

Reading Diktys: The Discrete Charm of Bogosity

KEN DOWDEN
University of Birmingham

Cretan shepherds, like characters from a Poussin painting, find an earthquake-shattered tomb and marvel at the skeleton now disclosed. Beneath the head, they discern a tin box. Inside lies no treasure but linden-bark rolls inscribed in Punic letters: this is the earliest surviving historical document, the diary (*ephemeris*) of Diktys¹ of Crete, his record of the Trojan War itself. Thus the text we read, the antiquity of the writer, indeed the writer himself, and an audience trying to make sense of events are inscribed in the opening tableau.

Such is the *mise-en-scène* for what we view today as a sort of novel, though at other times during and since antiquity it has been viewed, or seems to have been viewed, as actual history, and the Greek fragments, which I have edited, find their place (as author 49) in Jacoby's *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* and the *Brill New Jacoby*.² Thus the contexts in which Diktys is read, evaluated and understood, are rather fluid and the work is correspondingly hard to grasp.

In this contribution, I seek to establish these reading contexts with a little more precision and perhaps in the process to enhance the interest of Diktys. To do so, I will relate his work to the type of mythography that held the market in the 1st centuries BC and AD, though it is the purpose of another paper and of other *BNJ* entries more centrally to establish the nature of that 'New Mythography', as I call it.³

¹ I use 'Diktys' for the fictional author of the Greek text and also for its real author (Ps.-Diktys, strictly), but 'Dictys' to refer to the Latin text translated and adapted by Sestimius.

² Dowden, *BNJ* (author no.) 49.

³ Dowden forthcoming; Dowden *BNJ* e.g., 46, 49, 54, 56, 57, 59, 61.

Without an understanding of reading contexts, we will struggle to understand the historical popularity of Diktys. Thus Nathaniel Griffin, in his dissertation published at Baltimore in 1907,⁴ can only state:

Notwithstanding a total lack of intrinsic literary merit, Dares and Dictys enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages a widespread popularity – which equalled, if it did not surpass, that accorded to the three great rival tales of Arthur, Charlemagne, and Alexander. This popularity is to be ascribed primarily to the fact that each author claims that he has been an actual participant in the Trojan War and an eye-witness of the events he records.

This is a harsh, if clear, judgment, expressed with the confidence a scholar might have in 1907, but it is perhaps not far from modern views. So Tomas Hägg, for instance, describes the *Ephemeris* as ‘prosaic in a double sense’.⁵ Only Stefan Merkle has paid Dictys the necessary attention to rescue some understanding of the *Diary* as a literary work, principally basing himself on structure and themes.⁶

A comparator for this difficulty is the *Alexander Romance*, where Merkelbach can serve as the Griffin of the story:

die Menschheit war im ausgehenden Altertum und im Mittelalter wieder kindlicher geworden.⁷

The phenomenon of the ‘Middle Ages’ is deeply disconcerting to modern literary values: the *Alexander Romance* is said to have been the most popular text after the bible and was translated into 24 languages.⁸ How can it be that works of such questionable literary merit achieved such outstanding popularity?

Style constitutes a significant difficulty.⁹ The Latin of Septimius is reasonably urbane but not very memorable and in this respect Septimius is loyal to the deliberately limited *ephemeris* or *commentarius* style of the original – simple narration, in rhetorical terms, if with flashes of Sallustian colour. Occasionally characters speak, but only rarely and to very little effect. Simi-

⁴ Griffin 1907, 6-7.

⁵ Hägg 1983, 146.

⁶ Merkle 1996, 567.

⁷ Merkelbach 1977, 92.

⁸ Dowden 1989a, 650.

⁹ Dowden 1989a, 651.

larly, the *Alexander Romance*, except in the version of the distinguished Julius Valerius Polemius, is a frustration for the modern translator. The style of Ps.-Kallisthenes is very simple, very restricted, and only occasionally shifts register when in direct speech or letter-form; even that shift is not great and a sort of ‘toy’ register prevails, one that recalls childish self-importance rather than rhetorical grandeur.

