

HERODOTUS IN THE THEATRE AT ALEXANDRIA? ON ATHENAEUS 14.620D

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Abstract: This article discusses a passage in Athenaeus (14.620d) that refers to the performance of Herodotus' work in a theatre in Hellenistic Alexandria. In his edition of Athenaeus, highly valued and still influential, August Meineke replaces Herodotus' name (unanimously transmitted in Athenaeus' manuscripts) with Hesiod's. In this article I set out to overturn a widespread tendency to accept Meineke's emendation of Athenaeus 14.620d, reconsidering the possibility that Athenaeus did in fact name Herodotus in the light of (a) the difficulty of explaining the origin of the alleged mistake in Athenaeus' manuscript tradition and (b) the ancients' tendency to draw parallels between Herodotus' style and language and Homeric poetry. The fact that Athenaeus refers to theatrical performances of both Herodotus' work and the Homeric poems will be shown to be very much in line with the ancient rhetorical, historiographical and biographical tradition which regarded Herodotus as the most Homeric of all prose writers.

Keywords: Herodotus, Homeric poems, Athenaeus, theatrical performances, Hellenistic Alexandria

I. Hesiod replaces Herodotus

Ἰάσων δ' ἐν τρίτῳ Περὶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἱερῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ φησὶν ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ θεάτρῳ ὑποκρίνασθαι Ἡγησίαν τὸν κωμῶδὸν τὰ Ἡσιόδου, Ἑρμόφαντον δὲ τὰ Ὀμήρου.

Jason in book three of *On the Sanctuaries of Alexander* says that in the great theatre in Alexandria the comic actor Hegesias performed Hesiod's poems, and that Hermophantus performed Homer's.¹

This quotation provides a very curious and intriguing testimony regarding recitations in a theatre in the Hellenistic period. The Greek text quoted above follows the standard editions of Athenaeus, Georg Kaibel's Teubner and S. Douglas Olson's Loeb. However, the main manuscript of the *Deipnosophistae*, Marcianus gr. 447 (A), written at the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century,² reads τὰ Ἡροδότου instead of τὰ Ἡσιόδου. The same goes for the principal manuscripts of the epitome of Athenaeus, Parisinus suppl. gr. 841 (C), of the 14th/15th century, and Laurentianus plut. 60.2 (E), of the end of the 15th century.³ Hence, in Simon Petrus Peppink's edition of the epitome we read: ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ δὲ ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ θεάτρῳ ὑπεκρίνατο Ἡγησίας ὁ κωμῶδὸς τὰ Ἡροδότου, Ἰάσων φησὶν, Ἑρμόφαντος δὲ τὰ Ὀμήρου⁴ ('In the great theatre in Alexandria the comic actor Hegesias performed Herodotus' work and Hermophantus performed Homer's poems, reports Jason').

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very useful comments. It goes without saying that any mistakes or inaccuracies are my responsibility alone.

¹ Ath. 14.620d. Translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own, unless otherwise noted.

² The manuscript was copied by John the Calligrapher between 895 and 928 for Arethas of Caesarea and was delivered to Bessarion in 1423 by Giovanni Aurispa, who probably bought it in Constantinople. See Wilson (1996) 129; Cipolla (2015) 1–2.

³ On the manuscript tradition of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, see Wentzel (1896) 2026–27.

⁴ Peppink (1936a) 128.

The correction of the text from τὰ Ἡροδότου to τὰ Ἡσιόδου in Athenaeus 14.620d was proposed for the first time by Lodewijk Caspar Valckenaer (1715–1785) in his unpublished annotations on Athenaeus' text, preserved in the library of the University of Leiden⁵ and, independently, by August Meineke (1790–1870) in his edition of Athenaeus (1858–1859). To justify his emendation, Meineke states:

Parum mihi credibile videtur Herodoti historias in theatro actas esse, quae res tam mihi mira visa est, ut Herodoto Hesiodi nomen substituere non dubitaverim.

It seems to me barely credible that Herodotus' *Histories* were performed in the theatre; so incredible does this seem to me, that I have not hesitated to change the name *Herodotus* to *Hesiod*.⁶

Meineke's emendation is followed by all subsequent editors of Athenaeus, from Kaibel to Charles Burton Gulick to Olson.⁷

