EARLY GREEK MYTHOGRAPHY AND EPIC POETRY: A REASSESSMENT*

ABSTRACT

Studies of early mythography have stressed the dependent relationship between the so-called logographers and epic archaic poetry. Better knowledge of archaic and classical mythography in recent years has provided more accurate details of the context of the production and purposes of the fragmentary works by Hecataeus, Acusilaus, Pherecydes and Hellanicus. Each of them has his own agenda and programme, which have to be explained within their context and not, from a purely historic-literary perspective, as an appendix, a continuation or an exegesis of the epic tradition. This article argues that conditions of preservation, and means of transmission, of fragmentary mythographers have shaped the way we approach them. In other words, the process of reception of epic poetry through the exegetic and grammarian tradition distorts our view and leads the modern reader to see mythography as being dependent on Homer or Hesiod.

Keywords: mythography; epic poetry; scholia; Hecataeus of Miletus; Pherecydes of Athens

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Studies of early mythography, at least since the seventeenth century, have stressed the dependent relationship between the so-called logographers and epic archaic poetry.[1] In general, it is accepted as fact that the first mythographical prose by Greek logographers was a direct continuation of epic tradition, which it sought to complete, correct, adapt, comment on and interpret.[2] Furthermore, in the history of the reception of myths, the

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[1] Texts are cited after the edition of R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography, I. Text and Introduction* (Oxford, 2000). On 'logographers' for the pre-Herodotean historians (or mythographers), see L. Pearson, *Early Ionian Historians* (Oxford, 1939), 5–8; K. von Fritz, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung, I. Von den Anfängen bis Thukydides* (Berlin, 1967), 337–47. *Contra* J. Grethlein, '*Logográphos* und Thuc. 1.21.1', *Prometheus* 30 (2004), 209–16. Like Pindar's *logioi* (vs *aoidoi*), Herodotus' *logopoios* (cf. *epopoios* and *mousopoios*) and Hippias' *syggraphai* (vs *poiêtai*), Thucydides' term *logographoi* expresses a 'formal difference' with poets. See A. Corcella, 'The new genre and its boundaries: poets and logographers', in A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 33–56 (at 49 n. 54). The word, however, also suggests 'writing down tales' (*logoi*, as Herodotus called the sections of his work).

[2] R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography, II. Commentary* (Oxford, 2013), xvi: 'The entirety of the archaic poetic tradition was their [*sc.* the mythographers'] raw material'. On Hecataeus, see below n. 17, 18, 19 and 20; on Acusilaus, see G. Tosetti, 'La dernière génération héroïque: un parcours historico-religieux et sémio-narratif, d'Hésiode au ps.-Apollodore', *Kernos* 19 (2006), 113–30, at 118–20 (with Pl. *Symp.* 178a–c = Acus. fr. 6a; and see below n. 28); on Hellanicus, see K. Alpers, 'Hellanikos von Lesbos, Apollodor und die mythographische frühgriechische Epik', *ABWG* 52 (2002), 9–35, at 14: 'Es ist eine seit langem gängige und in der Tat auch natürliche Ansicht, daß Hellanikos den Stoff zur Behandlung der mythischen Zeit epischen Quellen verdankte' ('It is a

contribution made by mythographers seems to fit comfortably into the chronological gap between Homer, Hesiod and the Cyclic epics on the one hand, and history and tragedy on the other.[3] This evolutionary and teleological discourse, which assumes the secondary nature of mythographical prose with respect to the venerable epic tradition, has its forerunners in ancient erudition. For example, Strabo sees in the earliest Greek prose a simple *mimêsis* of poetry (1.2.6 [18]):

πρώτιστα γὰρ ἡ ποιητικὴ κατασκευὴ παρῆλθεν εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ εὐδοκίμησεν· εἶτα ἐκείνην μιμούμενοι, λύσαντες τὸ μέτρον, τἆλλα δὲ φυλάξαντες τὰ ποιητικά, συνέγραψαν οἱ περὶ Κάδμον καὶ Φερεκύδη καὶ Ἑκαταῖον.