Yet it is no mean feat to compose a work on the scale of Diktys in nine books, or of Ps.-Kallisthenes in three. And it is hard to believe that the authors could not have adopted a different stylistic register if they chose; it is simply that they made a deliberate choice, just as Xenophon of Ephesos employed a restricted neoclassical style – signalled by the pseudonym ‘Xenophon’?¹⁰ Their style is not in itself a sign of low literary quality, but of a choice, which we need to understand.

That choice then in turn relates to (a) the initial context, and (b) later receptions. We need to understand how Diktys pitched his product for, I believe, a late first-century AD market. We also need to recognise that his stylistic choice accidentally resulted in his text becoming very ‘accessible’. So, in their introductions to English translations of the *Alexander Romance*, Dowden mentions ‘the style that Christians commended for their nonelite audiences’ (1989a, 651) and Stoneman associates the story with ‘the fundamental features of the apocryphal lives of the Apostles’.¹¹ And religious narratives such as the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, or even *Joseph and Aseneth*, are not benchmarks for stylistic ambition.

So in what follows, I look at a mythographic context, and subsequently at the shifting identities of Diktys in successive receptions. Finally, I will draw one more character towards the first century AD contexts we will have outlined, namely Antonios Diogenes and his *Incredible things beyond Thule*.

Diktys and the mythographic games of the 1st century BC/AD

The date of Diktys matters for this argument. As I have rehearsed my views on this question elsewhere¹² I simply list here what seem to me the major considerations:

- Septimius’ translation is clearly enough a fourth century production, just like Julius Valerius Polemius’s translation of the *Alexander Romance*.

¹⁰ On the choices of Dictys and Dares, see Holzberg 1995, 21–22.

¹¹ Stoneman 1991, 20.

¹² Dowden *BNJ* 49, ‘Biographical Essay’; Dowden forthcoming.

- The original Greek text evidently falls before the papyri which date shortly after AD 200.
 - The prologue's reference to the discovery of this Bronze Age historian in the 13th year of Nero's reign puts its fabrication after 66.
 - It makes most sense to place Diktys closer to the beginning of this period (AD 66-200) than to the end. The prologue of the Greek author appears to know about T. Atilius Rufus, a distinguished consular and governor who died in 84 and whose significance would have faded fast after that.
- A 'Tuesday afternoon' in AD 91 looks quite appealing and the author could even have been a Cretan.¹³

This view can next be reinforced by setting Diktys against a mythographic backcloth, particularly of the first centuries BC and AD, which in effect Alan Cameron investigated in his 2004 book on *Greek Mythography*, and which I have developed in a somewhat different way in a companion-piece to this.¹⁴ In this way the philological satisfaction of anchoring Diktys grows into a new understanding of his project. The *Ephemeris* seems a very isolated work at first (apart from Dares, as in the *dvandva* 'Dares and Diktys'¹⁵), with no real generic home. Indeed, it may not have a generic home, but it does have an intellectual home.

The easiest route to this mythographic association is the case of Agamemnon's goat. At Aulis, Agamemnon is out hunting: he kills a deer and for some reason Artemis is aggrieved; he must 'therefore' sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia. This familiar version goes back to the Cyclic *Kypria*, from where it reaches Proclus' *Chrestomathy* in the 6th century AD, via that standard resource of Greek mythology, Ps.-Apollodoros (*Bibliothèque*, Ep. 3, 21), which will be mentioned again below. But a different version was known to Photios (*Bibl.* 190, 150b):

ἐν Αὐλίδι γὰρ παραγενόμενος Ἀγαμέμνων αἶγαν ἀγρίαν ἱερὰν Ἀρτέμιδος κατατοξεύει.

When he was at Aulis, Agamemnon shot a wild goat that was sacred to Artemis.

This is in Photios' report of Ptolemy Chennos' *Kaine Historia*, and Ptolemy too, like Diktys, seems to have written in the last decades of the first century

¹³ Suggested to me by K.A. & D. Wardle (pers. comm.), in the light of Cretan prosperity in the 1st century AD, visible in the archaeological record.

¹⁴ Dowden forthcoming

¹⁵ See, e.g., a search for "Dares and Dictys" in JSTOR, Google, or Google Books.