The editors of the recent Italian edition of the *Deipnosophistae* print the name of Herodotus both in their Greek text and in their Italian translation. However, in a note to the translation they add: 'La lezione concorde dei codici, "Erodoto", è palesemente errata: il nome dello storico è stato sostituito da Crusius con quello di Eronda (autore di mimiambi, attivo ad Alessandria nel corso del sec. III a.C.) e, meno felicemente, corretto da Valckenaer col nome di Esiodo (accolto da Kaibel)' ('The unanimous reading of the manuscript, "Herodotus", is clearly erroneous: the historian's name was replaced by Crusius with that of Herodas (the author of mimiambi, active in Alexandria in the third century BC), and, less felicitously, by Valckenaer with that of Hesiod (accepted by Kaibel)').⁸ This statement needs to be briefly discussed. Otto Crusius' proposal, put forward in his *editio minor* of Herodas,⁹ even if sound from a palaeographic point of view, has not been accepted by other scholars. The reason is twofold. On the one hand, our knowledge of Herodas' life, of his audience and of the possibility of public performances of his works is extremely poor.¹⁰ On the other hand, and most importantly, in Athenaeus 14.620b–d, where performances and recitations are discussed, all the authors belong to the Archaic and Classical age: Homer, Hesiod, Stesichorus, Archilochus, Semonides, Mimnermus, Phocylides and Empedocles.¹¹ Hellenistic writers are excluded according to the same cultural principle that the Hellenistic literary critics Apollonius of Byzantium and Aristarchus of Samothrace apply in the study of poetry: they exclude their contemporaries from their exegetical work.¹² These facts show that Crusius' proposed correction Ἡρώωνδου/Ἡρώωνδα in Athenaeus 14.620d is highly improbable. Even if confusions in the transmission of the names of Hesiod, Herodas and Herodotus, and even Herodorus or Herodicus, are frequently attested,¹³ such confusions are not good arguments for rejecting the presence of Herodotus in Athenaeus 14.620d and correcting it to Herodas or Hesiod.

⁵ Valckenaer's annotations were used by Peppink (1936b) 85.

⁶ Meineke (1867) 297.

⁷ Kaibel (1890) 3.368; Gulick (1927–1941) 340–41; Olson (2006–2013) 7.134–35.

⁸ Canfora (2001) 3.1601 n. 1.

⁹ Crusius (1914) 3–4.

¹⁰ See Delcroix and Giannattasio Andria (1997) 136–39, who reject Crusius' emendation.

¹¹ This point is discussed below in section II.

¹² See Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.54: *Apollonius in ordinem a grammaticis datum non venit, quia Aristarchus atque Aristophanes poetarum iudices neminem sui temporis in numerum redegerunt* ('Apollonius does not appear in the grammarians' list, because Aristarchus and Aristophanes,

who evaluated the poets, included none of their contemporaries'; tr. Russell (1964)). Cf. Steinmetz (1964); Matijašić (2018) 18–23.

¹³ See, for example, schol. *Il.* 4.476 (1.529 Erbse), where the transmitted text is Ἡρόδικος δὲ τὰ τετράποδα πάντα: Wilamowitz proposes Ἡσιόδος while Erbse prints Ἡρόδοτος (cf. Schmidt (1979) 178 n. 17; Cingano (1992) 7 n. 15); Ath. 11.504b: Ἡρόδορον is the transmitted name, while Kaibel proposes to correct it to Herodas (cf. Pagani (2007)). I wish to thank Ettore Cingano and Enrico Emanuele Prodi for pointing out these occurrences to me. The name of Herodotus is wrongly transmitted in *EM* 411.43 (clearly instead of Herodas, 5.32), *Poll.* 2.152 and *Zen.* 6.47 (cf. Tosi (1988) 101–03). Merkelbach and West (1967) collected many Hesiodic

Finally, Athenaeus 14.620d is included in Glenn W. Most's Loeb edition of Hesiod as a testimony on the life and works of the poet, thus endorsing Meineke's correction of the transmitted text.¹⁴ But neither Most nor Olson in his edition of Athenaeus signals in the apparatus that both manuscript A and the epitome manuscripts C and E have τὰ Ἡροδότου, not τὰ Ἡσιόδου.

This consensus led Simon Hornblower to state in 2006 that 'the only specific mention of Hellenistic public recitation of Herodotus, in the theatre at Alexandria, is not usable if we adopt the standard emendation to "Hesiod"'.¹⁵ A recent book on Hesiod's reception in antiquity confirms that the emendation has indeed become standard: 'It is not unlikely that Hesiod continued to be performed throughout antiquity, but we do not really know. Curiously enough, there is one source that mentions an actor "playing" (ὕποκρίνασθαι) the poems of Hesiod in the great theatre at Alexandria.'¹⁶ Nothing is said of the fact that Hesiod's name in Athenaeus 14.620d is a modern conjecture. Hence any possibility that Herodotus' work might have been performed in a theatre in Alexandria is excluded and quickly forgotten. The following pages argue that Meineke's correction should not be accepted and Herodotus' name should be restored in Athenaeus 14.620d.¹⁷ In order to do that, the Athenaeus passage needs to be thoroughly considered.

