

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

MEDIAEVAL AND EARLY MODERN READERS OF DARES PHRYGIUS

Frederic Clark, *The First Pagan Historian: The Fortunes of a Fraud from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xi + 355. Hardback, £47.99/\$74.00. ISBN 978-0-19-049230-4.

The *Destruction of Troy* (*De excidio Troiae historia*) is ascribed to Dares Phrygius, who is supposed to have lived at the time of the Trojan War and to have fought in it. This ascription is carried in a fictive prefatory letter purportedly addressed by Nepos to Sallust, in which Nepos claims to have discovered Dares while studying at Athens, and to have translated him faithfully and without beating about the bush (*vere et simpliciter*) into Latin, as a demonstration of the superiority of his contemporary testimony to that of Homer, who wrote much later. Trojans called Dares are mentioned by both Homer and Virgil, whether the same one as here or different ones; anyway, the text is a pseudepigraph, and it is rather odd that this (excellent) book does not seem to use the word at all. The first testimonium is in Isidore (d. 636), calling him the first pagan historian, in parallel to Moses, the first historian *apud nos* (*Etym.* 1.42.1). The text is conventionally dated to the fifth or sixth century (55) on the basis of its Latinity and possible echoes in Dracontius, but there are no secure *termini*; such a date would open the possibility of a Christian author (7). There may or may not have been a Greek version, or an earlier, fuller Latin version. Its most obvious comparison, Dictys' *Ephemeris Belli Troiani*, has an elaborate documentary fiction involving the rediscovery of a book in a grave and its translation from Phoenician letters into Greek; a third-century papyrus shows that in this case there was indeed a Greek version. There are references to pre-Homeric *Iliads* by Dares in (i) Aelian, *VH* 11.2 (claiming it was extant) and (ii) Photius' summary of Ptolemaeus Chennus (*Bibl.* 190, 147a26–9), but in either case the title *Iliad* implies a poem. The forty-four chapters of the text present an alternative and very revisionist narrative of the Trojan War, showing how its origins were imbricated in Greek misbehaviour (the abduction of Priam's sister Hesione), and ending with the sack of Troy as the result of Trojan treachery.

Dares in himself is nothing much. He is here, not for his own sake, but for what is at stake in his reception, which Clark succeeds in persuading us is very considerable indeed. There is an introduction, six chapters beginning with Isidore (but looking back to the text's fictive set-up and its possible literary context), and a conclusion which goes as far forward as Thomas Jefferson at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This in one sense is a *lot* for a classicist to take on board. Chapters 2 and 3 are a particularly tall order (Geoffrey of Monmouth and Geoffrey Chaucer are one thing, but what of those strays from *1066 And All That*, Fredegar and Frechulf; and then the Williams and Bernards, William of Malmesbury and William of Newburgh, Bernard of Chartres and pseudo-Bernardus Silvestris not to mention Bernard scribe of the Douai manuscript, a new name every two or three pages). On the other hand perhaps it is *precisely* a book a classicist should read. For the reception of this one, very particular, text is a clew through late antiquity, the mediaeval and early modern periods in respect of their basic understandings of what you did with the classical past, what uses you might put it to, and how you critiqued it. Some of these uses include universal history, antiquarian knowledge about Troy, genealogy, and exemplarity. It is mildly curious why it took so long to get beyond the exemplarity of goodness and evil and to cotton on to what seems so screamingly obvious to *us*, Dares' cynical *Realpolitik*. His interest for statecraft was noted by a certain John More in the late seventeenth century (301f.).

So Dares is a slender prop on which to rest a massive meditation on history, historiography, and antiquity. Cicero called history *lux veritatis* (*de Orat.* 2.9.36), a phrase which keeps coming up, as do other phrases about the truth of history, such as *historia veritatis* in the mediaeval poetic versions of Dares (Ch. 3). 'Nepos' himself, in his introduction, thematised truth in various ways (which witness was truer, *utrum magis vera existiment*, contemporary Dares or later Homer; the accuracy of his own translation of the Greek). But the presiding spirit of the book is never named in it. Who is he? He is the Pontius Pilate of St John's gospel, the one who asked more radically than any other pagan, 'What is truth?'. Pilate's tone is inscrutable, but his question appeared to be asking, not how to get at the truth, assuming we already know what it is, but what is it in the first place. This book circles and circles around many versions of truth (accuracy, authenticity, legitimacy; reason, revelation). Clark himself does not state the case in these terms, but simply for the purposes of organising a review I have separated out a few of the contexts in which the question arises. Other readers will doubtless find more.

