

THEOPOMPUS AND HERODOTUS: A REASSESSMENT

W. R. Connor has argued that Theopompus' critical attacks on almost all the leading figures in Greek history suggest he was writing a 'history without heroes'.¹ This article will argue that a similar principle applies to Theopompus' attitude towards Herodotus and other earlier historians: all fell short of his ideal, and, in the final analysis, Theopompus had but one literary hero: himself. Theopompus' mysterious *Epitome of Herodotus*, I will suggest, is best taken not as an independent work, but as a portion of the *Philippika* in which Theopompus incorporated and adapted a significant body of Herodotean material. This fact, taken together with Theopompus' polemical statements about his predecessors, suggests that Theopompus boldly challenged Herodotus on his own turf, confident he could improve upon him.

An initial reason for doubting Theopompus wrote an *Epitome of Herodotus* is that this would be the earliest-known epitome of a classical writer. Although there is some evidence of epitomizing not long after Theopompus, the epitome came into its own in the first century B.C. and proliferated under the Roman Empire.² Theopompus, who was perhaps the most discursive and long-winded of all Greek historians is, moreover, an unlikely father of the compact epitome. One must also ask why Theopompus or any fourth-century B.C. writer would have written an epitome of Herodotus, since he was still widely read at this time.³ These problems with the *Epitome* suggest we should take a closer look at the tradition concerning it.

Our knowledge of the *Epitome* is based exclusively on a late lexicographical tradition, represented by the Anti-Atticist (second/third c. A.D.),⁴ Photius (ninth c. A.D.) and the *Suda* (ninth c. A.D.), although the last two may only be drawing on the Anti-Atticist or a source derived from him.⁵ Only four fragments of the *Epitome*

¹ W. R. Connor, 'History without Heroes: Theopompus' Treatment of Philip of Macedon', *GRBS* 8 (1967), 133–54.

² On Theopompus' *Epitome* as the earliest-known abridgement of a great literary work, see R. Laqueur, 'Theopompus', *RE* V.A2 (1934), col. 2188. Although Philochorus (c. 340–263/2 B.C.) is credited with an epitome of his own *Atthis* (*Suda* s.v. *Φιλόχορος*), F. Jacoby, in his commentary on *FGrHist* 328 T 1, rightly challenges this attribution and assigns the epitome instead to Pollio (1st c. B.C.). Theophrastus is reported to have written a number of epitomes, e.g. of Plato's *Republic* (D.L. 5.43) and Aristotle's *περὶ ζώων* (D.L. 5.49). What form these epitomes took, however, is open to debate, especially in light of Diogenes Laertius' loose use of the term 'epitome' (see below, n. 15). O. Regenbogen, 'Theophrastus', *RE* Suppl. VII (1940), col. 1430, suggests, for example, that Theophrastus' epitomes of Aristotle's *περὶ ζώων* were not bare abridgements, but his own lectures commenting on and criticizing his predecessor's work. On the later popularity of epitomes, see C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 191–3.

³ On Herodotus' popularity at this time and in later centuries, see F. Jacoby, 'Herodotos', *RE* Suppl. II (1913), cols. 504–15, K.-A. Riemann, *Das herodoteische Geschichtswerk in der Antike* (Diss., Munich, 1967), and O. Murray, 'Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture', *CQ* 22 (1972), 200–13.

⁴ On the Anti-Atticist and his *floruit*, see esp. W. Schmid, *Der Atticismus in seinen Hauptvertretern von Dionysius bis auf den zweiten Philostratus* (Stuttgart, 1887), i.208–10, and Tolkiehn, 'Lexikographie', *RE* XII.2 (1925), col. 2461.