For poetry, as an art, first came upon the scene and was first to win approval. Then came Cadmus, Pherecydes, Hecataeus, and their followers, with prose writings in which they imitated the poetic art, abandoning the use of metre but in other respects preserving the qualities of poetry. (transl. Jones)

And Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.26.7) declared that mythographers like Acusilaus of Argos translated (μετήλλαξαν, 'transferred') the work of Hesiod into prose and had published it as if it were their own.

EARLY MYTHOGRAPHY IN ITS CONTEXT

Better knowledge of archaic and classical mythography in recent years, above all thanks to Fowler's publications, has helped provide more accurate details of the context of production, and purposes of the fragmentary works by Hecataeus of Miletus, Acusilaus of Argos, Pherecydes of Athens and Hellanicus of Lesbos. For example, the origins of Pherecydes' *Histories* seem firmly rooted in the Athens of the first third of the fifth century B.C., and specifically in the circle of Cimon and the

long-standing and indeed natural view that Hellanicus owes the material for the treatment of mythical time to epic sources'). On Pherecydes, see C. Saumaise, *Claudii Salmasii Plinianae exercitationes in Caii Iulii Solini Polyhistora. Pars altera* (Paris, 1629), 846: 'eamdem plane materiam libris illis historicis & genealogicis exequutus fuisse uidetur quam postea Apollodorus Bibliotheca sua pertractauit, antiquam scilicet μυθολογίαν omnium aetatum & Graeciae populorum. quod unicum fuit Ἐπικοῦ κύκλου argumentum. Pherecydes inter primos extitit qui fabulas illas historicas prosa oratione exposuit'. Cf. F.W. Sturz, *Pherecydis fragmenta* (Gera, 1789), 74. See also H. Bertsch, *Pherekydeische Studien* (Tauberbischofsheim, 1898), 4: 'Die Mehrzahl der Fragmente macht geradezu den Eindruck einer Ergänzung homerischer Angaben aus anderen Quellen oder durch eigene Kombination … Gegensätze zu homerischen Angaben finden sich allerdings auch …' ('The majority of the fragments give the impression of being supplements to Homer's information from other sources or through his own combination … However, contradictions to Homeric accounts can also be found …'); A. Severyns, *Le cycle épique dans l'école d'Aristarque* (Liège and Paris, 1928), 310: 'Phérécyde, une fois de plus, n'a fait que résumer un poème cyclique' ('Pherecydes, once again, merely summarized a cyclic poem').
[3] Fowler (n. 2), 5: 'Mythography staked out their own territory, between Homer, Hesiod's *Catalogue*, and the Cyclic Epics on one side, and history and tragedy on the other.' While mythographers took their 'raw material' from epic poetry, they 'prepared the way for the emergence of historiography' (Fowler [n. 2], xvi). Cf. however J.-P. Vernant (transl. J. Lloyd), *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1990), 214–15: 'This literary manipulation of myth [*sc.* tragedy] is all the more striking because other accounts were at this time being produced with the purpose of collating the various versions that were current in different parts of the oral tradition. In the fifth century, Pherecydes of Athens and Hellanicos present in their chronicles local legends about the founding of cities and the genealogies of gods or heroes that were the object of public or family cults …' But the mechanisms leading to such collections form part of an operation that 'was certainly set in train even earlier by logographers such as Hekataios, Charon of Lampsacus and Xanthos of Lydia'.