Some were already formulated in antiquity. In the first place there was epistemology. From the point of view of the very accessibility of historical tradition, antiquity was problematic: some things were simply unknowable. Clark quotes Varro's threefold scheme of human time, the first period from

creation to cataclysm, which was ἄδηλον; the second to the first Olympiad, i.e., including Troy, which was μυθικόν, the third ἱστορικόν, because it began to be recorded in ‘true histories’ (*quia res in eo gestae veris historiis continentur*). From the point of view of authority and source-criticism, on the other hand, old witnesses were best. This was what Nepos’ letter implied (Dares’ contemporary version was *magis vera* than Homer’s), and this dogma lives into the Renaissance (223, 226). Forgers (since antiquity) and critics were working on the same principle, just on different divides of it: an old source was a good one. Style would come to be a determinant of quality (Dares was condemnable on the same grounds as the Donation of Constantine, for bad Latin), though it was possible to run into complications if stylistic merit ran up against demonstrable pseudonymity, as was the case with Dictys (282).

Bound up with this are the categories into which narrative was divided, the binary of truth and fiction, the ternary of veracious, fictive, and verisimilitudinous narratives (Quint. 2.4.2: *historia; fabula; argumentum*). The ancients formulated both schemes, and they proved very enduring, especially the simpler binary (177: the Sicilian scholar Faragonius was still contrasting *fabulae* with *historiae veritas* in 1498). Just what was it about *historia* that elicited credence? It was eye-witness testimony in the first place, source-citations in the second. Any half-competent forger knew to address that deep-seated concern for verifiability (already on display in the *Odyssey*), as Dares and Dictys both did (Dares, 12; Dictys, 1.13: Odysseus told me what I did not personally witness), and such demonstrations were still playing well, say, to John Dee well into the sixteenth century (203). *Fabula/μῦθος*, on the other hand, was associated with poetry. There was never a time when Homer had not been vulnerable to attack on the score of veracity (Stesichorus, F 192f.; Pind. *Nem.* 7.20–7), to which the response was that poetry was capable of carrying deeper or more capacious meanings—was, as Aristotle put it, more philosophical (*Poet.* 1451b5). It is not always the case that Dares comes thumping into this binary on the side of *historia*, as he did for Philip Sidney who, reviving Aristotle’s dogma, found his version ‘right’, but Virgil (whose presentation of Aeneas differed dramatically) more ‘doctrinable’ (213f.). For Clark shows how Dares had himself been poeticised and encumbered with gods and what-not, of which the original version was so pleased to be free.

So far these are old categories. They go back to antiquity, and are essentially just remixed into the early modern period, like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope. They make the assumption that once you have your sources you can go about subjecting them to criticism on the grounds of plausibility, one critic perhaps setting the bar higher than another, but all proceeding on the basis that there *was* an extractable truth to be prized from the barnacles that encrusted it. Paul Veyne (*Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*) is one presiding spirit in this book; Max Weber and his notion of ‘disenchantment’

