Laonikos were deeply engaged with Herodotus and Thucydides, and although there are various later historians whose influence has been assumed, none of them has made such an impact upon the style and phrasing of Kritoboulos and Laonikos as Herodotus and Thucydides did.<sup>19</sup>

A second argument is that Herodotus and Thucydides decisively shaped the Greek historiographical tradition in antiquity, and thereby not only directly but also *indirectly* influenced their late-Byzantine successors. This argument is relevant when we look at indebtedness in explanatory models and other metanarrative aspects that go beyond the level of style and phrasing. In terms of religion, for instance, Herodotus' and Thucydides' Hellenistic successors like Polybius in many ways built their world-views upon their models, as elegantly argued by Hau in relation to Polybius' concept of 'fortune' (*τύχη*):

If quizzed about his thoughts on the motives of this superhuman power, Polybios might well have replied that they are unfathomable for mere mortals. And this, like his belief in double determination, brings him in line with traditional Greek religious thought, as represented by Herodotos.<sup>20</sup>

The empirical stance that Herodotus and Thucydides display towards their material in many ways determined the

<sup>18</sup> See for Kritoboulos *γράψω δὴ καθέκαστα ὡς ἐγένετο ἀκριβῶς* (Krit. 1.4: 'I will write down everything then exactly as it happened') and for Laonikos *ἐφ' ὅσον δὴ ἐς ἀκριβέστερον ἐπιθόμμεθα* (Laon. 1.8: 'as far as I was able to inquire as accurately as possible'). Compare Thucydides' methodological chapter: *ἀκριβείᾳ περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξεληθῶν* (1.22.2, 'dealing with every single event with accuracy').

<sup>19</sup> In the case of Kritoboulos, scholars mention Polybius' *Histories* (Harris (2003) 154) and Arrian's *Anabasis* (Reinsch (2003) 304 and Moustakas (2011) 219), whilst the historian himself refers to Flavius Josephus as a source of inspiration (Krit. 1.3.8).

<sup>20</sup> Hau (2011) 204.

absence of theological debate in the Byzantine historiographical tradition. This generic argument has been offered by Kaldellis in his discussion of Procopius' account of the plague that struck Constantinople under Justinian in 542. Kaldellis points to the tendency in early Byzantine historiography to avoid explicit statements on divine interference. He argues that the inherent goodness of the divine in Christian belief would have forced historians to explain why god brought havoc upon humans in the form of earthquakes and plagues. Instead, Procopius chose to describe the course of the disease and its impact on society according to the model that was offered by Thucydides in his second book (Thuc. 2.47.3–54.5), naming 'fortune' (τύχη, Procop. 2.23.16) as a potential motivating factor. Posing as a classical Greek historian, he preferred an essay rich in medical terminology to a homily that explained the plague in biblical fashion as the result of divine retribution.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Kaldellis argues, whereas the Byzantines of this era were deeply engaged in theological debate about the substance of the divine, they produced 'little or nothing that explained the god's historical agency in their own post-apostolic times, in living history'.<sup>22</sup> Instead, Herodotus and Thucydides continued to determine the way in which the historiographical tradition developed, with classicising historians throughout the Christian era grafting their works upon their *Histories*.<sup>23</sup>

A third argument is that comparing the works of Kritoboulos and Laonikos to their classical templates may help us in evaluating the terminology chosen to describe the events of their time. For instance, in choosing the word βασιλεύς ('king') to indicate the Sultan, both Kritoboulos and Laonikos are believed to have implicitly supported Mehmed's claim to the Byzantine throne and to have

<sup>21</sup> Kaldellis (2007) mentions the chronographer Malalas as an exception in explaining the plague under Justinian as a result of god's benevolence towards mankind, as it purged Constantinople of its worst residents.

<sup>22</sup> Kaldellis (2007); quotation from p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> See Cameron and Cameron (1964).

legitimated his succession as king of the formerly Roman Empire.<sup>24</sup> The choice of title, however, also reflects Herodotus' way of referring to the Persian king, who is usually indicated as '(the) king' without further specification.<sup>25</sup> Although we should not ignore the potentially ideological implications of the adoption of the title βασιλεύς ('king') for Mehmed, it cannot be excluded that it was the Herodotean tradition that primed the historians in the first place, rather than contemporary political circumstances. In the same vein, one should be careful with terminology designating the divine. Turner, for instance, in his study of the late-Byzantine philosophy of history, argues that Laonikos distinguishes between a more personal and more abstract concept of the divine in the alternation between masculine ὁ θεός ('the god') and neuter τὸ θεῖον ('the divine').<sup>26</sup> In fact, classical historiographers tend to use these terms indiscriminately, as has been argued by Harrison for Herodotus and Hau for Polybius,<sup>27</sup> and there is no reason to assume that Laonikos did otherwise. Like his predecessors, he reserved a specific use of θεός for his ethnographic passages and the speeches of his characters to refer to a specific god belonging to a particular religion.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, not too much should be read into Laonikos' use of the names of ancient Greek deities, like Apollo and Artemis, to indicate gods that were worshipped by contemporary peoples like the Samogitians, Bohemians,

<sup>24</sup> Moustakas (2011) 218–20, 224–5; Akışık (2013) 55–6.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance Laon. 8.44 and Krit. 2.9.1. Both Laonikos and Kritoboulos occasionally (but not frequently) refer to the Sultan without article, just as Herodotus normally indicates the Persian king as βασιλεύς without article. See e.g. Laon. 8.31 and Krit. 2.3.5.

<sup>26</sup> Turner (1964) 360–1.

<sup>27</sup> Harrison (2000) 158–81, Hau (2011) 187. The *locus classicus* remains François (1957), who shows that this is a tendency of Greek literature from Homer onwards, prose from the earliest period to the latest included.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Laon. 2.5 (Andronikos referring to the god of the Christians), 3.8 (Timur referring to the god of the Muslims).

and Massagetae (Laon. 3.29).<sup>29</sup> In this Laonikos follows the practice of Herodotus, who prefers the use of Greek names to indicate non-Greek deities (even when he also knows their local names),<sup>30</sup> as illustrated in his treatment of the Egyptian gods, who are usually referred to by Greek names, although Herodotus is aware of their difference, as his argument against equating the Egyptian with the Greek Hercules shows (Hdt. 2.43–45).<sup>31</sup>

Given the above arguments I believe that even in so complex a subject as the response to classical Greek religious views in the late-Byzantine era it is instructive to focus upon the beginning of the historiographical tradition, as it was so decisive in shaping the genre's themes and commonalities. In terms of definitions, then, I take these religious views in a broad sense, and include every utterance that ascribes an event to an entity beyond the sphere of human agency, whether this entity is indicated as a specific god, or referred to as a more abstract force like 'fortune' (*τύχη*). With this in mind I will now discuss those aspects of the divine in Herodotus and Thucydides that I consider to have been most relevant for Kritoboulos and Laonikos in composing their works of history.

<sup>29</sup> Akışık (2013) 59–60 considers this evidence of the continuation of the practice of ancient Greek cult among these peoples, at least in Laonikos' eyes: 'As we have seen, Laonikos wrote that the ancient religion of the Hellenes was still being followed in certain regions of the world in the fifteenth century, namely, among the Samogitians, Bohemians, an Indian race beyond the Caspian Sea, the Massagetae, and the inhabitants of the land of Khatai. Thus, Hellenism, with its worship of ancient Hellenic deities and nature, was a living reality according to Laonikos'.

<sup>30</sup> See for instance Hdt. 1.131.3, where he lists Mylitta, Alilat, and Mitra as names under which Aphrodite is known to respectively the Assyrians, Arabians, and Persians.

<sup>31</sup> Again, Harrison is important here: (2000) 208–22.

### **3. A Summary of the Role of the Divine in Herodotus and Thucydides: Polyphony, Discretion, and Portents**

When considering the role of the divine in the course of history more can be said about Herodotus, who explicitly awards it a role in human affairs, and less about Thucydides, who remains discreet in his narrative but makes his characters reflect on this topic and also hints at some form of coherence between the forces of nature and the violent events of his time.

In Herodotus' case, the role of the divine has led to much controversy in scholarship. Some consider the historian a traditional believer whilst others take him for a religious sceptic.<sup>32</sup> *A priori* however one should observe that Herodotus' ideas about divine influence upon human affairs defy rational analysis and therefore cannot be brought together in a coherent explanatory model. Although this may disappoint those who look for consistency in historical explanation, a general lack of coherence is in fact a common characteristic of any religion.<sup>33</sup> In this regard it is worth quoting Harrison's observations that Herodotus' religious beliefs, as, indeed, religions in general, 'cannot simply be broken down step by step, distinction by distinction, into a single consistent plan', but that, in fact, '[i]nconsistencies in belief are not just an inevitable flaw of all religions, but actually a *means* whereby belief is maintained'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Within recent scholarship Gould (1994), Harrison (2000), and Mikalson (2002) consider Herodotus more a traditional believer, whereas Lateiner (1989) 189–210 downplays the role of the divine within Herodotus' explanatory model and sees him more as a rationalist. Scullion (2006) holds a middle course in this debate, witnessing in Herodotus traces of scepticism as well as pious belief.

<sup>33</sup> For an extended discussion of this aspect of ancient Greek religion, and the consequences for its students, see Gould (2001) and Versnel (2011) 181–201 and appendix III.

<sup>34</sup> Harrison (2000) 16.

Thus a preferable approach is not to search for consistency in the role of the divine in Herodotus' *Histories*, but to analyse each reference to divine influence within its narrative context. In doing so, we should acknowledge that Herodotus was not writing theology, but, probably like any believer, struggled with the question of the (extent of) divine influence upon human life, especially in light of the vast and diverse amount of material that he collected for his project. As a consequence we find in the *Histories*, on the one hand, instances of a more fatalistic divine agent that causes great evils to fall upon people without any apparent reason. This divine force is the subject of Solon's lesson to Croesus (Hdt. 1.32), an envious divine that strikes human beings randomly (by 'fortune', *τύχη*), and whose only constant characteristic can be described as maintaining a balance so that aspirations of continuous growth are checked and counterbalanced.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, we find in the *Histories* references to a divine force that operates as a moralistic agent and punishes wrongdoers. This force is responsible for the fall and destruction of Troy, a punishment for the crimes against the sacred laws of guest-friendship committed by Paris. Herodotus explains this in the following words (2.120.5):

... ὡς μὲν ἐγὼ γνώμην ἀποφαίνομαι, τοῦ δαιμονίου παρασκευάζοντος ὅκως πανωλεθρίη ἀπολόμενοι καταφανές τοῦτο τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι ποιήσωσι, ὡς τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλαί εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τῇ ἐμοὶ δοκέει εἶρηται.

... at least according to my opinion, because the divine provided that by complete and utter destruction they should become an example for mankind of how great crimes lead also to a divine retribution that is great.

<sup>35</sup> For Herodotus' presentation of Solon's ideas on human fortune and their elaboration in the remainder of the *Histories* see Harrison (2000) 31–63. Parallels of this 'Solonic' thought are found in the stories of Amasis and Polycrates (Hdt. 3.40–43) and Xerxes and Artabanus (Hdt. 7.8–18), on which see below, pp. 151–2, 158–9.

And this has been stated according to my personal view.

Herodotus usually frames statements about the retributive divine as personal views, thereby implicitly allowing for different viewpoints. The twofold use of *μέν* ‘solitarium’ in the above passage implies that others are welcome to disagree and have different opinions on this subject.<sup>36</sup> His framing hints at contemporary controversy about the course of events during the Trojan War, the role of the divine, and that of particular individuals like Helen, Paris and Menelaus.<sup>37</sup>

Apart from referring to a divine that influences human life in different and apparently inconsistent ways, Herodotus also juxtaposes divine and earthly factors when he explains events. An example is his account of the madness of the Persian king Cambyses, which made him commit great crimes against the Egyptians and against members of his family and retinue (Hdt. 3.33):

*ταῦτα ... ὁ Καμβύσης ἐξεμάνη, εἴτε δὴ διὰ τὸν Ἄπιν εἴτε καὶ ἄλλως, οἷα πολλὰ ἔωθε ἀνθρώπους κακὰ καταλαμβάνειν· καὶ γὰρ τινα καὶ ἐκ γενεῆς νοῦσον μεγάλην λέγεται ἔχειν ὁ Καμβύσης, τὴν ἱρὴν ὀνομάζουσί τινες.*

Cambyses committed these mad acts, either because of Apis or it just happened because much evil tends to strike humans. It is said after all that Cambyses suffered from his birth onwards from a serious illness which some people call the ‘sacred disease’.

Herodotus explains Cambyses’ madness as either resulting from (divine) punishment for the slaying of Apis, a calf that

<sup>36</sup> On *μέν* ‘solitarium’ see van Emde Boas et al. (2016) 59.24. For the role of the retributive divine in Herodotus see Harrison (2000) 102–21.

<sup>37</sup> This controversy is attested in other sources. For an overview, see de Bakker (2012) 109 with references to further literature in n. 6.

was held sacred by the Egyptians, or from the natural cause of a mental disease that had plagued him all his life. He does not argue in favour of either, but offers two possible explanations to his readers, leaving them to choose for themselves.

A subtler example of such juxtaposing is found later in the *Histories* when Xerxes plans to revoke his decision to invade Greece and is threatened by a dream that orders him to maintain his original plan (Hdt. 7.12–18). Here the narrative suggests that the divine acts as a retributive force, as it urges Xerxes to attack the Greeks and suffer the consequences. Xerxes would, on this reading, be punished for his hubristic ambition to ‘equate the Persian realm with the sky of Zeus’, as he expresses it in his meeting with the other Persian grandees (Hdt. 7.87.1). Herodotus, however, complicates the explanation by making Xerxes’ uncle and mentor Artabanus argue that the dream is not divine, but the natural result of something that is in the front of Xerxes’ mind (Hdt. 7.16). As in the case of Cambyses’ madness a natural explanation is offered alongside a supernatural one, though the narrative in this case—with the same dream visiting Artabanus too (Hdt. 7.17.2, cf. 7.47.1)—suggests that Herodotus favoured the latter.

This juxtaposing of alternative explanations is typical of Herodotus’ way of presenting his material. The historian likes to confront his readers with different versions and viewpoints so as to engage them into his research and encourage them to active reflection.<sup>38</sup> This Herodotean ‘polyphony’ is nowadays understood as an indication that he worked in a circle of intellectuals that stimulated debate and discussion and had an audience in mind that held conflicting opinions on issues such as divine influence upon human affairs.<sup>39</sup> By allowing for different models of explanation he avoided the alienation of readers who would

<sup>38</sup> For this aspect of the *Histories* see the valuable analysis of Baragwanath (2008).

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of this context, based on comparison of Herodotus’ *Histories* with the texts of the early Hippocratic writers, see Thomas (2000).

otherwise not settle for the choices that he made in explaining the course of historical events.

A generation later Thucydides worked in a different way and presented his research in a smoother version to his readers, though in his work too there are ample traces of differing viewpoints and of his personal activity as an interpreter.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to Herodotus, however, Thucydides does not explicitly refer in his narrative to divine forces that influence the outcome of historical events. These references are exclusively found in speeches and thoughts ascribed to his characters, the classic example of which is found in Nicias' address to the Athenians after their final defeat in the Great Harbour of Syracuse, in which he refers to the divine as a retributive force (Thuc. 7.77.3–4):

*ἱκανὰ γὰρ τοῖς τε πολεμίοις ἠτύχηται, καὶ εἴ τῳ θεῶν ἐπίφθονοι ἐστρατεύσαμεν, ἀποχρόντως ἤδη τετιμωρήμεθα. ... καὶ ἡμᾶς εἰκὸς νῦν τὰ τε ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐλπίζειν ἡπιώτερα ἔξειν (οἴκτου γὰρ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀξιώτεροι ἤδη ἐσμέν ἢ φθόνου) ...*

For our enemies have enjoyed enough success, and if we in marching out incurred the wrath of one of the gods, we have now been punished sufficiently. ... Also in our case it makes sense now to expect the divine to be milder (for we are more worthy of its pity than envy) ...

Nicias is, in fact, portrayed as a deeply religious man when he decides that the Athenians—in spite of an increasingly hopeless military situation—should stay for another month in their camp on the shores of the Great Harbour near Syracuse after an eclipse of the moon, which prompts Thucydides to judge him as 'too much inclined towards superstition and the like' (*ἄγαν θειασμῶ τε καὶ τῷ τοιούτῳ προσκείμενος*, Thuc. 7.50.4). The subsequent narrative proves Nicias' appeals to the gods to be futile, as the delay

<sup>40</sup> For these aspects of Thucydides' history, see Rood (2006).

of the Athenians only fortifies the Syracusan position. The Athenians ultimately fail in their attempt to escape from their Sicilian enemies, and meet an even harsher fate than Nicias had envisaged. In a similar way Thucydides makes the Melians, when besieged by the Athenians, twice express their faith in a divine force that acts as an agent of justice and will protect them (Thuc. 5.104.1; 5.112.2), but they are ultimately conquered and killed by the Athenians.

Instances like these as well as references to religious institutions like the oracle of Delphi or the Games of Olympia show that Thucydides acknowledges the importance of religion for those who participated in the war, but refuses to speculate explicitly about divine influence upon human affairs in his own voice.<sup>41</sup> Although the over-all narrative structure of the *Histories* may suggest that the Athenian defeat at Syracuse could be seen as some form of retribution for imperial overstretch, Thucydides himself remains silent about the potentially sensitive religious aspect of this interpretation.<sup>42</sup> Instead, one of the factors that often influences the outcome of events in his narrative is the unforeseen chance (sometimes indicated by *τύχη* or its related verb *τυγχάνω*) that throws premeditated plans into disarray. This is exemplified in his account of the second sea-battle of Naupaktos, where the Peloponnesian fleet throws away certain victory against a much smaller number of Athenian ships which use a merchant vessel that coincidentally lies in their path to outwit their pursuers (Thuc. 2.91.3 ‘a merchant vessel happened to lie at anchor at sea’, *ἔτυχε δὲ ὀκτὰς ὀρμουσα μετέωρος*). In highlighting unforeseen fortune, Thucydides initiated a theme in historiographical war narrative that would be further developed by Polybius and, via Procopius among others,

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of Thucydides’ attitude towards religion with references to further scholarship see Furley (2006).

<sup>42</sup> For more on this and the parallels with Herodotus’ narrative of the Persian Wars see Rood (1999).

find its way into the later Byzantine historiographical tradition.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, it cannot be denied that also in Thucydides there is a certain ambiguity in relation to supernatural explanations of events. Although he usually prefers a rational, empirical explanation (for instance in ascribing the cause of a tsunami to an earthquake and not to a divine force, 3.89.5), Thucydides also claims, at the end of his introduction, that the magnitude of his war coincided with unparalleled portents and natural calamities, as Greece was struck by more (violent) earthquakes, solar eclipses, droughts, and famines than ever before. Although the historian does not claim a causal relationship, he implies that the exceptional events of the war should be seen in coherence with its accompanying natural phenomena. His claim hints at an underlying explanatory model in which all events in the cosmos are interdependent, which causes extreme human suffering to be paralleled by natural calamities. Although he never voices this principle explicitly, it turns out that he weaves references to the forces of nature into his narrative, suggesting that they act in some form of ‘concomitance’ with human events.<sup>44</sup>

In sum, then, the following aspects of Herodotus’ and Thucydides’ attitude to religion in motivating events are relevant for the late Byzantine tradition:

(1) a tendency to juxtapose different explanatory schemas, whether divine or human, and to countenance a range of different forms of divine action (fatalistic, providential, and retributive). Herodotus openly juxtaposes these forms, whereas Thucydides tacitly allows for the possibility of coherence between human and natural phenomena;

<sup>43</sup> See Hau (2011) and my observations on Kritoboulos below, pp. 150–2.

<sup>44</sup> For a more elaborate discussion, also in relation to other parts of Thucydides’ *Histories*, see de Bakker (forthcoming). For the concept of ‘concomitance’ see Munson (2015).

(2) a tendency to ascribe explicit comments upon the role of the divine to characters by embedding them in the representation of their speeches and thoughts;

(3) a belief that great events are accompanied by spectacular natural portents.

It is now time to look at the ways in which Kritoboulos and Laonikos present the role of the divine in the great events of their time, and compare their use of classical models with other schemes of causation, both Christian and non-Christian, that may have informed their views. Turner singles out Kritoboulos and Laonikos as holding ‘fundamentally divergent views of the role of fate and divine providence in history’ when compared to their contemporaries. In his view both historians show themselves indifferent towards dogmatic Christianity.<sup>45</sup> But what do they offer instead?

#### 4. The Divine in Kritoboulos’ History

In making Mehmed the protagonist of his work and evaluating his words and actions in generally positive terms Kritoboulos clearly did not base his explanation of Ottoman conquest primarily upon divine forces. Moustakas’ view, however, that ‘the metaphysical or theological aspect’ occupied ‘only a marginal position in his reasoning’ seems to be too strong when we consider the way in which Kritoboulos accounts for the end of the Palaeologan Empire.<sup>46</sup>

In the opening of his *Histories*, Kritoboulos inserts an ‘apology’ (*παράκλησις*, 1.3) in which he addresses his readers and asks forgiveness for laying bare the ‘evils at home’ (*οἴκεια κακά*, 1.3.1) that have afflicted the Byzantines.<sup>47</sup> He

<sup>45</sup> Turner (1964) 361–5; quotation at 364.

<sup>46</sup> Moustakas (2011) 222.

<sup>47</sup> As Anthony Ellis points out to me the phrase itself might be read as an echo of Hdt. 1.45.2, where Croesus is told to be in ‘such great evil at home’ (*ἐν κακῷ οἴκῳ τσοούτῳ*) after the death of his son Atys.

exonerates them from blame for the fall of the city, pointing instead to the cyclical nature of empire and arguing that history has taught that nothing remains the same forever (1.3.4–5):

*τίς γὰρ οὐκ οἶδεν, ὡς, ἐξότου γεγόνασιν ἄνθρωποι, τὰ τῆς βασιλείας καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς οὐδ' ὄλως ἔμεινεν ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν οὐδ' ἐνὶ γένει τε καὶ ἔθνει περιεκλείσθη, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ πλανώμενά τε αἰεὶ καὶ ἐξ ἔθνων ἔθνη καὶ τόπους ἐκ τόπων ἀμείβοντα πανταχοῦ μεταβέβηκέ τε καὶ περιέστη, νῦν μὲν ἐς Ἀσσυρίους καὶ Μήδους καὶ Πέρσας, νῦν δὲ ἐς Ἕλληνας καὶ Ῥωμαίους κατὰ καιρούς τε καὶ περιόδους ἐνιαυτῶν ἐπιχωριάσαντά τε καὶ οὐδέποτε ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν βεβηκότα; οὐδὲν τοίνυν θαυμαστὸν καὶ νῦν τὰ ἑαυτῶν δρᾶσαί τε καὶ παθεῖν καὶ Ῥωμαίους μὲν τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὴν τύχην ἀπολιπεῖν, πρὸς ἑτέροισι δὲ διαβῆναί τε καὶ μεταχωρῆσαι, ὥσπερ ἐξ ἄλλων ἐς τούτους, πανταχοῦ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν τε καὶ τάξιν τηροῦντα.*

For who does not know that ever since mankind has been in existence, kingship and empire did not stay intact in the same hands and were not limited to one race or nation, but as if they were always wandering and changing from nation to nation and from place to place have everywhere moved away and circled around, and the one moment visited Assyrians, Medes and Persians, the other moment Greeks and Romans according to circumstances and cycles of years, and never ended in the same hands? Thus it is no surprise that also now kingdoms and empires do and suffer what is characteristic of them, and that power and fortune have left the Romans and shifted and moved across into the hands of others, just as they came from others to them, always and everywhere remaining faithful to their own nature and disposition.

In his apology Kritoboulos points at the principle of eternal change, which was first formulated by Heraclitus (6th–5th c. BCE) and guarantees that rule, kingship, and empire never

remain in the same hands forever. In his view, world-history should be seen as a continuous succession of empires, with the Ottoman Empire being ‘the next in line after the collapse of the Roman’.<sup>48</sup> The observation is made at the end of his introduction, just before the beginning of the narrative of the events. This placement is reminiscent of Herodotus, who rounds off his introduction to the *Histories* with a similar statement (1.5.3–4):

... προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου, ὁμοίως σμικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστυα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών. τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν σμικρὰ γέγονε, τὰ δὲ ἐπ’ ἐμεῦ ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρὰ. τὴν ἀνθρωπηίην ὧν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν ταύτῳ μένουσαν ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως.

... I will continue with my story touching upon mankind’s small and big cities in like manner. For those cities which were great in earlier times, have mostly become small, and those that were great in my time, were small in earlier times. Understanding, therefore, that human prosperity in no way remains in the same place I will mention both in like manner.