Philaidae family.[4] The work of this Athenian mythographer fits comfortably into the intellectual and artistic entourage (together with Polygnotus, Sophocles, Ion, Bacchylides, and the elegists Archelaus and Melanthius) that surrounded the Philaidae, and contributes to strengthening their identity and political aspirations. All of this prompts a reappraisal of the contribution made by mythographers to the process of receiving and appropriating myth. Although the use of writing made it possible to address an abstract audience, regardless of a specific place or time, they transcribe both family memories and stories from the Greek mythical heritage from a particular perspective. To do so, each has his own agenda and programme, which have to be explained within their context and not, from a purely historic-literary perspective, as an appendix, a continuation or an exegesis of the epic tradition.

A second factor should also be considered: relative chronology, which seems to produce a dependent relationship of mythographical prose on epic poetry. A century ago, philologists dated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to the tenth and ninth centuries B.C. Throughout the twentieth century there has been a sustained tendency to move further down the date of composition of Homeric epics, to the extent that dates have been proposed as late as the mid sixth century.[5] But perhaps more important than that is the displacement of the relative chronology of epic and lyric poetry: today the idea that epic poetry, as we now have it, comes before lyric poetry, as well as iambic and elegiac poetry, is no longer assumed. In the *Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*, Nagy's chapters on lyric poetry and on Homer are in an 'inverted' order.[6] In parallel to this phenomenon, we should note recent efforts to adjust the dating of some mythographers, and specifically the chronology of Acusilaus of Argos. Following Mazzarino, who integrates this mythographer in the atmosphere of the 'trasformazione religiosa connessa con il movimento iniziatico' of the sixth century,[7] some scholars consider Acusilaus to be an author of the late archaic period, bringing his production back to the sixth century.[8] As a result of both tendencies, the chronology of epic and lyric poetry and of mythography tends to be constrained within much narrower time limits. Thus, for example, if we accept the later date of the *Catalogue of Women* proposed by West,[9] this genealogic poem would be contemporary with the earlier mythographers.

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[4] P. Dolcetti, 'Le genealogie di Ferecide di Atene e i Θησεῖα cimoniani', *Quaderni del Dipartimento di filologia, linguistica e tradizione classica 'Augusto Rostagni'* 17 (Bologna, 2001), 67–75; J. Pàmias, 'Coon or Cimon? Pherecydes' Homer: the mythographic possession of an epic past', *Mnemosyne* 70 (2017), 131–9. Pherecydes' work can be dated to the early 470s. See G. Huxley, 'The date of Pherekydes of Athens', *GRBS* 14 (1973), 137–43; cf. Fowler (n. 2), 478.

[5] M.L. West, 'Towards a chronology of early Greek epic', in Ø. Andersen and D.T.T. Haug (ed.), *Relative Chronology in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Cambridge, 2012), 224–41, at 224; the fact is that 'there is no clear reflex of the *Iliad* in art before *c.* 630, or in literature before Alcaeus' (p. 235). Recently, Lane Fox has argued for an upward dating, *ca.* 780–750 (R. Lane Fox, *Homer and his Iliad* [New York, 2023], 182–3).

[6] G. Nagy, 'Lyric and Greek myth' and 'Homer and Greek myth', in R.D. Woodard (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (Cambridge, 2007), 19–51, 52–82, respectively. Cf. L. Kurke, 'The strangeness of "song culture": archaic Greek poetry', in O. Taplin (ed.), *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds. A New Perspective* (Oxford, 2000), 58–87, at 59: 'We must avoid two misconceptions. First, that the "age of lyric" succeeded the "age of epic" as an organic development of the Greek spirit (to be succeeded in turn by the Hegelian "synthesis" of tragedy).'

[7] S. Mazzarino, *Il pensiero storico classico*, vol. 1 (Bari, 1973), 58: 'the religious transformation associated with the initiatory movement'.

[8] F. Fontana, 'Sul metodo storiografico di Acusilao di Argo', *Historia* 61 (2012), 383–413; J. Pàmias, 'Acusilaus of Argos and the bronze tablets', *HSPh* 108 (2015), 53–75.

[9] M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women. Its Nature, Structure, and Origins* (Oxford, 1985), 136: perhaps *c.* 540–20 B.C.