is another (24). Clark's discussion is powerful. Weber meant it to describe the effect of the advent of science in the modern world. The ancient rationalisers proceeded in a disenchanted way, as if the barnacles that needed removing were those involving supernaturalism, leaving a pristine account that met the criteria of plausibility and possibility. Yet they were still in thrall to the idea of a truth that could be rendered pristine by wiping it clean of the daubs and smirches that befouled it. It took literally ages to get from that to the kind of critiques that *we* might mount against the historicity of the Trojan War (26: it never happened, it was myth or legend, the characters had no historical existence, one cannot retroject literacy, let alone the existence of the genre of *commentarii*, as far back as that), which rest on the idea of anachronism, of qualitative differences between time periods which are based on *more* than their relative degrees of knowability. Dares came in for severe debunking in the early modern period when he was exposed as a pseudepigraph. But even those critics who were, on stylistic grounds, disenchanted with him were *still* enchanted by antiquity to the extent that they thought that you could tweezer out the bad or rogue bits and be left with the truth. Clark's point—that there are different sorts of disenchantment—is profound. Our form of disenchantment with texts like Dares is not the same as the disenchantment of Scaliger and the critics who, for all their daring, still believed that ancient chronology was reconstructible, provided you purged it of unreliable witnesses (239f.). A step closer to *our* way of thinking is represented by Vico (327), who could begin to formulate the problem of anachronism in more fundamental terms. The Trojan War never happened; Homer was a primitive popular bard, not a philosopher or historian; modern critics construct ancient authors in their own image, which is a misconception and a fallacy.

Not exactly a *fil rouge*, but more like the intertwined strands of a double helix that runs through this book, are (i) the gravitational pull of the old, old opposition between *historia* and *fabula*, ever formulated and reformulated in different terms (336), and (ii) the category error, which takes these classifications but misprizes them. What mental categories do we apply to 'truth'? Dares committed the category error of trying to change *fabula* into *historia* (26), but in antiquity that was representative of a general critical tendency with the *Iliad* itself, where critics proceeded on the basis that the correct battleground (so to speak) was the extent to which it accurately represented the persons and events it portrayed, starting from the unchallenged assumption that it had a historical basis in the first place which was, in principle, accessible, provided you went about it in the right way. Conversely, mediaeval attempts to poeticise Dares, to remythologise him, and to make him carry explicitly moralising content (128f.), turned *historia* back into *fabula*. Then, with the advent of humanism, critiques of Dares made of him a forger, *falsarius*, a liar, impostor, which is not necessarily what his documentary fiction was setting

out to do in the first place at all. Revelling in its new-found power, this way of thinking simply drives a coach and horses through the various possible motivations for pseudepigraphy, for instance for the sake of membership of a philosophical coterie in the Hermetic corpus; for argumentative/propagandistic reasons in the Sibylline Oracles; in the case of Dares and Dictys, perhaps playful and ironic, although admittedly we are not sure of their motivations. More on this shortly.

Finally on truth, there is the very complicated matter of the relationship between pagan and Christian truth or truths. The point here is that Dares, in his small way, reflects some of the ways of negotiating their relationship. According to the macroscopic and accommodating version of the chronographers, he was the pagan answer to Moses, albeit later and vastly reduced. In the equally macroscopic world-view of the Middle Ages, he was often transmitted with other pagan or pseudo-pagan testimonia for universal history, enabled by the fact that he came to be encrusted with genealogical legend. He was at least on the fringes of the allegorising movement to extract Christian truths from pagan texts. He was grist to the mill of those who condemned pagan *fabulae* about the gods, because he apparently excluded them as well. He was one of the minor casualties of the war on fakes and forgeries which spilled over from the Christian to the classical canon. He was subjected to explicative attempts to make pagan texts reflect Judaeo-Christian truths (295f.), and to get Christian and pagan accounts good-naturedly to illustrate human universals, such as hospitality (320)—before Jean Hardouin came along and insisted that the pagan past should simply be appreciated on its own terms, for its alterity, instead of trying to force two uncongenial/incompatible yokefellows into harness together (324f.).

All of this is very far-reaching and profound about the way we conceptualise the past, but in a book about Dares is it, if not Hamlet without the prince, at least the Sack of Troy without Aeneas? Clark never sets his book out to be a literary study of Dares. Such discussions as there are are brief and agnostic (23: ‘the question of just how directly *Dares* can be traced back to this world [that of the Second Sophistic] is an open one’; 54: ‘we cannot be sure precisely from *what* world the Latin *Destruction of Troy* derived’; 334: ‘We still do not know’). Still, it is hard to avoid the question what its original author was up to in the first place. It is worth saying a little more about this because the enquiry raises questions that are germane to the book’s main arguments.

