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«In King Cambyses' Vein»: Reconsidering the Relationship between Thomas Preston's *Cambises* and Herodotus*

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ABSTRACT: The relationship between Thomas Preston's early Elizabethan tragedy *Cambises* (printed 1569) and the Book III of Herodotus' *Histories* has often been downplayed, owing to the lack of printed editions or translations of Herodotus in England at the time and the much more evident connection between the tragedy and the second book of Richard Taverner's *Garden of Wysedome* (1547). However, a closer look at the play's sources reveals how a connection may exist, and how the version of the story Preston staged may be influenced by the tale of Cambyses as presented by the ancient historian. The insistence on the relationship between the king and his subjects (a central issue in both Preston's tragedy and its sources) may derive from Herodotus, especially if viewed in contrast with the previous versions of the story in medieval literature, the focus of which was mainly on the ethical *exempla* they provided. Through a comparison of those texts, and a consideration of the availability of Herodotus' work at the time, either in print or in manuscript form, this paper will then suggest that the version Preston staged in his tragedy is closer to Herodotus than the previous literary tradition.

KEYWORDS: Cambyses; Johannes Carion; classical reception; Herodotus; Persian Empire; Thomas Preston; Richard Taverner; tyranny – Cambise; Johannes Carion; Erodoto; impero persiano; Thomas Preston; ricezione dei classici; Richard Taverner; tirannide.

Up to 1934, scholars generally assumed that the primary source for Thomas Preston's tragedy *Cambises* (printed 1569, staged probably in

* This article is part of a broader research on the Greek legacy in the Elizabethan theories of tyranny and their relation to contemporary theatre practices, originally carried out for my PhD dissertation (University of Verona, 2018) and then largely revised and fully developed in 2020 within the 2017 PRIN project Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama, directed by Professor Silvia Bigliazzi at the University of Verona.

1560-1561) was to be recognised in the third book of Herodotus' *Histories*, where the historian relates in detail the life of that Persian king. It was a reasonable assumption, since, on the surface, the drama reprises many of the major plot points of the Greek text, not only those in Book III, but also the story of the punishment of the unjust judge Sisamnes in V 25, 1. However, this assumption contrasts not only with the numerous differences between the Greek text and the tragedy as regards plot points and stylistic features¹, but also with the fact that, in 1560s England, there were no vernacular translations of Herodotus, nor would there be any at least for another twenty years.

The first English translation of Herodotus would appear only in 1584 by an unknown translator (B.R.), printed by Thomas Marshe; even in that case, it would consist only of the first two books (cf. Grogan 2014, 73-77). There would have been no English translation of the *Histories* as a whole until the 17th century. The *Histories* had also been translated into Latin by Lorenzo Valla and in Italian by Matteo Maria Boiardo in the 15th century. Both these translations had a deep impact on the reception of the historian's work in Renaissance culture (cf. Foley 2016 and Looney 2016; on Valla's translation, see also Pagliaroli 2006), and were still widely read almost a century after; however, while Preston may have known them, the matter of the different plot points and the closer affinity with other texts identified by previous scholarship needs to be accounted for.

In 1934, Don Cameron Allen suggested that the actual source of Preston's tragedy was the *Chronica* of German historian Johannes Carion, first printed in German in Wittenberg in 1532 and then translated into Latin by Hermann Bonus (Basel, 1537) and into English by Walter Lynne (1550). This book presented itself as a world history from the beginning of time to the present day, seen in the light of the Reformation as the ultimate revelation of Christ's word². Cambyse's³ tale was included in Book II of the *Chronica*, and the similarities Allen highlighted between

¹ The military expedition to Egypt, which so much space occupies in Herodotus, is reduced in the tragedy to only one scene, the first one, where Cambises merely asks his noblemen advice for its organization. No mention is then made of the actual war, nor of the expedition against the Aethiopians and the slaughter of Apis. Similarly, nothing is said in the tragedy about the plot of the fake Smirdis.

² In its original printing, the *Chronica* ended with the reign of Emperor Charles V. Subsequent editions of the work, edited amongst others by notable scholars as Philip Melancthon and Kaspar Peucer, would expand its content to comprehend later events.

³ From now on, I will adopt the spelling 'Cambyse' when referring to Herodotus' character, 'Cambises' when talking about the protagonist of Preston's tragedy.

the chronicle and the tragedy are indeed strong. The two works include the same number of stories involving Cambyses, presented in almost exactly the same order (there is only one major difference, see below), and an entire section of the text seem to be reprised almost directly from Carion to form the dialogue and the action of Preston's play (especially the ones involving the murders of Praxaspes' son and Cambyses' sister/queen).