II. The context of the quotation

Athenaeus discusses the theatrical performances of Hesiod (or rather Herodotus) and Homer in a wider review of performances of poetic texts which begins at 14.620b, where he writes that 'there was no shortage of rhapsodes at our parties' (οὐκ ἀπελείποντο δὲ ἡμῶν τῶν συμποσίων οὐδὲ ῥαψωδοί) and continues with a long list of testimonies on poetic performances. The *Homeristai* are defined as rhapsodes by Aristocles (*fr.* 10, *FHG* 4.331), and they are said to have been introduced in theatres (εἰς τὰ θέατρα) by Demetrius of Phaleron (*fr.* 33 Wehrli; *fr.* 55A Fortenbaugh-Schütrumpf). According to Chamaeleon, the author of a treatise on Stesichorus (*fr.* 28 Wehrli; *fr.* 30 Martano), not only were Homer's poems 'set to music' (μελωδηθῆναι), but so too were those of Hesiod, Archilochus, Mimnermus and Phocylides. Clearchus is cited (*fr.* 92 Wehrli) for the fact that one Simonides of Zacynthus recited Archilochus' poems in the theatres (ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις) seated on a stool. Lysanias, a third-century BC grammarian from Cyrene,¹⁸ reports that Mnasion, a rhapsode, gave public performances in which he acted out (ὕποκρίνεσθαι) the *iamboi* of Semonides of Amorgos,¹⁹ while another rhapsode, Cleomenes, recited (ἐῤῥαψώδησεν) Empedo-

fragments catalogued as *dubia* and *spuria* where Hesiod's name might have been erroneously transmitted; see Hes. *fr.* 347 M.-W. *apud* Plin. *HN* 15.3 (a reference to Herodotus 5.82.2), *fr.* 363 *apud* Apollon. *Lex. Hom.* p. 164.14 Bekker (Heliódoros or Hesiod?), *fr.* 364 *apud* Arist. *Hist. an.* 601b1 (*cf.* Hdt. 1.106.2, 184; Huxley (1965) convincingly excludes Hesiod's name and believes the passage to be a quotation of Herodotus' account of the fall of Nineveh missing from the extant version of the *Histories*; *cf.* also Vecchiato (2019)), *fr.* 368 *apud* Strabo 1.3.18 C 59 (*cf.* Hdt. 2.10.3), *fr.* 396 *apud* Hsch. α 7017 (Ἡλιόδωρος Ruhnken), *fr.* 397 *apud* Hsch. α 4153 (Ἡλιόδωρος Pearson: Ἡρωδιανός Hermann), *fr.* 402 *apud* *EM* 557.55 (Ἡρωδιανός Ruhnken). On Hes. *fr.* 364, 368 and 347, see Delcroix and Giannattasio Andria (1997) 136–39. For a detailed discussion of confusions of personal names from the point of view of both psychoanalysis and textual criticism, see Timpanaro (1974).

¹⁴ Most (2010) 216–17: T 85.

¹⁵ Hornblower (2006) 306; the following sentence is also significant: 'The other author there said to have been recited is Homer, who is the reason for emending the other name; but it is tempting to keep "Herodotus" and juxtapose the poetic and the prose Homer, as above.' *Cf.* also Chaniotis (2010) 262, where Homeric performances are discussed, while Hesiod's name appears in his quotation of Ath. 14.620d without further notice (see especially n. 25 on the same page).

¹⁶ Koning (2010) 48.

¹⁷ To my knowledge, among modern scholars only Nagy (1996) 158 ('Valckenaer emends, maybe unnecessarily, from Ἡροδότου'), Delcroix and Giannattasio Andria (1997) and Priestley (2014) 40–41 have, to different degrees, questioned Meineke's emendation.

¹⁸ Pagani (2007).

¹⁹ The text has 'Simonides' (τῶν Σιμωνίδου τινῶς ἰάμβων ὑποκρίνεσθαι), but most editors believe it to be a confusion for Semonides; see, for example, Olson (2006–2013) 7.134 n. 70: 'Confused here (as routinely elsewhere) with Semonides of Amorgos.'

cles' *Purifications* (31 A 12 Diels-Kranz) at Olympia, according to Dicaearchus (*fr.* 87 Wehrli; *fr.* 85 Mirhady). Finally, we find our passage on the performances by two actors of the works of Herodotus and Homer.²⁰

Meineke's astonishment at Herodotus' presence in this passage was partly dictated by the general context: Athenaeus' list includes only poets and poetic performances.²¹ Different verbal forms are used to present these performances: μελωδέω, ῥαψωδέω, ὑποκρίνομαι. The last usually refers to performances in the theatre,²² but can also mean 'to deliver a speech', 'to declaim' or 'to represent dramatically',²³ as in this Athenaeus passage. Moreover, Athenaeus, both in general and in this passage, has a taste for quoting strange and unconventional episodes regarding ancient authors and texts, historical events and culture.²⁴ The dramatic performance of Herodotus' *Histories* in a theatre – which is what the verb ὑποκρίνομαι entails – might fit well both the context of this passage (14.620b–d) and Athenaeus' general tendency.