That Kritoboulos looked closely at Herodotus’ introduction is proven by the resemblance in the formulation of the principle of change (οὐδ’ ὅλως ἔμεινεν ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ≈ οὐδαμὰ ἐν ταύτῳ μένουσαν). Though a literal copy is avoided, Kritoboulos couches the principle in language that is largely synonymous.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Moustakas (2011) 222. See also Reinsch (2003) 306.

<sup>49</sup> Observe that Laonikos refers to the same Herodotean passage at the end of his introduction, though without reference to the principle of change: ὡς οὖν ἕκαστα τούτων ξυνέβη γενέσθαι, ὡς τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πράγματα κατὰ βραχὺ ἀπώλετο, φθειρόμενα ὑπὸ Τούρκων, καὶ ὡς τὰ ἐκείνων μεγάλα ἐγένετο, ἐς μέγα αἰὲ ἐς τόνδε τὸν χρόνον ἴοντα εὐδαιμονίας, ἐπιμνησόμεθα ἐπεξιόντες, ἐφ’ ὅσον δὴ ἐς τὸ ἀκριβέστερον ἐπιθόμεθα (1.8: ‘how each of these events happened, how Greek power ended in a short time, being destroyed by the Turks, and how the

In Herodotus' *Histories* the instability of fortune and the fleeting nature of properties like wealth, happiness, and empire are repeatedly thematised. Ample reflection on the subject is found in the story of the Lydian king Croesus, who believes himself to be most blessed of all men until he is faced with the loss of his son and his empire. Having learnt from this experience he issues a warning to king Cyrus of Persia (1.207.2):

μάθε ὡς κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἐστὶ πρηγμάτων,  
περιφερόμενος δὲ οὐκ ἔα αἰεὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐτυχέειν.

Learn that there is a cycle of human affairs, which turns round and does not allow the same people to be successful forever.

This cyclical view of an ever-changing course of history is also found in Kritoboulos' work, as witnessed by his observations about the cyclical nature of empire in his *παραίτησις* (1.3). Elsewhere too he uses it in his narrative for the purpose of consoling the Byzantines for the loss of their empire (1.69.3):

οὕτως οὐδὲν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πιστὸν οὐδὲ βέβαιον, ἀλλὰ  
πάντα δίκην Εὐρίπου ἄνω καὶ κάτω στροβεῖται καὶ  
περιφέρεται ταῖς ἀγχιστρόφοις τοῦ βίου μεταβολαῖς  
παίζοντα καὶ παιζόμενα παρὰ μέρος ...

Thus nothing human remains fixed and stable, but everything like the river Euripos<sup>50</sup> whirls around up

latter's power became great, and is still growing to great prosperity until now, we will relate in our overview of history, in so far as we gathered information in a more accurate manner'). Compare *ἐπιμνησόμεθα ἐπεξιόντες* with *ἐπεξιῶν* and *ἐπιμνήσομαι* (Hdt. 1.5.4).

<sup>50</sup> The use of the Euripos (the narrow strait that separates Euboea from mainland Greece) as an image of whirling instability dates back to antiquity, e.g. Aeschin. 3.90; Aristot. *Met.* 366a23. Kritoboulos may owe this particular phrase to Aelius Aristides (24.10 Keil): *ἀλλ' ὥσπερ Εὐριπος ἄνω καὶ κάτω φέρεται*.

and down and is tossed around by the quick changes of life, playing and being played with in turn ...

We could, with Moustakas,<sup>51</sup> consider this cyclical view primarily secular, as Kritoboulos makes the successes of the Ottomans dependent on the qualities of Mehmed. However, in adopting this ancient explanatory model, Kritoboulos also makes a religious choice. He does not use linear models of historical explanation that were based upon Christian-eschatological doctrine and used by contemporaries like Gennadios Scholarios who also cooperated with the Ottoman leadership. Instead, he opts for an impersonal force that operates neutrally in guaranteeing the continuous change and succession of empire. The fall of Constantinople then being fated, it should just be seen as a spectacular piece of bad luck for its contemporary inhabitants, but not as the result of their sins.

Kritoboulos combines this cyclical view of empire with the idea of a capricious, impersonal ‘fortune’ (τύχη), which strikes at random and must always be borne in mind.<sup>52</sup> It is this fortune, in personified form, that Kritoboulos holds responsible for the fall of the city, for instance when he refers to the staunch fighting mentality of its defenders (1.56.4):

*ἀλλ’ ἐτήρησαν γενναίως τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔνστασιν διὰ πάντων, ἕως ἣ πονηρὰ καὶ ἀγνώμων τύχη προὔδωκε τούτους.*

But they nobly guarded their initial mentality throughout all events until wicked and inconsiderate fortune betrayed them.

<sup>51</sup> Moustakas (2011) 222–3.

<sup>52</sup> On ‘fortune’ (τύχη) in Kritoboulos, see Turner (1964) 361–3, who defines it as an impersonal concept without purpose, reason, and providence.

The fortune theme recurs in particular in character-speech. Kritoboulos ascribes the following words to Mehmed when he encourages his troops to remain vigilant during the final stage of the siege of Constantinople, thus marking him out as a wise leader (1.15):

*οὐκ οἶδαμεν ὡς τὰ τῶν πολέμων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν ἔργα οὐ  
μενετὰ καὶ τῷ χρόνῳ οὐδὲν ἀνέλπιστον καὶ τὰ τῆς τύχης  
ἄδηλα πανταχοῦ καὶ τὸ τῶν πραγμάτων τέλος  
ἀστάθμητον καὶ ἀτέκμαρτον;*

Do we not know that war and crisis should not be waited for, that in time nothing remains out of reach, that fortune is everywhere unclear and that the end of things cannot be determined or fathomed?

Whereas Harris points to Thucydides and Polybius as templates for Kritoboulos' concept of fortune,<sup>53</sup> this example shows that the historian, in making Mehmed stress fortune's unpredictability, copied a narrative strategy that is also found in Herodotus. The latter, too, did not reflect upon fortune's capriciousness and divine envy in his own voice, but instead ascribed these views to his wise advisors Solon (1), Amasis (2), and Artabanus (3), whose speeches contain statements such as the following (Hdt. 1.32.4; 3.40.2 and 7.51.3, respectively):

(1) *πᾶν ἐστὶ ἀνθρώπος συμφορή.*  
'man is in all respects accident'.

(2) *ἐμοὶ δὲ αἱ σαὶ μεγάλαι εὐτυχίαι οὐκ ἀρέσκουσι,  
ἐπισταμένῳ τὸ θεῖον ὡς ἔστι φθονερόν.*  
'To me your great successes are not pleasing, as I know that the divine is envious.'

(3) *ἐς θυμὸν ὦν βαλεῦ καὶ τὸ παλαιὸν ἔπος ὡς εὖ εἴρηται,  
τὸ μὴ ἅμα ἀρχῇ πᾶν τέλος καταφαίνεσθαι.*

<sup>53</sup> Harris (2003) 154–5.

‘Bear in mind also the ancient saying, how well it has been said, “it is not at all at the beginning that the end becomes clear.”’

Kritoboulos also makes his characters reflect upon the divine in different terms. In his second book, which deals with the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople, the advisors of Dorieus, a local Aegean chief, warn him against disinheriting his older brother’s wife and children by appealing to (2.11.4):

*θείαν νέμεσιν ... ἣ πανταχοῦ περιερχομένη τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων δικάζει καὶ τοὺς ἀδικουμένους καὶ ἀδικοῦντας ὀρᾷ.*

divine vengeance, ... which comes around everywhere to give judgement on human affairs and observes those who are wronged and their wrongdoers.

Again the phrasing is loosely based upon a concept familiar from Herodotus, who, as discussed above, at times saw the effects of a retributive ‘vengeful divine’ at work, for instance in the case of Croesus, who was punished after his failure to understand the lessons that Solon tried to teach him (Hdt. 1.34.1):

*ἔλαβε ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη Κροῖσον, ὡς εἰκάσαι, ὅτι ἐνόμισε ἑωυτὸν εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων ὀλβιώτατον.*

a great vengeance from the god fell on Croesus, as one may guess, because he considered himself to be most blessed of all men.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, Kritoboulos follows his ancient masters in paying attention to portents, such as the fog that covered

<sup>54</sup> Observe though that the *nemesis* concept is widespread in Byzantine literature. See Hinterberger (2010).

Constantinople and evaporated on the final day of the siege (1.46). Similarly, when the Byzantines prepare for the defence of the city, he mentions unfavourable omens, exceedingly strong earthquakes, thunderstorms, unusual signs and constellations of the heavenly bodies (1.18.6). These omens are offered by ‘the divine’ (τὸ θεῖον, 1.18.7) and appear to foreshadow the fall of the city. This passage subtly alludes to the observation made by ancient historians that great events coincide with unusual natural phenomena such as plagues, disasters, earthquakes, solar eclipses, droughts, and famines. Above, I referred to Thucydides’ claim that the Peloponnesian War coincided with natural disasters of unparalleled quality and quantity (Thuc. 1.23.3). Herodotus voices the same principle when he mentions the plague and collapse of a school on Chios, two events that foreshadow the island’s conquest by Histiaeus (Hdt. 6.27).<sup>55</sup>

Thus Kritoboulos’ approach to the role of the divine in human affairs is couched in terms familiar from the classical historiographical tradition. Particularly striking are his allusions to Herodotus, who appears to have inspired him in formulating the principle of everlasting change. It may be from him that he copied the metanarrative strategy of remaining reluctant to express explicit statements upon the nature of the divine in his own voice. Instead, he makes his characters refer to the capriciousness of fortune, and at least once hint at a more retributive form of divine justice. The narrative passages, meanwhile, mainly focus upon the empirically verifiable human affairs and thereby reflect Kritoboulos’ aspirations towards historiographical authority in the eyes of his readers.

<sup>55</sup> Hdt. 6.27.1: *φιλέει δέ κως προσημαίνειν, εὖτ’ ἂν μέλλη μεγάλα κακὰ ἢ πόλι ἢ ἔθνει ἕσσεσθαι*. (‘There are invariably warning signs given when disaster is going to overwhelm a community or race’, trans. Waterfield). I thank Anthony Ellis for drawing my attention to this passage.

### 5. The Divine in Laonikos' *Demonstrations*

Compared to Kritoboulos' *Histories*, Laonikos took on a more ambitious project, in which he did not exclusively focus upon the fall of Constantinople and its immediate aftermath, but attempted to write a contemporary world history structured around the rise of the Ottomans. His approach was innovative as he included lengthy geographical and ethnographical digressions, for which he used Herodotus' *Histories* as a template and ignored the preceding Byzantine historiographical tradition. This aspect has been discussed recently by Kaldellis, who points out that the indebtedness is particularly revealed in the 'conceptual framework of Laonikos's ethnography',<sup>56</sup> which lacks a Christian or pro-Hellenic bias, as exemplified by his discussion of Islam (3.15–20). To quote Kaldellis:

Laonikos was the first author from a Christian society to present Islam not as a theological error or religious abomination, but as a valid religious culture, presenting the facts dispassionately and finding it overall to be just. His approach was ethnographic, not religious.<sup>57</sup>

In narratological terms, Laonikos' narratorial attitude can be described as impartial. In this respect he follows the historiographical tradition all the way back to the Herodotean narrator, who himself owes this impartiality to Homer.<sup>58</sup> This aspect of Herodotus' narrative was already acknowledged in antiquity by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who described his older compatriot as 'fair' (ἐπιεικής),<sup>59</sup> but

<sup>56</sup> Kaldellis (2014) 49–100; quotation at p. 65.

<sup>57</sup> Kaldellis (2014) 101.

<sup>58</sup> See Moustakas (2011) 224: 'In treating the history of the Ottomans, he tries to be impartial, which could be reflecting an influence from classical models of historical writing. In any event his narration is respectful towards the Ottomans, which in itself could be attributed to the imitation of his principal archetype, Herodotos, in the way the latter had treated the Achaemenid Persians'. For Herodotus' indebtedness to Homer in creating his narrator's voice, see de Jong (2004).

<sup>59</sup> D. Hal., *Pomp. Gem.* 3.15.

it was faulted by others, most notably Plutarch, who accused Herodotus of being a ‘lover of barbarians’ (*φιλοβάρβαρος*).<sup>60</sup> Just as Herodotus awards positive evaluations to foreign kings like the Persian Cyrus, Laonikos characterises some sultans in positive terms. Mehmed himself, however, as Harris points out, is ‘cast in the mould of the Persian king, Xerxes, as an arbitrary and selfish tyrant, as careless of the lives of his subjects as of those of his enemies’.<sup>61</sup>

In religious matters, however, Laonikos remains more discreet than Herodotus, and seems to follow Thucydides’ approach. He avoids typically Herodotean themes like miracles and dreams and reflects rationally upon the human inclination to turn to superstition in case of crisis (2.37), a passage that resembles Thucydides’ observations about the use of oracles by the Athenians at the time of the great plague (Thuc. 2.54) as well as Polybius’ criticism of Nicias’ superstition during the siege of Syracuse (Pol. 9.19, cf. Thuc. 7.50.4, quoted above). For Laonikos only ‘fortune’, (*τύχη*) counts as a force that brings about historical events, but in contrast to Kritoboulos, he does not qualify fortune as fleeting, but presents it as interrelated with human action and as concomitant with virtue.<sup>62</sup> Laonikos highlights this interrelationship in his introduction, where he refers to the Greeks and argues that (1.3):

*τύχην ἀρετῆς ἐνδεᾶ σχόντες ἀπανταχοῦ, ξύμμετρον δὲ οὐδαμοῦ.*

their virtue was everywhere lacking in comparison to the fortune they enjoyed, and nowhere commensurate with it. (tr. Kaldellis)

<sup>60</sup> Plut., *DHM* 857A.

<sup>61</sup> Harris (2003) 162.

<sup>62</sup> Turner (1964) 359–61 denies this connection between fortune and virtue. He describes Laonikos’ concept of fortune as an impersonal supernatural force, acting as a ‘colourless numen’ (361).

The Romans are credited as conquerors of the greatest empire as (1.5):

ἰσοτάλαντον ἔχοντας τύχην τῇ ἀρετῇ.

their fortune was equal in weight to their virtue.

This combination of virtue and fortune recurs a few times in the *Demonstrations* to explain political and military success.<sup>63</sup>

Those specialists who study Laonikos' concept of fortune have tried to account for its intellectual origins. In general they point to Laonikos' tutor Plethon, who wrote a treatise 'on fate' (*περὶ εἰμαρμένης*) in neo-Platonic fashion.<sup>64</sup> Harris argues that Laonikos owes his concept of fortune to the Latin historiography of Livy, to which he could have gained access through Italian connections, possibly via Plethon. He considers Laonikos' treatment of fortune a sign of emerging Renaissance thought, as it suggested a more emancipated role for human beings, more able than previously thought to influence their own destiny, provided that they lived a virtuous life.<sup>65</sup> Kaldellis, however, points out that Laonikos may have derived these ideas also from ancient sources, where they were found in the works of Plutarch.<sup>66</sup> In fact, ideas that connect one's fortune with one's personal qualities are already found in Herodotus, who, typically, frames them by embedding them in the speeches of his characters. Thus Themistocles is credited with the following sweeping statement at the end of his speech to his fellow-admirals at Salamis (Hdt. 8.60γ):

<sup>63</sup> Compare Laon. 1.47; 1.58; 7.63.

<sup>64</sup> Turner (1964) 359–60; Harris (2003) 160; Akışık (2013) 88, 123.

<sup>65</sup> Harris (2003) 163–70. Compare Moustakas (2011) 229.

<sup>66</sup> Kaldellis (2014) 172–3. Plethon, incidentally, studied the ancient historiographical tradition carefully, as is witnessed by his short historiographical treatise in flawless Attic Greek, fashioned after Xenophon and based upon Plutarch and Diodorus.

οἰκότα μὲν νυν βουλευομένοισι ἀνθρώποισι ὡς τὸ ἐπίπαν  
ἐθέλει γίνεσθαι· μὴ δὲ οἰκότα βουλευομένοισι οὐκ ἐθέλει  
οὐδὲ ὁ θεὸς προσχωρέειν πρὸς τὰς ἀνθρωπῆϊας γνώμας.

When humans discuss a plausible course of action this will mostly happen. But if they do not discuss a plausible course of action, not even the divine will agree with human plans.

These words conclude a speech in which Themistocles warns the Greek allies not to give up their position at Salamis. His *peroratio* reflects an optimistic perspective upon the role of the divine as supportive provided that humans are willing to carefully consider, discuss and plan their actions (*βουλεύεσθαι*). Themistocles' formulation thereby also befits the broader Herodotean theme of how to use one's cognitive capacities in the planning of an action. Many rulers in his work, most notably Xerxes, fail either to plan properly or respond adequately to wise advice offered by their subjects, often with disastrous effects for themselves and their subjects. Their attitude makes a negative outcome almost inevitable, as exemplified already early in the *Histories* by the behaviour of the Lydian king Candaules, who believes his wife to be the most beautiful woman on earth and keeps bragging about her to his trusted servant Gyges (Hdt. 1.8.1). Candaules, Herodotus thereupon admits, 'was destined to end his life badly' (*χρῆν ... Κανδαύλη γενέσθαι κακῶς*, 1.8.2), and in the narrative that follows he relates how Gyges ultimately usurped his throne.

In the one passage where Laonikos explicitly awards a role to fortune in his narrative, we find a similar situation. Here, Laonikos deals with the Palaeologoi Thomas and Demetrios, incompetent despots of the Morea, who according to Laonikos mismanaged their territories, were continually at odds with one another, and ignored Ottoman advice on how to improve their demeanour (8.43):

ἀλλ' ἐχρήν μὲν ταῦτα, τύχη οὐκ ἀγαθῇ φερόμενα, ταῦτ' ἄρα ἴσχειν σφίσι τὴν τελευτήν, καὶ οὕτω ἀποβήσεσθαι ἐς τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι γενόμενα.

But these things had to end in this way, propelled as they were by an evil fortune, and it brought about the end for them, their final outcome being extinction (tr. Kaldellis).<sup>67</sup>

As often in Herodotus, an evil destiny is concomitant with or results from some form of human transgression. In this way, Laonikos characterises the Peloponnesian despots as the exact opposites of the Romans mentioned in his introduction. Whereas the latter found fortune on their side thanks to their virtue, the former were brought down by fortune as a result of their incompetence.

Elsewhere, Laonikos only embeds explicit statements about divine interference in human affairs in his character's speeches and thoughts, a narrative method familiar from Herodotus and Thucydides as we saw above. It is exemplified by the conversation between Timur and his defeated and captured opponent Bayazit, whom he accuses of blindness (3.60):

ἀλλ' ἦν μὴ ἐτετύφωσο, ἔφη Τεμήρης, οὕτω μέγα πάνυ φρονῶν, οὐκ ἂν δὴ ἐς τοῦτο συμφορᾶς, οἶμαι, ἀφίκου· οὕτω γὰρ εἴωθε τὸ θεῖον τὰ πάνυ μέγα φρονοῦντα καὶ πεφυσμημένα μειοῦν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ σμικρύνειν.

But if you had not been blinded, Timur said, and been so very high-minded, you would not have arrived, in my opinion, at such misfortune. For in this way the divine usually tends to lessen and make small everything that is swollen up and very high-minded.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of this passage see Kaldellis (2014) 42; cf. 192–3.

<sup>68</sup> For a similar example see Laon. 9.72.

Timur's statement echoes a passage in Herodotus' *Histories* in which Artabanus gives advice to his nephew Xerxes and warns him against his plan to invade Greece (Hdt. 7.10ε):

ὄρῳς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα ζῶα ὡς κεραυνοὶ ὁ θεὸς οὐδὲ ἐᾷ φαντάζεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σμικρὰ οὐδέν μιν κνίζει· ὄρῳς δὲ ὡς ἐς οἰκήματα τὰ μέγιστα αἰεὶ καὶ δένδρεα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀποσκήπτει τὰ βέλεα. φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν. ... οὐ γὰρ ἐᾷ φρονέειν μέγα ὁ θεὸς ἄλλον ἢ ἑωυτόν.

You see how the god strikes with his thunderbolts those creatures that stand out, and does not allow them to make a show, whereas small creatures do not provoke him. You see how he hurls his bolts always into the largest palaces and trees of such size. For the god likes to curtail everything that stands out ... the god does not allow anyone else to be high-minded apart from himself.

Both statements (Timur's given from hindsight, Artabanus' as preliminary warning) hint at the divine as a force that punishes those who grow too big and become high-minded (observe the expression *μέγα φρονεῖν* in both passages).<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere too Laonikos makes his characters refer to this punishing role of the divine, for instance in his concluding reflection upon the fall of Constantinople, where he mentions the opinion held in the Latin west that it was a revenge for the capture of Troy—an opinion that, as discussed above, was widely held (8.30):

δοκεῖ δὲ ἡ ξυμφορὰ αὕτη μεγίστη τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην γενομένων ὑπερβαλέσθαι τῷ πάθει, καὶ τῇ τῶν Ἰλίου παραπλησίαν γεγονέναι, δίκην γενέσθαι τοῦ Ἰλίου ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων τοῖς Ἑλλησι πασσοῦδι ἀπολουμένοις, καὶ οὕτω τοὺς Ῥωμαίους οἴεσθαι

<sup>69</sup> For more references to this widespread topos in classical literature, see Cairns (1996).

*ξυμβῆναι, τὴν τίσιν ἀφίχθαι τοῖς Ἑλλησι τῆς πάλαι ποτὲ γενομένης Ἰλίου ξυμφορᾶς.*

This enormous disaster seems to have surpassed those that have happened across the inhabited world in degree of suffering, and to have resembled the evil that struck the Trojans. The barbarians seem to have avenged themselves upon the Greeks as they were entirely brought down, and it seems that the Latins were of the opinion that it happened for this reason, that revenge fell upon the Greeks for the disaster that once struck Troy.

In this passage Laonikos carefully distinguishes his own opinion, namely that the fall of Constantinople resembled that of Troy in its magnitude, from the opinion of the Latins, who considered the events evidence of divine retribution for Greek crimes against the Trojans long ago. Unlike his predecessor Herodotus, Laonikos seems reluctant to endorse the idea of the divine as a punishing force within his narrative, and instead embeds it exclusively in the speeches and thoughts of his characters.

## **6. The Function of Ancient Explanatory Models in the Historiography of Kritoboulos and Laonikos: Anchoring Innovation?**

The question remains, then, how to evaluate Kritoboulos' and Laonikos' use of the explanatory models of their distant predecessors. Why did they avoid a Christian orientation, such as found in Doukas' contemporary chronicle, which fashionably starts with Adam and a list of saints from the Old Testament before arriving at the Byzantine Emperors, and which expresses the more conventional opinion that the Byzantines owed their demise to themselves and were punished by god?

The answers to these questions cannot be given with certainty in light of our limited knowledge of the (religious) context in which Kritoboulos and Laonikos operated. Of

Kritoboulos, we can be reasonably certain that he was an Orthodox Christian, which becomes apparent in a prayer and a poem handed down under his name. Reinsch believes that he belonged to the circle of Gennadios Scholarios, the first patriarch of Ottoman Constantinople.<sup>70</sup> The autograph of the *Histories* opens with a dedicatory letter to Mehmed, which together with the positive evaluation of the Sultan's actions in the narrative itself, suggests that Kritoboulos sought to ingratiate himself at the Ottoman court in the same manner as many of his predecessors did under the Byzantine emperors.<sup>71</sup> All this suggests that he may have had personal reasons to avoid explaining the Ottoman capture of the city—in Christian terms—as a divine punishment for the sins of the Byzantines. Moustakas hints in this direction by alleging that a view of Muslim rule as divine punishment was better avoided as it 'could only compromise the position of the conquered Christian peoples into the new state of affairs'.<sup>72</sup> However, Kritoboulos envisages not only the Sultan as his reader, but also the defeated Byzantines themselves, to whom he offers comfort in his 'apology' (*παράιτησις*, 1.3). Here as well, an appeal to Christian thought is conspicuously absent and the historian resorts to the classical Greek tradition. In sum, Kritoboulos deliberately chose to frame contemporary

<sup>70</sup> Reinsch (2003) 298.

<sup>71</sup> Unlike their ancient Greek predecessors, almost all historians of the Byzantine Empire were closely affiliated with the court and vying for prestige, often at the expense of others. Scott (1981) has defined this as a crucial distinction between classical and Byzantine historiography. This explains the focus on the character of the emperor and on his virtues. See also Croke (2010) on the audience for which the Byzantine historians wrote their works. The typical attitude of a Byzantine historiographer towards his royal patron can be illustrated by the work of the contemporary chronicler Sphrantzes, who repeatedly praises the last emperor, Constantine Palaeologus, and laments him when he dies in the final hours of the siege (*Chronicon Minus* 35.9). Sphrantzes was the last emperor's *Protovestiarius*, one of the highest officials at the court, and he describes various encounters with Constantine, whom he seeks to exonerate from blame for the city's fall.