AD (this comes from an internal reference to a painting in the Temple of Pax under Vespasian). At this point, we should bear in mind that Ptolemy was subjected to a devastating, and indeed unparalleled, attack by Rudolf Hercher in 1855, that sought to destroy his credibility, his *Glaubwürdigkeit*, and by and large that attitude has prevailed up to modern times (and is largely adopted by Cameron). It is important to understand the nature of this attack and the theoretical baggage that comes with too easy acceptance of Hercher's position. Unlike the attack of Ronald Syme on the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, there is no misrepresentation of history, only of mythology, which is revised in ingenious, if often preposterous, ways. What however angered Hercher was that Ptolemy cites a very large number of authors who are otherwise unknown, leading to the grave suspicion that he had largely invented the supposed sources for this material. These supposed authors, several of whom feature in Jacoby's *FGrH*, are on the Hercherian view bogus, they are the products of an imaginative *Schwindelautor*.

But there is a problem with the goat: this goat is also in Diktys (49F5 = DL 1.19) and is one of a number of instances – admittedly not huge, but enough to make a point – where Diktys and Ptolemy agree.¹⁶ How then are we to maintain the theory of Ptolemy's brazen invention? The usual way is to claim that Diktys got this material from Ptolemy.¹⁷ This has the effect of distributing blame satisfactorily: (a) Ptolemy's bad name is preserved; (b) Diktys is (blamelessly) writing fiction. Virtuositically, Cameron has maintained the reverse (2004, 149): Ptolemy got the story from Diktys, but this does not exonerate him from the charge of having made up this story, because 'it would be entirely in character for Ptolemy to draw on a source he knew to be outright fiction.'¹⁸

In addition, it does not seem entirely without reason that Agamemnon is said to have killed a *goat*. Any mythologist who has looked at the Iphigeneia story will realise that it is part of a family of stories, situated variously at Aulis in Boiotia, and at Brauron and Mounichia in Attica.¹⁹ An animal is killed and the same animal, or sometimes another, is substituted for Iphigeneia. A bear is killed and the girls of Brauron must perform the Bear rite; but at Mounichia the first priest Embaros sacrifices a goat dressed up as his daughter and presumably the sacrifice thenceforth remains a goat. The alle-

¹⁶ Dowden on *BNJ* 49F5.

¹⁷ Griffin 1907, 109-110.

¹⁸ This is perhaps needlessly emotive. Diktys had worked out a version of the mythology and Ptolemy may have accepted it as a 'neoteric' version (see below). It might explain where the scholia got Diktys' name from as authority for this version.

¹⁹ Dowden 1989b, ch. 2.

gation, then, that Agamemnon killed a goat apparently gives some place to the animal privileged in Attic sacrificial practice (though the story strangely continues with the deer substitution). This is a *learned* change in the story rather than a random and irresponsible one.

Antonios Chatzis in 1914 maintained that Hercher was wrong to dispute Ptolemy's credibility. Countless ancient authors, he observed, have been lost, and as a result, if we have not heard of so many of Ptolemy's authors, it does not mean that they did not in fact exist. I cannot go into detail here,²⁰ but broadly I think Chatzis' position is preferable, if exaggerated, and that there is a very great danger of destroying our knowledge of this period and its authors by too dismissive an approach to Ptolemy. Thus we might prefer to believe that Ptolemy has, as he claimed, trawled through a huge amount of literature to gather together the New Mythology for his, to give it its full title, *Kaine historia es polymatheian* – his 'New History for Encyclopaedic Learning'. Ptolemy thus becomes a sort of Philostratus of a mythographic sophistic, and Diktys is part and parcel of it. There is no point in quarantining bogus mythology to Ptolemy – it was being created everywhere and even influenced Vergil. In this climate, the work of Ps.-Apollodoros on mythology begins to make sense for the first time, as I have outlined in a separate paper.²¹ His work is probably from much the same time, say the later first century AD (all we know for certain is that it is after 61 BC), and it is a deliberately conservative work, trying to establish a correct mythology rather than a modish work of the New Mythography. But even he gives himself away when he talks of Achilles as becoming an admiral of the Greek fleet at the age of 15. This is New Mythography material, for which you would turn above all to Diktys.