This all leads to the consideration of mythographical production as an independent project from epics. Putting a myth into writing dissociates it from performance, from immediate religious and ritual practice, and emancipates it from its institutional nature. To the extent the mythical repertoires of the early mythographers are abstracted from the conditions of oral communication, they constitute 'autonomous intellectual objects'. Although mythographers work from a local perspective, for Hecataeus of Miletus, Pherecydes of Athens or Hellanicus of Lesbos, writing is a means of addressing an abstract audience, regardless of the specific performance context.[10] In fact, for authors like Acusilaus of Argos or Pherecydes of Athens, there would be no reason to use the Ionian dialect in their books unless they had an international readership.[11] Besides that, the formal vehicle of expression that these authors have chosen is revealing: following the practice of some philosophers, the mythographers use prose, free from the metrical form typical of poetry and particularly of the oral epic tradition. At the beginning this decision was not a choice between two formal alternatives but a proper revolution. The emergence of prose implies a rupture of such magnitude that the old belief 'daß die (schriftliche!) Sachprosa irgendwie "direkt" aus der (potentiell mündlichen) Dichtung "herausgewachsen" sei' cannot be accepted.[12]

EARLY MYTHOGRAPHY AND ANCIENT SCHOLARSHIP: PHERECYDES

The conditions of preservation, and the means of transmission, of fragmentary mythographers have shaped how we approach them. In other words, the process of reception of epic poetry through the exegetic and grammarian tradition distorts our view and leads us to see mythography as being dependent on, or engaging with, Homer or Hesiod. Grammarians, lexicographers and scholiasts have filtered out from the texts that they are quoting those aspects that are irrelevant to them. And this often helps to create the impression that mythographers have merely antiquarian interests.[13] Thus, for example, Fowler's comment that 'Pherekydes […] is cited seven times for his views on Homeric words, which must mean the grammarians saw him as a source of such information',[14] can be formulated the other way round: the fact that Homeric commentators and scholiasts cite Pherecydes as a source of information to illustrate or complete a passage from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* is what leads the modern scholar to

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[10] Ch. Jacob, 'L'ordre généalogique. Entre le mythe et l'histoire', in M. Detienne (ed.), *Transcrire les mythologies* (Paris, 1994), 169–202, at 172–3.

[11] We have a good example in a fragment of Pherecydes (fr. 146 Fowler). When the mythographer traces the mythical origins of the Athenian deme of the Daedalidae, he informs us that it is in Athens. If the detail 'in Athens' was in Pherecydes's work (and not added by a later scholiast), it proves that the original text was meant to be read beyond Athens, and its perspective was therefore panhellenic. See R.L. Fowler, 'Early *historiē* and literacy', in N. Luraghi (ed.), *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2001), 95–115, at 111.

[12] M. Asper, 'Medienwechsel und kultureller Kontext: Die Entstehung der griechischen Sachprosa', in J. Althoff (ed.), *Philosophie und Dichtung im antiken Griechenland* (Stuttgart, 2007), 67–102, at 68 ('that (written) factual prose somehow "directly" emerged from (potentially oral) poetry …').

[13] G. Schepens, 'Jacoby's *FGrHist*: problems, methods, prospects', in G.W. Most (ed.), *Collecting Fragments. Fragmente sammeln* (Göttingen, 1997), 144–72, at 167 n. 66; for the particular case of the Atthidographers, see J. McInerney, 'Politicizing the past: The *Atthis* of Kleidemos', *ClAnt* 13 (1994), 17–37, at 22–3.