Does Dares belong with the Second Sophistic texts of Homeric criticism, Lucian’s *True Histories* and *Somnium*, Dio’s eleventh oration, Philostratus’ *Heroicus*? It seems to have several points of overlap. The first is pseudo-documentarism, including the remarkable detail in Isidore that the text was written *in foliis palmarum*, which recalls not only Dictys’ linden tablets but also the tablets of cypress wood (τὰς κυπαριττίνους δέλτους) in Diogenes’ novel *The*

Wonders Beyond Thule: where did Isidore get it from? Second is the inscenation of supposedly contemporary witness (Dares answers to Menelaus in Dio, *Or.* 11.38, Euphorbus in Lucian, Protesilaus in Philostratus), as opposed to the latecomer Homer (Dio, 92). Third is the exposition of an alternative narrative of the Trojan War that fastens on *Realpolitik*, particularly like Dio, in fact. Fourth is the implied flattery of the reader by means of the assumption of *paideia* and cultural competence. Should we be surprised that something *so very* second or third century was apparently written in the fifth or sixth? In other words what are the limits of the Second Sophistic? The edge is taken off the oddity to some extent by the fact that, although declamations generally concentrate on the classical period, Trojan War themes do still show up in those of the fourth-century Libanius (*Decl.* 3–4, purportedly the speeches of Menelaus and Odysseus as ambassadors in Troy), and Choricus, who lived in the reign of Anastasius I (d. AD 518), i.e., at precisely the right presumptive date. Choricus is interesting, because his speeches (*Decl.* 1–2) concern Achilles' love for Polyxena, which is important to both Dictys and Dares (ch. 27), and one of them pictures Priam arguing against marrying Polyxena off to a foreigner, precisely the argument Priam puts forward in Dares, ch. 27.

Still, it remains true that the revisionist historiographical project is better paralleled in the second and third century texts. There is nothing specifically Second Sophistic about the false ascription, but the question has been asked whether it was ever meant to be taken seriously, as opposed to being a wink to the cognoscenti who could appreciate a *rhetor's* clever play. Does the frame device even set it up as a kind of novel or historical fiction?¹ Of the extant novels that employ frames, as not all do, the documentary fiction (as opposed to ecphrasis) is not the preferred one, but a documentary fiction was employed, as we have seen, for at least one of the levels of narration in Diogenes' *Wonders Beyond Thule* (Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 166, 111b). A ludic motive is, briefly, suggested by Clark himself (27): 'It is possible that whoever wrote the *Destruction of Troy* meant to have a laugh not only at myth itself, but also at some of these hermeneutic strategies' (that is, using *historia* to attack *fabula*, a particularly subtle and subversive strategy if so). But if we do indulge ludic,

¹ The question is posed by R. I. Pervo, 'History Told by Losers: Dares and Dictys on the Trojan War', in S. R. Johnson, R. R. Dupertuis, and C. Shea, ed., *Reading and Teaching Ancient Fiction: Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman Narratives* (Atlanta, 2018) 123–36, at 130, in which case, if the answer is yes, the *entire* subsequent reception history of Dares is a category error. Pervo himself is inclined to think that neither Dares nor Dictys is trying to signal that they are fiction (133), although he is also inclined to characterise them as 'novels in journal form', like Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (136). Ultimately, and one must agree, pursuit of the answer to the question whether the authors *wanted* to be believed, in other words were preying on the gullible, is not very rewarding; 'attempts to read authors' minds or make definitive judgments about the critical skills of implied readers will not produce substantial advances in the study of ancient literature' (ibid.).

ironic, playful readings, they imply a sophistication of motive which *we* might be able to appreciate, but for which Clark's history of reading and reception draws a blank. On two or three occasions the book uses the interesting notion of reverse reception (126, 290, 305), whereby a text's *later* reception offers possible clues to its ancient one. But reverse reception is still a historical method; the ludic reading, in contrast, simply posits a trans-historical community of sophisticated minds.² There is an implicit to-ing and fro-ing throughout this book, perhaps through any study of reception, between methods which endlessly recycle and invert categories that are ultimately traceable back to antiquity itself (the weary old battle-ground of *historia* and *fabula*) and those which read in, presume, impose. This particular reading is compelling because it reflects us back to ourselves. It is another matter how well it will age. Our own methods need every bit as much critical distance as those studied here.