<sup>72</sup> Moustakas (2011) 229.

events within a perspective derived from a pre-Christian past, but no conclusive evidence of the factors that encouraged him to make this choice can be found.

In the case of Laonikos, the situation is even more obscure, as we cannot say anything with certainty about his personal religious views and are in the dark about his whereabouts after 1447.<sup>73</sup> It has been suggested that he was influenced by neo-Platonic views of his master Plethon, who is believed to have propagated the pagan religion of the ancient Greek past.<sup>74</sup> The one passage where neo-Platonic views surface is Laonikos' discussion of the tides of the Thames (2.41–42), in which he refers on the one hand to a 'great king' god who created order in nature and the celestial bodies and on the other hand to a 'world-soul' ( $\tau\eta\eta$  τοῦ παντὸς τοῦδε ψυχῆς, 2.42), which arranges conflicting motions in nature into one harmonious whole.<sup>75</sup> Such views, however, are not expounded elsewhere, as Laonikos hides his personal religious views behind the voice of his impartial narrator, who takes an exterior perspective upon the religious habits of the peoples that are described in the *Demonstrations*, Christians, Muslims, and pagans alike.

Given the scant historical evidence, a possible way forward in evaluating Kritoboulos' and Laonikos' use of explanatory models from the classical past is the framing of this problem in terms of 'anchoring innovation'. This refers to the idea that for an innovation to become successful, it should be 'anchored' in a context that is familiar to the target-group for which it is intended. This holds for innovation in the technical realm as much as in conceptual

<sup>73</sup> Kaldellis (2014) 106: 'his own religious views are difficult, if not impossible to discern'.

<sup>74</sup> For this see in particular Akışık (2013) 58–75, who has studied the Herodotus manuscript Laur. 70.6 which Laonikos used in Mistras and identified an epigram in his hand in honour of Herodotus. I am not convinced however by Akışık's argument, based upon her interpretation of the epigram, that Hellenism was an alternative religion that offered itself to Laonikos. Problematic is that Hellenism refers to an ethnic/cultural identity and not to a religious/theological system.

<sup>75</sup> Akışık (2013) 76–80; Kaldellis (2014) 106–8.

areas. Energy efficient light bulbs, for instance, are more attractive to buy if designed in the guise of traditional light bulbs. And to take a conceptual example from close-by, one could argue that the modern theory of narratology developed by Genette–Bal owes its remarkable success in the field of classics to its transparent terminology largely derived from the ancient Greek and Latin rhetorical toolbox and thus easily understandable for classicists.<sup>76</sup>

Both Kritoboulos and Laonikos took innovative steps in their works by which they deviated from the existing historiographical tradition. Kritoboulos' main innovation compared to his contemporaries was his attempt to legitimise Ottoman rule. As Moustakas points out, such an attempt precluded the use of explanatory models based on Christian principles as these were incompatible with the ideas on empire that were popular among the Ottomans and determined the way in which Mehmed acted as Sultan.<sup>77</sup> Given that he wrote his work not only for the Sultan but also with an eye to a Greek-speaking audience, Kritoboulos may have attempted to 'anchor' his 'innovative' approach to Ottoman rule by a strong reliance upon the classical Greek historiographical heritage. In Laonikos' case, the innovation lies, first, in the unusually broad focus of the *Demonstrations*, in which he attempted to write a universal history of contemporary Asia and Europe, and, second, in his neutral attitude towards the Ottomans and Islam, the latter of which he describes in empirical terms without judging it as a religious aberration. In this respect Akışık suggests that Laonikos must have been engaged with 'contemporary Italian humanist theories concerning historical processes' and that in this exchange of

<sup>76</sup> The concept of 'anchoring innovation' has been introduced in the field of ancient studies by Ineke Sluiter (cf. e.g., <http://www.ac2015.eu/ineke-sluiter-phd>). It currently features as a central theme of the OIKOS national research school of ancient studies in the Netherlands (<http://www.ru.nl/oikos/anchoring-innovation/anchoring-innovation/>).

<sup>77</sup> Moustakas (2011) 218.

ideas acted as an ‘innovator rather than a follower’.<sup>78</sup> I take, then, his extensive use of Herodotus in the creation of his work to be a well-considered strategy to ‘anchor’ his innovative approach to contemporary history within a framework that was familiar to his intended readers, in particular his fellow Greek-speaking intellectuals who had benefited from an education under Palaeologan patronage and were thoroughly schooled in the tradition of classical Greek historiography.

From our modern perspective it is ironic that Kritoboulos, who was by far the better of the two in stylistic respects and whose text is a delight to read compared to the obscurity of Laonikos’ Greek, ultimately failed in his attempt to ‘anchor’ his innovative approach. The autograph of his *Histories* remained in the library of the Sultans, only to be rediscovered in the 19th century, and no other copies appear to have been in circulation, which suggests that his text remained unknown to a wider audience. The reason for this may be that Kritoboulos, although innovative in his attempt to legitimise Ottoman rule, followed a selling strategy for the promoting of his work that was traditional to Byzantine historiography, whose representatives were usually affiliated with the emperors and their retinues, and wrote in support of their actions. Kritoboulos may have sought a position for himself at Mehmed’s court and therefore have followed his predecessors’ panegyric writing manner. The Sultan, however, broke with existing Byzantine traditions, and, in setting up his court in Constantinople, preferred to rely upon his trusted Ottoman officers as well as Ottoman

<sup>78</sup> Akışık (2013) 100. She relates this intellectual development to the decline of the Byzantine states in the fifteenth century: ‘In the fifteenth century, as the administrative structures of the Byzantine State crumbled around them, intellectuals, among them Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Bessarion, Plethon, Mark Eugenikos, Doukas, Kritoboulos, Sphrantzes, Gennadios Scholarios, Theodore of Gaza, George Amiroutzes, and George of Trebizond, heirs to a tradition that synthesised Mosaic and Christian teaching, classical Greek thought, and imperial Roman rule, were hard pressed to redefine their allegiances or even their identities’ (55).

nomenclature. We do not know how he received Kritoboulos' manuscript, but it appears that no attempts were undertaken to fund the production of copies.

Laonikos, on the other hand, appears to have been successful in 'anchoring' his innovative view upon history. Given that his *Demonstrations* were considered a unique source for the rise of Ottoman power and on the nature of its institutions, the work was copied and spread across Europe, and, as mentioned above, translated into Latin and French in the sixteenth century. In contrast to Kritoboulos, Laonikos' work does not show traces of attempts to ingratiate himself with any contemporary ruler. It probably owed its popularity to its broad scope of interest and its impartial narrative viewpoint, which made it a palatable text to consult for any contemporary member of the elite regardless of his political affiliation.

## 7. Conclusion

Kritoboulos and Laonikos, the last two representatives of a historiographical tradition that spanned almost two millennia, not only allude to their earliest predecessors Herodotus and Thucydides on a verbal level, but also show a deep understanding of their schemes of causation, reuse their themes and motifs, and use similar narrative mannerisms to communicate their views. From a religious viewpoint, they avoid Christian doctrine and prefer explanatory models that originate in Herodotus and Thucydides and favour 'fortune' (*τύχη*) as the overriding factor of influence upon the events. Furthermore, they adopt the caution (Herodotus) or discretion (Thucydides) of their ancient predecessors on matters of religious doctrine in their narratives and choose to ascribe more explicit views, for instance about divine retribution, to their characters. It may have been contemporary events that moved the two historians to use a framework that allowed them to sidestep theological intricacies. As such, it is attractive to evaluate their use of classical models as an attempt to 'anchor' an innovative approach in writing about the past. In

Kritoboulos' case this amounts to the legitimation of Ottoman rule, whereas Laonikos advertises a broader scope of interest than his predecessors in the Byzantine tradition, and, posing as an empirical observer, favours an impartial way of looking at different cultures and their religion.

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*HERODOTUS MAGISTER VITAE*, OR:  
HERODOTUS AND GOD IN THE  
PROTESTANT REFORMATION\*

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All references given in the format ‘2.53’ or ‘2.53.1’ are to Herodotus’ *Histories*, unless otherwise indicated. Greek and Latin references follow the conventions of LSJ and the *OLD*. Translations are my own, except where indicated. Melanchthon’s writings and his revised edition of the *Chronicon Carionis* are cited from the *Corpus Reformatorum* (CR). In the absence of modern editions of the works of Pezel, Chytraeus, Casaubon, and others I preserve the original Latin and Greek typography of the editions consulted (including use and placement of Greek breathings and the intermittent use of iota subscript) but I expand out ligatures and abbreviations. Page numbers are not infrequently misprinted in editions of Chytraeus: I give the expected page number and include the number actually printed in brackets and inverted commas, e.g. Chytraeus (1601) 193 (= ‘191’). I have cited from later printings of works when the earliest edition I have been able to consult lacks page numbers (e.g. Chytraeus’ *De lectione historiarum recte instituenda*, Naucler’s *Memorabilium*). Finally, Casaubon corrects an error in the pagination of Estienne’s 1570 edition of Herodotus (misnumbered from p.127 onwards, so that the pages run 127, 128, 127, 128, 129, and so on, continuing two behind the ‘correct’ number). I quote from the original Stephanus page numbers, and give Casaubon’s corrected pagination in brackets.

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*Abstract:* During the sixteenth century Herodotus' *Histories* reached new audiences throughout Europe, in Greek, Latin, and the vernaculars. This period saw the emergence of an extensive scholarly literature on Herodotus, particularly in German-speaking lands, where Lutheran reformers and academics worked concertedly to incorporate Greek historiography into the new didactic curriculum of Protestant humanism. This article explores Herodotus' reception in the context of the religious and cultural upheavals of the Reformation, and examines the origins and impact of some striking claims: that Herodotus' religious beliefs were largely commensurable with Christianity; that his *Histories* were part of a divine plan to create a continuous record of world history; and that his was an excellent text with which to illustrate the Biblical Ten Commandments. In tracing a little-known chapter in the Christianisation of Herodotus, I focus on the close-knit circle of Hellenists trained by the Lutheran reformer Philipp Melanchthon and on the prodigious Francophone scholars Henri Estienne and Isaac Casaubon.

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*Keywords:* Herodotus, Religion, Theology, Reception, Melanchthon, Chytraeus, Casaubon, Estienne, humanism.

### **Introduction: Herodotus in Rostock**

In late 1559 a young theologian and historian at the University of Rostock began a course of lectures on the earliest surviving work of Greek prose: Herodotus' *Histories*, which described the Persian Wars of the 5th century BC and traced their origins through the dynastic successions of the Ancient Near East. David Chytraeus (1530–1600) worked his way through the *Histories* book by book, and elucidated its contents according to the historico-theological framework of his friend and former teacher Philipp Melanchthon. Only the advertisements for Chytraeus' lectures survive, but we can build up a picture of their contents from the many writings he published on Greek history and Herodotus from the early 1560s onwards.

Chytraeus' treatise 'On the Utility of Herodotus'<sup>1</sup> showed how the stories and maxims of the *Histories*

<sup>1</sup> The essay is variously called the *Oratio de Herodoti utilitate* (in the book title) and the *Praefatio in Herodoti Lectionem* (in the text). Its first publication seems to have been in 1597 (Halle: Paulus Graeber).

illustrated each of the Ten Commandments revealed to Moses,<sup>2</sup> expanding on claims made in his essay ‘On teaching the reading of history correctly’ (1563). Proceeding in order through each commandment, Chytraeus paraphrased Herodotus’ *exempla* (exemplary stories) and *sententia* (sayings or opinions) to demonstrate the concord between the Decalogue and the *Histories*.<sup>3</sup> Chytraeus’ ‘Chronology of the *Histories* of Herodotus and Thucydides’ (1565) began with God’s creation of the world (in 3962 BC) and set the events of the Old Testament and the Greek historians side by side, demonstrating that Greek pagan history could confirm the truth of the Sacred Histories written by Moses and the Prophets but was also younger by over 3000 years.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout his works Chytraeus claims that Herodotus’ writing has an important role to play in contemporary education because it illustrates divine law more vividly and memorably than the bare precepts alone.<sup>5</sup> Indeed nothing less than God’s own beneficence had brought it about that the history of the world should be preserved without interruption from Creation to the present day. Hence, Chytraeus observed, Herodotus began his *Histories* at the very point where the Holy Scriptures cease: his account of Egypt describes the death of Apries (2.161)—as predicted in Jeremiah (44:29–30)<sup>6</sup>—and his description of Cyrus the Great’s miraculous survival as a boy and the rise of the

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 20:1–17; 34:28–9; Deut. 5.4–21.

<sup>3</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 32–3, cf. Chytraeus (1579) 461.

<sup>4</sup> Chytraeus makes this claim in his *argumentum* to the second book (dated January 1560) regarding Herodotus’ comment that Hesiod and Homer had created many components of Greek religion 400 years before his own time (2.53); cf. Chytraeus (1601) 212–14.

<sup>5</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 33 (*Praefatio in Herodoti lectionem*): ‘Deinde, Exempla consiliorum & euentuum ac pœnarum, quæ ferè conspectiora sunt, & altius in animos rudiorum penetrant, ac efficacius quàm nuda præcepta, ad rectè factorum imitationem, & scelerum ac turpitudinis odium & fugam impellunt. Cùm igitur ambæ hæ Regulæ & Normæ vitæ, in Herodoto, purißima ac dulcißimâ Orationis formâ, & nectare ac melle suauiore, expositæ ac illustratæ extent ac eniteant’; cf. (1579 = 1565) 460.

<sup>6</sup> Apries is known as Hophra to Jeremiah.

Persian Empire illuminated the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 44:28–45, fulfilled in Ezra 1:1–8; cf. 2 Chron. 36:22–3).<sup>7</sup> God, it seemed, wanted history, including the pagan writings of the Greek historians, to be studied.<sup>8</sup>

Chytraeus was not the first to make these striking claims about the great relevance of history, Greek historians, and Herodotus in particular, to the moral and intellectual life of Christians. He was one of several Lutheran humanists to use his voice and pen to disseminate the moralising approach to Greek literature forged by the reformer Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560), the prodigious reformer, theologian, and the first chair of Greek at the University of Wittenberg. During the 1550s and 1560s Herodotus was also the subject of lectures in Wittenberg by Christoph Pezel and Ernst Regius, and in Jena by Johannes Rosa. But Chytraeus seems to have been the only scholar in Lutheran circles who elaborated in detail for an ancient text what he asserted to be true in principle by turning his attention to a detailed exposition of Herodotus and Thucydides (on whom he lectured between April 1562 and May 1564, after having finished Herodotus). As Anthony Grafton has shown, the Ciceronian commonplace *historia magistra vitae* was ubiquitous in the historical treatises of sixteenth-century Europe, as was theorising on the utility of ancient *exempla*.<sup>9</sup> But few had the tenacity Chytraeus displayed when he showed precisely how Herodotus' text could illustrate every commandment revealed by God to Moses, enabling the *Histories* to be treated in practice, as well as in theory, as a storehouse of positive and negative exemplars which

<sup>7</sup> On Apries: Chytraeus (1601) 11–12, 211–2; on Cyrus: (1601) 48–9, 170, 200.

<sup>8</sup> Chytraeus (1565) Av (*In lectionem Herodoti*): 'VVLT Deus legi à nobis præcipuos scriptores, qui maximarum rerum memoriam, & continuam Mundi historiam à prima conditione ad nostra vsque tempora deduxerunt. Ideo enim Deus ipse primam historiam per Moysen scripsit, & continuam annorum Mundi & historiarum seriem conseruauit, vt rerum initia, primæ & veræ Religionis originem, & propagationem, ortus superstitionum, quæ postea in Mundum irrepserunt'. Cf. (1601) 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Grafton (2006) 31 and *passim*.

demonstrated the divine rewards and punishments that awaited good and bad behaviour.

In the late 1560s Herodotus was also the subject of several treatises by the peripatetic scholar-printer Henri Estienne (*ca.* 1531–1598). In his *Apologia pro Herodoto*, primarily directed at demonstrating Herodotus' historical integrity, Estienne put forward a series of ingenious arguments to show that Herodotus was as pious as it was possible for a man ignorant of Christianity to be. Estienne further demonstrated that Herodotus' theological statements conformed wholly with Christianity, and specifically (if implicitly) with predestinarian beliefs current among Calvinists. Emerging from the very different intellectual worlds of Paris, Geneva, and Rostock, the writings and lectures of Estienne and Chytraeus offer remarkable insight into the reception of Herodotus and ancient Greek religion in the humanist culture of the Northern Renaissance and the Reformation. As we shall see, each seems to have been intimately acquainted with the work of the others, and the many differences in their goals and methods reflect both personal differences and the different cultural milieu inhabited by each.

This article focuses on the largely unstudied reception of Herodotus' theological, philosophical, and ethical material in several of the treatises, lectures, and historical handbooks written in the sixteenth-century Reformation, where history was primarily an ethical and theological endeavour. It is generally acknowledged that Renaissance humanists took a moralising approach to Greek literature, and that the classical curriculum played a central role in Protestant pedagogy. Much less is known about how the reading of Classical texts was conducted in practice. A particular interest in what follows is to examine how Chytraeus and Estienne went about finding the theological and ethical messages they sought in the *Histories*, what inspired them to do so, and how they dealt with the inevitable complications.

I begin by exploring the origins of Chytraeus' approach to Herodotus in the writings and lectures of Philipp Melanchthon and the brood of Reformation theologians he

reared in Wittenberg in the middle decades of the sixteenth century. We shall see that Chytraeus' writing is an inextricable part of the wider culture of Melanchthonian Hellenism,<sup>10</sup> an intellectual movement which would profoundly influence German pedagogy, historiography, and scholarship over subsequent centuries.<sup>11</sup> In the following section I look in more detail at how Chytraeus, Melanchthon's most prolific student in the realm of classical historiography, applied his teacher's vision of the theological and ethical content of Greek history to Herodotus.<sup>12</sup> I then move beyond Lutheran Hellenism to examine Estienne's attempt to build new and ever more ambitious bridges between Herodotus' text and the religious and ethical thought of sixteenth-century Europe. Finally, I discuss Isaac Casaubon's engagement with Herodotean theology, by way of comparison with what precedes.

<sup>10</sup> On Melanchthonian historiography more generally see Ben-Tov (2009); For the reception of individual classical authors in Melanchthonian circles see: Schmitz (1993) 107–15 on Pindar, Lurie (2004) 94–103 and (2012) 442–4 on Sophocles, Pontani (2007) on Homer, and Richards (2013) on Thucydides. See also brief discussion below, nn. 40–2.

<sup>11</sup> For Melanchthon's influence on Protestant European universities, scholarship, and historiography in his own time and in the following centuries see, e.g. Rhein (1993), esp. 95, on the University of Rostock; Skovgaard-Petersen (1998) on Denmark; Kusukawa (2002) on England; Selderhuis (2002) on the Netherlands; on the influence of the *Chronicon Carionis* see Lotito (2011) 240–335. Lotito goes so far as to describe the work—published in thirteen languages (and many different versions) over 160 years—as 'a basis of Western historical thought' (167).

<sup>12</sup> Chytraeus' writings on Herodotus have not received much attention. In addition to passing comments by Momigliano (1966) 140, Kipf (1999) 25, Völkel (2000) 125–6, and Bichler and Rollinger (2000) 126, see Backus (2003) 338–43 (who gives an excellent description of Chytraeus' historical methods), Olivieri (2004) 45–52 (on the *Chronologia historiae Herodoti et Thucydidis*), and Ben-Tov (2009) 67–70.

### 1. Melanchthon and the Wittenberg Hellenists on Herodotus and Greek History

To say that Chytraeus' approach to Greek history and Herodotus was unoriginal would be an understatement. Although Melanchthon's direct remarks on Herodotus are limited to brief comments scattered throughout his vast oeuvre (28 weighty volumes in the *Corpus Reformatorum*), much of Chytraeus' basic approach to history and most of his individual points on Herodotus are repetitions—often verbatim—of treatises and speeches which Melanchthon published between the 1520s and 1550s.<sup>13</sup> Chytraeus had ample opportunity to become acquainted with Melanchthon's ideas. At fourteen he left the University of Tübingen (where he had been taught by Joachim Camerarius, the other luminary of Lutheran Hellenism)<sup>14</sup> and enrolled in Wittenberg, where he heard the lectures of Martin Luther, Paul Eber, Johann Forster, and of course Melanchthon. Between 1544 and 1550 Melanchthon took Chytraeus in as a lodger *fili loco*, on one account because he was so impressed by the young student's ability to handle

<sup>13</sup> Ben-Tov (2009) 67–8 notes that Chytraeus 'shared Melanchthon's humanistic sympathies and valued [Melanchthon's] *Chronicon Carionis*', but the extent of his dependence upon Melanchthon in his writings on Herodotus has not been appreciated (Melanchthon goes unmentioned in Momigliano (1966) 140 and Olivieri (2004) 45–52). For further discussion of Melanchthon's readings of Herodotus see Ellis (in preparation), and Kipf (1999) 19–23.

<sup>14</sup> Camerarius' influence is clearly observable at several points in Chytraeus' work—mostly where the latter 'defends' Herodotus—but Camerarius generally has far less impact on Chytraeus' published work than Melanchthon. This is, however, unsurprising, since their two-year acquaintance in Tübingen ended when Chytraeus was only eleven years old, when Camerarius moved to the University of Leipzig. The surviving section of an undated letter from Chytraeus to Camerarius (full of detailed questions about Herodotus) suggests that Camerarius exerted his greatest influence on Chytraeus through his 1541 *Proemium* to Herodotus (which Chytraeus calls *defensio tua*; see Chytraeus (1614) 411–12; cf. 445–8). For clear examples of direct influence see, e.g., Camerarius (1541) a5<sup>v</sup>–a5<sup>r</sup> with Chytraeus (1601) 100–1 (on the meaning of divine *phthonos*, discussed in Ellis (forthcoming, a)), as well as below, pp. 194, 205 n. 75.

Thucydidean Greek.<sup>15</sup> As a young student in Melanchthon's house—the heart of the theological and political turmoil of the Reformation—Chytraeus met many of the influential thinkers and actors of his day and acquired a close familiarity with Melanchthon's vision of history and Greek literature, to which he remained devoted throughout his life.

Unless we have lost all record of a substantial written or oral treatment of Herodotus by Melanchthon (not impossible), the closest textual precedents for Chytraeus' approach to Herodotus are not Melanchthon's sparse references to Herodotus but his radical theories on Greek history and its role in God's providential plan for the world and in contemporary pedagogy. Although the *locus classicus* for these ideas is Melanchthon's revised edition of the *Chronicon Carionis* (1558–60),<sup>16</sup> which have been lucidly described by Asaph Ben-Tov,<sup>17</sup> it is clear, as I hope to show, that Melanchthon had elaborated the central ideas by the early 1540s, before and during the period in which Chytraeus lodged with him in Wittenberg.

In a speech on Ambrose of Milan and his struggles against Paganism (1542), Melanchthon elaborates a number of theologico-historiographical theories which would become the bread and butter of Lutheran historiography. If, Melanchthon argues, we accept the premise that the one true religion must also be the *first* religion,<sup>18</sup> then the relative ages of the world's religions and their foundational texts becomes an issue of the utmost importance. Mosaic history

<sup>15</sup> On Chytraeus' relationship with Melanchthon in his early days in Wittenberg see Rhein (2000). The Thucydidean anecdote is told by Chytraeus' colleague in Rostock Lucas Bacmeister (cited in Rhein (2000) 13).

<sup>16</sup> See particularly Melanchthon's dedicatory letter (CR ix 531–8) and preface (CR xii 712–21).

<sup>17</sup> See Ben-Tov (2009), esp. 36–47.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Tertullian *Adversus Praxean* 2.2: 'id esse verum quodcunque primum; id esse adulterum quodcunque posterius'. For the development of this idea in antiquity (particularly in Jewish and Christian apologetics) see Pilhofer (1990).