Jason, the author said to have described these performances, is otherwise unknown,²⁵ and the title of his work as reported by Athenaeus, *On the Sanctuaries of Alexander* (Περὶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἱερῶν), is difficult to interpret, since ἱερά or ἱερὸν can refer both to sacrifices or offerings and to sacred places such as sanctuaries and shrines.²⁶ Even if the actors that performed the works of Herodotus and Homer, Hegesias (Ἡγησίας) and Hermophantus (Ἑρμόφαντος), are not mentioned in any other literary source, Hermophantus might be identified with the comic actor attested in *IG* II–III² 2325 (line 231) victorious at the *Lenaia* in the middle of the third century BC. The name of Hegesias is possibly attested in the same inscription (line 228), but only the initial H is preserved on the stone.²⁷ It is possible, albeit not certain, that both actors were active in Athens during the middle of the third century and later moved to Alexandria where they performed in the local theatre.²⁸ The fact that two comic actors performed the works of Herodotus/Hesiod and Homer is certainly peculiar. I have been unable to identify other references to similar performances in ancient sources. The involvement of the two *komoidoi* is bound to remain a puzzling detail.

²⁰ Ath. 14.620b–d: οὐκ ἀπελείποντο δὲ ἡμῶν τῶν συμποσίων οὐδὲ ῥαψωδοί. ἔχαιρε γὰρ τοῖς Ὀμήρου ὁ Λαρῆνσιος ὡς ἄλλος οὐδὲ εἷς, ὡς λῆρον ἀποφαίνειν Κάσανδρον τὸν Μακεδονίας βασιλευσαντα, περὶ οὗ φησι Καρύστιος ἐν Ἱστορικοῖς Ὑπομνήμασιν (*fr.* 8, *FHG* 4.358) ὅτι οὕτως ἦν φιλόμυθος ὡς διὰ στόματος ἔχειν τῶν ἐπῶν τὰ πολλά· καὶ Ἰλιάς ἦν αὐτῷ καὶ Ὀδυσσεΐα ἰδίως γεγραμμένα. ὅτι δ' ἔκαλοῦντο οἱ ῥαψωδοί καὶ Ὀμηρισταὶ Ἀριστοκλῆς εἰρηκεν ἐν τῷ Περὶ Χορῶν (*fr.* 10, *FHG* 4.331). τοὺς δὲ νῦν Ὀμηριστὰς ὀνομαζομένους πρῶτος εἰς τὰ θεάτρα παρήγαγε Δημήτριος ὁ Φαληρεὺς (*fr.* 33 Wehrli; *fr.* 55A Fortenbaugh-Schütrumpf). Χαμαλέον δὲ ἐν τῷ Περὶ Στησιγόρου (*fr.* 28 Wehrli; *fr.* 30 Martano) καὶ μελωδηθῆναι φησιν οὐ μόνον τὰ Ὀμήρου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ἀρχιλόχου, ἔτι δὲ Μυμνέρμου καὶ Φωκυλίδου. Κλέαρχος δ' ἐν τῷ προτέρῳ Περὶ Γρίφων (*fr.* 92 Wehrli), τὰ Ἀρχιλόχου, φησίν, Σιμωνίδης ὁ Ζακύνθιος ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις ἐπὶ δίφρου καθημένος ἐῤῥαψώδει. Λυσανίας δ' ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ Ἰαμβοποιῶν Μνασίωνα τὸν ῥαψωδὸν λέγει ἐν ταῖς δεῖξεσι τῶν Σιμωνίδου τινὰς ἰάμβων ὑποκρίνεσθαι. τοὺς δ' Ἐμπεδοκλέους Καθαρμοῦς (31 A 12 Diels-Kranz) ἐῤῥαψώδησεν Ὀλυμπίᾳ Κλεομένης ὁ ῥαψωδός, ὡς φησιν Δικαίαρχος ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπικῷ (*fr.* 87 Wehrli; *fr.* 85 Mirhady). Ἰάσον δ' ἐν τρίτῳ Περὶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἱερῶν (*FGrH* 632 F1) ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ φησιν ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ θεάτρῳ ὑποκρίνασθαι Ἡγησίαν τὸν κωμωδὸν τὰ Ἡροδότου, Ἑρμόφαντον δὲ τὰ Ὀμήρου.

²¹ The whole of Ath. 14.620b–d is thoroughly

discussed in Nagy (1996) 157–61; Hunter (2002) 196–97.

²² The term ὑποκριτής ('actor') is discussed in O'Connor (1908) 1–5.

²³ LSJ⁹ s.v. ὑποκρίνομαι (especially II.2).

²⁴ Cf. Zecchini (1989) and many contributions in Braund and Wilkins (2000).