Before I conclude I want to press harder at another comparison which emerges from Clark's book. Within its time frame Dares crosses tracks with the Sibyl twice. Not that there was any intrinsic similarity between them, even *via* reverse reception. The first is a matter of what was foisted on Dares. After he had become the starting-point for Frankish genealogy the mediaeval taste for testimonia from classical antiquity led to his juxtaposition in many manuscripts with the Tiburtine Sibyl (118f.), two carriers of truths about *longue durée* history. The second is in respect of the critical methods to which they were subjected. Both, as we have seen, lost their credibility over the course of the seventeenth century, both were debunked as 'forgeries' even as the very different bases for the fiction was completely overlooked (233, 236f. and n. 60, 239; Scaliger alluded to Dares and Dictys in the vicinity of Hermes and the Sibyl). But I want to draw attention to a third and more interesting overlap, which is more fundamental to the argument of the book even though it falls outside its time-frame. That is the passage in the third Sibylline Oracle where the Sibyl takes Homer to task over the truth-value of his account (*Or. Sib.* 3.419–30). This particular oracle is generally thought to be the earliest in the collection, and to originate in Hellenistic Jewish circles; this part of it has been dated to between 146 and 84 BC.³ It has a number of remarkable affinities with Dares and the direction of his attack.

First, they are similar kinds of figure. The Sibylline passage obviously locates the prophetess at a time earlier than Homer, and she delivers *ex eventu* prophecies about the Trojan War (3.414–18). The local historian Apollodorus

² Another example: T. Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Cambridge, 2011) 87: 'It is unlikely that all ancient readers really believed that Dictys represented a transcription of a discovered manuscript, any more than modern readers of *The name of the rose* do'; nice, but where are these readers?

³ J. J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism* (Missoula, Mont., 1974) 27f.

of Erythrae (*FGrHist* 422 F 1, ap. Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.6.9) claimed that his local Sibyl uttered prophecies to the Greeks on their way to Ilium, so she was contemporary with the war.

Second, both the Sibyl and Dares picture Homer as a writer, not an oral poet (423: *γράφει τὰ κατ' Ἴλιον / ... quod ... scripserit*). Lucian, *VH* 2.24, also imagines him as a writer of books, but Homer the author as opposed to singer is a distinctly minority opinion in antiquity.⁴

Third, the accusation against him is framed in historiographical terms (419: *ψευδογράφος*; 423f.: *οὐ μὲν ἀληθῶς, | ἀλλὰ σοφῶς*).⁵

Fourth, though less straightforwardly, they both have problems about the way Homer represents gods interacting with men. ‘Nepos’ reports that the Athenians delivered a judgement (*iudicium*) that Homer was insane (*pro insano Homerus haberetur*) on the grounds that he represented gods fighting with men (*quod deos cum hominibus belligerasse scripserit*). The Sibyl, meanwhile, complained that Homer represented the gods ‘standing beside’ men, and adds as an additional swipe that the gods themselves are no more than empty-headed mortals (*μέροπας κενοκράνους*) themselves. It is hard here to draw the knot very tightly. Given that Dares’ complaint is located in Athens, it is reasonable to suspect the ultimate origin is in Plato’s take-down of Homer and poetry in general, even though Plato’s difficulty was the impropriety of the gods fighting with each other;⁶ Lucian, however, parallels Dares in extending the objections to god–men encounters (*Jup. Tragoed.* 40). The Sibyl’s verb *παρίστασθαι*, on the other hand, suggests the problem was the gods *helping* men (*Il.* 10.279,

⁴ Also found in some of the *Vitae* (A. Beecroft, ‘Blindness and Literacy in the *Lives* of Homer’, *CQ* 61 (2011) 1–18); they are obliged to weave around the problem of a literate but traditionally blind bard, a problem the Sibyl simply ignores and Dares does not confront. At a point where Nonnus is taking Homer to task, he refers to his text (42.181: *ἔψεύσατο βιβλος Ὀμήρου*), but without quite making Homer himself a writer.