(*Moisi historia*) is manifestly older because it describes the world from its beginnings, through its various ages, and shows the origins and migrations of different peoples, as well as the beginnings of religion. The writings of the Greeks, then, who say nothing about the beginnings of humanity or about the rise and spread of different religions, cannot be as old as the books of Moses.<sup>19</sup> Greek history might go back a fair way—remembering the flood and the names of Japheth, Ion, Cithim, Elam and others—but only Mosaic history tells how the human race survived the flood, the origins of Japheth, and remembered that Ion (i.e. Javan) was his son.<sup>20</sup> Likewise the origins of Greek religion were unknown to the Greeks themselves: the history of the oracle of ‘Zeus Hammon’ (i.e. Zeus Ammon) could only be discovered by reading the Bible, which narrated the life of Noah’s son Ham, whose religion was the direct ancestor of the corrupted rites practiced by Ham’s Egyptian descendants in Herodotus’ day.<sup>21</sup> Digressing further from

<sup>19</sup> CR xi 566–98, *Declamatio de Ambrosio*; cf. 579: ‘Unum autem extat scriptum Moisi, quod primum temporis vetustas nobis commendat, deinde doctrinae series. Nullum est enim scriptum antiquius? Deinde, nullum exordia mundi et tempora certo distincta numero annorum, origines gentium, et migrationes, initia religionum et depravationes certa series describit, ut haec Moisi historia. Cum igitur Graeca monumenta recentiora sint, cum nihil de ortu aut propagatione religionum certi dicant, denique cum absurdam opinionem de multitudine deorum contineant, necesse est anteferri Moisen.’

<sup>20</sup> More recently Loudon (2013), in examining the genetic relationship between the Biblical Genesis and the Greek mythological tradition, has offered the opposite conclusion (also based on the names Ἰαπετός/Ἰαφῆ and Ἰάφωv/Ἰἶv).

<sup>21</sup> In the 16th century Melanchthon’s etymological aspirations would not have seemed tendentious as they might today: the spelling of ‘Ammon’ as ‘Hammon’ is found in many classical Latin authors (e.g. Cic. *N. D.* 1.83; *Div.* 1.3; Virg. *Aen.* 4.198; Lucr. 6.848) and sixteenth-century Greek typefaces tended not to include breathings on capital alphas, so the texts of Manutius (1502) 8 and Camerarius (1541) 11 (both Ἀμμων) did not contradict the transliteration *Hammon*. In any case, since Herodotus’ Ionic dialect was psilotic (and so did not pronounce word-initial ‘h’) his original text would likely have read Ἄμμων even if the oracle was widely known as Ἄμμων.

the topic of his discourse, Melanchthon notes that Herodotus begins his history ‘at the very juncture’ where the prophetic works cease.<sup>22</sup> Chytraeus would repeat these points in his Herodotean lectures and publications,<sup>23</sup> even offering further etymologies for the names of Greek religious institutions, revealing their origins in post-diluvian Hebrew culture.<sup>24</sup>

Four years later Melanchthon’s treatise ‘On the Hebrew Language’ further elaborated God’s plan for the survival of a continuous history of the world.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> CR xi 580–1: ‘Deinde Ieremias vaticinatur de Aprie ... Haec postea recitat Herodotus, quasi inchoans historiam in eo ipso articulo, ubi nostri desinunt. Tantam vero superbiam ait Apriis fuisse, ut dixerit sibi nec deorum nec hominum quenquam regnum eripere posse. Fuit igitur gravis causa, cur ei Propheta supplicium minatus est.’ This striking fact would be widely repeated both inside and outside Wittenberg circles, e.g., Regius (1555) 71; Baudouin (1579) 654; Chytraeus (1579) 471–2; (1601) 11–12, 212.

<sup>23</sup> Chytraeus explained in his Rostock lectures of January 1560 (apropos of Hdt. 2.55–6) that oracles of Jupiter Hammon and Dodona were the remnants of communities founded by Noah’s son Ham and great-grandson Dodanim (Gen. 10:1–4); Chytraeus (1601) 212–14; cf. 118.

<sup>24</sup> After discussing the divinatory method of the Pythia (involving a tripod over a crevice in the floor of the temple which emitted vapours) Chytraeus (1601) 116–7 (*ad* Hdt. 1.46.2) suggests two possible Hebrew derivations for mount Parnassus which towered above Delphi: ‘mountain of divination’/*mons divinationum* (from *har*/הר (‘mountain’) and *nakhash*/נחש (‘prophecy’)) or ‘crevice of divination’/*hiatus divinationum* (from *pakh*/פך (‘jug/flask’), and *nakhash*/נחש). The edition uses vocalic pointing intermittently (only on פך), writes *nakhash* with *sin* (rather than *shin*—perhaps to bring the sound closer to the target word), and uses the medial rather than final form of *khaf*. How exactly Chytraeus considered פך to mean *hiatus* is unclear to me.

<sup>25</sup> *De lingua Hebraica* (1546), CR xi 708–15. Cf. 713: ‘Magnum donum Dei est, quod in Ecclesia extat continua historia omnium mundi temporum, non interrupta usque ad monarchiam Persicam. Ac ne ignota esset series sequentium rerum, Deus singulari consilio contexuit historiam, excitatis Graecis scriptoribus. Nam aliquanto ante finem Ieremiae, inchoat historiam Herodotus: postea Graecorum, Latinorum et Germanorum continua historia extat. Necesse est autem doctos viros in Ecclesia tenere integram seriem temporum, ut quae sit doctrina, et quae mutationes extiterint, considerent. Una est enim de Deo vera sententia, quae ab initio divinitus certis testimoniis Ecclesiae tradita est,

It is a great gift from God that the Church possesses a continuous history of all the ages of the world, uninterrupted until the Persian monarchy. So that people should not be unaware of the order of subsequent events God created history by a singular plan—by inspiring the Greek writers. Shortly before the end of Jeremiah, Herodotus begins his history: after this there survives the continuous history of the Greeks, Latins, and Germans. It is necessary for learned men in the Church to know the continuous series of the ages [...] For there is one true opinion about God, which from the beginning has been transmitted with divine aid in sure testimonies, and these cannot be judged without a consideration of history.

Pagan history, then, was God's gift to the Church, and its study was the obligation of educated churchmen.

It was not only churchmen that Melanchthon encouraged to study ancient history. In 1542 he wrote a letter to the Prince of the Palatine Electorate in Heidelberg which illustrates his pedagogical principles in action. Melanchthon praises the young prince for his studies and upright morals, before warning him of the divine rewards and punishments that await good and bad rulers:<sup>26</sup>

haec sine historiae consideratione iudicari non possunt: et in his historiis, gentium origines conferendae sunt. Haec sine literis fieri nequeunt.'

<sup>26</sup> CR iv 929: 'Divina res est gubernare caeteros. Ad hoc tantum munus magna cura animus praeparandus est, et ingentia praemia Deus gubernatoribus pollicetur. Rursus quam horribiliter irascatur cum ignavis, tum sceleratis Principibus, historiarum exempla ostendunt, quas quidem legere te iam hac aetate prodest, ut videas quantum decus sit imitari bonos. Saepe audivi narrantem Capnionem, adeo fuisse avidum historiarum Palatinum Philippum, ut contexi sibi integram historiam ac seriem Monarchiarum a Rudolpho Agricola curarit, qui aulam Heidelbergensem diu secutus est. Tunc enim Monarchias descriptas ab Herodoto paucissimi norant. Te vero adhortor praecipue ad sacrae historiae lectionem, quae doctrinam maxime utilem gubernatoribus continet, nec ulla pars est vitae, cuius non imago aliqua proposita sit in consiliis, actionibus, periculis et eventibus Principum, quos sacri libri recitant.'

It is a divine thing to govern over others. For this great task the mind must be prepared with great care—and God promises great rewards to rulers. By contrast, the examples of history show how terribly God becomes angry with both slothful and depraved princes. You should read such things, even at your age, so you can see how fitting it is to imitate good rulers. I often heard [Johannes] Reuchlin tell how Philipp Prince of the Palatine [i.e. Philipp der Aufrichtige, 1448–1508] was so devoted to histories that he ordered Rudolph Agricola, who for a long time was present at the University in Heidelberg, to compose a continuous history and series of the monarchies. For at that time very few people knew of the monarchies described by Herodotus ...

Properly interpreted, then, the *exempla* of history, pagan as well as Christian, could teach contemporary rulers the rewards and punishments that God had ordained for virtuous and sinful behaviour. For Melanchthon ancient history—whose original Greek sources remained inaccessible to all but scholars—was an important vehicle for the didactic messages he wished to impress upon a wide audience. In the introduction to his revised edition of the *Chronicon Carionis* (1558) Melanchthon outlines precisely which lessons a reading of histories could teach:<sup>27</sup>

The histories of all periods relate examples of the punishment of blasphemy, perjury, tyrannical cruelty, sedition, wicked lustfulness, and robbery, whose punishments attest divine providence and justice, and also the rules that: ‘God will not consider anyone

<sup>27</sup> CR xii 712: ‘Recitant historiae omnium temporum exempla, de poenis blasphemiarum, periuriorum, tyrannicae crudelitatis, seditio, flagitiosarum libidinum, et rapinarum, quae poenae testimonia sunt providentiae et iudicii divini, et harum regularum: Non habebit Deus insontem, quicumque vane usurpat nomen eius. Item: Qui gladium acceperit, gladio peribit. Item de libidinibus: Omnis anima, quae fecerit abominationes has, delebitur. Item: Veh qui spolias, quia spoliaberis. Et potest ceu commune argumentum inscribi omnibus historiis: Discite iusticiam moniti, et non temnere Divos.’

innocent who takes his name in vain' [cf. Ex. 20:7]; likewise: 'He who accepts the sword will die by the sword' [Matt. 26:52]; likewise concerning lustfulness: 'Every soul which commits such abominations will be destroyed', likewise: 'Ye who despoil others beware, because you too will be despoiled' [Isa. 33:1]. The following phrase can be inscribed on all histories like the common theme: 'be warned: learn justice and not to slight the Gods' [Virg. *Aen.* 6.620].

The *exempla* of history, Melanchthon noted, provide a vivid illustration of the punishments that await those who contravene the Decalogue. As examples he gave God's prohibitions of murder, adultery, and theft, as well as a non-biblical theme on which he lays great stress in his writing: the punishments that await those who begin 'unnecessary wars'.<sup>28</sup> Here, too, Melanchthon gestured down paths which Chytraeus would map out in detail in his *Praefatio in Herodoti lectionem*.

Melanchthon's most venturesome claim about Herodotus comes in a short paragraph in another declamation 'On the Study of the Hebrew language' (1549), where he compares the Greek historian favourably with the chronological inaccuracies of the Talmud. Herodotus is praised for the sweetness of his style (a commonplace since antiquity) and the utility of his *exempla*, which teach a clear lesson about divine justice: that the moderate come to a good end, while things undertaken in a spirit of ambition and greed end badly.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> CR ix 534: 'Historiae Ethnicae magis proponunt exempla secundae Tabulae Decalogi, quorum multa pertinent ad praeceptum, Non occides, ad quod haec regula pertinet: Omnis qui gladium acceperit, videlicet non datum a legibus, gladio peribit. Quam multi Tyranni, quam multae gentes poenas dederunt, iuxta hanc regulam? Mouit Annibal non necessarium and iniustum bellum' etc.

<sup>29</sup> CR xi 868: 'An quisquam tam agresti animo est, ut non malit legere Herodoti historiam perpetuam, de maximis rebus gestis inde usque a Croeso ad Xerxem, de plurimorum regnorum mutationibus sapientissime et dulcissime narrantem consilia gubernatorum, causas bellorum, exitus placidos in negotiis moderatis, tristes vero in rebus cupiditate et ambitione susceptis: quam legere Thalmudicos libellos, in

In the body of the *Chronicon Carionis* itself, the narratives borrowed from Greek historiography are carefully tailored to bear out these programmatic claims. The stories of Croesus, Cambyses, and Xerxes are treated as *exempla* illustrating certain principles, particularly the inconstancy of human life and the rule that those who start unnecessary wars in a spirit of arrogance or greed will be punished by God. Many Herodotean narratives clearly lend themselves to such moralistic readings. As a terrible tyrant born to a virtuous father, Melanchthon notes, Cambyses illustrates the inconstancy of human affairs, while his death from an accidental sword wound (in precisely the same spot on his thigh in which he had impiously stabbed the Egyptian god Apis, 3.64.3; cf. 3.29.3) serves as an *exemplum* of God's justice and providence, illustrating Jesus' words: 'every man who accepts the sword will die by the sword' (Matt. 26:52). 'Herodotus', Melanchthon observes, 'gives this *exemplum* of justice about Cambyses'.<sup>30</sup>

In order to uncover the didactic message embedded in the *exempla* of history, Melanchthon often had to tweak or fundamentally rework the Herodotean stories he used. In the *Chronicon Carionis* Xerxes is said to have started an unnecessary war because he was desirous for glory (*cupidus*

quibus et tempora mundi manifesto errore mutilata sunt, et tantum est insulsiatis, ut Alexandrum somnient gessisse bellum cum Dario filio Hystaspis, qui successit Cambysi. Si rerum suavitas et exempla memorabilia quaeruntur, multo est iucundius et utilius considerare Themistoclis sapientiam, in omnibus belli momentis providendis, et Aristidis iusticiam atque moderationem, et Graeciae universae constitutam concordiam in defensione patriae, quam legere fanaticos furores Ben Cosban.' For the topos of Herodotus' sweetness see Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.1.73, also echoed by, e.g., Benedetto Brognolo in his dedicatory epistle in Valla (1474), Camerarius (1541) 2<sup>v</sup>; cf. ch. 3, p. 110 in this volume for Byzantine echoes of the trope.

<sup>30</sup> CR xii 789–90: 'Cambyses ... Sed talis cum esset Cambyses, aliquanto post divinitus punitus est. Cum enim in equum ascenderet, decidens ex vagina gladius ferit ei femur, ex eo vulnere post paucos dies mortuus est ... Est autem et ipsius poena testimonium regulae: omnis qui gladium acceperit, gladio peribit. Ac talibus exemplis poenarum Deus caeteros homines de providentia et de suo iudicio commonefacit. Iusticiae exemplum de Cambyse hoc narrat Herodotus.'

*gloriae*), incited by Mardonius and dissuaded by his uncle Artabanus, a much simplified, if comprehensible reading of the Persian War Council as described by Herodotus (7.5–11). Melanchthon, however, omits the infamous dream scene that forms the dramatic centre-piece of Herodotus' story, in which Xerxes changes his mind, apologises to Artabanus, and abandons the expedition, but is then forced to go to war by a divine dream which also appears to Artabanus (7.12–18). In the Herodotean version Xerxes is entirely passive after the dream's final appearance to Artabanus and it is his cautious uncle who (amid professions of man's helplessness and the dangers of expansionism) finally and authoritatively commits the Persians to war, instructing Xerxes to obey the inevitable commands of God and announce to the Persians that the Grecian campaign will go ahead (7.18.3).<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in the course of threatening Artabanus, the divinely sent dream-figure describes the Greek campaign as 'what must happen' (7.17.2), appearing to refer to an ineluctable destiny. Only by disregarding a central element of Herodotus' narrative can Melanchthon use Herodotus' story of Xerxes to urge the moral that 'God does not want unnecessary affairs [in this case, war] to be

<sup>31</sup> Xerxes' reference back to the dreams in his conversation with Artabanus at Abydos (7.47.1) confirms that they are not—as claimed by most scholars seeking to justify the exclusion of the dreams from their analysis—merely a 'Persian' story from which Herodotus is keen to distance himself (for a review of attempts to see such 'distancing' in the phrase *καὶ δῆ κού* (7.12.1) see Christ's close examination of these particles, (1994) 194 n. 83, which concludes that the claim is unconvincing). The dreams clearly play an important part of Herodotus' dramatisation of the genesis of the Persian War. For recent attempts to wring a clearer moral from Herodotus' story by omitting the dreams from discussion, reinterpreting them as a divine test (an idea not found in Herodotus), or psychologising them (so that they reflect Xerxes' subconscious expansionist desires, Artabanus' inability to free himself from mental subordination to Xerxes' will, or the hard political reality) see, e.g., Schulte-Altendorneburg (2001), Pietsch (2001) 217, Munson (2001) 43–4 (cf. 35, 41), Saïd (2002) 144, Löffler (2008) 187. For a powerful critique of such attempts see Roettig (2010).

undertaken out of a desire for glory and a trust in human power'.<sup>32</sup>

Melanchthon identified and effected many other such changes necessary to massage the Herodotean stories of Croesus, Cyrus, Cambyses, and Xerxes into the straightforward moral stories he sought.<sup>33</sup> Typically, this involved removing all traces of divine incitement to war (a theme which recurs in Herodotus' story of Croesus) and stressing the arrogance and impiety of the characters involved at the point at which they decide to wage war. This presented no significant difficulties: although the *Chronicon's* main source for Persian history was Herodotus, it did not purport to be a reading of the *Histories* themselves but rather an interpretation of the *events* of the past, to which Herodotus was but one witness. Xenophon, Ctesias, and others presented alternative versions for many events and the *Chronicon Carionis* participates in a long tradition of historical chronicles which freely mix the accounts of different sources with, at most, casual attribution. In treating the origins of Croesus' disastrous campaign against Cyrus, Melanchthon bases his narrative on Herodotus, but abandons the ambiguous Delphic oracle delivered to Croesus in the Herodotean version in favour of the oracle reported by Xenophon, facilitating the conclusion that Croesus' campaign was motivated by his own stupidity and self-confidence.<sup>34</sup> Where the Delphic response given by

<sup>32</sup> CR xii 796: 'Vult enim Deus, non suscipi bella non necessaria cupiditate gloryae et fiducia humanae potentiae. Regula est enim, Necessaria mandata divinitus facienda esse, et petendum esse a Deo auxilium, iuxta dictum: Commenda Deo viam, id est, vocationem tuam, et spera in eum, et ipse faciet.' Cf. 798: 'Sunt autem exempla in hac historia consideratione digna plurima. Primum, ne quis fiducia potentiae res non necessarias moveat, quia Deus subito magnam potentiam delere potest, ut hoc bellum ante biennium finitum est.'

<sup>33</sup> On the characterisation of historical actors in the ecclesiastical parts of Melanchthon's history writing see Backus (2003) 335–6.

<sup>34</sup> CR xii 780: 'Croesus fiducia potentiae infert bellum Cyro, gerenti iustum bellum adversus tyrannum Babylonicum'; cf. 781–2: Croesus 'ait se deplorassee suam stulticiam, quod confisus praesenti potentia, bellum Cyro intulisset, tunc non cogitans fortunae inconstantiam, cum quidem

Herodotus—‘Croesus will destroy a great empire’ (i.e. his own: 1.52–3; cf. 1.91.4–6)—is misleading to the point of mendacity,<sup>35</sup> the oracle given to Croesus in Xenophon’s account was, at least, not actively misleading, merely the comparatively harmless exhortation ‘Know thyself’ (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.2.20). In reality Herodotus was little more than one source of narrative material for the historical collage Melanchthon used to teach theology and ethics through the genre of didactic history. Thus far, however, no humanist had put Herodotus to comparable use.<sup>36</sup>

et oraculo recte monitus esset, se beatum fore, si sese nosset’ (based loosely around Hdt. 1.91.6; 1.207.1–3, and Xen. *Cyr.* 7.2.20). For a perceptive discussion of Croesus’ great *insecurity* at the point at which he goes to war, see Pelling (2006) 153–4.

<sup>35</sup> This point remains contentious enough today to require emphasis: while the first part of the oracle is—at least technically—neutral, the natural interpretation is that the campaign would turn out well for Croesus. But the second part of the oracle’s response—that he should ally himself with the most powerful Greeks—confirms Croesus’ reading as the natural one: that the oracle is recommending military conflict. As Stephanie West observes ‘there would be no point in involving the Greeks in defeat’ (personal communication). And, while the oracle at 1.91 clearly blames Croesus for the ‘misinterpretation’, it is in many other ways an unsatisfactory reading of Herodotus’ earlier narrative: the oracle tells Croesus he should have consulted again (*ἐπανειρόμενος*) to discover whose empire would be defeated (1.91.4–5). Croesus did, however, consult a second time, asking whether his own empire would be ‘long lasting’ (1.55.1), in return for which he received another opaque oracle. Regardless of how the incongruities between the narrative and the Delphic apology are interpreted—see, however, Nesselrath (2013) for an interesting theory on Herodotus’ source usage—the narrator’s description of the oracle as ‘false’/‘deceptive’ strongly supports this reading of the early part of the narrative. Indeed, *κίβδηλος* is reserved, in the *Historiēs*, for actively deceptive oracles like that given to the Spartans (1.66.3) and for bribed oracles (5.91.2); elsewhere in classical Greek it is opposed to ‘true’ (see also n. 73, below). The oracle was, of course, notorious in antiquity as an example of mendacious ambiguity that (if accepted as genuine) stood to the discredit of the oracular institution: a hexameter version (different from the prose version given at Hdt. 1.53) is cited by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3.5, 1407a39–b2), Diodorus (9.31.1), and Cicero (*De div.* 2.115–16).

<sup>36</sup> For the scant knowledge of Herodotus in Heidelberg in the early German Renaissance—despite Melanchthon’s claims to the contrary—see Ellis (in preparation). Earlier Italian Renaissance treatments of

Melanchthon's use of Herodotus must be understood in the context of his wider approach to Greek literature, and his concern to justify the reading of the pagan works of Greek antiquity in an intellectual culture often sceptical of such exotic activities.<sup>37</sup> Melanchthon's views can be seen from the titles of early works like 'On the utility of fables' (1526),<sup>38</sup> and from his inaugural speech on pedagogical reform as Chair of Greek in Wittenberg (29 Aug. 1518).<sup>39</sup> His writings on tragedy and Homer acclaim the salutary moral and theological lessons they contained. In his *Cohortatio ad legendas tragoedias et comoedias* (1545) Melanchthon generalised about ancient tragedy in the same terms he used for history:<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in all the tragedies, this is the main subject. This is the thought they wish to impress upon the hearts of every man: that there is some eternal mind that always

Herodotus are not comparable; Aldus Manutius' brief dedicatory letter to his *Editio princeps*, for example, makes no mention the utility of history (1502); cf. Pontano's letter of 1st Jan. 1460, cited in Pagliaroli (2007) 116–17. For wider discussion of early Herodotean readings see Olivieri (2004).

<sup>37</sup> In the Preface to his 1511 edition of Pico's *Hymni heroici* Beatus Rhenanus wrote: 'non video, quo pacto ex aethnicis dumtaxat literis sancti mores hauriri queant' (cited from Schucan (1973) 158). He was not alone in advising caution, particularly regarding heathen poets; cf. Schucan (1973) 151–6. Melanchthon's teacher Reuchlin made the case for reading heathen poetry by reference to, *inter alia*, Basil of Caesarea's *Ad adolescentes, de legendis libris Gentilium*—'The charter of all Christian higher education for centuries to come' in the words of Werner Jaeger. For an overview of Basil's treatise see Schwab (2012) 147–56; on its reception in the writings of the early Reformers (for which surviving evidence is scanty) see Schucan (1973) 183–4.

<sup>38</sup> *De utilitate fabulorum*, CR xi 116–20.

<sup>39</sup> *De corrigendis adolescentium studiis*, CR xi 15–25.

<sup>40</sup> CR v 568: 'Ita Tragoediarum omnium hoc praecipuum est argumentum. Hanc sententiam volunt omnium animis infigere, esse aliquam mentem aeternam, quae semper atrocia scelera insignibus exemplis punit, moderatis vero et iustis plerunque dat tranquilliores cursum' (trans. Lurie (2012) 443). On Melanchthon's wider reading of tragedy see Lurie (2004) 94–103.

inflicts severe punishments upon atrocious crimes, while bestowing mostly a more tranquil path for the moderate and just.

In his *Preface* to Homer (1538), likewise, Melanchthon talks about the poet in reverent tones, praising him in almost exactly the same terms he would use when discoursing on the didactic uses of history: Homer is an ideal teacher (*magister*) and the utility of his text (*utilitas*) is derived from its *sententiae* (pronouncements, sayings), *sapientia* (wisdom), and *exempla*.<sup>41</sup> Pindar would receive the same treatment from Melanchthon himself, as well as his students Johannes Lonicer and David Chytraeus.<sup>42</sup> It was not only when theorising about history that the Lutheran academy was concerned to stress the moral usefulness and virtues of classical texts.

Nor was Chytraeus the only scholar to devote himself to the dissemination of Melanchthon's view of Greek history. At least two of his contemporaries discuss Herodotus in precisely the same terms in lectures delivered in Wittenberg in the 1550s and '60s. All that survives of Ernst Regius' 1555 lecture on Herodotus is a brief advert, but these show him to be a close follower of Melanchthon.<sup>43</sup> The historiograph-

<sup>41</sup> CR xi 397–413, esp. 400–3. Cf. 403: 'Talibus, inquam, maximis constat totum poema Homeri, hoc est, communibus et utilissimis regulis ac praeceptis morum, vitaeque et civilium officiorum, quarum in omni vita et actionibus usus latissime patet, multa docet, multa sapienter monet, instillat temerae aetati honestissimas et suavissimas noticias, modestiae, verecundiae, ac reliquarum virtutum: suavitatis et humanitatis morum nullus eo melior Magister', etc. On Melanchthon's reading of Homer see Pontani (2007) 383–8.