⁵ Photius and the *Suda* appear to be doing just this in *FGrHist* 115 F 37, where they have the same entry as the Anti-Atticist.

survive, consisting of three single-word citations and one three-word citation (*FGrHist* 115 FF 1–4).⁶ The one testimony about the *Epitome* is the garbled entry of the *Suda* s.v. *θεόπομπος Χίος ῥήτωρ*, which notes that Theopompus ‘wrote an *Epitome of the Histories of Herodotus* in two books, a *Philippika* in seventy-two books, and *Hellenic Histories* in eleven books’ (T 1). Given the *Suda*’s erroneous count of the number of books in the last two works, we cannot be sure its testimony about the length of the *Epitome* is accurate.⁷ A more pressing question, however, is why no source mentions the *Epitome* before the late second century A.D.

The silence of earlier writers about the *Epitome* suggests they either did not regard it as a significant work or did not know of it at all. Polybius, for example, writing only two centuries after Theopompus, mentions only the *Hellenika* and *Philippika* when criticizing the ‘overall plan’ of his predecessor (T 19). More significantly, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first c. B.C.), Theopompus’ greatest admirer in antiquity, omits the *Epitome* from his detailed list of the historian’s works (T 20):⁸

Theopompus of Chios was the most illustrious of the pupils of Isocrates. He composed many panegyric and deliberative speeches, as well as the letters which are entitled ‘Chian’, and some noteworthy hortatory treatises. As a professional historian he deserves praise on several grounds. Firstly, his historical subjects are *both* good, one of them comprising the closing stages of the Peloponnesian War, the other the career of Philip. Good, too, is his arrangement, being in *both* works lucid and easy to follow. (tr. Usher, adapted) (emphasis added)

Since Dionysius is clearly quite familiar with the corpus of Theopompus and even mentions minor works here, it is hard to believe he would have omitted the *Epitome*, had he known of it. In referring to Theopompus’ historical works, moreover, he twice refers to ‘both’ (*ἀμφότεραι*) of them, i.e. the *Hellenika* and *Philippika*, as if this were the sum total of his endeavours in this area. While Polybius may pass over the *Epitome* because he regards it as insignificant, therefore, Dionysius is evidently unaware of its existence.

If this is true, the question arises as to how the Anti-Atticist, writing several centuries after Dionysius, came upon a previously unattested *Epitome* by Theopompus. One possibility is that he mistakenly attributed to Theopompus an *Epitome of Herodotus* produced in the heyday of epitomes under the Empire. A fragment of what is probably a late epitome of Herodotus was, in fact, discovered early this century at Oxyrhyncus.⁹ It is difficult to understand why anyone would attribute such a work to Theopompus, however, and even more puzzling how it would pass muster under the scrutinizing eyes of contemporary stylists as a legitimate entry in the debate over Atticism. I would therefore suggest the Anti-Atticist was working from

⁶ The words cited yield no useful information about where they might have appeared in an epitome of Herodotus. The fact that the words quoted in FF 1, 3 and 4 do not appear at all in Herodotus suggests that Theopompus was not following Herodotus’ language closely. Although *κακόβιος* (F 2) appears only once in Herodotus (4.95), this may be Theopompus’ rendition of a different word in Herodotus.

⁷ Jacoby, in his *app. crit.* on T 1, suggests that the seventy-two books the *Suda* attributes to the *Philippika* are actually the total of all three works (2 + 58 + 12). Appealing as this suggestion may appear, it assumes that the *Epitome* was two books in length, a fact in doubt given the *Suda*’s patently wrong count of the books in the *Hellenika* and *Philippika*.

⁸ On Dionysius’ admiration for Theopompus, see esp. W. R. Roberts, ‘Theopompus in the Greek Literary Critics’, *CR* 22 (1908), 120–2.

⁹ *Oxy. Pap.* 857 (4th c. A.D.). B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhyncus Papyri*, Part VI (London, 1908), p. 162, suggest the author may be Theopompus, but note ‘the occurrence of at least two examples of hiatus (lines 20 and 21–2), which is very rare in the extant quotations from Theopompus, does not favour the view that he was the author, though his earliest literary efforts may have shown less care in this respect.’ Jacoby (n. 3), col. 514, rightly labels the papyrus ‘very dubious’ and omits it from the fragments of the *Epitome* in his *FGrHist*.

something by Theopompus, namely, an excerpt from the notoriously digressive and unwieldy *Philippika*.