Thus this flowering of inventive mythography, chronicled in Ptolemy, underpins the work of Diktys and gives sense to it. As Stefan Merkle has seen, his account is what happens when a *grammaticus* in the problem-and-comment tradition, instead of commenting on particular incidents in the epic tradition, puts his conclusions all together into a single narrative. And therein lies its fascination: this is the Trojan War within the New Mythography, operating according to new canons of realism and psychology. The game played is very close to the rules of Thucydides' *archaiologia*, the original virtuosic transposition of poetic narrative into history. But Diktys and his kind are even more epideictic and in the end do not, I think, believe in a truth

²⁰ For a fuller account see Dowden on *BNJ* 56F1b.

²¹ Dowden forthcoming.

to recover, but in a story which strikes a certain realistic poise and advertises the ingenuity of the interpreter. What matters is realism not reality.

In this way, a coherent period can now be constructed out of what were isolated, or marginalised, texts. Ptolemy is no longer an idiosyncratic loner, responsible single-handed (or with Ps.-Plutarch, *Parallela minor* and *de fluviis*) for mythographic irresponsibility. Diktys is not a one-off failed novelist waiting for Dares (and in a sense the *Alexander Romance*) to join him in the voyage into the Middle Ages. The fictional authors of the *Schwindel-autoren* can rise from their graves and walk the pages of literary history again. And Dio's *Troikos Logos* is not some sort of isolated 'stunt'.²² Indeed, I wonder whether this work, with its admirable claim that Helen was legitimately married to Paris and that the Trojan War never happened, was not the inspiration for Diktys.²³ In any case, it belongs with Ptolemy and Diktys.

The eight identities of Diktys

This then finally enables us to construct an outline history of the reading of Diktys' text and of the stance of its supposed author.

1. Starting with the text itself, Diktys is a *character in his own narrative*, whose principal purpose is to be present at key points to authenticate the story for the reader. His insistence on autopsy is remarkably Thucydidean (Thuc. 1, 22):

τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἡξίωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὥς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατόν ἀκριβεῖα περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελθόν.

The facts of what happened in the war I did not learn at random. Rather, I chose to write, not following my own inclination, but pursuing each issue with the maximum accuracy either through being present at the events myself or from others.

Our Diktys likewise is a writer of reliable narrative, whose remains are found in his tomb at its outset, his work beside him in a tin box, hermetically sealed against the charge of implausibility (49T2c). For contemporary, 1st

²² An idea entertained by J.W. Cohoon in *Dio Chrysostom* 1, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard (1932), 445, cf. Dowden forthcoming.

²³ Dowden, on *BNJ* 49T3.

century AD, readers, part of the pleasure of reading is testing Diktys against this fantasy.

2. Diktys *the first century writer*, e.g. an author from Crete, who knew its seismic activity and knew how to lie, is also in a way the Thucydides of the *archaiologia*. Hektor is not killed through an epic combat which lacks real-day plausibility: he is ambushed. And Achilles is not killed by arrows to vulnerable heels, or by the stroke of Apollo: he is murdered by Paris and Deiphobos in the grove of Apollo Thymbraios. The Trojan War is demythicised and Homer is treated as a witness that needs correction, because we must allow for his being a poet (ποιητὴν ὄντα, Thuc. 1,10). This then is a culture of ludic *verismo*, an enjoyment of the game of realism, a reconstruction of the history that might have been, that one could argue over the drinks was what of course must have happened, inviting assent to one's ingenuity.

3. As with the ideal novel, there is little sign of his actually being *read* in antiquity. Not even Julian remarks how much he has just enjoyed reading Diktys. There are only two papyri, from around 200-210 AD, one from Tebtynis, one from Oxyrhynchus. It is perhaps significant that *both* are from the fourth book – the one with the murder of Achilles and arguably the high point of the whole work. We cannot know that there was any more of Diktys than this in Egypt in AD 200. Conceivably Philostratos, *Heroikos* takes a shot at Diktys at around the same time.²⁴ He next comes into view when Septimius translates him, probably in the 4th century AD. Notably Septimius rolls the last four books, 6-9, into a single book: perhaps his interest too had largely expired after the end of Book 4, just as the Egyptian readers seem to have privileged the action-packed part; or perhaps the non-Vergilian post-homerica were now falling outside the range of cultural familiarity of Latin audiences. The motives of Septimius himself, however, are inscrutable: we are, he says, *avidi verae historiae* and we wish to cast aside our *desidia otiosi animi* – he is keen to study true history, and to make good use of leisure time.²⁵ These are postures and betray nothing of his real reasons.