<sup>42</sup> See Schmitz (1993) esp. 107–15, and, for bibliography on Lonicer's background, *ibid.* 77; Chytraeus's primary work on Pindar appeared in 1596.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., Regius (1555) 71 ('praecipuas Imperiorum in mundo mutationes Deus uult nobis notas esse') and 72 (on Herodotus' providential overlap with Jeremiah on the death of Apries). Regius particularly stresses two Herodotean passages: the narrator's comment that the sacking of Troy represented divine punishment for the adultery of Paris (2.120.5) and the dream figure which told Hipparchus shortly before his death that 'no mortal can escape punishments' (5.56.1).

ical compendium compiled by the jurist Johannes Wolff in 1576 (reprinted in 1579) contains another lecture on history, delivered in 1568 in Wittenberg by Christoph Pezel (1539–1604). Here Pezel notes that heathen histories (Herodotus' included) not only provide examples of divine justice and divine anger, but also show that God *loves* mankind (i.e. is *φιλόανθρωπος*).<sup>44</sup> This builds on Melanchthon's attempts to defend Homer against Plato in 1538, where the great Reformer had reinterpreted Homeric theology in overtly Platonic terms through a mixture of selective citation and allegorisation, and sought a more Christian vision of God.<sup>45</sup>

Several years later Chytraeus would cite these very passages as testimony of God's omnipotence, justice, and role as overseer of human lives and empires, (1579) 460: 'Valde igitur utile est in lectione Historiarum, Exempla omnium humanorum officiorum, tanquam in illustri posita loco, prudenter accommodare ad Regulas seu leges vitæ. Quarum hæc prima & summa est, quæ adfirmat, verè esse Deum conditorem & inspectorem Imperiorum & vitæ hominum, omnipotentem & iustum, qui flagitet & præmijs ornet timorem sui, iusticiam, obedientiam: & horribiliter puniet impietatem, iniurias, tyrannidem, superbiam, libidines, & alia scelera: καὶ θεῶ ἀεὶ ξυνέπεσθαι δίκην [sic], τῶν ἀπολειπομένων τοῦ θείου νόμου τιμωρὸν [= Pl. *Ig.* 716a]. Ad hanc communem regulam Herodotus totam belli Troiani historiam refert, cum inquit: Excidum Troiæ docere, ὅτι τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων, μεγάλαι εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ. Et in Terpsichore, hanc generalem regulam ad regendos mores utilissimam recitat: οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων ἀδίκων τίσιν οὐκ ἀποτίσει, Nullus homo pœnam sceleris reus effugit unquam.' Cf. (1601) 5.

<sup>44</sup> Pezel (1579) 605: 'In historijs Ethnicorum conspiciuntur exempla & testimonia sapientiæ & iusticiæ Dei patefactæ in Lege, iræ & iudicii divini adversus scelera hominum, perpetuæ præsentæ in genere humano, in imperijs ac politijs, in defensione piorum Principum, in fœlicibus & salutaribus consiliarijs, in pœnis Tyrannidis, iniusticiæ & libidinum, Quæ ostendunt, quòd sit Deus, & qualis sit, quòd rerum humanarum cura afficiatur, quòd sit φιλόανθρωπος, autor & conservator & custos ordinis Politici, legum, iudiciuorum, artium vitæ necessarium, disciplinæ, pij magistratus, honestarum & piarum familiarum, quòd sit iudex & vindex scelerum, & atrociam scelerum puniat atrocibus pœnis, in ijs qui magistratum gerunt, & in privatis.' The penultimate clause loosely translates Hdt. 2.120.5.

<sup>45</sup> Melanchthon CR xi 409–10 (*Preface to Homer*): 'Facit Deum φιλόανθρωπον, unde Iuppiter ab ipso introducitur, conquerens affici se humanis casibus, et dolere sibi hominum mala atque miseras: statuit

Like Regius and Chytraeus, Pezel notes that the *exempla* of history support the commands of the Decalogue and then cites Herodotus' statement at 2.120.5 (after modifying it so that Herodotus talks about 'God' rather than 'the gods').<sup>46</sup>

In 1568 Johannes Rosa (1532–71), another former pupil of Melanchthon,<sup>47</sup> also lectured on Herodotus in Jena. Thirty double-sided pages of lecture notes survive in the hand of Jacques Bongars (1554–1612), who would later serve as Henri IV's ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire. But fourteen when he attended Rosa's lectures in 1568, Bongars was a diligent note-taker, and the headings reveal the influence of Lutheran humanism, with a strong interest in moral didactics and exemplarity.<sup>48</sup>

item bonos defendi, cumulari bonis, divinitus malos puniri.' The reference is to Hom. *Od.* 1.32–43.

<sup>46</sup> Pezel (1579) 606: 'Prudenter ac in exemplis consideremus, ad quæ Decalogi præcepta, ac ad quas vitæ regulas accommodanda sint, Quod quidem à sapientibus historicis observari videmus. Tradit hanc regulam expressè Herodotus: *μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλοι εἰσὶ καὶ τιμωρίαι παρὰ θεοῦ* [*sic*], Et plures alias, quas excerpere longum foret.' Herodotus, of course, uses 'the gods' and 'god' interchangeably (for discussion and bibliography see Harrison (2000) 158–69), but at 2.120.5 the text of all MSS runs *παρὰ τῶν θεῶν*.

<sup>47</sup> Rosa first enrolled in Wittenberg on 5th Jan. 1550; after a period of studies in Jena (summer 1553–1555) he returned and received his Masters in Wittenberg in March 1555 (examined by, *inter alia*, Melanchthon and Peucer). Cf. Förstermann (1841) 251, Köstlin (1891) 16.

<sup>48</sup> This is not the place for an extensive discussion of these largely unknown lecture notes, and I hope to explore them in more detail elsewhere. Bongars' brief underlined marginal notations serve to summarise, head, and emphasise aspects of the main body of notes, and in these we see the recurrence of ethical judgements and material: 'deposita veste, deponit pudor' (1568: 4<sup>r</sup>); 'Periander crudelis' (5<sup>v</sup>); 'rerum humanarum inconstantia', 'nemo ante mortem beatus', 'arrogantia' (6<sup>v</sup>); 'Luxus', 'Persarum libido' (22<sup>r</sup>); For the dates of Bongars' studies in Heidelberg, Marburg, Jena, and Strasbourg, and a brief overview of Bongars' notes from school and university, see Mittenhuber (2012a) and Michel-Rüegg (2012). For Bongars' life and humanistic endeavours see the essays in Huber-Rebenich (2015). I am grateful to both Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich and Florian Mittenhuber for making me aware of this manuscript.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the Lutheran historians of Wittenberg seem at first sight to have been relatively unconcerned with the question that has drawn forth the most ink shed in evaluating the Father of History—Herodotus’ basic trustworthiness as a historical source. In his extensive writings Chytraeus sometimes states in passing that Herodotus deserves the highest level of trust,<sup>49</sup> but, to my knowledge, he goes further on one occasion only: in the *De lectione historiarum* Chytraeus briefly defends Herodotus’ good faith by citing the historian’s statement that it is his duty to report the stories he hears, but not to believe everything he reports (7.152).<sup>50</sup> This particular quotation has often formed the centre-piece of Herodotean apologetics, as it had in Camerarius’ *Proæmium* to his edition of Herodotus (1541) and would in Estienne’s *Apologia*,<sup>51</sup> both of which zealously defended Herodotus’ historical integrity.<sup>52</sup> In the copy of the *Histories* belonging to the great textual critic and chronologer Joseph Scaliger—and later to his student Daniel Heinsius—this quotation is inscribed on the title page (see Fig. 1, bottom).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Chytraeus (1579) 471–2.

<sup>50</sup> Chytraeus (1579) 520.

<sup>51</sup> Camerarius (1541) 3<sup>v</sup> (my italics indicating Herodotean citations): ‘cauetq[ue] ne quis simplicior decipiatur, cum addit semper huiusmodi quiddam. ut feru[n]t. ut ego audiui. quid ueri mihi quidem simili non fit.’ See Estienne (1980) 14–16.

<sup>52</sup> On this topic, which has been the focus of most reception work done on Herodotus in the 16th century, see the broad sketch of Herodotus’ reputation for truth and lies by Momigliano (1966), as well as Boudou (2000) 436–9, and brief remarks in Evans (1968) and Bichler and Rollinger (2000) 124–32. For the 16th century see now Kliege-Biller (2004).

<sup>53</sup> Scaliger (Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv. a.19.2.), with the text from Hdt. 7.152; compare, however, Scaliger’s comments in the *Isagogices Chronologiæ Canones* (1606) 309–10, where he considers less flattering explanations for Herodotus’ erroneous departures from the writings of Manetho, including the deception of Herodotus by devious Egyptian priests and Herodotus’ cultivation of the *vicio Græculorum* (the game of mixing truth with falsehood); for the context of the remark see Grafton (1975) 171 and id. (1993) 258.

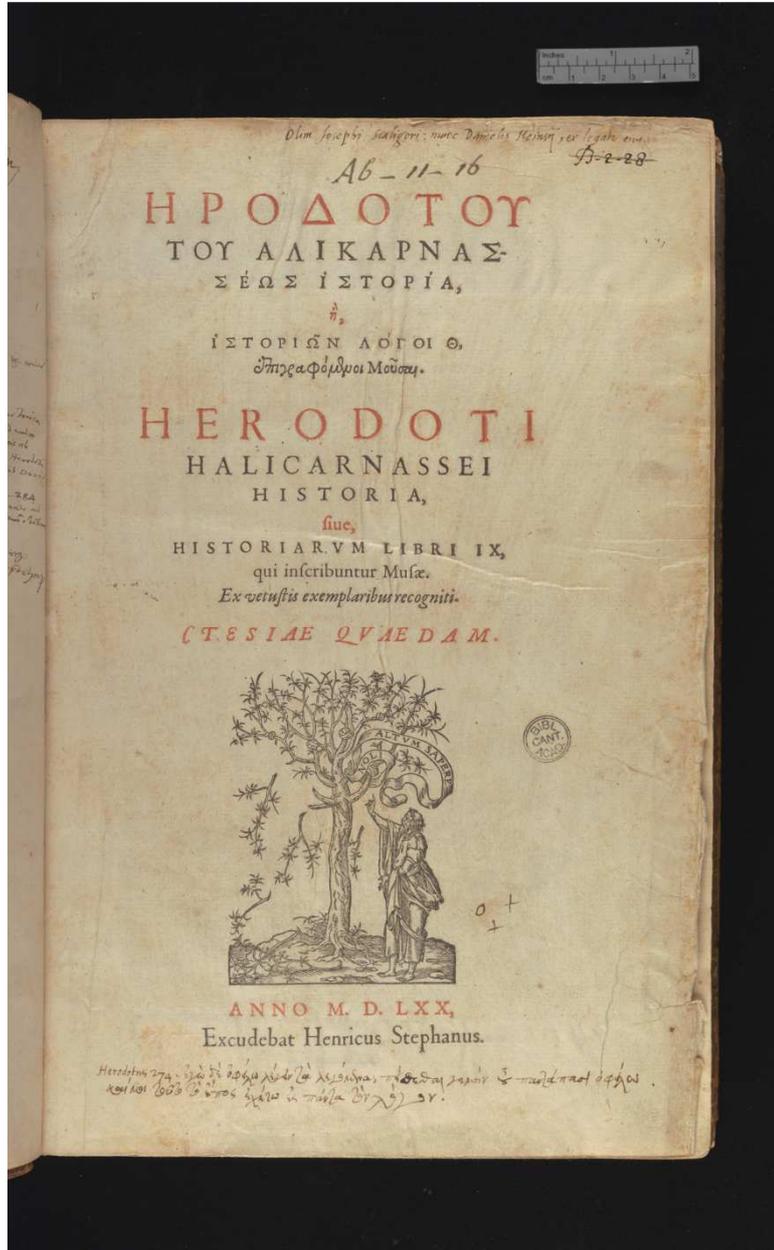


Fig. 1. Joseph Scaliger's copy of the *Histories* (Title Page). Cambridge University Library, Adv. a.19.2. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library

In Lutheran circles, however, it seems that it was rare to offer even such basic apologetics for Herodotus' veracity. The primary exception is Joachim Camerarius' *Prooemium*, published in the year Camerarius moved to Leipzig from Tübingen, which defends Herodotus' veracity at some length. In this, as in many other areas, Camerarius shows an independence from Melanchthon—his colleague and close friend—not often seen among Melanchthon's students like Chytraeus, Winsemius, and others.<sup>54</sup> In addition to citing 7.152, Camerarius observes that Herodotus qualifies implausible claims with indicators of source provenance, to ensure that we do not take them at face value. Camerarius also argues that Herodotus' very usefulness as a historical source is connected with his willingness to turn dry historical facts into vivid *exempla* that teach moral lessons. If, in doing so, Herodotus has to elaborate some details to work the basic historical framework into a compelling narrative, Camerarius says, this is to be commended not condemned.<sup>55</sup> Here the didactic function of history is again

<sup>54</sup> On, e.g., Winsemius' close adherence to many of Melanchthon's approaches to Thucydides see Richards (2013) 154–78. As Ben-Tov has observed (personal communication), there is arguably a discrepancy between Chytraeus' antiquarian approach in his letter to Camerarius on Herodotus, and the moralistic and Melanchthonian tone of his published work.

<sup>55</sup> Camerarius illustrates the point with Herodotus' story of king Candaules, who lost his throne after persuading a servant to look on his naked queen (1.8–12). See (1541) α4<sup>r</sup>: 'Cum autem historia non solum delectationem cognitionis, sed instructionem etiam animorum continere debeat, ut & uoluptatem & utilitatem afferat legentibus: si his ipsis quæ ut fabulosa notantur etiam monita utilia atque salutaria multa insunt, quis iam eos non modo qui uitupererent, sed qui laudent iniquius ferre omnino possit? fuit Candaules rex Lydorum: Nemo, ut opinor, negare audet. Hoc tempore in aliam familiam translatum fuit regnum Lydiæ. An quisquam falso hoc proditum dicit? Cur igitur illa iam culpant de satellite coacto aspicere nudam Reginam? Quæ si, quod haud scio an non sint, conficta essent, quanti multis de caussis fieri mererentur? Nõnne illam peruersionem animorum, quæ ita mirabiliter, ut diuinitus effici uideatur, sæpe urgentibus fatalibus casibus animaduertitur, demonstrant? Quàm speciosis & bonis sententijs illustris est narratio?'

brought to the fore to exculpate Herodotus from the ancient charge that he shunned his duty to the truth.<sup>56</sup>

Chytraeus' tendency to avoid meeting Herodotus' critics head-on may, perhaps, simply be a different approach to the same goal. His stress on the harmony between Herodotus and the Bible, like the claim that Herodotus' writing was part of God's plan for seamless historical coverage, acts to implicitly reaffirm Herodotus' historical worth; his almost complete silence on Herodotus' detractors gives the impression that Herodotus' historical fidelity is beyond doubt. We should not forget, however, that even some of Melanchthon's students read Thucydides' infamous methodological comments (1.22.4) as a criticism of Herodotus' fabulous elements (*τὸ μυθῶδες/fabulosa*), and implicitly downgraded the latter's value as a historical source, following the judgements of earlier humanists like Agricola, Erasmus, and Vives.<sup>57</sup>

To sum up this section, then, the extensive writings and lectures of Chytraeus, Pezel, and Regius embedded Greek history and Herodotus within the providential framework laid out by Melanchthon. They promoted his didactic concerns, borrowed specific observations and arguments (such as the overlap between Jeremiah and Herodotus and the superior age of Biblical history), and closely echoed his language.<sup>58</sup> Chytraeus' work, however, is of particular

<sup>56</sup> Camerarius, accordingly, does not think that the speeches of the ancient historians could (or should) be verbatim reports of what was said, but rather defends the validity of speeches composed by the author; cf. (1541) 3<sup>v</sup>, and (1565), as discussed in Richards (2013) 86–8, 141–2. For contemporary debates over the validity of including speeches in historical works see Grafton (2006), esp. 35–46.

<sup>57</sup> See Winsemius (1580 = 1569) br<sup>v</sup> and discussion in Richards (2013) 161–2; cf. below, n. 63.

<sup>58</sup> Bold assertions about what 'God wishes' ring out in greatest density from the revised *Chronicon* (1558/60): Melanchthon CR xii 721–2 (cf. 713–14, 718, 727, 783): 'Singulari consilio D e u s in Ecclesia extare et semper conservari voluit initia mundi, et seriem annorum ... Vult enim sciri Deus originem generis humani, et divinas patefactiones, et testimonia patefactionum, et quae doctrina, et quomodo propagata sit. Vult sciri certo, ideo conditum esse genus humanum, ut inde aeterna Ecclesia colligatur. Vult et causas sciri calamitatum humanarum, et

interest because of its greater depth, in large part due to the commentary format he employs, which prompts him to offer his opinion on much more material than the author of a short treatise, who could merely excerpt and modify a handful of passages that suited his argument. The following section, therefore, looks in more detail at Chytraeus' writings on Herodotus, and in particular at his handling of several Herodotean narratives: the stories of Croesus, Cyrus, and Xerxes.

## **2. David Chytraeus: Forging Exemplarity from Herodotus**

In pragmatic terms, Chytraeus' writings strive to incorporate the *Historiæ* into the body of literature that could be used as the basis for a Lutheran education. Chytraeus sought to achieve this by constantly referring the reader to points of contact between Herodotus and the Christian tradition, whether chronological, linguistic, geographical, or ethical. By dating Herodotean events with respect to Old Testament regnal systems Chytraeus knitted together Biblical and Herodotean chronology into a single narrative that united the historical traditions of the ancient

mortis, et agnoscî filium, per quem liberabimur ab his malis, et restituentur iusticia et vita aeterna.' He had used the same expression in another context in his *De studiis linguae Graecae* (1549), CR xi 860: 'voluit Deus et hunc thesaurum per eiusdem linguae ministerium humano generi impertiri ...'. Compare Regius (1555) 70–1: 'Deus uult notam esse seriem temporum mundi. Vult enim sciri initia generis humani ...'; Chytraeus (1579) 463: 'Vult enim Deus sciri à nobis, mundi & Ecclesiae initia'; (1565) Av: 'VULT Deus legi à nobis præcipuos scriptores ...'; (1601) 1: 'Vt enim Deus totum hoc pulcherrimum mundi theatrum, cælos, solem, Lunam, stellas, elementa, plantas, animantia [*sic*], aspici à nobis & considerari vult [...]'; Pezel (1579) 616: 'quantum Dei beneficium sit, quòd integram & nusquam interruptam temporum ac historiarum seriem Deus extare voluit de qua alibi dicitur. Cogitent & de causis huius consilij, quæ sunt: Quod vult Deus sciri initia generis humani, exordia, instaurationem & conservationem Ecclesiae ...'.

world into a continuous whole;<sup>59</sup> by references to idioms Herodotus shared with Christian texts he showed the importance of Herodotus to a linguistic understanding of the Bible;<sup>60</sup> by his many references to shared subject matter he showed how a reading of Herodotus confirmed and further illuminated the Bible;<sup>61</sup> by frequent etymologising he reinforced the long-standing belief that the Greeks and their sacred institutions were the corrupted remains of communities established by Old Testament figures dispersed after the flood;<sup>62</sup> and by highlighting specific Herodotean passages he turned Herodotus' text into a mine of *exempla* and *sententiae* that could act as a guide to a good Christian life. While these activities were clearly interrelated, in what follows I focus on this final aspect, which was arguably the most complex task Chytraeus attempted.

<sup>59</sup> The dates of Croesus, for example, are given according to the Lydian, Persian, Jewish, and Roman regnal systems, and the oppression of the Athenians by the Pisistratids is dated to the time of the Babylonian captivity; Chytraeus (1601) 47, 80; cf. 85, 176. Melanchthon, it seems, had done likewise in his lectures on Thucydides in the 1540s and 1550s: see Richards (2013) 42.

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., Chytraeus' comments at (1601) 162, which seem to claim that the word *δικαιόω* is used in the same sense ('justum puto, justum censeo') in Herodotus' dialogue between Croesus and Cyrus (1.89.1) and Paul's doctrine of justification. Melanchthon, too, attempted this with Herodotus, see e.g. CR viii 37.

<sup>61</sup> Herodotus' mention of the city of Ascalon (1.105) is cross-referenced to Judg. 1:18, Jer. 25:20, 47:5, Amos 1:8. Likewise Herodotus' description of the capture of Babylon (1.191.6) is said to cohere with Daniel 5; Herodotus' mention of the Colossians (7.30) is of interest because they later received Paul's evangelical letter; Cf. Chytraeus (1601) 169, 193 (= '191'), 237.

<sup>62</sup> See above, nn. 23–4, for Chytraeus' derivation of Dodona from Dodanim, son of Javan (Gen. 10:2, 4), the Getae (or Goths) from Gether (Gen. 10:23), the oracle of Ammon from Ham (Gen. 10:1), and Parnassus from various Hebrew words. See Chytraeus (1601) 117, 118, 120–1, 196, 212–13; cf. also 167, 191, 192. For more such etymologising in the Melanchthonian circle see Ben-Tov (2009) 64–6 (particularly on Caspar Peucer).

It is worth noting at once that Melanchthon's claims about the utility of pagan literature were as contested in Chytraeus' day as they had been in Melanchthon's own lifetime, and his strenuous assertions must be seen in the light of such debates. The Calvinist Matthieu Béroalde based his 1575 *Chronicum* exclusively on the sacred histories, and even Gnesio-Lutherans like the Centuriators of Magdeburg (working between 1559 and 1574) excluded pagan history from their historical endeavours on the grounds that it was, at most, of meagre value as a source of theological, moral, and historical guidance.<sup>63</sup>

Chytraeus lays out his theoretical approach, inherited from Melanchthon, in his *In lectionem Herodoti* (first published 1563). The figures of history, he writes (in reference to history as a whole, not just Herodotus), can be divided into positive and negative examples: in the latter category he cites Paris, Astyages, Croesus, and Xerxes (amongst others), who were punished by God for their tyranny, lust, envy, and ambition. As positive *exempla* he offers Cyrus, Deioces, Darius, Miltiades, Themistocles, and Pausanias, all admirable for their justice, goodness, mercy, bravery in *necessary* wars, and moderation in tolerating the errors of others. History and a reading of Herodotus thus teach rulers the truth of the maxim 'the throne is stabilised by justice' (cf. Prov. 16:12) and that 'it is due to injustice that the Kingdom is transferred from one people to another'.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> On the Magdeburg Centuries see Backus (2003) 358–60, esp. n. 115. For Béroalde's views on the unreliability of pagan Greek and Roman historians see Béroalde (1575) 208–9. This did not, however, stop him from basing his scathing judgements of Herodotus' many fables and lies (à propos of his treatment of Cyrus) on a positive assessment of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (1575) 153. For a brief outline of Herodotus' reputation as a historian among earlier 15th- and 16th-century humanists see Boudou (2000) 436–9 and Kipf (1999) 16–19, who note the negative judgements of Herodotus given by Agricola, Budé, Erasmus, Vives, and Turnebus (Estienne's Greek teacher); cf. also above, n. 57.

<sup>64</sup> Chytraeus (1579) 461: 'Hæc exempla nunc quoque boni Principes in suis ditionibus gubernandis studeant imitari. Cyrus, Deioces, Themistocles, Scipio, Augustus, iusticia [*sic*], bonitate, clementia, fortitudine in bellis necessarijs ... iuxta Regulam: Iustitia stabilitur

Chytraeus' pedagogical goals, then, required that the delicate shades in which Herodotus sketched his characters be reduced to bolder and simpler ones. Such a project might not appeal to the sensibilities of scholars today, but it is crucial to realise that this reflects not a lack of sophistication on Chytraeus' part, but a fundamentally different view on the purpose of reading Greek literature. Chytraeus' aim, in line with the program of Melanchthonian pedagogy, was to simplify Herodotus' narrative to render it a useful tool of ethical instruction. The examples of Herodotus were to be extracted and placed next to other historical *exempla* to illustrate salutary moral lessons.<sup>65</sup> When Herodotus, as narrator, states that 'a great *nemesis* from god took Croesus' (1.34) Chytraeus draws parallels with the defeat and humbling of Sennacherib (2 Chron. 32) and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4).<sup>66</sup> In commenting on Herodotus' proem (1.1–5)—where tit-for-tat abductions by Greek and barbarian raiders culminate in the rape of Helen and the sacking of Troy—Chytraeus explains the destruction of Troy as God's punishment for the libidinous crimes of Paris (clearly taking his cue from Herodotus' comments at 2.120.5). This Herodotean example is cited alongside the Biblical tales of the flood and the destruction of Sodom (which, Chytraeus observes, was also destroyed

thronus ... Econtra Tyrannide, libidinibus, invidia, ambitione fiducia foederum, intestinis odijs & dissidijs, potentissima regna & civitates horrendis calamitatibus obrutæ & eversæ sunt, ut in prima statim pagina Herodotus narrat.... Hæc exempla ad regulam pertinent: propter iniustitiam transfertur regnum de gente in gentem ...'. This last quote is also used by Melanchthon in the *Chronicon Carionis* (CR xii 1088).