[14] Fowler (n. 2), xvi, cf. 706–7.

believe that Pherecydes was referring to Homeric words or passages. When the Homeric scholiast makes use of Pherecydes and quotes his words, there is usually no internal evidence that he made an explicit mention of the poet to correct him, comment on him or to explain him. One exception is fr. 169, which apparently shows Pherecydes' view on a particular Homeric passage or word.[15] When commenting on Hom. *Il.* 2.592 (καὶ Θρύον Ἀλφειοῖο πόρον καὶ ἐΰκτιτον Αἰπύ), the scholiast cites a fragment of Pherecydes that suggests that the mythographer engaged with the verbal interpretation of a Homeric passage, as his analysis concerns both a place name and an adjective appearing in the same hexametric context (Pherec. fr. 169 Fowler = Σ A Hom. *Il.* 2.592b [1.310.29 Erbse]):

Φερεκύδης δὲ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος τὸ μὲν Ἐΰκτιτον κύριον ὄνομα παρέλαβεν, τὸ δὲ αἰπύ ἐπίθετον.

Pherecydes the Athenian took the proper name to be Euktiton, but 'towering' (*aipy*) as the epithet. (transl. Morison)

Otherwise, as regards the whole corpus of fragments, to assume that Pherecydes is explicitly referring to Homer is a hasty conclusion drawn from the fact the Pherecydes' text is quoted within a Homeric scholium. Consider two examples:

1. Line 336 of book 15 of the *Iliad* (γνωτὸν μητρυιῆς Ἐριώπιδος, ἣν ἔχ᾽ Ὀϊλεύς) speaks of Medon, brother Ajax. The scholiast discusses the names of Ajax's mother (Pherec. fr. 24 Fowler = Σ T Hom. *Il.* 15.336c [4.82.43 Erbse]):

ὁμοίως τῷ ποιητῇ καὶ Ἑλλάνικος Ἐριώπην τὴν μητέρα Αἴαντός φησιν. Φερεκύδης δὲ ἐν πέμπτῳ καὶ Μνασέας ἐν ὀγδόῳ Ἀλκιμάχην …

In the same manner as the poet, Hellanicus says that Eriope was the mother of Ajax, but Pherecydes in Book Five and Mnaseas in Book Eight says that it was Alcimache … (transl. Morison)

2. Commenting on Hom. *Il.* 24.251 (Δηΐφοβόν τε καὶ Ἱππόθοον καὶ δῖον Ἀγαυόν), the scholiast asks whether Priam's son was called Dios (with the epithet ἀγαυός) or otherwise Agavus (with δῖος as adjective) (Pherec. fr. 137 Fowler = Σ T Hom. *Il.* 24.251b [5.565.53 Erbse]):

Φερεκύδης τὸν Δῖον νόθον υἱὸν Πριάμου φησίν. ἔσται οὖν τὸ ἀγαυόν ἐπίθετον.

Pherecydes says that Dios is the illegitimate son of Priam. Thus ἀγαυόν 'noble' is an epithet. (transl. Morison)

In both cases we cannot conclude from the scholiastic text that Pherecydes made his contribution to complete or correct Homer's text. We can rather infer that it is the scholiast, using the mythographer as an external authority, who establishes the connection between both authors and thus creates the illusion that the mythographer depends upon the poet. Comparison with a scholium of Pindar can be illustrative. The scholiast to *Olympian* 7 quotes Pherecydes in the same way that the Homeric scholiast does, that is to say, to complete, or correct, the information given by the poet. Since this ode is dated to 464 B.C. (slightly later than the mythographer),[16] nobody would argue that Pherecydes comments on or corrects Pindar (Pherec. fr. 80 Fowler = Σ Pind. *Ol.* 7.42b):

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[15] Another possible example is Pherec. fr. 141 Fowler, as interpreted by Pàmias (n. 4).

[16] On the date of *Olympian* 7, see W.J. Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar. Volume I, Olympian Odes 3, 7, 12, 14* (Leiden, 1987), 40. On the date of Pherecydes' activity, see above n. 4.