Other imperial *Nachleben* are harder to pin down. Somewhere at an indeterminate point between Diktys himself and Byzantine times, the Homeric scholia mention his name a propos of Agamemnon's goat, though maybe via Ptolemy, and one 'Sisyphos' rewrites him from a different point of view, that of Achilles' son Pyrrhus.

4. After this, following now the fate of the Greek text (as opposed to Septimius' Latin), Diktys is mentioned in Syrianos, perhaps in the first half

²⁴ §30, cf. Merkle 1994, 193-194.

²⁵ On these concepts see Dowden 2003, 150-154.

of the fifth century, as Merkle has observed.²⁶ Now Diktys is cited as evidence that the rhetoric of Cadmus and Danaos (presumably thinking of the letter shapes) was still practised in the time of the Trojan War. This apparently represents a more literal acceptance of Diktys veracity. But even here this is about reconstruction of the times of legend in order to dignify the history of rhetoric and assert its existence in some sense since the beginnings of human society. The strict historical truth of such statements is not really necessary and the reconstruction by Diktys of a deep past with typically Greek rhetorical features is a convenience for this author.

5. A full text seems to be in the hands, a century and a half later, of John Malalas (AD c.580) and in the nature of things we have no idea how he came by it. This ‘eloquent’ (‘Malalas’, in Syrian) man from Antioch is composing a chronography, an important tool for the understanding of God’s world. For that, the world of myth must enter the world of history and it was ready done, for the Trojan War, by Diktys. In this way the mythic world has benefited from the Old Testament, which it is the purpose of this sort of chronography to anchor to history. Thus the credibility that is extended to Hebrew tradition supports a continuing ‘belief’ (cf. the work of Paul Veyne) in the data reported by Greek mythology. However, John actually believes in the historical reality of Diktys sufficiently to call him σοφώτατος (most wise, 49T2a, his standard term of approbation for a source with good information²⁷). And he speaks (49T2c) of ἡ ἔκθεσις τοῦ Τρωικοῦ πολέμου μετὰ ἀληθείας παρ’ αὐτοῦ συγγραφεῖσα πᾶσα (‘the entire account of the Trojan War written truthfully by him’), a claim evidently deriving from the autoptic stance stressed in the introduction to the *Ephemeris*. Thus Diktys becomes a Moses, the narrator from mythic times. And the reader is now obliged on grounds of faith to accept the world of systematised authoritative knowledge. Furthermore Diktys very conveniently writes in such a simple style, without excessive literary artifice or depth of characterisation, that he may be incorporated with little change into John’s text.

Thus the changing readings of Diktys correspond to much larger changes in the nature of belief and the acceptance of traditions about the past.

6. John Malalas must be responsible for Diktys coming to the attention also (and not just via his own chronicle) of John of Antioch a generation

²⁶ Merkle 1988, 22, referring to *Syriani, Sopatri et Marcellini Scholia ad Hermogenis Status*, vol. 4 p. 43 line 3, assuming this is the same Syrianos.

²⁷ John Malalas uses the word 82 times in the nominative singular, 10 in other cases, overwhelmingly to praise sources.

later (c. 620) and also, it seems, George Kedrenos in the 1050s.²⁸ Others could have seen the text, but need not have done – Arethas around AD 900 and the *Souda*. Interestingly, Bishop Photios (died 893) did *not* read it for his *Bibliotheca*, unlike several of the novelists, and Kedrenos is its last known reader. It could have perished in the sack of 1204.