⁵ What complicates this in the Sibyl is the apparent combination of lying with the charge of plagiarism (424). The two charges are associated with different Sibyls, lying with the Erythraean (*FGrHist* 422 F 1: *et Homerum mendacia scripturum*), plagiarism with the Delphic (Bocchus, in Solinus, 2.18; D.S. 4.66.6; H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London, 1988) 110), and this passage does seem to reflect the latter Sibyl’s claim that Helen would be brought up in Sparta to be the bane of Asia and Europe (414f.: ~ Paus. 10.12.2). 424 is certainly a charge that Homer appropriates the Sibyl’s metre, and 425 that he will read her books. *ἔπη*, plural, could refer to the type of verse (LSJ s.v. *ἔπος*, IV.a), but also to specific lines (ibid. c), which the Sibyl would be accusing the bard of appropriating (as in Diodorus, *πολλὰ τῶν ἑπῶν σφετερισάμενον κοσμησαι τὴν ἰδίαν ποίησιν*). It is true that *κρατήσει* is not as strident as Diodorus or Bocchus (*cuius plurimos versus operi suo Homerum inseruisse*). It could just mean that Homer demonstrated mastery of a verse-form, rather than that he stole particular content. But if it does mean the latter, the collision between the charges of falsehood and that of theft (what, then, of the Sibyl’s own truth-value?) has not been properly thought through.

⁶ *Rep.* 2.378b–d; also a problem for Dio, *Or.* 11.32, 106; Lucian, *Menipp.* 3.

290f.; 16.715; 17.338, al.), and her additional thrust about the mortal nature of the epic gods is typical sectarian stuff. Different Second Sophistic writers handle Homer's gods differently; Dio subjects them to the same kind of evidentiary critique which could equally be applied to the heroes (*Or.* 11.11–13, 17–24).⁷ Still, what Dares and the Sibyl have in common is that their problem is with divine–human interaction.

Maybe what we should be struck by here is not, or not only, the consanguinity of Dares with the Second Sophistic texts, but more that a Hellenistic Sibyl now seems to stand in the same company. Both Dares and the Sibyl are positioning themselves as contemporary to the Trojan War itself, as opposed to Homer who came later, and both are critiquing him on historiographical and theological grounds and *qua* writer rather than singer. As a fictive witness, the Sibyl, like Dares and Dio's Menelaus, is a faked contemporary whose testimonia has survived. Philostratus' Protesilaus and Lucian's Euphorbus are ghosts or reincarnations in the here and now, but there is a certain overlap with Protesilaus even so, who sometimes has an oracular and macroscopic quality.⁸ The Sibyl's opposition of truth and sophistry (423f.: οὐ μὲν ἀληθῶς, | ἀλλὰ σοφῶς) is rather close to Dio, *Or.* 11.4, where Homer has a reputation for being σοφόν, but what he has said about Troy is untrue (οὐκ ἀληθεῖς).⁹ One of the Sibyl's specific complaints is about the false claims over Homer's homeland (cf. 3.420: ψευδόπατρις; 3.422f.); the same concern surfaces in Lucian, *VH* 2.20 and Philostratus, *Her.* 44.

But why would the Sibyl launch a historiographical critique of Homer at all unless she had some professional reasons of her own for pique? She does not seem, in the version in *Or. Sib.* 3, to be motivated by any desire to give testimonia about the Trojan War beyond what everyone already knew about Helen. Perhaps we have to reach back to one of the pagan Sibyls who apparently underlie this passage, presumably the Erythraean, who took Homer to task for his lies (n. 5). The local historian Apollodorus of Erythrae, who wrote her up, has a *terminus post quem* of the late fourth century and *terminus*

⁷ Parodic, according to L. Kim, *Homer Between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 2010) 98–100.