In 1955, William A. Armstrong suggested a new source, the second book of Richard Taverner's *Garden of Wysedome* (1547)⁴, a collection of exemplary tales of kings and governors with moralistic purposes. He showed how Taverner's version of the story was identical to the one staged by Preston, to the point of having the story about the punishment of the unjust judge Sisamnes preceding the murder of Praxaspes' son, just as in the play (while in Carion, as in Herodotus, the story involving Sisamnes is the last one to be told). He also pointed out, however, how apart from this difference, Taverner's text followed Carion in practically every way, and thus suggested considering Taverner as an intermediary source between Preston and the *Chronica*, and the closest one to the tragedy for linguistic, chronological and cultural reasons. Armstrong's proposal has since then been the version widely accepted by scholars on the matter, and any further analysis of *Cambises* in relation to Herodotus has been altogether discarded⁵.

And yet, I argue that a connection between Preston and Herodotus can be traced, because the version of Cambyses' story Preston stages has very strong links to the historian's. With that, I do not mean to suggest that Herodotus is once again to be recognised as the primary source of the play (Carion and Taverner are still the most likely direct sources); what I do mean is that the inclusion of some plot details not only in Preston's text, but also in both Carion and Taverner, reveals a knowledge of the *Histories* which is absent in their literary antecedents, and is the result of either Preston or one of his sources reading Herodotus. I shall then provide a close reading of Preston's tragedy and the episodes of Cambyses' life staged in it, highlighting those details that reveal links

⁴ Taverner's work was printed for the first time in 1539, but in this first edition it consisted of only one book; I will then refer only to the second edition in this issue.

⁵ An exclusion which has led *Cambises* to be neglected from studies on Persia and its empire in English literature. Even in the most recent and extensive work on the subject, Grogan 2014, the chapter involving Elizabethan drama focuses entirely upon the presence of Cyrus the Great as both a character and a role model, ignoring the fortune of other Persian rulers such as Cambises and Darius.

between the tragedy and the historian's work, either direct or mediated through Carion and Taverner's texts.

We may start by pointing out that while it is true that no version of Herodotus' text (either in Latin, English or Greek) had been printed in England by Preston's time, this does not mean that the historian did not circulate in England: on the contrary, according to what Roger Ascham (former Cambridge student, professor at the same university and future tutor to Elizabeth I) wrote to his friend and former classmate John Brandesby in 1542, at the university «Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon magis in ore et manibus omnium teruntur, quam tum Titus Livius» (Ascham 1865, XXXVII). The archives of Cambridge University libraries show us that eight copies of the *Histories* printed outside of England could be found in the libraries of both King's College (where Preston studied)⁶ and Trinity College, including three copies of the Greek text printed by Manutius and three of Valla's translation⁷. As for manuscripts, while it is doubtful that the MS. I.2.09 (30) now held at Emmanuel College in Cambridge and containing the entire Greek text of the *Histories* could be found there in Preston's time⁸, we still have traces of many of them to be found in different libraries between Cambridge, London and Oxford in the first half of 16th-century⁹. It is then highly likely Preston could read Herodotus by himself, either in the original Greek or in a Latin translation; and indeed, there are a couple of instances where evidence from the play suggests he may have done so, even if he still abided by Carion and Taverner for what concerns the main structure of the play.

⁶ Cf. the entry on Thomas Preston in Oxford *DNB* 2020.

⁷ For a complete list, see both *ISTC* 2020 and the digital catalogues of both colleges. Although the websites do not furnish details about the acquisition of those books, nothing prevents us to think they were already present in the libraries when Preston attended Cambridge.

⁸ This 15th-century manuscript, coming from the library of Andronicos Kallistos, is linked to another manuscript containing Thucydides' *History*, now held at Cambridge University Library (MS. Nn. 3.18). However, according to the entry on the latter in *Cambridge Digital Library* (Thucydides 2020), Thucydides' manuscript was acquired by the university between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century; previously, it belonged to the private collections first of late 15th-century Milanese copyist and book collector Baldassar Migliavacca (who presumably bought it from Kallistos himself) and then of Anthony Askew (1722-1774). It is unclear whether Herodotus' manuscript followed the same pattern as Thucydides', but since we cannot exclude it, I would be cautious in affirming its presence in Cambridge in Preston's time.