Several ancient sources attribute a *bon mot* to Isocrates about his supposed students, Ephorus and Theopompus, namely, that the former needed the spur, the latter the rein.¹⁰ Theopompus' *Philippika* was indeed a work that ran wild and free, if not out of control. According to Photius, when Philip V of Macedon removed the digressions from it and reduced it to the activities of Philip II, only sixteen out of fifty-eight books remained (T 31). Even Theopompus' admirer Dionysius allowed that the historian at times went overboard in his digressions: 'Some of these are neither necessary nor opportune, but betray great childishness' (T 20a, tr. Shrimpton). More harsh is the judgement of the rhetor, Theon (second c. A.D.), that in the *Philippika*, 'we find about two, even three, and more entire histories in the form of digression; and in them there is no mention of Philip nor even the name of a Macedonian' (T 30, tr. Shrimpton).

As a direct result of this peculiar feature of the *Philippika*, by the second or third centuries A.D. ancient writers used separate titles to describe three parts of it. These three parts may even have circulated independently of the whole:

1. *Θαυμάσια* (*Marvels*). Book Eight and part of Book Nine of the *Philippika* related a wide variety of wonders and were consequently entitled *Marvels*.¹¹ Apollonius (second c. B.C.?), who is the first to use the title *Marvels*, is clearly aware the material so labelled is part of the *Philippika* (F 67b). When Diogenes Laertius (third c. A.D.) (F 69 and F 71) and *Serv. Dan.* (fourth c. A.D.?) (F 75b) use the title later, however, it is not clear that they are aware it is a part of the *Philippika*.

2. *Περὶ δημαγωγῶν* (*On the Demagogues*). Athenaeus (c. 200 A.D.) states that 'some people separate off the last part' of Book Ten of the *Philippika* and refers to this as τὰ περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι δημαγωγῶν (F 100). A scholiast on Lucian refers simply to the *Περὶ δημαγωγῶν* (F 95).

3. *Περὶ τῶν συληθέντων ἐκ Δελφῶν χρημάτων* (*On the Treasure Plundered from Delphi*). Since Athenaeus is our first and only testimony to the existence and contents of this work (FF 247–9), it seems quite possible that it is actually a component of the *Philippika*. We know, in fact, that the *Philippika* dealt repeatedly with the Sacred War and offered numerous opportunities for such an excursus. Although Jacoby accepts Athenaeus' testimony that *On the Treasure Plundered from Delphi* is an independent work, earlier editors of Theopompus' fragments reasonably took it as a part of the *Philippika*.¹²

The fact that writers under the Empire referred to parts of the *Philippika* by separate titles provides our best explanation for the mysterious appearance of the *Epitome* at this time: this was simply a title for a portion of the *Philippika*, which the Anti-Atticist adopted out of convenience or because he was unaware of its relation to

¹⁰ See Cic. *De Or.* 3.9 (36) = Quint. 2.8.11, [Zos.] *Vit. Isoc.* 3.90–105 (Westermann, *Vit. Script.*, pp. 256–7), and *Suda* s.v. Ἐφορος (*Vit. Script.*, p. 213), all collected and translated by G. S. Shrimpton, *Theopompus the Historian* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), pp. 199 and 203–4.

¹¹ For the view that the *Marvels* do not constitute a single section of the *Philippika*, but are excerpts collected from the entire work, see esp. K. Ziegler, 'Paradoxographoi', *RE* XVIII.3 (1949), cols. 1144–5, and more recently, S. Dušanić, 'On Theopompus *Philippika* VI–VIII', *Aevum* 51 (1977), 27–36. Dušanić, p. 30, maintains unconvincingly that F 67b and T 20a 'imply that Theopompus' *Θαυμάσια* followed a geographical pattern resulting from the author's historical narrative'. The passages cited imply only a geographical organization for the *Marvels* and do not suggest that this arose from their being collected from Theopompus' narrative.