⁸ He and other Trojan heroes give advice and warnings to the contemporaries of the narrator, but he also gives macroscopic overviews of history, like the Sibyl (*Her.* 7.6: the great φθοραί of history were Deucalion's flood, Phaethon's conflagration, and the Persian Wars), or like Herodotus (in other words, his voice has a historiographical quality), when he calls the battle of Greeks against Mysians before the Greeks arrived in Troy the greatest battle of all, including Troy and the subsequent ones between Greeks and barbarians (*Her.* 23.12).

⁹ Philo, *Praem.* 8 opposes ἀλήθεια and σοφιστεία (but not σοφία) apropos of the use of myth (μύθου πλάσμα).

ante quem of Varro.¹⁰ That could give us an originally local Sibyl launching a historiographical critique in the Hellenistic period, but the interpretation is fraught and complicated by uncertainty over the fidelity with which Lactantius represents Varro: if he altered Varro to suit his own knowledge of the third book, the argument is short-circuited (see Buitenwerf's commentary on *Or. Sib.* 3.419–32). In short, the antecedents of the passage in *Or. Sib.* 3 are obscure. But at all events, it turns out that the antecedents for this part of Dares' strategy reach back a good deal further than the Second Sophistic.

To conclude. This review has concentrated on the historiography of truth rather than the history of taste, though the *querelle des anciens et modernes*, which Clark shows was not just a seventeenth-century issue, but had been going on since antiquity itself, 'was always part and parcel of a quarrel between truth and falsehood' (309). Dares was an especially important part of it in its mediaeval versions. The results could be complicated and paradoxical. The 'modern' Joseph of Exeter (Ch. 3, late twelfth century) castigated *fabula* in the person of Virgil, but did so by erecting the even more ancient Dares against him—and then complicated matters even further by treating Dares, not as a historian, but as a *vates* (and by re-injecting some of the supernaturalism into Homer that Dares had laboured to strip out). Thus a prophet from dimmest antiquity was invoked to shore up the superiority of modernity, in a controversy where the *real* ancient bogeyman was Virgil. On the other hand, in later iterations of the quarrel, Dares' style, which was not really the issue for Joseph, drew down the ire of both sides. To humanists, the excellence of Joseph's verse, even though it was mediaeval, could seem superior to Dares' barbarous Latin (268f.); for the seventeenth-century 'ancient' Madame Dacier (314–24), Dares was a forger, and an unskilled one at that, whose inept attempts at rationalisation completely misfired against the licensed departures from verisimilitude in Homeric poetry.

Dares' career ended with a whimper not a bang (284, 335). It ended in disenchantment, with the text, and with the model of doing history and accessing the past that it represented. But there was no decisive moment when, the mask having fallen away, the audience filed out of the theatre and the lights went out. For a while defenders lingered, using old methods which refused to die, and fortified by misattributions and errors and ongoing disputes about the ancient past. What has brought him back, to the extent that this splendid monograph *is* a bringing-back? Obviously because Classics developed enough of a sense of its own history to write him back into the script: the project *is* still a historical one, but one that has moved on from genealogies and universal histories and chronicles and antiquarianism and encyclopaedism to the history of ideas, and above all the history of the book.

¹⁰ Parke (above, n. 5) 28; cf. 44.

Is there any more mileage left in him yet? Clark himself addresses this question: ‘And perhaps it may inspire again, especially those who read ludic, parodic, or subversive intent into its contents’ (334). But that would be a definite turn to the ahistorical.¹¹

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¹¹ Anthony Grafton is a presence in parts of this book. If I consign my niggles (which are few) to a footnote, it is not through any ambition to imitate Grafton’s past-masters in that art-form in order to wield a stiletto or promote a counter-narrative. Rather, I genuinely did not want to tarnish the main body of the review with complaints. I noted a few typos, misspellings, and a case of dubious Latinity: 16: ‘the text begged a crucial question’ (the copy-editor really should not have let this through); 55: Tuebner; Ch. 3: Holdenreid (for Holdenried), throughout; 234: Metasthenes (did he metasthasise?); 243: Nepos himself as *magistra vitae* (as opposed to *historia*, to whom the phrase originally applied); 264: Magdalene College, Oxford; 314, 318: the road must be tread; 325: reserved (for reversed, presumably).