⁹ For a complete list, see *Pinakes* 2020.

Coming to the tragedy, *Cambises*¹⁰ may be divided into six sections, each one corresponding to a particular event¹¹, and also present in Taverner and Carion: Cambyzes' ascension to the throne and expedition to Egypt (scenes 1-2), the punishment of the unjust judge Sisamnes (scenes 3-5), the murder of Praxaspes' son (scene 5), the killing of Cambyzes' brother Smirdis (scenes 6-8), the incestuous marriage between the king and his sister and her subsequent execution (scenes 9-10) and the accidental death of Cambyzes when falling from a horse (scene 11). Of these stories, almost all had appeared previously in some notable work of late medieval English literature. The punishment of the unjust judge was reported in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1386-1390), Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regement of Princes* (1413-1414) and James Yonge's translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum* (1422) as a cautionary tale for magistrates to correctly administer justice. In a similar vein, the murder of Praxaspes' son constituted the prologue of *The Somonour's Tale* in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400), where it also appeared as a cautionary tale about the dangers of talking to men in power. John Lydgate too, in *The Fall of Princes* (1431-1438), presented Cambyzes' accidental death by a fall from a horse as another example of divine punishment for a crime, this time Smirdis' murder. In most of these texts, Cambyzes was called by name, thus ensuring his status as a traditional tyrannical figure in English culture long before Preston's tragedy made him the first tyrant of the Elizabethan stage¹². And yet, if we

¹⁰ All quotations from the tragedy refer to Robert Carl Johnson's 1975 edition, which is based on the first *quarto* edition (1569). The tragedy is divided into thirteen scenes, whereas there is no act division. My quotations from Carion, Taverner and Lynne refer to the original printing of the works (Carion 1537, Taverner 1547 and Lynne 1550 respectively). It should be noted, as Armstrong showed, that Lynne and Taverner's texts are identical in expression (cf. Armstrong 1950).

¹¹ This prompted Norland 1992-1993 to suggest that Preston had originally written *Cambises* as a five-act tragedy destined to be staged for a university audience, in a similar way to Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* (1562). The version we have would then represent a subsequent rewriting of the work, whose purpose was to make it more suitable to a larger, non-cultivated audience. However, Norland does not provide conclusive evidence for his theory; on the other hand, everything we know of Preston's life (see below) agrees more with the idea of a drama written for a popular audience from the start.

¹² There had been previous tyrant figures, like Herod, in early theatrical genres such as the mystery plays or moralities, but Cambyzes is the first tyrannical character to be the protagonist of a non-religious play which also called itself a 'tragedy' (even if it is likely this word did not yet define a literary genre: cf. Braden 2015, 373-374; Dall'Olio 2019, 48-50). The way Preston characterized him would also have a great influence on the late development of the 'tyrant-as-a-character' in Elizabethan theatre. On those

compare these texts to Preston and its sources, we find some very important differences, which make the latter closer in inspiration to Herodotus than their predecessors.

Take for example the assassination of Praxaspes' son. Chaucer's text in the *Tales* is an explicit reprisal of Seneca's *De ira* III 14, 1-2, where the story constitutes one of the many moral *exempla* the philosopher provides about the dire consequences of wrath and the crimes it may lead to¹³:

Cambysen regem nimis deditum vino Praexaspes unus ex carissimis mornebat ut parcius biberet, turpem esse dicens ebrietatem in rege, quem omnium oculi auresque sequerentur. Ad haec ille: «Ut scias», inquit, «quemadmodum numquam excidam mihi, adprobabo iam et oculos post vinum in officio esse et manus». Bibit deinde liberalius quam alias capaciorebus scyphis et iam gravis ac vinolentus obiurgatoris sui filium procedere ultra limen iubet adlevataque super caput sinistra manu stare. Tunc intendit arcum et ipsum cor adolescentis, id enim petere se dixerat, figit rescissoque pectore haerens in ipso corde spiculum ostendit ac respiciens patrem interrogavit, satisne certam haberet manum. At ille negavit Apollinem potuisse certius mittere.

Seneca's version of the story is clearly one with a moralistic intent. Praxaspes reprimands Cambyses because «turpem esse ebrietatem in rege», an ethical maxim of general (and generic) value; in response, Cambyses drinks «liberalius», more than usual, and punishes him in an horrible way, thus showing the terrible effects wrath and drunkenness may have. Chaucer¹⁴ did not only represent it in the same spirit, but he also went further, depriving the tale of every historical element in order to let the moral message stand out. In this version, Cambyses is defined with the adjective «irous» (3.2043) and nothing else, Praxaspes is just «a lord of his meynee / That loved vertuous moralitee» (3.2045-2046), and the tale begins with a long speech on drunkenness as a vice unfit for a lord.