²⁵ A possible identification with Jason of Nysa, a late first-century BC philosopher and historian, is discussed in Matijašić (2019), with previous bibliography.

²⁶ See Müller (1846) 160, who refers to sacred offerings; Gulick (1927–1941) 6.340–41 translates *On the Divine Honours to Alexander*; Canfora (2001) 3.1600: *Sacrifici per Alessandro*; Olson (2006–2013) 7.134–35: *On Alexander's Offerings*. Fraser (1972) 2.65–66 n. 151 argues for shrines, while Burstein (2009), who incorrectly believes that the title is Περὶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἱερῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, translates it as *Concerning the Shrines(?) of Alexander in Alexandria*.

²⁷ There is also a ὑποκριτής Ἑρμόφαντος who acted in a dramatic festival on Samos around 240 BC (*IG* XII.6.1, 176), even if we cannot be sure that it is the same man attested in the Athenian inscription. On both actors, see O'Connor (1908) nos 181 [Hermophantus], 209 [Hegesias]; Bonaria (1965a); (1965b); Stephanis (1988) nos 908 [Hermophantus], 1055 [Hegesias]; Delcroix and Giannattasio Andria (1997) 122–29; Millis and Olson (2012) 203, nos 99, 102.

²⁸ The theatre of Alexandria mentioned by Jason (ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ θεάτρῳ ... ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ) is probably the

III. Reasons for rejecting Meineke's emendation

It should be emphasized that the emendation of Ἡσιόδου for Ἡροδότου in Athenaeus 14.620d takes account of the passage's context. The fact that in the Athenaeus passage Jason mentions the Homeric poems in the same Alexandrian environment is one of the main reasons. In fact, Homer and Hesiod are often combined in the ancient biographical tradition, even if almost all the testimonies collected in Hesiod T 1–24 Most deal with the issue of their relative chronology. The *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, on the other hand, belongs to an ancient anecdotal-biographical tradition already attested in pre-Socratic philosophy.²⁹ Moreover, at the end of the fifth century BC, the poetic contest between Aeschylus and Euripides staged in Aristophanes' *Frogs* might presuppose a previous, more famous contest between two illustrious Greek poets.

Considering the ancient tradition that associates Homer and Hesiod, Meineke's emendation of Athenaeus 14.620d fits the context. However, there is a fundamental issue that, in my opinion, proves the correction unnecessary. If we suppose that Athenaeus originally wrote τὰ Ἡσιόδου, it is very difficult to explain why a copyist (who might have copied the text any time between Athenaeus' lifetime and manuscript A of the *Deipnosophistae*) would have written τὰ Ἡροδότου instead of τὰ Ἡσιόδου, given the much more common association of Hesiod with poetic performances and with Homer. Ἡροδότου, which is preserved in both the fuller and the epitomized version of the *Deipnosophistae*, is the *lectio difficilior*.³⁰

Another point that supports the reading Ἡροδότου is the already mentioned fact that Athenaeus in 14.620b–d deals with a series of peculiar episodes regarding performances of classical texts: the recitation of Archilochus' poems in theatres, the rhapsode who recited seated on a stool, the acting out of Semonides' *iambi* and so on. In such a context, the recitation of Herodotus' historical work, or more probably of some significant passages of his *Histories*, appears extremely plausible.

Even though there are many testimonies to re-performances of ancient tragedies and comedies in the Hellenistic period,³¹ there are none regarding Hesiod, except the reference of Athenaeus as emended. There is, however, a passage in Plato's *Laws*, imagining rhapsodic performances of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and Hesiod's poems.³²

As regards Herodotus, there is a strong ancient tradition that Herodotus himself read his work in public.³³ However, excluding Athenaeus 14.620d, there are no references to later readings of Herodotus' *Histories* in antiquity. On the other hand, numerous inscriptions attest public lectures and readings (ἀκροάσεις) of ancient historians, especially in cities. These testimonies have been extensively discussed by Angelos Chaniotis,³⁴ but they always refer to historians who are contemporary with these ἀκροάσεις. In the case attested in Athenaeus 14.620d, the performed text was written long before the performance itself: we are dealing with the performance of a text that is already a classic.

same theatre referred to by Polyb. 15.30.4, Strabo 17.1.9 C 794 and Caes. *BCiv.* 3.112.8; cf. Walbank (1967) 491. It was possibly situated in the area known in modern times as Kom el Dikka ('Mound of Rubble'), not far from the port and the royal palace, where a Roman theatre has been excavated. Further details on this theatre in Fraser (1972) 1.23, 29, 2.94 n. 211; Delcroix and Giannattasio Andria (1997) 129–34; Derda et al. (2007); McKenzie (2007).

²⁹ See Heraclitus, 22 B 56 Diels-Kranz, pointed out by Richardson (1981). Cf. West (1967); Koning (2010) 239–68; Hunter (2014) 302–15.