¹² Jacoby, commentary on FF 247–8. Earlier editors who took it as part of the *Philippika* (Book 26) include R. H. E. Wickers, *Theopompi Chii Fragmenta* (Leiden, 1829), and C. and T. Müller et al., *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1841–70).

the *Philippika*. The latter may, in fact, be the case: the Anti-Atticist appears to have only a passing knowledge of the *Philippika* and could well, therefore, have mistaken the *Epitome* for a separate work and passed that impression on to later lexicographers.¹³

If the *Epitome* is actually a part of the *Philippika*, its title presumably did not arise from Theopompus' compression of all of Herodotus into two books.¹⁴ Such an all-encompassing abridgement makes little sense within the *Philippika*, a work inclined to far-flung digressions, to be sure, but with no pretension to covering all of history comprehensively. The title *Epitome* more likely arose from Theopompus' extended reliance on his predecessor in one of his many digressions into the past or on non-Hellenic peoples and places. While ancient scholars often apply the label epitome to skeletal synopses, they also apply it to what we would term adaptations, and this may well be the case with Theopompus' *Epitome of Herodotus*.¹⁵

Although Theopompus boasted of the expense to which he went to gather material for his histories (F 26, cf. F 181), he must have relied heavily, as Ephorus did, on earlier historians. Porphyry (third c. A.D.), in fact, charges both men with plagiarism because of their transparent incorporation of earlier writers' accounts into their own works.¹⁶ Theopompus, he asserts, 'transcribed in the exact words' a portion of Isocrates' *Areopagiticus* in Book Eleven of his *Philippika* (F 102); he 'pilfered stories, assigning anecdotes to the wrong people... [an example from the *Thaumasias* follows]' (F 70, cf. F 71); and he 'transposed a great deal' from Xenophon's *Hellenica* into his own work of the same title (F 21). This 'plagiarism' of earlier writers could well account for the presence of an *Epitome of Herodotus* in Theopompus' *Philippika*. Fourth-century B.C. historians, including Ephorus, Callisthenes, Nearchus and Hecataeus of Abdera, regularly turned to Herodotus for material and sometimes drew extensively from him, and there are a number of indications that Theopompus was of a similar inclination.¹⁷

That Theopompus may have drawn on and adapted Herodotus for a portion of his *Philippika* is consistent with what we know about his attitude towards his distinguished predecessor and other earlier writers of history.¹⁸ Like historians before

¹³ The Anti-Atticist cites Theopompus only six times: thrice he cites the *Epitome* (FF 1–3), twice the *Philippika* (F 37, referring to Book 1, and F 264, without a book number), and once 'Theopompus' with no particular work named (F 265). By contrast, he cites Herodotus sixty-one times and Thucydides forty-one times (these last figures are from Schmid (n. 4), i.208–9).

¹⁴ The Anti-Atticist uses the vague title *Epitome of Herodotus* (FF 1–3), which need not imply an abridgement of all of Herodotus. Although the late *Suda* uses the title *Epitome of the Histories of Herodotus* (T 1; cf. F 4), this may just be an expansion of the title found in the Anti-Atticist.

¹⁵ Note, e.g., Diogenes Laertius' application of the title ἐπιτομή τῶν ῥητόρων (2.104 = F 138 Rose) to Aristotle's *τεχνῶν συναγωγή*. This work was no mere abridgement, but a polished adaptation whose style Cicero admired (*De Inv.* 2.2 = F 136 Rose).

¹⁶ Euseb. *PE* 10.3.1–12 = Porph. *On the Greeks as Plagiarists*, from Book 1 of *The Study of Philology* (Mras, ed.), conveniently included in Shrimpton (n. 10), pp. 210–11, whose translation I follow here. Jacoby's T 27 is a short excerpt from this passage. On the charge of plagiarism in antiquity, see H. Peter, *Wahrheit und Kunst: Geschichtsschreibung und Plagiat im klassischen Altertum* (Leipzig/Berlin, 1911), pp. 450–2, and E. Stemplinger, *Das Plagiat in der griechischen Literatur* (Leipzig/Berlin, 1912).