<sup>65</sup> On the humanist practice, encouraged by Melanchthon, of extracting *sententiae* from ancient texts and storing them according to theme for later retrieval and use without regard to original context, see Blair (2003); Grafton (2006) 208–9.

<sup>66</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 113: 'Ἔλαβε ἐκ θεῶν νέμεσις κροῖσον] comes superbæ est ἀδράσεια, & Abominatio est coram Deo, quicquid inflatum est in mundo. Sennaherib. Nebuchodonosor. Hæc est Babylon quam EGO ædificauī. Timotheus. Hoc EGO feci, non fortuna.'

for the inappropriate sexual behaviour of its citizens, in contravention of the sixth commandment).<sup>67</sup>

Two sets of ideas particularly resonated with Chytraeus, as with Melanchthon: the fragility and transience of all human power (and humanity's consequent dependence on God) and the inevitability of punishment for arrogance, lust, injustice, and prosecuting 'unnecessary wars' which God did not wish to be fought. Both scholars, therefore, place great stress on several Herodotean episodes, like Solon's warning to Croesus on the vicissitudes of the human lot: that 'man is entirely *sumphorē*' ('chance' or 'disaster', 1.32). Indeed, it is clear that Chytraeus actually had Melanchthon's *Chronicon Carionis* in hand when he commented on this passage—here (as elsewhere) he borrows Melanchthon's elaborate, non-literal translation of the Greek, rather than translating it himself or using Valla's Latin translation.<sup>68</sup> The Swabian chronicler Johannes Naucler (1425–1510), by contrast, who also found the passage worth citing in his account of Croesus, had reproduced Valla's text verbatim, much closer to the unusual Greek phrase used by Herodotus.<sup>69</sup>

Complications inevitably arise in the attempt to set a Christian moral tale in the pre-Christian, pagan world of classical antiquity. In using ancient non-Biblical narratives to teach the importance of piety and the punishment of

<sup>67</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 24–5, 44–5, 54. For the flood: Gen. 6–8 (and for man's wickedness Gen. 6:4–5, 11–12); for Sodom's destruction after the citizens' infamous attempt to violate the angels lodging with Lot: Gen. 18–19. The most obvious of the many problems with Chytraeus' reading is that Herodotus states his agnosticism about the story told by the Persian *logioi* (1.5). For a recent description which brings out the complexities of the Proem see, e.g., Bravo and Wećowski (2004) with further bibliography.

<sup>68</sup> Chytraeus' text (1601) 45–6: '... homo hoc totum quod est, omnibus calamitatibus & aduersis casibus obnoxium sit') is a rearrangement of that given in the *Chronicon Carionis* CR xii 781–2 ('Homo hoc totum quod est, est obnoxium multis calamitatibus et aduersis casibus').

<sup>69</sup> Naucler (1579) 221: 'Ita igitur omnino calamitosus est homo', cf. Valla (1474) [7'] and Hdt. 1.32.4: *πάν ἐστι ἄνθρωπος συμφορή*.

idolatry, would-be moralists are confronted with the fact that, in Christian terms, much ‘piety’ displayed by an ancient Greek consisted in the performance of aberrant rituals to wily demons. The Reformation educator was faced with a choice, in principle, between treating talk of ‘god’ or ‘the gods’ in a Greek narrative as if it referred to ‘God’ and treating it as if it referred to a pagan demon. None of the scholars considered here takes a systematic approach to this issue, and the combination of approaches often pulls Herodotus’ interpreters in contrary directions. Chytraeus, for example, is torn between the hostile condemnation of pagan demons (most often found in the context of oracular institutions, following in the footsteps of the early Christian apologists) and the theological syncretism that characterises much Humanist treatment of the pagan classics and most naturally suits his moralising goal.<sup>70</sup>

In consequence of his indecision, Chytraeus offers two quite different visions of Croesus’ disastrous war with Cyrus and the Persians, and uses each to a different moralising purpose. The two interpretations rely upon fundamentally different theological assumptions. Chytraeus generally uses Croesus as a negative *exemplum* of the divine punishments which fall upon those who have excessive confidence in their own capabilities and wage ‘unnecessary war’;<sup>71</sup> when doing so he studiously ignores the role of the Delphic oracle (described by the narrator as ‘deceptive’) in pushing Croesus into war.<sup>72</sup> The approach was not uncommon in

<sup>70</sup> Ossa-Richardson (2013) 13–47 traces, *inter alia*, the trope of the ambiguity and deception of the Delphic *daimones* through early Christian apologetics and into the early-modern period.

<sup>71</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 47; cf. 6–7, 154.

<sup>72</sup> Herodotus mentions the oracle as a motivation for Croesus on numerous occasions (1.71.1; 1.73.1; 1.75.2; cf. 1.87.3–4). At 1.73.1, the narrator mentions three motives: the ‘desire for land’ (the motive appears only here); the Delphic oracle’s ‘deceptive’ response; and ‘revenge’. In his comment on this passage Chytraeus (as elsewhere) simply omits the oracle, listing ‘greed’ and ‘revenge’ as the sole motives: (1601) 154: ‘ἐσπατέετο δὲ ὁ Κροῖσος] CAVSÆ belli, a Croeso adversus Cyrum suscepti; CVPiditas amplificandi imperii, & VINDictæ.

contemporary literature, and has continued to prove popular with interpreters who explain Croesus' defeat by his own moral shortcomings.<sup>73</sup> Croesus' three consultations of the oracle are declared excessive (showing 'insolence' toward God) and it is suggested that his dedications to Delphi were made in the wrong spirit, with—Chytraeus remarks in Protestant umbrage—a focus on the gift itself rather than the state of his own soul.<sup>74</sup> Thus treated, the

*πρωτίστη δὲ κακῶν πάντων ἐπιθυμία ἐστὶ. ac Reges aliena regna injustè appetendo, sæpe propria amittunt, ut Cyro, & aliis plurimis accidit. Vindicta verò bonum est vita jucundius ipsâ.*'

<sup>73</sup> Since the mid-20th century scholars taking this approach have attempted to harmonise this view with the narrator's comment that the oracle was *κίβδηλος* ('deceptive' or 'counterfeit', 1.75.3). Claims that this is a neutral term are hard to reconcile with the fact that Herodotus otherwise only uses *κίβδηλος* of another actively deceptive oracle (1.66.3) and bribed oracles (5.91.2; cf. 5.63.1; 5.66.1; 5.90.1). For attempts to make *κίβδηλος* imply an oracle of 'mixed' quality rather than one that is 'counterfeit' (as Kurke argues) see Pelling (2006) 154 n. 49, citing Kroll (2000) 89, who focuses on the fact that debased coinage is a 'mix' of more and less precious metals. While ingenious, this ignores the term's highly negative sense in the archaic and classical periods: in Theognis (119–23) *κίβδηλος* money finds its human analogue in 'lying' (*ψυδρός*) and 'deceptive' (*δόλιον*) friends; Plato (*Leg.* 728d) uses *κίβδηλος* in opposition to 'true' (*ἀληθής*; cf. Thgn. 975; Democr. *Vorsok.* 68 B 82; Eur. *Hipp.* 616). Moralising treatments which explain Croesus' misfortunes as the result of his negative character traits (imperialistic ambition, non-Greekness, tyrannical inability to heed good advice, etc.) pass over the narrator's comment here (or render *κίβδηλος* as 'ambiguous', 'zweideutig' *vel sim.*) so that Croesus can take full responsibility for the misunderstanding. See, e.g., Marg (1953) 1105; Kirchberg (1965) 26–7; Munson (2001) 41–2; Saïd (2002) 136; Kindt (2006); Löffler (2008) 32; Gagné (2013) 326–43. Flower (1991) 71 and n. 96 and Kurke (1999) 152–6, however, take the implications of *κίβδηλος* seriously. I hope to explore the wider implications of this and other points to the interpretation of the Croesus *logos* elsewhere.

<sup>74</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 121, cites various Classical and Biblical precedents for the idea that it is the spirit of the sacrifice rather than the quantity, that matters: 'SACRIFICIA & ANATHEMATA CROESI. de quibus Aristotelis sententiam, in Rhetoricis, studiosi meminerint, *χαίρει ὁ θεὸς, οὐ ταῖς δαπάναις τῶν θυομένων, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐυσεβείᾳ τῶν θυόντων*, congruentem aliqua ex parte cum Prophetarum dictis. Esa. 1. Quo mihi multitudinem victimarum vestrarum. Ose. 6 misericordiam volo, & non sacrificium. Plato in Alcibiade, Non donis flectitur Deus, vt

story provides ample opportunity for Chytraeus to preach against cupidity, insolence towards God, and the prosecution of wars which God does not wish to be fought. Elsewhere, by contrast, Chytraeus condemns the deception perpetrated by the pagan demon residing in Delphi. In Herodotus' narrative Croesus confronts Apollo with the charge that he violated the principle of reciprocity by misdirecting him (1.89–90). Chytraeus comments, drawing on the common knowledge of the sixteenth-century humanist:<sup>75</sup>

Apollo is called Loxias because he used to give oblique, ambiguous, and deceptive oracles to those who consulted him, partly so that he might hide his own untrustworthiness, and partly so that he might cast those who were deceived by his ambiguity into sad calamities and yet be able to excuse himself, as he does here before Croesus.

auarus foenerator, sed animum intuetur.' On whether Herodotus disapproves of Croesus' oracle-testing see Christ (1994) 189–94. Chytraeus, however, may have viewed Croesus' testing in the light of Jesus' response to the devil at Matt. 4:8 (Οὐκ ἐκπειράσεις Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου).

<sup>75</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 162–3 (*ad* 1.91): 'Λοξίῳ] Λοξίας, Apollo vocatus est, quod obliqua seu ambigua & captiosa oracula consulentibus daret, partim vt tegetet suam vanitatem, partim ut deceptos ambiguitate, in tristes calamitates conijceret, & tamen se excusare posset, ut hic Cræso se excusat.' Pagan oracles, Chytraeus explained in his *Praefatio in Herodoti lectionem* (1601) 12–13, were demons with limited access to prophetic truth and no genuine prophetic powers of their own: their predictions were often cribbed from earlier statements made by God's true prophets or were based on other non-miraculous sources of knowledge. For the background to this view in Lutheran demonology—especially the influential 1553 *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum gentibus* by the Philippist Caspar Peucer (son-in-law of Melanchthon)—see Ossa-Richardson (2013) 55–60. For Camerarius' comments on pagan oracles in his *Commentarius de generibus divinationum, ac graecis latinisque earum vocabulis* (published posthumously in 1576, Leipzig), see Ossa-Richardson (2013) 116.

Croesus is, here, given comparatively sympathetic treatment as the victim of a diabolical trick, and his decision to attack Persia is approached from a very different perspective, alive to quite different aspects of the Herodotean text from those explored elsewhere.<sup>76</sup>

Chytraeus was, of course, scarcely the first to base his interpretation of the Pythia's prognostications to Croesus on the assumption that Apollo was a pagan demon. Already in the late 2nd century AD Tertullian had suggested that the demon in Delphi, while unable to predict the future, was able to crib prophecies from the Bible and to move at great speed to learn about contemporary events, and thereby impress his human consultants (specifically Croesus, when boiling the lamb and tortoise, Hdt. 1.46–9).<sup>77</sup> Later, an anonymous Byzantine scholar (whose annotations survive on a Vatican manuscript of Herodotus) composed a gloating address to Croesus which elaborated on a semi-Herodotean variant of the story, given by the Byzantine historian John Malalas:<sup>78</sup>

σὺ μὲν ὦ Κροῦσε τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖς χρηστηρίῳ θαρρήσας  
κατὰ τοῦ Κύρου ἐξώρμησας. ὁ δὲ Κύρος τὸν μέγιστον  
προφήτην Δανιήλ μετακαλεσάμενος καὶ ἐρωτήσας καὶ

<sup>76</sup> Elsewhere Chytraeus (1601) 12–13 gestures in the direction of uniting these readings by suggesting that Croesus finds what he wants in the ambiguous oracle: 'since we easily believe the things for which we wish' ('vt quæ volumus, libenter credimus').

<sup>77</sup> Tert. *Apol.* 22.8–10; For an overview of how early Christian apologists dealt with the question of pagan oracles see Ossa-Richardson (2013) 29–38 (30–1 on Tertullian).

<sup>78</sup> Vat. Gr. 123, cited from Stein (1869–71) II.431 (= MS R, 33.10 *ad* 1.53). The commentator is familiar with the alternative narrative of John Malalas in his *Chronicle* (6.9 = 156 Dindorf). If the original Byzantine author of this comment (in Stein's MS R, 14th century) is the same commentator who makes free use of the first-person elsewhere in the same manuscript (e.g. ἀκουομεν, οἶμαι, βλέπω), then we might hesitantly date him to somewhere between the late 11th century and the mid 13th century by a reference he makes elsewhere to the *Komanoi*, a Turkic peoples known to the Byzantines by this name between their first arrival in the late 11th or early 12th century and their defeat by the Mongols in 1241.

μαθὼν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ὅτι σε καὶ ἠττήσει καὶ αἰχμάλωτον  
λήψεται, τὸν πρὸς σὲ συνεκρότησε πόλεμον, καὶ ὁ μὲν σοὶ  
δοθεὶς χρησμὸς ἐψεύσθη, ἡ δὲ τοῦ Δανιὴλ προφητεία  
ἠλήθευσε.

You, Croesus, were encouraged by the oracle in Delphi and set out against Cyrus. But Cyrus summoned the great prophet Daniel, questioned him, and learnt from him that he would defeat you and take you prisoner, and so he clashed in war with you; the oracle you were given lied, whereas Daniel's prophecy told the truth.

The author misses—or perhaps follows Malalas in intentionally suppressing—the fact that the Herodotean oracle, however deceptive, is open to a *double* meaning (rather than being wholly and utterly a lie), and presents the conflict between Croesus and Cyrus as a sort of prophecy-competition between God and the demon known as Apollo. Chytraeus is unlikely to have known this particular comment, but his commentary succeeds in incorporating both this apologetic, Christian approach to Croesus' defeat (based on the assumption of Delphic impotence, ambiguity, and malevolence), and the moralising approach which attributed Croesus' misfortune to avoidable human folly (which edits the mendacious oracle out of the story). It would, however, be churlish to criticise Chytraeus for attempting to push the story of Croesus in two directions at once. Given his pedagogical goals, he might fairly view his presentation as a triumph, since he succeeds in extracting two morals from superficially incompatible interpretations of the same story.

The story of Cyrus presented its own special complications, and Chytraeus' treatment represents one of his relatively scarce innovations from Melanchthon's *Chronicon Carionis*. Humanists had long been puzzled by the fact that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Herodotus' *Histories* presented completely different accounts of Cyrus' death.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> As recent talks by Keith Sidwell and Noreen Humble in the panel 'Reading Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in the Early Modern Period'

Xenophon's Cyrus, apparently an idealised Socratic ruler, dies peacefully after a pious death-bed speech to his friends and sons, exhorting them to virtue (*Cyr.* 8.7). Herodotus' Cyrus dies in an expansionist war against the Massagetae in the north of his kingdom, urged on by his unbounded successes and a birth that seemed 'more than human' (1.204).<sup>80</sup> Since Cyrus' death is not reported in any Biblical narrative, both versions lay open to the humanist historian, though Herodotus' was by far better known.<sup>81</sup> The Bible did, of course, mention Cyrus, and particularly influential on Chytraeus was God's proclamation that Cyrus was his anointed and chosen ruler (cited repeatedly by Chytraeus).<sup>82</sup>

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure ... Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of

(Renaissance Society of America, Berlin, 26th March 2015) have demonstrated. Poggio Bracciolini and his correspondents had exercised themselves about this very topic—although Poggio, writing before Valla's translation of Herodotus was in circulation, describes Cyrus' violent death in the campaign against the Massagetae as the account of Justin/Pompeius Trogus (see below, n. 81). This strongly suggests that he never turned his (self-avowedly basic) knowledge of Greek on Herodotus' *Histories*. Puzzlement at the conflicting versions continued throughout the quattrocento as well as in 16th-century France, with commentators generally explaining the divergence either by Herodotus' mendacity or by the exemplary (and thus fictive) nature of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (the explanation proffered by Poggio citing Cicero's famous judgement in *Q. Fr.* 1.23). See Harth (1987) III.135–6 (to Lionello Achrocamur, summer 1451) and 225 (to Alberto Pisari, Florence 25th June 1454). I thank Keith Sidwell for making me aware of these passages.

<sup>80</sup> For comparisons of Cyrus' death in Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon see Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2010).

<sup>81</sup> The outlines of the Herodotean version are followed in Lucian *Charon* 10–13, Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus (1.8), and Orosius' *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* (2.7).

<sup>82</sup> Isaiah 44:28–45:4 (cited from the KJV); Chytraeus cites extracts from this prophecy three times (from the Latin of the Vulgate): (1601) 48–9, 170–1, 200; Melanchthon refers to but does not cite the prophecy in the *Chronicon Carionis* (see n. 84).

kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut ... I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron ... and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which called thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

To the eye of the Lutheran theologian Isaiah's prophecy proclaimed Cyrus ruler of the second of the world's four Monarchies, divinely appointed to lead the Jews and God's true Church back from captivity in Babylon. Faced with the contrasting narratives of Herodotus and Xenophon, Melanchthon had acknowledged both in his final revision of the *Chronicon Carionis*,<sup>83</sup> and ingeniously used the Herodotean version—in which Cyrus dies while prosecuting an unnecessary and thus unjust war—to warn the virtuous against complacency: 'Not only the impious and those who commit injustice, like Pharaoh, Saul, and countless others have to fear an adverse fate. Even the elect, when they reach their peak, must do so, particularly if they are indolent ...'. Cyrus might have been a member of God's true Church (taught by the prophet Daniel) and an inheritor of eternal life, but he was not immune from human infirmity or divine punishment.<sup>84</sup>

Although Chytraeus does, on several occasions, repeat Melanchthon's moralising treatment of the Herodotean

<sup>83</sup> A 1532 German edition of the *Chronicon Carionis*, by contrast seems to have mentioned neither the contradiction, nor the negative Herodotean version, cf. Lotito (2011) 179. For the publication history of the *Chronicon Carionis*—the *Corpus Reformatorum* only produces part of the Melanchthon's final revision of the Latin text—see Lotito (2011), esp. 28–32.

<sup>84</sup> CR xii 783–4: 'Et fieri potest, ut Cyrus Deum recte invocaverit, et fuerit verae Ecclesiae membrum, ac haeres vitae aeternae, didicerat enim a Daniele veram doctrinam, tamen ut Iosias moto non necessario bello, cladem acceperit, et inter exempla propositus sit, quae monent, non solum impios et iniusta moventes, a Deo everti, ut Pharaonem, Saulem, et alios innumerabiles, sed etiam electis, cum in fastigium venerunt, metuendos esse adversos casus, praesertim si fiant segniore ...'.

version,<sup>85</sup> he shows a marked preference for Xenophon's idealised vision of Cyrus and, in the fashion of his day, he solved the problem by a piece of ingenious genealogising, proposing a case of mistaken identity. Xenophon, he argued, recounts the true story of the death of 'Cyrus the Persian' (i.e. Cyrus the Great, God's anointed ruler), whereas Herodotus' *Histories* preserved the death story of 'Cyrus the Mede'—brother and successor to 'Darius the Mede' (the otherwise unknown figure who appears in Daniel 6–11)<sup>86</sup> and brother to Mandane (mother of Cyrus the Persian, Hdt. 1.108–21). Herodotus, confused by the similarity of name, had innocently attached a story about Cyrus the Mede to his nephew, Cyrus the Persian. Chytraeus elaborates this theory several times and illustrates it with a genealogical table.<sup>87</sup> Given its absence from the *Chronicon Carionis* and Chytraeus' fondness for genealogy,<sup>88</sup> it seems likely that it is of his own devising, motivated by a desire to keep Cyrus as a positive exemplar and preserve his pristine presentation in the Bible without discrediting the basic reliability of Herodotus.

In his treatment of Xerxes, Chytraeus follows Melanchthon more closely: Xerxes is both an example of the fragility of human affairs and temporal power and an example of the punishments which God gives to those who 'wage unnecessary war' convinced of their own wisdom and power. Artabanus' comments on God's punishment of those who 'think big' (7.10ε) are cited approvingly, next to Chytraeus' own conclusions: 'God, in a sudden moment, is

<sup>85</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 199–200 (*ad* 1.204.2): 'πολλὰ γὰρ μὴν καὶ μεγάλα] Causæ interitus CYRI. Res secundæ etiam sapientum animos fatigant, ac insolentes reddunt. Superbia verò and ὕβρις καὶ μαγνητας [*sic*] ἀπόλεσε καὶ Κολοφῶνα [= Thgn. 1103]. Odit enim and punit DEVS omne superbum'; cf. (1601) 50. The Theognis quotation was a favourite of Melanchthon, CR xii 712–13; xxiv 343.

<sup>86</sup> For an overview of attempts to reconcile 'Darius the Mede' with the historical record, see Collins (1994) 30–2.

<sup>87</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 50, 203–4.

<sup>88</sup> On the contemporary interest in genealogy see Grafton (2006) 150–63.

capable of destroying the greatest power, and hates the arrogant and the meddling.’<sup>89</sup> Chytraeus, like Melanchthon, offers the reader no aid on how to reconcile Xerxes’ status as a negative *exemplum* of arrogance and bellicosity with the rest of the Herodotean narrative in which Xerxes repents, changes his mind, and is forced to go to war by a divine dream. But Chytraeus, like most scholars who followed him over the subsequent centuries, did not allow the intransigence of the text to prevent him from making the centre-piece of the morality play Xerxes’ refusal to heed advice and abandon the war. Nowhere in his *argumentum* for Book 7 or in his commentary does Chytraeus discuss Xerxes’ dreams. It would be left to scholars of the nineteenth century and beyond to reconcile such attitudes about Herodotus’ theological beliefs and moralising agenda with the attention to textual detail that the academic establishment increasingly demanded.<sup>90</sup>

In evaluating Chytraeus’ work on Herodotus, it is important to note that he does, at times, distinguish in principle between stories which are worthy of *historical* credence and stories which are of *didactic* worth. In his brief discussion of Xenophon in the *De lectione Historiarum*, Chytraeus repeats the Ciceronian judgement that Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* is not of value for its faithfulness to history (*ad historiae fidem*), but as a form of teaching (*forma institutionis*).<sup>91</sup> If this distinction is absent from most of Chytraeus’ work on Herodotus, this is not because he was

<sup>89</sup> Chytraeus (1601 [= the 1561 *Argumentum* for Book 7]) 234–5: ‘Nemo fiduciâ propriæ sapientiæ aut potentiæ res periculosas, aut non necessarias suscipiat. Nam Deus, subito momento, summam potentiam euertere potest, & omnes superbos ac πολυπράγμονας odit, φιλέει ὁ θεὸς τὰ υπερέχοντα κολούειν ... Insigne exemplum fragilitatis maximæ potentiæ & omniam rerum humanarum, in toto hoc Xerxis bello propositum est ...’.

<sup>90</sup> For recent attempts see above, n. 31 and, for the 19th century, Ellis (forthcoming, a).

<sup>91</sup> Chytraeus (1579) 473: ‘Cyri maioris παιδείαν, non ad historiae fidem, sed velut formam institutionis, & imaginem boni Principis quem nihil à patre bono differre ait, sapientissimè expressit’ (citing Cic. *Q. fr.* 1.23).

incapable of countenancing the idea that some ancient accounts might be less suited to his purposes than others. In fact, Chytraeus' near total silence about aspects of Herodotus which did not fit his didactic agenda must have been a studied position. The books and linguistic skills necessary to read Greek history had only begun to filter into Germany in the late fifteenth century, and they had been strongly opposed by the theological and philosophical establishment, which perceived that it was being rapidly disenfranchised by a generation of scholars who could appeal to a set of authoritative sources that their elders could not read.<sup>92</sup> The community of Lutheran theologians who sat at the centre of the growing religious, political, and military community of the Reformation held many of the keys to this ever-increasing body of authoritative knowledge. The democratisation of knowledge—both biblical and historical—was a key ideological component of the Reformation, and it was thus essential that it was the *right* knowledge that was available. As the local guardians of letters and educators of successive generations, Melanchthon and his students applied themselves with zeal to crafting a vision of a history that would suit their rhetorical goals. They fed all texts—sacred and profane alike—through the formidable Melanchthonian moralising mill to produce a single, sequential, and uniform narrative of the past that served contemporary ideological needs.