³⁰ The same conclusion in Delcroix and Giannattasio Andria (1997) 138.

³¹ See Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 72–33, 99–101; Prauscello (2006) 32–33, 123–26; Nervegna (2007) especially 18–21. On performances and re-performances of

poetic texts, see now several articles in Bakker (2017).

³² Pl. *Leg.* 658d: ῥαψῳδὸν δὲ, καλῶς Ἰλιάδα καὶ Ὀδύσσειαν ἢ τι τῶν Ἡσιοδείων διατιθέντα, τάχ' ἂν ἡμεῖς οἱ γέροντες ἥδιστα ἀκούσαντες νικᾶν ἂν φαίμεν πάμπολυ ('We old men would probably be most delighted to listen to a rhapsode giving a fine recitation of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* or of a piece from Hesiod: we would say that he is clearly the winner'). For a discussion of this passage, see Murray (2013). Cf. Koning (2010) 48, already quoted above: 'It is not unlikely that Hesiod continued to be performed throughout antiquity, but we do not really know.'

³³ See especially Lucian *Her.* 1; Marcellin. 54. Cf. Piccirilli (1985) 158–61.

³⁴ See Chaniotis (1988) 365–72; (2005) 224–25; (2009) 259–62.

IV. The most Homeric of all prose writers

At the beginning of the previous section I noted that the reference to Homeric poems in Athenaeus 14.620d supported the emendation of Ἡροδότου to Ἡσιόδου because of the proximity of Hesiod and Homer in the ancient biographical tradition. However, the association of Herodotus with Homer has been ignored or insufficiently emphasized by those who have accepted the emendation. It is not an uncommon conjunction in ancient sources. Even Plutarch, who devotes a whole treatise, *On the Malice of Herodotus*, to exposing Herodotus' falsehood, praises his language at both its beginning and end.³⁵ Most notably, he says: '[Herodotus] is an artist, his words are sweet, his narrative is charming and elegant and graceful; he has told "a story like a bard, with understanding" [Hom. *Od.* 11.368], well, not really, but with lucidity and clarity.'³⁶ The quotation of the *Odyssey* emphasizes both Homer's role as an inspiration for Herodotus and the figure of Odysseus as a model figure for historians.³⁷

The rhetorical tradition offers some very significant insights. Ps.-Longinus' *On the Sublime*,³⁸ describing the road that leads to sublimity, employs a rhetorical question:

μόνος Ἡρόδοτος Ὀμηρικώτατος ἐγένετο; Στησίχορος ἔτι πρότερον ὃ τε Ἀρχίλοχος, πάντων δὲ τούτων μάλιστα ὁ Πλάτων ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὀμητικοῦ κείνου νάματος εἰς αὐτὸν μυρίας ὄσας παρατροπὰς ἀποχετευσάμενος

Was Herodotus alone the most Homeric of all? There were also Stesichorus and Archilochus before him, and above all others Plato, who drew off from the great Homeric spring thousands of channels for his own use.³⁹

From this passage, Herodotus emerges as the writer closest to Homer in ancient thought, not only among prose authors, but also among the poets. Indeed Ps.-Longinus recalls Stesichorus' and Archilochus' debt to Homer before introducing Plato, also unanimously associated with Homer in matters of style and language.⁴⁰

That Herodotus was 'the most Homeric' of all Greek prose authors is not an arbitrary invention of Ps.-Longinus nor an isolated erudite comment. The judgement is attested in a late Hellenistic inscription found in 1995 near ancient Halicarnassus, in modern Turkey. The stone preserves a text, known as 'the Pride of Halicarnassus' or the Salmakis Inscription, which contains 30 elegiac

³⁵ Compare the opening (Plut. *De Her. mal.* 1.854e) with its close (*De Her. mal.* 43.874b).

³⁶ Plut. *De Her. mal.* 874b: γραφικὸς ἀνὴρ, καὶ ἡδὺς ὁ λόγος, καὶ χάρις ἐπεστί καὶ δεινότης καὶ ὥρα τοῖς διηγήμασι, "μῦθον δ' ὡς ὄτ' αἰιδός, ἐπισταμένως", μὲν οὖν, λιγυρῶς δὲ καὶ γλαφυρῶς ἠγόρευκεν. Cf. Priestley (2014) 213–18. Note that the adverb λιγυρῶς ('lucidly') usually refers to poetic, metrical texts (see Theoc. *Id.* 8.71; Dion. Thrax 1.1.6; Hsch. λ 979), but is here used for a prose author such as Herodotus.

³⁷ On the figure of Odysseus in relation to Herodotus, see Marincola (2007); cf. also Priestley (2014) 217–18.

³⁸ The author of the treatise is anonymous, and I consider it a work of the first century AD: for a detailed discussion of Ps.-Longinus' identity and date, see Russell (1964) xxii–xxx; Mazzucchi (2010) xxix–xxxviii.