Ὅμηρος ταύτην Ἀστυόχην φησίν, οὐκ Ἀστυδάμειαν. εἰκὸς δὲ τὸν Πίνδαρον ἀπαντῆσαι ταύτῃ τῇ γραφῇ· ὃν τέκεν Ἀστυδάμεια βίῃ Ἡρακληείῃ. καὶ Ἡσίοδος δὲ Ἀστυδάμειαν αὐτήν φησι, Φερεκύδης δὲ Ἀστυγένειαν.

Homer says that this woman is Astyoche, not Astydameia. And it is probable that Pindar had encountered this passage: 'he whom Astydameia bore by the strength of Herakles'. Hesiod also says that she is Astydameia, but Pherecydes that she is Astygeneia. (transl. Morison)

EARLY MYTHOGRAPHY AND ANCIENT SCHOLARSHIP: HECATAEUS

A comparable state of affairs is observed in the reception of another early Greek mythographer, namely Hecataeus. Again this author is described as being dependent on the Hesiodic tradition 'ex parte materiae', as De Sanctis put it.[17] A more recent trend has even seen this logographer more as the 'continuateur de la tradition épique' than 'le précurseur d'Hérodote',[18] which denies to him the role of the father of history.[19] But even those scholars willing to accept Hecataeus' detachment from Hesiod (like Bertelli) assume that his main goal was to correct and to take a critical stance towards the epic poet, and that he explicitly criticized Hesiod by name.[20] This notion, however, is based on a distorted interpretation of the scholiastic literature. The only two fragments that are used, and can be used, to prove Hecataeus' explicit critique to Hesiod are 18 and 19.

Fragment 18 is transmitted by the scholiast to Apollonius Rhodius, who contrasts Hecataeus' opinion (ἐλέγχων) to the Hesiodic one (Hecat. fr. 18b Fowler = Σ Ap. Rhod. 4.282–91b). But the text is given by modern editors (Wendel, Jacoby, Fowler) as follows:

Ἡσίοδος δὲ διὰ Φάσιδος αὐτοὺς εἰσπεπλευκέναι λέγει. Ἑκαταῖος δὲ <… Ἀρτεμίδωρος δὲ> ἐλέγχων αὐτὸν ἱστορεῖ μὴ ἐκδιδόναι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τὸν Φᾶσιν.

In supplementing Ἀρτεμίδωρος δέ modern editors follow in a proposal by Hollander, who observed that this fragment contradicts a parallel statement made in the same scholiast above (Hecat. fr. 18a Fowler = Σ Ap. Rhod. 4.257–62b):[21]

Ἑκαταῖος δὲ ὁ Μιλήσιος ἐκ τοῦ Φάσιδος διελθεῖν εἰς τὸν Ὠκεανόν, εἶτα ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὸν Νεῖλον, ὅθεν εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν θάλασσαν. τοῦτο δὲ ὁ Ἐφέσιος Ἀρτεμίδωρος ψεῦδός φησιν εἶναι· τὸν γὰρ Φᾶσιν μὴ συμβάλλειν τῷ Ὠκεανῷ.

Hecataeus of Miletus says the Argonauts went through from the Phasis to the Ocean and from there to the Nile, whence they reached our sea. But Artemidorus of Ephesus says this is untrue, for the Phasis does not join the Ocean.

[17] G. De Sanctis, 'Intorno al razionalismo di Ecateo', *RFIC* 61 (1933), 1–15, at 2.

[18] F. Lasserre, 'L'historiographie grecque à l'époque archaïque', *QS* 4 (1976), 113–42, at 118.

[19] L. Bertelli, 'Hecataeus: from genealogy to historiography', in N. Luraghi (ed.), *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2001), 67–94, at 77.

[20] L. Bertelli, '"C'era una volta un mito…": alle origini della storiografia greca', in *De tuo tibi. Omaggio degli allievi a Italo Lana* (Bologna, 1996), 49–85, at 60; 64: 'troviamo una palese rettifica del mito esiodeo'; Bertelli (n. 19), 82: 'Of his predecessors, he explicitly criticized Hesiod by name'.