7. An offshoot of John Malalas appears in the Slavonic tradition of his chronicle, a bizarre product where scribes perhaps from the 9th century onwards wrote in Old Church Slavonic, in this case a very old version of Russian, about arcane and deviant parts of Greek mythology, for instance how *Menefeousŭ*, in the shrine of *Afina*, heard the case presented by *Ouakosŭ* who had come with <*Toun*> *dariousŭ*, who was the tsar and father of *Klou-temnista* and the grandfather of *Arestŭ*, and how *Menefeousŭ* ruled in favour of the latter (49F2) – as we discover ‘in the sixth rhapsody composition of *Diiktousŭ*’. This cannot have made much sense to the readers of the chronicle, who must be presumed, by the fact of its being in Slavonic, not to have a Greek education or Greek texts. What bearings could they possibly have had for learning about how Menestheus, king of Athens, held a trial in the shrine of Athena on the Areopagus, and heard the case presented against Orestes by Oiax, who had come with Tyndareus – king and father of Clytaemnestra and grandfather of Orestes? And how exactly were they meant to follow up the reference to Diktys? No, Diktys has finally become a name in a work of reference for encyclopaedic readers who strove to belong to the world of culture and the world of religion: he has become an ingredient in a latter-day *New history for encyclopaedic learning*. But the ludic dimension is totally lost and replaced by an earnest subscription to knowledge with no context.

8. The final Diktys is ours, the Diktys who is in danger of being a novelist and is studied mainly by those interested in ancient fictional narrative. This is another fictitious construction, present already in Jacoby (the *Ephemeris* is a ‘Roman’), and in histories of literature, and constantly tempting modern specialists in ancient narrative.²⁹ Beside the ideal novel, we are in danger of conjuring up the historical novel. Yet we are uneasy as we know that, whatever use genres have for the analysis of ancient literature, that usefulness runs out for the unacknowledged genre of the ancient novel. The ideal novels form an intertextual set and at best an implicit genre may be deduced from them. Other narratives are much freer. Petronius’ *Satyricon*, or

²⁸ Dowden on *BNJ* 49F5.

²⁹ E.g., Hägg 1983, 146. Holzberg 1995, 21 is very careful not directly to call Diktys a novel, and cf. the remarks of Merkle 1989, 303–304.

rather its Greek original,³⁰ is a particular intertextual recipe, and Diktys' *Ephemeris* is another. Diktys really belongs to a different game, which must be tested through the extent of its supposed claim to historical truth and the reader's corresponding interest in events which are deemed, however lightly, to have really, non-fictionally happened. Chariton may cite the historical Hermogenes, but his work does not consist in a statement of the course of attested history; the proportions are different. And if Alexander had not existed, then the *Alexander Romance* would really be as uninteresting as it seems.

Diktys and Antonios Diogenes

Diktys, however, is not without significance for the world of the novel, as we might more narrowly conceive it. The clearest link is to Antonios Diogenes, another rather aberrant work and one whose date, if we can determine it, would be significant for how we read it. Though many views are possible on his dating, Ewen Bowie has made a fairly detailed, and suggestive, case for the decade following AD 98 (Bowie 2002: 58-60). This would on my view place him very soon after Diktys and make him also a contemporary of Ptolemy Chennos. Antonios perhaps deserves re-reading in that light.

The overall challenge of τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἄπιστα (*Incredible things beyond Thule*) recalls that of Ptolemy's *New History* retailing long sequences of grossly implausible events culled from authors so obscure that they have seemed implausible themselves. The whole point of ἄπιστα (*incredible things*) is that they should be παρὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν, 'contrary to the (received) story',³¹ but not rejected. It is the same, at root paradoxographic, drive that gives Diktys his special flavour. A more realistic Trojan War is not more real and the audience knows it.

But Antonios is even closer to Ptolemy than that (Photios, *Bibliotheca* 166, 111a):

Λέγει δὲ ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ποιητὴς ἐστὶ κωμωδίας παλαιᾶς, καὶ ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἄπιστα καὶ ψευδῇ πλάττοι, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχει περὶ τῶν πλείστων αὐτῷ μυθολογηθέντων ἀρχαιοτέρων μαρτυρίας, ἐξ ὧν σὺν καμᾶτῳ ταῦτα συναθροίσειε· προτάττει δὲ καὶ ἐκάστου βιβλίου τοὺς ἄνδρας οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα προαπεφάναντο, ὥς μὴ δοκεῖν μαρτυρίας χηρεῦν τὰ ἄπιστα.