¹⁷ For the extensive borrowing of fourth-century historians from Herodotus, see esp. Murray (n. 3), pp. 204–7.

¹⁸ That Herodotus was, in a certain sense, Theopompus' literary forebear is clear from the latter's marked interest in ethnography, geography and the natural world, marvels, and the Delphic oracle.

and after him, Theopompus takes a critical stance towards his forebears. Significantly, however, it is not their inaccuracies that draw his polemic, but rather their inferiority in presenting their material. Photius, for example, attributes the following extravagant boast to Theopompus (F 25):

he declared the pre-eminent authors of former time to be greatly inferior even to the second-rate authors of his own day. He claims that this is clear both from their best-wrought works and from their neglected ones; for, according to him, literary culture (*paideusis*) made great progress (*epidosis*) in his generation. But who he means by 'the authors of former time', I cannot rightly guess. I do not suppose that he has the effrontery to rail at Herodotus and Thucydides, for in many respects he is far inferior to those men. Perhaps he is alluding to Hellanicus and Philistus, the historians, or perhaps he is making veiled allusion to Gorgias and Lysias and men like that, born before his time but very near it, but even they are not such inferior authors. (tr. Shrimpton, adapted)

Despite Photius' doubts, Theopompus surely included Herodotus and Thucydides among 'the pre-eminent authors of former time' whom he and his contemporaries surpassed.¹⁹ His boast evidently included no disclaimers in regard to these earlier giants, and elsewhere he includes Herodotus in the list of authors he will surpass in relating *mythoi* (F 381). Theopompus justified his claims, to judge from Photius' comments, by pointing to the advances in rhetoric made by his generation.²⁰ His assertion of literary progress recalls the position of his putative instructor, Isocrates, who, in discussing oratory, asserts that

the deeds of the past are an inheritance common to us all; but the ability to make proper use of them at the appropriate time, to conceive the right sentiments about them in each instance, and to set them forth in finished phrase, is the peculiar gift of the wise. I believe that the study of oratory as well as the other arts would make the greatest advance (*epidosis*) if we should admire and honour, not those who make the first beginnings in their crafts, but those who are the most finished craftsmen in each, and not those who seek to speak on subjects on which no one has spoken before, but those who know how to speak as no one else could. (*Paneg.* 9–10, tr. Norlin, adapted)

Theopompus, rhetorician as much as historian, conceived of his history in similar terms, and therefore did not hesitate in his *Philippika* to adapt, in what he thought was a superior manner, Herodotean material.²¹

Since we do not have any fragments from ten books of the *Philippika* and our information is sketchy about those books from which fragments are extant, we can only speculate on what section a late reader might have described as an epitome of Herodotus. While the *Epitome* could be an alternate title for the *Marvels*, the extant fragments of the *Marvels* draw on Herodotus only once, for the story of Zopyrus (F 66).²² A more likely possibility is that the *Epitome* was a part of Theopompus' long digression in Books 11–19 on the western satrapies of the Persian empire, a portion of the *Philippika* Jacoby described as the 'History of the Persian Empire'.²³

¹⁹ Shrimpton (n. 10), p. 285 n. 4, takes a similar view of the passage.

²⁰ Duris (*FGrHist* 76 F 1 = 115 T 34) in turn criticized Ephorus and Theopompus on rhetorical grounds, asserting that 'they cared only for the formal elements of writing'. On this much-debated passage, see esp. F. W. Walbank, 'History and Tragedy', *Historia* 9 (1960), 218.

²¹ Later writers remarked on the rhetorical character of Theopompus' historical writing: see esp. T 21 (Quint. 10.1.74) and T 45 (D. Chr. 18.10).