[21] 'Quod autem ad Hecataei nomen, aut ipsum corruptum est, aut, id quod probabilius uidetur, post Ἑκαταῖος δὲ aliquot uerba interciderunt' (H. Hollander, *De Hecataei Milesii descriptione terrae quaestio critica* [Bonn, 1861], 21).

Since in this second text Hecataeus made the Argonauts sail through the Phasis and this conception of the route coincides with the Hesiodic one, the participial ἐλέγχων has been explained away or else made to depend on another author, Artemidorus, who is positively said to have contradicted Hesiod. Korenjak advances reasons for leaving the text as it stands, since he thinks that the scholiast is referring not to the Milesian but to Hecataeus of Abdera.[22] Be that as it may, since there are no reasons to relate the participle ἐλέγχων to Hecataeus of Miletus in fr. 18b, this fragment cannot be taken as a critique of Hesiod by the logographer.

The second textual witness in which Hecataeus is allegedly addressing a critique to Hesiod is fragment 19 (= Σ Eur. *Or.* 872, ed. Mastronarde):

ἡ πολλὴ δόξα κατέχει μὴ ἀφῖχθαι τὸν Αἴγυπτον εἰς Ἄργος, καθάπερ ἄλλοι τέ φασι καὶ Ἑκαταῖος γράφων οὕτως· ‘ὁ δὲ Αἴγυπτος αὐτὸς μὲν οὐκ ἦλθεν εἰς Ἄργος, παῖδες δέ, <ἐόντες>, ὡς μὲν Ἡσίοδος ἐποίησε, πεντήκοντα, ὡς ἐγὼ δέ, οὐδὲ εἴκοσι’.

3 ἐόντες coni. Weil, Wilamowitz | ὡς ἐγὼ δέ Wilamowitz : ὡς λέγων δέ codd. : ὡς ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω Müller : ὡς δὲ ἐγὼ λέγω Weil, Kirchhoff | εἴκοσι Weil, Wilamowitz : εἰσί MA : ἔστι T

The majority opinion maintains that Aegyptus did not come to Argos, as among others Hecataeus too says, who writes as follows: ‘Aegyptus himself did not come to Argos, but his sons did, fifty of them, as Hesiod wrote, but as I say, not even twenty’.

The manuscripts of Euripides offer λέγων δέ (or λέγω δέ: in one manuscript, according to Mastronarde’s new online edition) and not ἐγὼ δέ.[23] The inclusion of ἐγώ is credited to Müller and modern scholarship has followed in his steps.[24] Yet Müller relied on Cobet’s edition of the scholia of Euripides that had appeared shortly before.[25] Either way, no positive textual evidence supports the notion that Hecataeus is making a personal statement. Moreover, as it stands (and the text appears to be corrupt), the scholiast does not imply that Hecataeus is engaging with Hesiod. The commentator is merely quoting Hecataeus’ authority in order to explain that Egypt did not come to Argos. And the words that confidently can be ascribed to Hecataeus are only ὁ δὲ Αἴγυπτος αὐτὸς μὲν οὐκ ἦλθεν εἰς Ἄργος (‘Aegyptus himself did not come to Argos’). After παῖδες δέ scholars either introduce a lacuna or supplement the word ἐόντες, in order to construct a complete and longer sentence to Hecataeus’ credit. However, even the number of twenty for the sons of Egypt, which are unanimously ascribed to Hecataeus, is a product of modern scholarship: the text of the manuscripts gives εἰσί or ἔστι, not εἴκοσι.[26] The

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[22] M. Korenjak, ‘Ein Neues Fragment des Hekataios von Abdera. Eine Fussnote zu FGrHist 1 und 264’, *Philologus* 149 (2005), 347–51.

[23] See D.J. Mastronarde (ed.), https://euripidesscholia.org/index.html: ‘λέγων δὲ M (ambig. whether λέγω or -ων) VCRw’. See also below n. 25.