Although Chytraeus and, to a lesser extent, Melanchthon give a great deal of attention to Herodotus—both as the first pagan historian whose narrative intersected with the Bible and because many of his stories lent themselves to moralising interpretation—this cannot be seen in isolation from the wider picture. Biblical narratives, too, were subjected to the same selective exegesis. Few lessons are drawn about God's nature or how humans ought to behave from the numerous biblical passages that

<sup>92</sup> See further Pohlke (1997) 45–6; Kluge (1934) 12–14; for similar conflicts in France see Stevens (1950) 116–17, who discusses various apologetic arguments offered for Hellenic study in the early French Renaissance.

defy a simple moralising analysis. The plague God sends to Pharaoh in punishment for taking Sarai into his palace—after she claimed that Abram was her brother rather than her husband (Gen. 12:11–20)—is one of many such complex stories to go unmentioned in Melanchthon’s discussion of biblical history, presumably because such passages—like the majority of sacred and profane literature—are less than ideal pedagogical tools.<sup>93</sup> Likewise, little is said of the undeserved sufferings which the Devil inflicts on Job (and his family) with God’s consent. The moralising exegetes of the Reformation were doubtless capable of smoothing the rough edges of these stories to their own satisfaction, but Chytraeus and Melanchthon do not waste space by complicating the picture any more than is strictly necessary: inconvenient details are omitted from the Bible as readily as they are from Herodotus.

Comparison with Thucydidean scholarship is, once again, illustrative. Chytraeus’ general prefatory comments about Thucydides are, in places, identical to those on Herodotus and diverge strikingly with judgements on Thucydides today. Thucydides, Chytraeus writes, is to be praised for his *exempla* and *sententiae*, which illustrate moral rules more effectively than the bare precepts themselves;<sup>94</sup> the whole Peloponnesian War is an admonition against ‘unnecessary wars’, as well as a sign of God’s anger and punishment of covetousness and crimes, and the work as a whole offers numerous rules which show how to live correctly.<sup>95</sup> In Chytraeus’ close analysis of the individual

<sup>93</sup> Note also God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, for which Pharaoh is then punished, at Ex. 7:1–5. Chytraeus briefly mentions the punishment of Pharaoh as an *exemplum* of God’s anger at (1601) 3. Melanchthon uses Pharaoh as an *exemplum* of an unjust man at CR xii 783–4.

<sup>94</sup> Chytraeus (1579) 543: ‘Thucydides non orationibus tuantummodò and sententijs gravissimis, verùm etiam insignibus consiliorum ac eventuum exemplis illustrat. Quæ multò effacius, quàm nuda præcepta, hominum animos ad omnem posteritate movent & percellunt.’ Compare Chytraeus’ statements on Herodotus (nearly identical at points) cited above, n. 5.

<sup>95</sup> See Chytraeus (1579) 544 (= ‘444’).

books, however, we see a different reading of Thucydides emerge, undoubtedly in response to the different nature of the text. Here the historian's usefulness is said to derive primarily from his political savvy, theological opinions come to the fore less frequently, and comparatively few attempts are made to link the subject matter and chronology to the Bible.

Chytraeus, then, clearly reveals his desire to use Thucydides and Herodotus to teach precisely the same morals and themes, but the differences between the two authors (and the critical traditions attached to each) to a large degree determine the nature of his treatment. Comparison with Thucydides, then, reveals why Herodotus held a special place in the hearts of Lutheran commentators: he stood at the juncture of Sacred and Profane history, his work was strewn with explicitly theological and moral content that could be relatively easily manipulated to serve a new didactic purpose, and his *Histories* could act (in carefully delineated ways) as a supplement to gaps in Biblical history.

The preceding pages have explored the use made of Herodotus by the school of theologians educated by Melanchthon in Wittenberg in the early years of the Reformation, a group which wrote and lectured widely throughout Protestant Germany in the late sixteenth century, and went on to have a disproportionate impact on the scholarship and educational institutions of the following centuries. The final part of this article will look at the reception of Herodotus over a similar period in a quite different intellectual milieu, that of mid- to late-sixteenth-century Paris and Geneva, where another adherent of the reformed faith, Henri Estienne, turned his hand to similar topics with quite different results.

### **III. Henri Estienne and the Christian Piety of Herodotus**

In 1566 Henri Estienne, the prolific scholar and publisher, produced two polemical tracts on Herodotus: a Latin

*Apologia pro Herodoto*, which he prefaced to his revised edition of Valla's Latin translation,<sup>96</sup> and a much longer French satire full of anti-Catholic polemic, commonly known as the *Apologie pour Hérodote*, that (on one account) had Estienne burnt in effigy in Paris while he hid in the mountains.<sup>97</sup> Estienne was writing four years after the end of Chytraeus' Herodotean lectures, three years after the publication of Chytraeus' *De lectione historiarum recte instituenda*, and six years before the massacre of Protestants on St Bartholomew's Day 1572.

Melanchthon and Chytraeus had, as we have seen, produced a corpus of didactic texts that passed over hermeneutic difficulties, typically eschewed close readings, and drove their message home by repetition and consistency. The opening pages of Estienne's *Apologia* present their author in an altogether different light. Estienne poses as an urbane commentator aware of the controversies surrounding Herodotus, keen to pursue a middle path between those who revere the ancients with a superstitious devotion and those who attempt to deprive them of their due credit.<sup>98</sup> Estienne thus positions himself between the two rhetorical poles of the debate that would (in later manifestations) become known as the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Although his claim to be a balanced commentator is undermined by his consistently apologetic tone, his posturing points to an important difference with Lutheran humanists: in place of—if occasionally alongside—dogmatism and simplification, Estienne uses argument and counter-argument, anticipating his reader's objections rather than their unquestioning acceptance.

<sup>96</sup> Estienne (1566a) \*\*iiii<sup>r</sup>–\*\*\*iiii<sup>v</sup>; I cite the *Apologia* from Kramer's edition (1980).

<sup>97</sup> Estienne (1566b). For discussion of the relationship between the two see Kramer's introduction to Estienne (1980), esp. vii–x. On Estienne's burning in effigy and associated witticism (Estienne apparently said 'se nunquam magis riguisse quam cum Parisiis ustularetur') see Greswel (1833) 223–4, who finds no early authority for the story.

<sup>98</sup> Estienne (1980) 2.

Estienne's audience, of course, was not composed of the children who arrived at Lutheran universities but the learned minds of the Republic of Letters. As with Joachim Camerarius' *Proæmium* to his 1541 edition of Herodotus, the critic Estienne is most concerned to answer is Plutarch, whose polemical pamphlet *On the Malignity of Herodotus* (*De Herodoti malignitate*) was well known to contemporaries.<sup>99</sup>

Camerarius' *Preface* had attempted (with limited persuasiveness) to deflect the charge of sacrilege—*sacrilegus* as he translates Plutarch's βλασφημία—which Plutarch (following in a long Platonic tradition) had leveled against Herodotus for representing god as *phthoneros* ('grudging', 'envious') in the dialogue between Solon and Croesus (1.32.1).<sup>100</sup> Estienne's *Apologia* is formally structured as a series of examples of Herodotus' 'love of truth' (φιλαλήθεια), but he includes extensive arguments for Herodotus' piety as further evidence of his honesty. If Herodotus was so pious, Estienne asks leadingly, why should he intentionally and gratuitously mislead his readers?<sup>101</sup>

Estienne's professed goal was not, therefore, that of Chytraeus and Melanchthon, to demonstrate that reading the *Histories* could be beneficial to the education of a Christian—though he would doubtless have endorsed that conclusion—nor was it to argue that Herodotus was part of God's plan to provide a continuous documentation of the history of the world, nor that his narrative illustrated the

<sup>99</sup> Although not named until almost half way through the *Proæmium*, Plutarch lurks behind the critics Camerarius mentions early on, who accuse Herodotus of 'malignity', see Camerarius (1541) 2<sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>r-v</sup>. Estienne mentions Plutarch several times, but never explicitly names him as a critic of Herodotus. Plutarch's popularity, Estienne's wide reading, and his knowledge of Camerarius' *Proæmium*—which he would later prefix to his own Greek edition of Herodotus (1570)—make it inconceivable that he was not fully aware of Plutarch's *De Herodoti malignitate*. Estienne's omission of divine *phthonos* (below, n. 104) further confirms this conclusion.

<sup>100</sup> Camerarius (1541) 5<sup>r-v</sup>; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 857F–858A. For Platonic criticisms of divine *phthonos* see, e.g. *Timæus* 29e and ch. 1 in this volume, pp. 19–21.

<sup>101</sup> Estienne (1980) 30.

biblical Decalogue. It was an altogether more ambitious and personal one than his contemporaries in Wittenberg and Rostock attempted: to demonstrate that Herodotus was himself pious in a manner that cohered with Christian conceptions of god, morality, predestination, and divine providence. This might seem a forbidding task, but Estienne's near-exhaustive knowledge of the *Histories* enabled him to make a powerful case, which he structured—after the manner of his day—around an exhibition of the most laudable sayings (*sententiae* or γνῶμαι) he could cull from the work.

Estienne begins with Herodotus' statement on the 'foresight of the divine' (3.108). This, like many Herodotean *sententiae*.<sup>102</sup>

show[s] Herodotus to be gifted with as much piety as can occur in a man ignorant of the Christian religion; in truth, they show that he thought the same things about divine power and divine providence which it is right and fitting for a Christian to think.

After this, Estienne then gives a lengthy citation of Artabanus' comments in the Persian War Council (translating 7.10ε), including his statements that 'god loves to abase whatever stands out the highest' and god's refusal to let any but himself 'think big'.<sup>103</sup> Presumably so as to avoid

<sup>102</sup> Estienne (1980) 18: 'Multae enim sententiae siue γνῶμαι ... tanta illum pietate praeditum fuisse testantur quanta in hominem Christianae religionis ignarum cadere potest: imò verò ea de diuina potentia prouidentiaque sensisse quae Christianum sentire et deceat et oporteat. Huiusmodi sunt haec in Thalia: ...' (cites Hdt. 3.108).

<sup>103</sup> Here, as in the next section, it may not be superfluous to draw attention to the motto of the Estienne press from 1526–78: *noli altum sapere* (see further below, n. 125, and Floridi (1992)). Estienne, like all Hellenists worth their salt, knew that the phrase from Paul *Rom.* 11.20 (μὴ ὑψηλοφρονεῖ ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ) was a warning against *pride* and *arrogance* (Henri himself is reported to have suggested the translation 'ne elato sis animo': see Floridi (1992) 145–6). The resonance of this with the Herodotean caution against *μέγα φρονέειν* would have been obvious to most well-educated humanists.

getting bogged down in unnecessary complications Estienne edits his Latin translation here to omit a clause that would cause later commentators as much difficulty as it had already caused Camerarius, namely Artabanus' statement that greater armies are defeated by smaller ones 'whenever God, feeling *phthonos* ('envy', 'jealousy', or 'resentment'), casts down fear or thunder, by which they are destroyed in a manner unworthy of themselves'.<sup>104</sup> Omission and silence were, in fact, the most common response among the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers when confronted with the disquieting notion of divine 'envy' or 'jealousy' (*invidia/φθόνος*) in classical Greek literature.<sup>105</sup> In following this general trend Estienne neatly sidestepped divine *phthonos* and the awkward notion that God might destroy people in an 'unworthy' manner.

After adducing parallels from Hesiod (*Op.* 5–8) and Horace (*Carm.* 1.34.12–14) that (like Herodotus' Artabanus) proclaim the omnipotence of God, Estienne showcases Herodotus' *exempla* and *sententiae* on divine punishment. He cites Herodotus' comments on the terrible death of Pheretime, eaten alive by maggots as a testament to the gods' abomination of excessively harsh (human) punishments (4.205),<sup>106</sup> and lays special emphasis on the

<sup>104</sup> Estienne (1980) 18. The omitted Greek clause runs: ἐπεάν σφι ὁ θεὸς φθονήσας φόβον ἐμβάλη ἢ βροντήν, δι' ὧν ἐφθάρησαν ἀναξίως ἑωυτῶν.

<sup>105</sup> For discussion of examples from Naucler's Latin paraphrasing of Valla, Hieronymus Boner's 1535 German translation, and B. R.'s 1584 English translation, see Ellis (forthcoming, a), which attempts a more general examination of attempts between the Renaissance and the present to reconcile divine *phthonos* with a providential, just, and benevolent theology. For Camerarius in particular see Ellis (forthcoming, b). In the 16th century, however, perceptions of *phthonos* were dominated by the highly negative description of the emotion in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1386b16–20, echoed throughout classical literature), and most scholars were well aware that the notion of divine *phthonos* had been unanimously condemned as impious by all Christian authorities from the early Fathers through to Aquinas, following Plato's comments at *Tim.* 29e; further, ch. 1 in this volume, pp. 19–21.

<sup>106</sup> Herodotus observes that 'excessively harsh punishments are *epiphthonos* (abominable) to the gods', a statement which contains the

eye-for-an-eye revenge taken by the eunuch Hermotimus upon the man who castrated him before selling him into slavery. Estienne particularly approves of Hermotimus' accusatory speech before he forces his enemy to castrate his four sons and then forces them, in turn, to castrate their father (8.105–6):

Did you think that you would escape the notice of the gods, when you did this? Using just law the gods brought you, the perpetrator of these unholy deeds, into my hands, so that you will find no fault with the justice I shall exact.

'Is any of what we read here', Estienne asks, 'unworthy of a Christian mouth, if we only change the plural number of gods into the singular?'<sup>107</sup> He then moves on to Herodotus' much-lauded comment on the destruction of Troy (2.120.5) and a wealth of other examples and professions of divine punishment to be found in the *Histories*.<sup>108</sup>

Estienne then considers Herodotus' belief in predestination, citing many instances in which the narrator states that 'it was necessary' that something should happen.<sup>109</sup> Today prevailing scholarly opinion links Herodotus' talk of 'what must happen' (with *δεῖ* or *χρῆ*) to *moira* (one's 'portion', or 'fate') or the *Moirai* ('fates')

*phthon-* root (associated with envy/jealousy/resentment), and which Estienne ((1980) 22) does this time translate directly: 'Nempe homines tam atrocibus vindictis inuidiam sibi apud deos conflant'.

<sup>107</sup> Estienne (1980) 22: 'Quid quaeso hinc legimus quod ore Christiano sonari non meretur, si tantum pluralem deorum numerum in singularem vertamus?'

<sup>108</sup> Estienne (1980) 22, citing: 3.126.1 (the *tisies* of Polycrates come upon Oroites); 6.72.1 (the *tisis* given to Demaratus); 6.84.3 (the *tisis* paid by Cleomenes to Demaratus); 9.64.1 (the *diké* paid by Mardonios for the death of Leonidas), 7.134.1 and 7.137.2 (the *ménis* of Talthybius which falls upon the Spartan messengers).

<sup>109</sup> Estienne (1980) 26, citing: 1.8.2 ('it was necessary for Candaules to end badly'); 9.109.2; 5.33; 5.92δ.1; 6.135.3; 9.15.4; 9.16.2–5. Estienne also suggests that Herodotus is the source of Livy's statements on divine necessity (Livy 1.4.1).

mentioned in the Delphic oracle given to Croesus, where Apollo proclaims: ‘Even for a god it is impossible to change predestined fate’ (1.91).<sup>110</sup> Estienne, by contrast interprets ‘what must happen’ as a reference to God’s providentially determined fate, and to support this interpretation he cites the conversation reported by Thersander on the eve of the battle of Plataea in which an anonymous Persian talks about ‘what must come *from god*’ (9.16).<sup>111</sup> Estienne thereby demonstrates that ‘what must come’ is, in Herodotus’ language, merely a shorthand for ‘what must come from God’. By joining the dots in this neat but selective fashion, the humanist was able to claim that the *Histories* is studded with the author’s professions of God’s providential predestination, a conclusion of obvious interest to a contemporary Calvinist.<sup>112</sup>

Though Estienne might have stopped at this stage—having argued his point through a clever if selective exposition—he goes a step further in a virtuoso display of rigour and considers a potential counter-argument:<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Thus several scholars today treat ‘what must happen’ as logically exclusive of divine action and consider the mix of ‘fatalistic’ and ‘divine’ causation a contradiction—see, e.g., Maddalena (1950) 65–7; Versnel (2011) 186.

<sup>111</sup> As I hope to argue elsewhere, Estienne’s decision to read ‘what must happen’ against the words of Thersander’s dinner companion at 9.16 is preferable to reading it against the oracle at 1.91, since the oracle does not use the words *δεῖ* or *χρή* and is written in a markedly different theological register from the rest of the narrative (reminiscent of the theological world of epic hexameter). Estienne, however, never discusses the oracle at 1.91 and suppresses the complication.

<sup>112</sup> For natural theology in Calvin’s writings—important background for Estienne’s claim that Herodotus agrees with Christian theology—see McNeill (1946) 179–82. For the theological ideas underlying Estienne’s *Apologie pour Herodote* see Boudou (2000) 478–88.

<sup>113</sup> Estienne (1980) 28: ‘Non quomodo (dicent nonnulli) huic quam praedicas pietati consentanea sit illa *τύχης* appellatio, quae quum apud vetustissimos scriptores rarò, apud Homerum autem nunquam reperitur, hic contrà illi euentus rerum imputat? Qui fortunam constituit, nonne is prouidentiam tollit?’

Is the piety which you have just mentioned—many will say—not somehow incompatible with the word ‘chance’ (τύχη) which, though it is rare amongst the oldest writers and never found in Homer, Herodotus often uses to explain the outcome of affairs? Surely he who elevates fortune (*fortuna*) destroys providence (*providentia*)?

Here Estienne meets his imagined critics on home ground. Estienne had long cultivated the humanist penchant for proverb collecting and in doing so accumulated not only a stock of comparative material in the form of Latin, Greek, and French proverbs, but also various exegetical approaches that he could deploy to great effect.<sup>114</sup>

Estienne’s response to this hypothetical attack is to argue that talk of ‘chance’ and ‘fate’ are not at all incompatible. Today the neatest route to this conclusion would seem to lie through the field of linguistic pragmatics,<sup>115</sup> and Estienne’s actual argument gestures in a similar direction by denying that τύχη has the ‘popular’ sense of ‘chance’ (*fortuna*) in these passages.<sup>116</sup> Herodotean ‘chance’ is not, he argues, opposed to God’s will, because Herodotus sometimes talks of ‘divine chance’ (θείη τύχη)<sup>117</sup> indicating that ‘chance’ is equivalent to ‘divine fate’ (θείη μοῖρα—Estienne’s phrase, not Herodotus’),<sup>118</sup> namely God’s providential will. To drive his point home, Estienne observes that the same phenomena are found in contemporary Christian proverbs like the French expression *C’est fortune: Dieu le ueult* (‘it’s fortune, God wills it’). Estienne was, in fact, particularly fond of noting parallels between the Ionic dialect of ancient Greek

<sup>114</sup> For Estienne’s collection, ordering, and publication of proverbs see Boudou (2005).

<sup>115</sup> I consider this approach—which contemporary Herodotean scholars have typically eschewed in recent decades—further in Ellis (2015).

<sup>116</sup> Estienne (1980) 26: ‘sed τύχην illis in locis vulgarem fortunae significationem habere nego.’

<sup>117</sup> Estienne (1980) 26, citing: 4.8.3 (θείη τύχη); 5.92.3 (θείη τύχη); and 9.91.1 (κατὰ συντυχίην, θεοῦ ποιῶντος).

<sup>118</sup> But compare, e.g. Pind. *Olymp.* 2.21: θεοῦ μοῖρα.

and French: his 1570 edition includes a list of *Ionismi Gallici, sive Ionici Gallicismi* ('Gallic Ionicisms, or Ionic Gallicisms') and in the *Apologia* (impelled by the similarity of these proverbs) he repeats one of his favourite claims: that the French language was descended from Greek.<sup>119</sup>

Estienne ends his discussion of Herodotus' religious and theological beliefs with a flash of characteristically grandiloquent rhetoric:<sup>120</sup>

In truth, when I consider the pious sayings of Herodotus which I have gathered ... a fear strikes my soul that, like that pagan lady the Queen of Sheba, Herodotus and with him other pagan authors ... should, on that final day of judgement, make the accusation that we, who have committed our name to Christ and accepted his name as our surname, frequently think and speak and write things in a more profane way.

Despite such rhetorical overstatements, Estienne's claims are accompanied by an impressively detailed knowledge of the text and a subtlety of argument which make the *Apologia* the first significant scholarly study of Herodotus' religious beliefs, which contains much of enduring value for Herodotus' readers.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> See Estienne (1565); cf. Boudou (2005) 166; Schleiner (2003) 753, 758.

<sup>120</sup> Estienne (1980) 30 (cf. 1 Kings 10): 'Verumenimvero quas hactenus recensui Herodoti pias sententias dum mecum reputo (vt tandem huic sermoni finem imponam) hic animum meum percellit metus, ne cum profana illa muliere regina Saba profanus Herodotus, et cum Herodoto caeteri profani scriptores quibuscunque adeo sacra dicta erupuerunt, nos in illo extremo iudicii die reos peragant, qui quum Christo, vnico verae religionis duci, nomen dederimus, et cognomen ab eo acceperimus, profanius plerunque et sentimus et loquimur et scribimus.'

<sup>121</sup> In noting the importance of context in the interpretation of contradictory proverbs and looking beyond the purely semantic meanings of words like *τύχη*, Estienne anticipates proverb research of the latter part of the twentieth century, which much scholarship on Greek religion has yet to take into account. I evaluate various

But Estienne's rhetorical goals take total priority over a balanced treatment: to a scholar who knew the *Histories* as well as Estienne, the *Apologia* is clearly selective in its quotations, omissions, and mistranslations, and set a precedent for Herodotus' Christianising interpreters during subsequent centuries.

#### IV. Isaac Casaubon Reading Herodotus

In the winter of 1601–2 Isaac Casaubon embarked on a series of lectures on Herodotus to a group of friends at his home in Paris. His diary entries suggest that the task caused him more vexation than pleasure, another in the endless line of Parisian distractions which conspired to keep him from his books and embroiled him in petty disputes.<sup>122</sup> The lectures were originally envisaged for six or seven friends but, once word got out, a multitude of eminent hearers poured in, resulting in the envy of his enemies, the kindly intervention of the king and, finally, Casaubon's voluntary decision to discontinue the lectures on the excuse of ill health.<sup>123</sup> Casaubon's diary records the popularity of the lectures and groans with regret at the loss of time for study:<sup>124</sup>

methodological approaches to the interpretation of Herodotus' proverbs in Ellis (2015). On contradictory proverbs see, e.g., Yankah (1984) 10–11; on the importance of context to their interpretation see, e.g., Siran (1993). In epigram CCXLII (= XX) of his *Premices* Estienne suggests that contradictory proverbs in fact refer to different situations: (1594) 207; cf. Boudou (2005) 170.

<sup>122</sup> For further discussion of Casaubon's reading habits and his convictions of the greater worthiness of reading the scriptures and church fathers see Grafton (1983) and Patison (1875) 54–6.

<sup>123</sup> See Casaubon's letter of 1602 to David Hoeschel (1566–1617), *Ep.* 294 in Janson (1709) 154–5.

<sup>124</sup> Casaubon (1850) I.374 ('Kal. Oct. Mane quod male haberemus e nocturna febris, quodque hodie privatas lectiones rogatu amicorum magnorum essemus aggressuri jacuerunt studia. Ergo incepimus, quod felix et faustum velit esse ὁ μέγας θεός. Γένοιτο, γένοιτο. Herodoti interpr. Hodie nisi ad Scaligerum excerpta nostra e Siculis fastis. Recepi 10 mensibus post'); 377; 394–5.

*Kal. Oct.:* Early today my studies lay abandoned, both because I was weak from a nocturnal fever and because I embarked on some private lessons at the request of some friends in high places. And so we begin, may the great God wish it to be happy and prosperous. May it come to pass, may it come to pass.

Lecturing on Herodotus. Today I sent to Scaliger my excerpts of the Sicilian *Fasti*. I received it 10 months ago.

*X. Kal. Nov.:* I taught a great number of preeminent men in my house today. Surely this benediction is yours, O Father. The honour and praise is yours eternally. Amen.

*IV. Eid. Jan.:* Look, I see that the lectures which I began at the request of my friends are a burden to me. That's all. I'm sorry I began them. But you, O God, be with me. Amen.