³⁰ Jensson 2004.

³¹ Dowden forthcoming.

He says that he himself is a poet of Old Comedy, and that if he makes up incredible and fictional things, all the same he has the evidence of older authors for most of the fabulous stories he tells, authors from whom he put this together with hard work. And he gives a list at the beginning for each book of the men who previously stated this sort of material so that his incredible things should not seem to lack evidence.³²

So this is a learned man who understands learned games, if he can claim to write Old Comedy, rather like Pliny's friend (*Ep.* 6, 21) Vergilius Romanus, in effect a contemporary of Antonios:

nuper audiui Vergilium Romanum paucis legentem comoediam ad exemplar veteris comoediae scriptam.

I recently (c. 105 AD?) heard Vergilius Romanus reading to a few people a comedy composed in the manner of Old Comedy.

Like Ptolemy – and like Ps.-Apollodoros – he stressed the hard work that has gone into making the learned collection of material the reader has in front of them.³³ Like Ptolemy, his material is wayward and obscure; like Ptolemy, he gives you the idea that some of these authors may not quite be real. Like Pliny the Elder (who died of course in AD 79, the previous generation?), he cites his authorities book by book, but the ludic dimension has taken over.

Diktys too had been careful at all points to maintain the plausibility of the narrative, often by taking the trouble to witness it himself. But beyond that, the narrative authority of Diktys rests on the linden-bark leaves in the tin-covered *kibotion* (chest).³⁴ Antonios bows to this device, and surely to Diktys himself, but elaborates and complicates it. The chest is now, like the tablets it encloses, made of cypress (Photios, *ibid.*):

Προσέταξέ τε τῷ Κύμβῳ δίχα ταῦτα τὰ διαμυθολογηθέντα ἀναγράφασθαι, καὶ θατέραν μὲν τῶν δέλτων αὐτὸν ἔχειν, τὴν ἑτέραν δέ, καθ' ὃν

³² The translation I present is a shade more literal than that of G. N. Sandy in Reardon 1989, 781.

³³ Dowden forthcoming.

³⁴ Dares, written on palm-leaves in the Latin version (*FGrH* 51T2), is impossible to date unless one takes the Latin to be a re-setting (to match Dictys Latinus) of the original Greek epic which was available to Aelian (51T6), and more significantly to Ptolemy Chennos (51T5), who himself wrote an Anti-Homer in 24 books (*Souda* s.v. Ptolemaios, π 3037 Adler, and cf. my comments on *BNJ* 56F1b).

ἀποβιώῃ καιρόν, τὴν Δερκυλλίδα πλησίον τοῦ τάφου κιβωτίῳ ἐμβαλοῦσαν καθεῖναι.

(Deinias) told Kymbas to write down this story he had told, twice over: one set of tablets he should keep, and the other Derkyllis should put in a *kibotion* near his tomb when he should die.

There is a carbon copy of the text, so that the story may be read and in addition survive in a tomb, as yet undisturbed by an intertextual earthquake. The story involves a plurality of characters and of tellings and in the circumstances it goes into the tomb of Derkyllis, the aristocratic heroine from Tyre. Meanwhile in the next Chinese box, the author Antonios is himself citing authorities, presumably either for this work or for its encyclopaedic elaboration, in the manner of Pliny the Elder.

Thus Antonios' *Incredible Things* grows out of the same context as Diktys and similar tastes and methods to Ptolemy. But its material is in some ways closer to the Greek ideal novel, to a Chariton or (soon) a Xenophon. It seems that the ludic reconstruction of historico-mythographic and geographic realities, save maybe Lucian's *True Story*, is giving way, on the larger scale, to a more outright fictional stance. As the period of the New Mythography is expended, the novel is taking off, propagating a sort of new-comic plot relative to the learned mythography of the old epics and tragedies and the parodic geography of Antonios. New Comedy has begun again.

Abbreviations

BNJ = I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill's New Jacoby*, 2007-date, online: Brill (<http://www.brill-online.nl>).

FGrH = F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin 1926-1930, Leiden 1954-1958.

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