²² Jacoby, in his commentary on F 66, argues persuasively that Theopompus follows Hdt. 3.153ff. rather than Ktesias (Phot. *Bibl.* 39a7ff.). If we include FF 78–80 on Tempe in the *Marvels*, the Herodotean connection is more pronounced. On Hdt. 7.128–30 as a model for Theopompus here, see Jacoby, commentary on FF 78–80.

²³ Jacoby, commentary on FF 24–246 (Vol. IIB, p. 359). For detailed discussion of these books, see P. Pédech, *Trois historiens méconnus: Théopompe–Duris–Phylarque = Collection d'études anciennes* 119 (Paris, 1989), pp. 147–60, and Shrimpton (n. 10), pp. 72–8. F. Walbank,

Theopompus had numerous opportunities in these far-ranging books to incorporate extensive material from Herodotus' treatment of the history and peoples of Asia Minor, Egypt, and Persia. F 113 (from Book 14), for example, describes the extravagant dining of the Persian king (cf. Hdt. 7.118–20), and could be part of a digression drawing heavily on Herodotus' account of Persian *nomoi*. Similarly, Books 18 and 19 (only F 124 survives) describing Artaxerxes Ochus' reduction of Egypt might have drawn extensively on Herodotus' Egyptian *logos*.²⁴

The *Epitome of Herodotus* has figured prominently in modern discussions of Theopompus. Scholars have explained it as a naïve and, therefore, youthful venture, as a more mature work written just before the 'Herodotean' *Philippika*; and as a handy abridgement intended for Philip II or Alexander the Great.²⁵ I. A. F. Bruce, building on Jacoby's observation that the *Epitome*, *Hellenika*, and *Philippika*, taken together with Thucydides' *Histories*, constitute 'eine Universalgeschichte von Hellas', has even argued that the *Epitome* was the first part of a universal history that Theopompus later abandoned.²⁶ If I am correct, however, in arguing that the *Epitome* is actually a component of the *Philippika*, these explanations must be set aside and the *Epitome* taken instead as evidence that Theopompus challenged Herodotus by adapting his material and including it in his *Philippika*. Although ancient scholars might have condemned this as plagiarism, Theopompus viewed it as the proper task for a rhetorically gifted historian like himself, writing in an age where literary culture had made such great 'progress'.

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Polybius (Berkeley, 1972), p. 2, suggests that 'one of Theopompus' aims was to restore Persia to her due place of prominence in the historical scene and to draw attention to the threat she presented to Greece'. Although Shrimpton, pp. 76 and 286 n. 15, may be correct that the focus of the digression was not so much on Persia, as 'on areas of Greek–Persian interaction', there was still ample space here for Persian ethnography and history.

²⁴ Perhaps Artaxerxes Ochus' conquest of Egypt recalled for Theopompus Cambyses' earlier conquest, as recounted by Herodotus. For Theopompus' general interest in Egypt, see F 46, on Sesostrius (cf. Hdt. 2.102ff.), F 293, on the Nile, and F 368, on Bubastus.

²⁵ A youthful venture: E. Meyer, *Theopomps Hellenika* (Halle a. S., 1909), p. 141, Laqueur (n. 2), col. 2188, Pédech (n. 23), pp. 27 and 40, Shrimpton (n. 10), p. 5. A later work: after the *Hellenika*, but before the *Philippika* – A. Momigliano, 'Studi sulla storiografia greca del IV secolo a.C. 1: Teopompo', in *Terzo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (Rome, 1966), i.378–9; for Philip – R. Lane Fox, 'Theopompus of Chios and the Greek World, 411–322 BC', in J. Boardman and C. E. Vaphopoulou-Richardson (eds.), *Chios: A Conference at the Homereion in Chios* (Oxford, 1986), p. 111, Murray (n. 3), p. 206 n. 1; for Alexander – Shrimpton (n. 10), pp. 277–8 n. 6.

²⁶ F. Jacoby, commentary on *FGrHist* 115 FF 1–4; I. A. F. Bruce, 'Theopompus and Classical Greek Historiography', *History and Theory* 9 (1970), 92.