³⁹ [Longinus] *Subl.* 13.3; cf. Bühler (1964) 93–94 and Mazzucchi (2010) 203–08. Pfeiffer (1968) 224–25 suggests that Herodotus' characterization as Ὀμηρικώτατος in *On the Sublime* might be traced back to Aristarchus' commentary on Herodotus, attested in a

single papyrus (*P.Amh.* 2.12) where the last chapters of Herodotus' first book are explained through parallels with Homeric poetry. Pfeiffer's hypothesis is attractive, but unfortunately it is not verifiable. On *P.Amh.* 2.12 and its significance for our knowledge of Aristarchus' commentary on Herodotus, see Matijašić (2013); (2018) 157–59 with previous bibliography; Montanari (2013) 3–6; Tribulato (2016) 174–76; Montana in Esposito and Montana (2019) 39–61.

⁴⁰ In the same passage quoted in the previous footnote, Ps.-Longinus carries on, stating that 'we might need to give examples, had not people like Ammonius drawn up a collection' (*Subl.* 13.3: καὶ ἴσως ἡμῖν ἀποδείξωσιν ἔδει, εἰ μὴ τὰ ἐπ' εἶδους καὶ οἱ περὶ Ἀμμώνιον ἐκλέξαντες ἀνέγραψαν). οἱ περὶ Ἀμμώνιον means Ammonius himself, a pupil of Aristarchus of Samothrace, who wrote on Plato's debt to Homer, as known from schol. *Il.* 9.540a¹ (2.515 Erbse). Other significant sources for Plato's dependence on Homer are Cic. *Brut.* 66–67 and Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.81; for other parallels, see Bühler (1964) 93–96 and Mazzucchi (2010) 207–08.

couplets divided up in two columns.⁴¹ At line 43 it mentions Herodotus among the many glories of Halicarnassus and describes him as τὸν πεζὸν ἐν ἱστορίαισιν Ὅμηρον, ‘the prose Homer in the realm of history’.⁴² Herodotus is the first of a series of authors from Halicarnassus (lines 43–54). Significantly, all the other authors are poets, with the exception of Andron of Halicarnassus (*FGrH* 10) and, possibly, Nossos.⁴³

The Salmakis Inscription offers a glimpse of Herodotus’ Hellenistic reception. If, on the one hand, Ps.-Longinus represents the erudite, rhetorical tradition, on the other, the inscription from Halicarnassus, claiming the father of history as one of its most renowned citizens, sets the historian in a local context.

Further assessments of the style and language of Herodotus and their proximity to Homer’s can be found in other rhetorical texts. For Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Herodotus is an emulator of Homer (Ὁμήρου ζηλωτής) in the domain of style; he also claims that both Herodotus’ and Thucydides’ works are beautiful poetical compositions.⁴⁴ Moreover, in the treatise *On Demosthenes*, Dionysius discusses Herodotus and Plato as examples of Homer’s influence on later prose writers.⁴⁵

Hermogenes of Tarsus, a very influential rhetor and teacher of rhetoric active in the second half of the second century AD,⁴⁶ in his *On the Categories of Style* (Περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγου) praises Herodotus for being the most ornate of all historians (ἐν τοίνυν τοῖς καθ’ ἱστορίαν πανηγυρικοῖς πανηγυρικότατος ἐστὶν ὁ Ἡρόδοτος). The presence of rhythm in his sentences and the use of dactylic, anapaestic and spondaic metres render his style solemn (σεμνός). Finally, ‘his imitation of the ethos and pathos of the characters is beautiful and extremely poetic (ποιητικώτατα)’.⁴⁷

Demetrius’ *On Style* (Περὶ ἐρμηνείας), certainly earlier, offers a different standpoint.⁴⁸ His opinion on the style of the ancient Greek historians diverges from that expressed by Ps.-Longinus, Dionysius and Hermogenes. Although he acknowledges that poetic style makes prose works elevated (μεγαλοπρεπές), he reproaches Herodotus for his excessive imitation of the poets and for having transferred (i.e. plagiarized) their verses into his own work. While accusing Herodotus, Demetrius extols Thucydides because, ‘even if he borrows something from the poets, he uses it in his own way making it his own work’.⁴⁹ At the same time, when discussing metrical diction (μετροειδής) in works of prose, he asserts that the Peripatetics, Xenophon, Herodotus and even Demosthenes have gone too far in their use of this pleasing device, while Thucydides avoids it altogether.⁵⁰ Even if Demetrius disapproves of Herodotus’ poetic style, he tacitly acknowledges the opinion expressed by Ps.-Longinus, Dionysius and Hermogenes, namely that in his writing Herodotus resembles the poets.