But if Casaubon was at best ambivalent towards the reality of lecturing on Herodotus amid the confessional and academic rivalries of Paris, the dense thicket of spidery writing covering the margins of Casaubon's copy of Herodotus' *Histories*—in the handsome Greek edition published in 1570 by his father-in-law, Henri Estienne—betrays an avid interest in the text itself, particularly in its theological aspects. It reveals that Casaubon continued the magpie-like reading habits of his predecessors. On the title page, to the left of the olive tree and words *noli altum sapere* (which served as the Estienne printer's mark for over four centuries),<sup>125</sup> Casaubon inscribed Herodotus' comment on

<sup>125</sup> As Jill Kraye has suggested to me, Casaubon's placement of this citation next to the motto of the Stephanus press—*noli altum sapere*—may be intentional. If so, the possible implications are several, as Casaubon may be linking Herodotus' comment on divine punishment (2.120.5) with the Latin of Jerome's Vulgate (*noli altum sapere*)—open to various readings from anti-intellectualism to anti-dogmatism: possibilities

the gods' punishment of Troy (2.120.5)—which had been admiringly cited before him by Regius, Chytraeus, Pezel, and Estienne—and like many of his predecessors he translated it into Christian idiom by making 'the gods' singular (see Fig. 2).<sup>126</sup> In the body of the text, next to the underlined passage itself, he jotted down a pithy laudation—*aurea sententia* ('a golden maxim').<sup>127</sup> This was imagery as scintillating as that used by David Chytraeus in his lectures four decades earlier in the winter of 1560: 'This saying is a rule for life, most useful for discipline and the correct governing of the morals, and an eternal tenet of divine justice. It shines out like a jewel from the second book of Herodotus'.<sup>128</sup>

On the 31st of December 1601 Casaubon ended the year with a thankful prayer to 'the most clement, mild, and well-disposed Lord' for the blessings with which he had showered Casaubon, his convalescing wife, and their new son, including Casaubon's successful studies and the

explored in Floridi (1992)—or alternatively with the Greek text of which Jerome's Vulgate is a hyper-literal translation: Paul *Rom.* 11:20 (μη ὑψηλοφρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ). Since Erasmus' *Novum instrumentum* (1516) it was well known to scholars that Jerome's translation was misleading, and humanists from Valla to Calvin and Henri Estienne himself had proposed alternative translations restoring the original exhortation against *arrogance* (see above, n. 103). Casaubon may, therefore, have been associating the Herodotean cautions against 'thinking big' or arrogance (e.g. 7.10ε) with his statement about divine punishment (2.120.5).

<sup>126</sup> Casaubon's title page reads '84: τῶν μεγάλων ἀμαρτημάτων μεγάλοι αἱ παρὰ θεοῦ τιμωρίαι' (the number refers to the page of the quotation). Chytraeus and Pezel had made precisely the same change (cf. above, nn. 43 and 46 and below, n. 128). On Casaubon's annotation practices, particularly on title pages, see Grafton and Weinberg (2011) 20–1.

<sup>127</sup> Casaubon (Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv.a.3.2) 84 (*ad* 2.120.5).

<sup>128</sup> Chytraeus (1601) 210–11: 'Regula vitæ, ad disciplinam ac mores rectè gubernandos utilissîma, & judicij divini norma immota, est hæc sententia, quæ in II. Herodoti libro velut gemma enitet: τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλοι εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, Atrocîa scelera atrocibus à D E O pœnis puniuntur.'

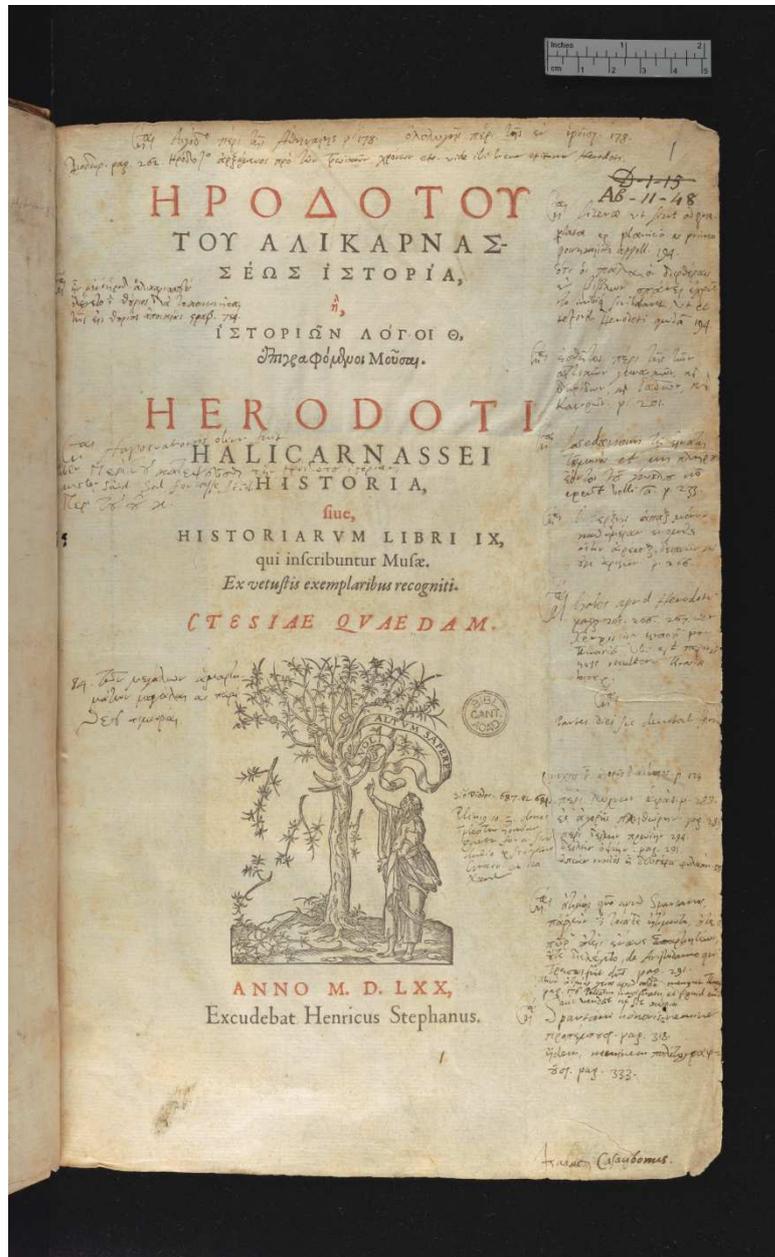


Fig. 2. Casaubon's copy of Herodotus' *Histories* (Title Page). Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv. a.3.2. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

generosity of king Henri IV.<sup>129</sup> His joy was to be short-lived. February brought news of the death of his sister Sara—the only comfort to his mother back home—and in April his nephew (‘*Petrus Chabaneus meus*’) contracted a sickness, and was to die in May. The diary entries of that winter and spring resound with prayers and lamentations:<sup>130</sup> ‘Most merciful Lord, be present with my mother and our whole family!’ ‘My studies lie abandoned, it pains me not. What pains me is the sickness of my dear Chabanes, who seems beyond hope.’ But Casaubon, who had left the Geneva of Beza and Calvin less than five years earlier and continued to suffer for his refusal to conform to the Catholic faith,<sup>131</sup> was not ignorant of the theological implications:<sup>132</sup>

XIII. *Kal. Mar.*: Eternal Lord, bring it about that I should be mindful of the punishment with which you

<sup>129</sup> ‘*clementissime, mitissime, benignissime Domine ... Regis illa liberalitas, O Deus, tota muneris est tui. Tu enim restrictiorem principis manum aperuisti ... Accessio si qua facta est studiis, quod nos putamus, id quoque muneris est tui. Jam quod infirmam uxorem et ex morbo decubentem ἐν ταῖς ὀδύσιν roborasti, ad εὐτοκίαν perduxisti, filiolo nos auxisti, omnes denique feliciter ac valentes annum exigere voluisti, quam ἀθρόα sunt hic beneficia tua!*’

<sup>130</sup> Casaubon (1850) I.397 (III *Kal. Feb.*), 417 (III *Eid. Apr.*); cf. 397: ‘*IV. Kal. Feb. ... Sed angit me quod me præcesseris, mea soror; quod tibi terras linquere meditati non adfuerim; quod tua morientis mandata non abs te acceperim; te denique non viderim, amplexibusque tuis non hæserim, et magnum tibi vale non dixerim.*’

<sup>131</sup> For a colourful narrative of the Fontainebleau conference, conditions at the University (from which Protestants were barred by statute), and the intense persecution Casaubon suffered for his Calvinism both personally (while growing up in Dauphiné) and as a citizen of Geneva while teaching at Calvin’s Academy, see Pattison (1875) *passim*, esp. 153–62, 175–89.

<sup>132</sup> Casaubon (1850) I.404: ‘*XIII. Kal. Mar. ... Fac etiam, Deus æterne, ut memor castigationis, qua nuper me et familiam hanc universam objurgasti, optimam sororem ad te evocans, animum tibi subjicere, et id semper velle quod vis tu, in dies magis magisque assuescam.*’ id. (1850) I.418: ‘*XVII. Kal. Mai. Æquum est, Pater, justum est; tua fiat voluntas, quam hodie fecisti, cum ad te vocasti Petrum Chabaneum τῆς μακαρίτιδος sororis meæ filium. Petrus Chabanei obitus die Lunæ ut vocant, hora tertia et dimidia.*’

recently scourged me and this whole family by calling my blessed sister unto you; subject my soul to you; and may I always want what you want, and become ever more accustomed to it as the days go by.

XVII. *Kal. Mai.*: It is fair, Father, it is just. May your will come to pass, which you wrought today, when you called Pierre Chabanes unto yourself, the son of my blessed sister.

That Casaubon should have met such personal tragedies head-on with professions of God's fairness and punitive justice attests the depth of his theological convictions. Casaubon's comments on the maxims he encountered in Herodotus that winter would seem to express a genuine delight in finding divine truths pithily expressed in the Greek language.

While reading the story of Glaucus—who asked the Delphic oracle whether he could break an oath to steal money entrusted to him—Casaubon underlined the oracle's response ('asking god about it and doing it are equivalent', 6.86). In his margin he wrote a judgement which recalls the writings of his father-in-law: *Christianam sententiam* ('a Christian opinion', see Fig. 3, lower right). In his commentary on the first book of the *Histories* Chytraeus had chosen this passage to illustrate the ninth and tenth commandments—prohibitions of coveting one's neighbour's possessions or wife: the Herodotean *sententia*, Chytraeus had argued, proved that God punishes not only human *actions* but also their desires and emotions.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Casaubon (Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv. a.3.2) 229 (p.231 in Casaubon's pagination); Chytraeus (1601) 32: 'Cum IX. & X. Præceptis, quæ non externa tantùm scelera, sed interiores etiam animi cupiditates & adfectus DEO displicere & prohiberi docent, congruit oraculi sententia in Erato, τὸ πειρῆσαι τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι, ἴσον δύναται. Tentare Deum tacita cogitatione aut conatu delicti, & FACERE, æquale peccatum est, & similem pœnam apud DEVM meretur. In maleficijs enim voluntas non exitus spectatur.'



cramped handwriting a famous quotation from the *Iliad*: ‘and God’s plan came to pass’ (Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή, *Il.* 1.5). No more than an interesting parallel, perhaps, but it is also suggestive of an attitude of pervasive theological syncretism towards Greek literature, which would also attribute to Homer a belief in providential predestination.

It is striking that Casaubon assiduously marks every statement that god is *phthoneros* (‘grudging’, ‘jealous’) in his text of Herodotus, both in Camerarius’ preface and in the Greek text itself (see, e.g., Fig. 4, middle left).<sup>134</sup> If Casaubon ever formed a certain opinion on whether divine *phthonos* was the blasphemy Plutarch claimed or could be reconciled with Estienne’s claims about Herodotus’ proto-Christian piety, it does not survive in the records I have seen,<sup>135</sup> but, as I have shown elsewhere, it is clear that he was fully aware of the theological problems raised by divine *phthonos*. In his copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum* he underlined the statement that ‘*phthonos* does not come from [above]’ (4.3), and his annotation links it to the Platonic criticisms discussed in the introduction to this volume (Casaubon writes ‘Plato *Tim.* 29e’ in the margin).<sup>136</sup>

Casaubon’s own notes from his lectures of 1601–2 contain an extensive defence of Herodotus against Plutarch’s attacks—also sketched out in the margins of his copy of Herodotus<sup>137</sup>—but they offer no discussion of the tricky question of divine *phthonos*, nor do they stray onto Herodotus’ religious or ethical material to make claims

<sup>134</sup> See Casaubon’s copy of Estienne (1570) (Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv. a.3.2) *ad* 1.32.1, 7.10e, 7.46. *Ad* 3.40 the margin contains a cross-reference to p. 8 (i.e. 1.32). Casaubon fails to mark only Themistocles’ statement that the gods ἐφθόνησαν (‘felt *phthonos*’) that Xerxes should rule Asia and Europe (8.109.2).

<sup>135</sup> I have not had an opportunity to consult the notes mentioned by Pattison (1875) 187 n. 41, apparently taken by two unidentified auditors of Casaubon’s Herodotus lectures, now held in the National Library, Paris (Shelfmark Latin 6252).

<sup>136</sup> See Grafton (1983) 81 n. 19; see Ellis (forthcoming, a); cf. Ch. 1 of this volume, pp. 19–21.

<sup>137</sup> Casaubon (Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv. a.3.2) on p. 24 of the introductory material.

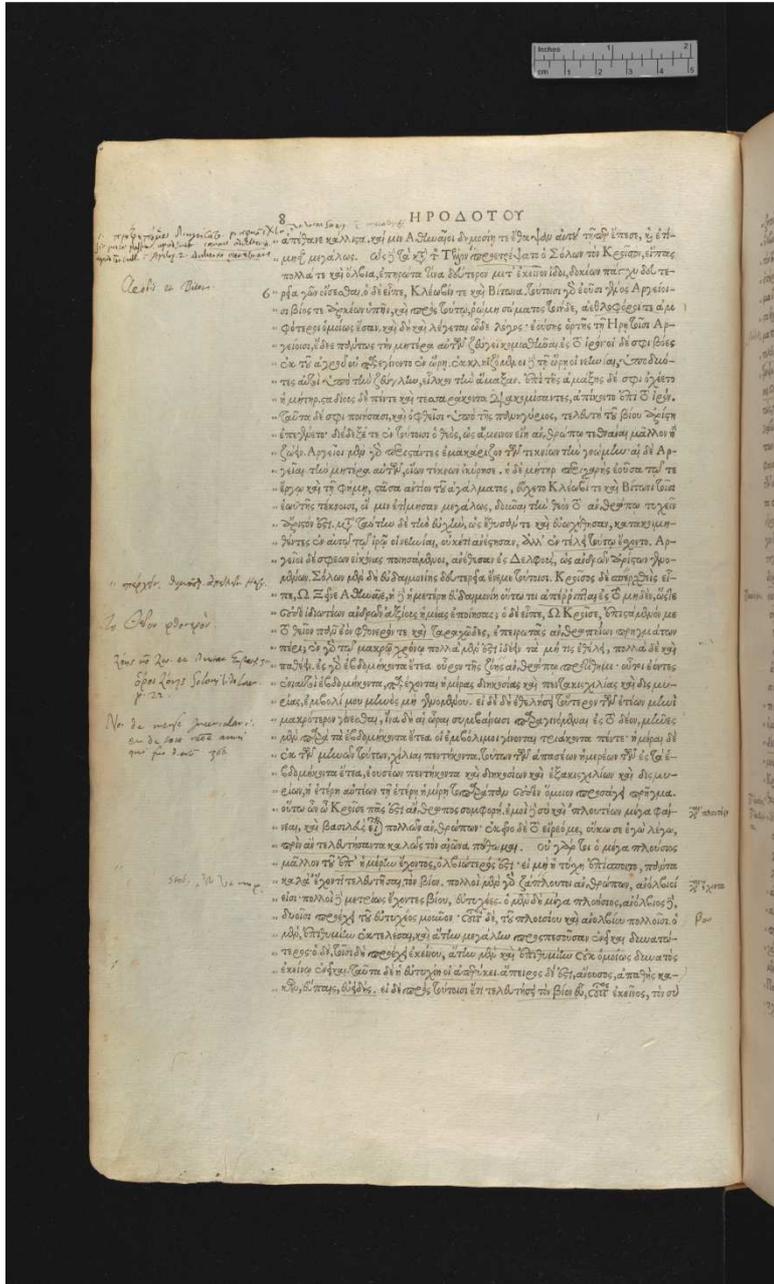


Fig. 4. Casaubon's copy of Herodotus' *Histories* (p. 8). Cam. Uni. Lib. Adv. a.3.2; Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

comparable to those that appear in the pedagogical or apologetic writings of Melanchthon, Chytraeus, Pezel, and Estienne.<sup>138</sup> Casaubon's pen does, however, reveal that he paid attention to other areas of the text that Herodotus' apologists typically ignored. He underlines large portions of the Delphic oracle at 1.91, including the stipulation that a 'god cannot change fate'—a statement earlier humanists like Erasmus had also found interesting enough to highlight and which Estienne, again, had not mentioned.<sup>139</sup>

Casaubon's scattered comments on Herodotus show, as we might expect, that the hallmarks of the humanist approach to a reading of the *Histories* were largely unchanged in the early seventeenth century. Casaubon might have disagreed with some of his predecessors on the pedagogical utility of negative *exempla*,<sup>140</sup> but he read the *Histories* with a keen eye for theological *sententiae* with a Christian ring, and his comments suggest (in so far as such brief annotations can) that his reading of Herodotean theology had much in common with that of his father-in-law, Henri Estienne. Yet the absence of any judgements on Herodotus' piety or theology in Casaubon's own lecture notes pulls in the opposite direction. In the context of Casaubon's hatred of the *dolus bonus* (little white lies told to

<sup>138</sup> Casaubon makes a self-conscious *praeteritio*, claiming that he will not meet each one of Plutarch's attacks, and instead dilates on the underlying cause of the attacks, namely Plutarch's excessive Hellenic patriotism, and his wounded Boeotian pride—the same rhetorical tactic Camerarius had used to defend Herodotus; cf. Casaubon (1601/2) 104<sup>v</sup>–105<sup>r</sup>, Camerarius (1541) 4<sup>v</sup>. A similar approach had been taken by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino in his *Apparatus ad omnium gentium historiam* (Venice, 1597), described in Longo (2012) 15–17. Casaubon would, however, later defend the metaphysical views of Polybius against the reproaches of the *Suda* (in a manner that recalls many aspects of Estienne's defence of Herodotus' piety) in a 1609 dedicatory letter to Henri IV, reprinted in Janson (1709) 74–5.

<sup>139</sup> See the marginalia in Erasmus' copy of Manutius' 1516 Greek edition of the *Histories* (ad 1.91 = Erasmus [Brit. Lib. C.45.k.6] 19). On Erasmus' two copies of Herodotus see Wilson (2015) xxiv n. 57 (with bibliography).

<sup>140</sup> Further Grafton (2006) 206.

further Christianity),<sup>141</sup> his vociferous defence of Polybius' religious views against the criticisms of the Suda,<sup>142</sup> and his assiduous underlining of problematic theological elements in Herodotus for which Estienne had been unable to account, it may be that Casaubon's silence over Herodotus' religious views in his lectures reflects his inability to present Herodotus' theological views both honestly and positively in what is, otherwise, a mini *apologia* for the *pater historiae*.<sup>143</sup>

### Conclusions

Taken as a whole the lectures, histories, advertisements, commentaries, and marginalia analysed in this article show that, during the sixteenth century, many readers engaged closely with Herodotus' ethical and theological content both on a personal and emotional level and on the level of rhetoric and pedagogy.

It is worth stressing that the differences between the approaches of Estienne and the Lutheran reformers are not the result of ignorance of one another's Herodotean endeavours, for these Protestant humanists read one another's works voraciously. Estienne had dedicated his edition of Pindar (1560) to Melanchthon, and in the dedicatory epistle Estienne basks in the reformer's 'paternal benevolence' towards him. Estienne's editions of Thucydides (1564) and Herodotus (1566) were dedicated to Joachim Camerarius and his Greek edition of Herodotus (1570) reprinted Camerarius' *Proæmium* to Herodotus. In

<sup>141</sup> Further Grafton and Weinberg (2011) 66 and n. 12.

<sup>142</sup> See his *Prefixa Commentariis in Polybium* (1600) in Janson (1709) 74–5, which recall Estienne's *Apologia pro Herodoto* to no small degree.

<sup>143</sup> The apologetic tone of the lecture notes is apparent from the start. Casaubon lauds the good taste of those who praise Herodotus (he lists Cicero, Quintilian, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Hermogenes, Longinus), then introduces Herodotus' detractors as envious of his glory ('non desuerunt qui tanto viro obstreperent & suam illi gloriam inuiderent') before listing and refuting their criticisms: (1601/2) 100<sup>r</sup>. Casaubon, like Camerarius before him, names Plutarch explicitly, and announces that he will 'respond', (1601/2) 101<sup>r</sup>.

1564 (in a dedication to Théodore Beza) Estienne described Camerarius and Melanchthon (who had died in 1560) as the ‘twin luminaries of Germany in our age’, and, in 1588, he printed an extract from Chytraeus’ *Chronologia historiae Thucydidis* in his second edition of Thucydides.<sup>144</sup> Given that Melanchthon and Estienne were correspondents there is no reason to suppose that Estienne’s familiarity with the works of the Lutheran reformers was one-sided—and indeed Camerarius dedicated his 1565 translation and commentary on selections of Thucydides to Estienne.

Yet, despite a close knowledge of one another’s works, the interests and goals of these scholars differed greatly. The requirements of Melanchthonian historiography caused Lutheran humanists to simplify Herodotean narratives to fit a model of exemplary history reminiscent of that favoured by ancient authors like Plutarch (who far outstripped Herodotus in popularity in the sixteenth century).<sup>145</sup> It is, moreover, striking that Camerarius’ defence of Herodotus in his *Proæmium* (1541) argues openly (against Plutarch) that the *Histories* was written according to the principles of exemplarity, while Melanchthon and his pupils write as if this point had never been in dispute. Estienne’s reading of Herodotus’ theology in the *Apologia* represents the first in a long line of works which would claim that Herodotus subscribed to a proto-Christian theology—a coherent belief in a just, all-powerful, providential divinity whose will was fate. Despite being the first substantial stone thrown in a debate that would last over three hundred years, the *Apologia* remains one of the most thorough and sophisticated examples, unsurpassed in several respects until the 20th century.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>144</sup> See Estienne (1560) 3–5; id. (1564) *ded. ep.*: ‘geminorum Germaniae nostro seculo luminum’; id. (1588) ggg iiiij<sup>r</sup> – vi<sup>r</sup>. The text of Estienne’s prefaces and dedications can be found reprinted in Kecskeméti, Boudou, and Cazes (2003) 58–9; 104–5; 116; 593.

<sup>145</sup> See Burke (1966) 135–9, 142–3.

<sup>146</sup> Comparable attempts are, e.g., De Jongh (1832), Baehr (1830/5) *ad* 3.108, Meuss (1888). An explicitly Christian attempt to claim Herodotus as proof of the efficacy of natural theology is Schuler (1869).

The attempt of the Wittenberg theologians to read Herodotus' *Histories* in moral and exemplary terms has proved yet more enduring. Much scholarship on Herodotus written in the last century attempts, like Herodotus' Renaissance readers, to divide the characters of the *Histories* into positive and negative exemplars which are rewarded or punished by the gods according to their merits and deserts.<sup>147</sup> Scholars who propose one or another structuralist dichotomy as the hermeneutic key to the *Histories* place themselves under similar interpretative pressures to those experienced by Melancthon and his successors, and they have inherited or independently alighted on many of the same tactics in order to deal with the textual difficulties.

But, as we have seen, Herodotus' text does not give the dogmatist an easy time. In a work as large and generically diverse as the *Histories*, such an approach necessarily involves drastic simplification—it denies the possibility of 'tragic' elements in the *Histories*, of characters who suffer arbitrarily, senselessly, or disproportionately, or of more troubling notions like divine hostility towards humanity. By watching Herodotus' early modern commentators attempt familiar exercises—like dismissing Herodotean complexities to present Croesus and Xerxes as wholly negative exemplars of bad kingship 'justly punished' for their expansionist mania—we gain a fresh perspective on the preoccupations, assumptions, and techniques of much more recent literary criticism.

The study of the rhetorical and didactic treatment of Herodotus in the Renaissance is, then, an exercise in hermeneutics as well as a significant chapter in the afterlife of the *pater historiae*. Observing Renaissance scholars appropriating Herodotus' text should encourage us to look more critically at the assumptions that underlie the way we, Herodotus' latest readers, approach the vast and complex work that stands at the beginning of the tradition of European historiography.

<sup>147</sup> In addition to recent literature discussed above (nn. 31 and 73) see, e.g., Van der Veen (1996). In recent years the structuralist tendencies of literary Herodotean scholarship have been challenged by, e.g., Pelling (1997); id. (2006); Baragwanath (2008).

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