[24] C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (Paris, 1851), 4.627. Cf. H. Weil, ‘Observations critiques. I. Sur les anciens prosateurs ioniens. II. Sur Thucydide’, *RPh* 2 (1878), 84–92, at 85; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aus Kythaden* (Berlin, 1880), 94.

[25] This edition provides the reading λέγω. See C.G. Cobet and A. Witzschel (ed.), *Scholia antiqua in Euripidis tragedias. Partim inedita partim editis integriora ex recensione C.G. Cobeti* (Leipzig, 1849), 15: πεντήκοντα ὡς λέγω δὲ οὐδὲ εἰσί.

[26] The number of twenty instead of fifty is assumed as fact (and as an example of ‘rationalization’) by modern scholars and the emendation is passed without noticing. See already F. Jacoby, ‘Hekataios (3)’, *RE* 7.2 (Stuttgart, 1912), 2667–750, at 2739; cf. L. Bertelli ‘Des généalogies mythiques à la naissance de l’histoire: le cas d’Hécatée’, in D. Bouvier and C. Calame (edd.), *Philosophes et historiens anciens face aux mythes* (Lausanne, 1998), 13–31, at 22; Bertelli (n. 19), 86; F. Graf (transl. T. Marier), *Greek Mythology. An Introduction* (Baltimore and London, 1993), 124; R.P. Martin, ‘The “myth before the myth began”’, in J.F. Nagy (ed.), *Writing Down the Myths*

emendation εἴκοσι is due to Weil, who assumes that Hecataeus' 'rationalism' accounts for likelihood and, hence, that the mythographer must have given a more plausible number of sons in accordance with his own criteria of acceptability:

Hécatée trouve que cinquante fils forment une famille trop nombreuse: il en réduit donc le nombre suivant ses propres idées, fidèle à sa déclaration: Τάδε γράφω, ὥς μοι ἀληθέα δοκέει εἶναι …[27]

To sum up, as in the former case, the supposed critical reference of Hecataeus to Hesiod is based on extremely weak textual evidence.

CONCLUSIONS

The close textual analysis conducted so far has shown that the genealogical link connecting Hecataeus and Pherecydes to ancient epic tradition is much weaker than has traditionally been accepted.[28] This connection is the by-product of an overarching narrative rooted in a developmental and teleological principle that leads from archaic epics to early mythography and further on to the rationalization and manipulation of myth accomplished by historiography and tragedy of the Classical period.

This article moves the focus by emphasizing the words of the scholiasts themselves, who need to be seen as authors with their own agenda and authoritative voice. Their role in shaping our conception of mythography has been crucial.[29] The modern evolutionary discourse that posits mythography as a straight continuation of ancient epics owes very much to them. When Müller or Wilamowitz introduce ἐγὼ δέ instead of λέγων into the text of Hecataeus they are acting, we might say, as scholiasts on the scholiast.

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(Turnhout, 2013), 45–66, at 61–2. Two exceptions are Pearson (n. 1), 103: 'the statement that he allowed Aegyptus less than twenty sons instead of the traditional fifty is perhaps evidence of a tendency towards rationalism; but the text has to be emended to supply this statement'; and Fowler (n. 2), 245 n. 21, who points out that the number twenty is the result of 'an emendation, to be sure, but it is hard to see what else the word could be'.

[27] Weil (n. 24), 85.

[28] The last example of this approach is to be found in the most recent edition of Acusilaus, which has a significant title: I. Andolfi, *Acusilaus of Argos' Rhapsody in Prose. Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Berlin and Boston, 2019).

[29] Texts embedded in scholia have to be carefully read because they are adapted to the interest of the commentator. Specifically focussing on mythography, see now N. Villagra, 'Mythography and scholia', in S. Smith and S. Trzaskoma (edd.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography* (Oxford, 2022), 239–60.