All these authors of rhetorical works, very influential both in their time and later, treat Herodotus’ style as an imitation of Homer’s and his language as very close to the poet’s. It is undeniable that Herodotus uses a language that resembles Homeric diction. This was not only the universal ancient perception, but is also supported in modern works on the language of Herodotus.⁵¹

⁴¹ First edition in Isager (1998); *SEG* 48.1330; *SGO* 01/12/02. For further bibliographical references, see Santini (2016); cf. also Marincola (2018) 3.

⁴² The translation follows Lloyd-Jones (1999) 3.

⁴³ That Nossos (Νόσσοσ ἐν ἱστορίαισι χρόνων σημαντόρα τεύξεν, line 53) was a historian, an author of *Χρονικά*, is suggested by Zecchini (1999).

⁴⁴ Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 3.11, 3.21. Cf. Matijašić (2018) 72–78.

⁴⁵ Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 41.

⁴⁶ On Hermogenes, see Patillon (2009) vii–xviii with references to earlier discussions.

⁴⁷ Hermog. *Id.* 2.12.18–20. On Hermogenes and the Greek historians, see Matijašić (2018) 179–83.

⁴⁸ The dating of the work and the author is controversial: it might belong to the late Hellenistic or early Roman Imperial age (first century BC to first century AD), but there is no consensus among scholars. See Chiron (2001); Dührsen (2005); Dihle (2007) with earlier bibliography.

⁴⁹ Demetr. *Eloc.* 112–13: Θεουκυδίδης μέντοι κἀν λάβη παρὰ ποιητοῦ τι, ἰδίως αὐτῷ χρώμενος ἴδιον τὸ ληφθὲν ποιεῖ.

⁵⁰ Demetr. *Eloc.* 181.

⁵¹ See the classic Jacoby (1913) 502–03; more recently, Marincola (2006) 26 nn. 8–9 with further references; for a narratological point of view, see de Jong (2004).

In a recent contribution, Olga Tribulato rightly emphasizes Herodotus' role as a model for Ionic in ancient Greek lexicography and grammar, an attitude that might be related to the fact that Herodotus' language was considered to be close to Homer's.⁵²

The relationship between Homeric and Herodotean language, style and narrative remains to be investigated properly. I have so far only offered a few guidelines that might perhaps encourage further studies on this complex and fascinating topic.

V. Herodotus regains his position in Athenaeus 14.620d

Turning back once again to the Athenaeus passage from which we started, we can now make a stronger case for the transmitted *lectio* of Athenaeus' manuscripts, τὰ Ἡροδότου. To sum up, there are two main reasons to reject Meineke's emendation of Athenaeus 14.620d. The first and foremost relates to textual criticism: why would an ancient or Byzantine scribe correct the name of Hesiod to that of Herodotus in a context of poetic performances and in relation to Homer? The second reason involves the ancients' perspective of Herodotus' style and language, and their proximity to Homer's poetry. Neither argument has been given due consideration by those who follow Meineke's correction. Nonetheless, both strongly support retention of the reading Ἡροδότου in Athenaeus 14.620d.

We will probably never know exactly how Herodotus' *Histories* were performed in a theatre. In single episodes or larger extracts? Selected speeches or narrative sections?⁵³ However, we should consider the possibility that his work was 'acted out' in a theatre in Hellenistic Alexandria, possibly only a few decades before Aristarchus produced his commentary on Herodotus' *Histories*. In conclusion, Athenaeus' text in 14.620d should read as follows:

Ἰάσων δ' ἐν τρίτῳ Περὶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἱερῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ φησὶν ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ θεάτρῳ ὑποκρίνασθαι Ἡγησίαν τὸν κομωδὸν τὰ Ἡροδότου, Ἑρμόφαντον δὲ τὰ Ὀμήρου

Jason in Book three of *On the Sanctuaries of Alexander* says that in the great theatre in Alexandria the comic actor Hegesias performed Herodotus' work, and that Hermophantus performed Homer's

From a broader perspective, even though the conclusion proposed here is not definitive, the issue is worthy of detailed scrutiny. It also shows how long-standing emendations, such as that of Meineke, might distort our understanding of crucial passages in ancient sources and consequently have a strong impact on our broader interpretations.

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⁵² Tribulato (2016) 191.

⁵³ A fragment of a play on the story of Gyges and Candaules' wife in *P.Oxy.* 23.2382 (MP³ 1707) (Adesp. *TrGF* 2.664), of the second/third century AD, has been tentatively interpreted as a Hellenistic dramatization of the well-known story told in Herodotus 1.8–12, cf. Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 434: 'it cannot be ruled out

that we are dealing with a Hellenistic dramatising of the well-known story'. However, the date of the text preserved in *P.Oxy.* 23.2382 is disputed and might be pre-Herodotean, perhaps from Aeschylus' time, which would rule out any connection with a Hellenistic dramatic context (different hypothesis on the dating of the papyrus are listed in *TrGF* II 664).

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