In Herodotus, this same story is set against a noticeably more articulated background. There, Praxaspes' words to Cambyses are not the private but uncalled-for reprobation of a well-meaning advisor, but the answer to a specific question made by the King himself on a delicate matter of internal policy (Her. III 34, 1-5):

λέγεται γὰρ εἰπεῖν αὐτὸν Πρηξάσπεα, τὸν ἐτίμα τε μάλιστα καὶ οἱ τὰς ἀγγελίας ἐφόρει οὗτος, τοῦτου τε ὁ παῖς οἰνόχοος ἦν τῷ Καμβύσῃ – τιμὴ δὲ καὶ αὕτη οὐ

issues, cf. Armstrong 1950; Bevington 1968, 141-167; Bushnell 1990, 84-89; McGrail 2001, 7-14 and Dall'Olio 2017, 489-496.

¹³ On this episode and its differences from Herodotus, cf. Giaccherio 1980.

¹⁴ The following quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* refer to Boenig - Taylor 2008.

σμικρή, – εἰπεῖν δὲ λέγεται τάδε· “Πρήξασπες, κοῖόν με τινὰ νομίζουσι Πέρσαι εἶναι ἄνδρα τίνας τε λόγους περὶ ἐμέο ποιεῖνται;”. τὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν “ὦ δέσποτα, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα μεγάλως ἐπαινέαι, τῇ δὲ φιλοινίῃ σε φασὶ πλεόνως προσκεῖσθαι”. τὸν μὲν δὴ λέγειν ταῦτα περὶ Περσέων, τὸν δε θυμωθέντα τοιάδε ἀμείβεσθαι· “νῦν ἄρα μέ φασι Πέρσαι οἶνῳ προσκείμενον παραφρονέειν καὶ οὐκ εἶναι νοήμονα· οὐδ’ ἄρα σφέων οἱ πρότεροι λόγοι ἦσαν ἀληθές”. πρότερον γὰρ δὴ ἄρα Περσέων οἱ συνέδρων ἐόντων καὶ Κροίσου εἴρετο ὁ Καμβύσης, κοῖός τις δοκεῖσι ἀνὴρ εἶναι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα τελέσαι Κῦρον· οἱ δὲ ἀμείβοντο ὡς εἴη ἀμεινών τοῦ πατρός· τά τε γὰρ ἐκείνου πάντα ἔχειν αὐτὸν καὶ προσεκτεῖσθαι Αἴγυπτόν τε καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν. Πέρσαι μὲν ταῦτα ἔλεγον, Κροῖσος δὲ παρεὼν τε καὶ οὐκ ἀρεσκόμενος τῇ κρίσει εἶπε πρὸς τὸν Καμβύσεα τάδε· “ἐμοὶ μὲν νυν, ὦ παῖ Κύρου, οὐ δοκέεις ὁμοῖος εἶναι τῷ πατρί· οὐ γὰρ κώ ἐστι υἱός, οἷον σὲ ἐκεῖνος κατελίπετο”. ἤσθη τε ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Καμβύσης καὶ ἐπαίνεε τὴν Κροίσου κρίσιν.

The murder which immediately follows is committed by Cambyses as a way to indirectly punish the Persians for not being honest with him, not as a personal punishment inflicted on Praxaspes himself for speaking out of terms. Moreover, the focus is more on the ways the king’s conduct affects the opinion of his people towards him, which may become hostile and therefore dangerous, than on the private behaviour of the king in itself. The deed then assumes a meaning that goes beyond a purely ethical view, and not only because, in Herodotus, it also marks the beginning of a section on how the Persian king oppressed his own people¹⁵. By asking Praxaspes what the Persians think of him, Cambyses reveals himself as suspicious and diffident; by punishing him immediately afterwards, he emerges as impetuous, violent, assertive and uncontrolled. Those were all psychological features that, in the literary and political culture of 5th-century Athens, were being associated with a stereotypical portrait of the tyrant not only as a definite type of character, but also as the negative model in ideological opposition to the positive one of the ideal citizen: a man who would seize absolute power for himself and oppress his fellows, by substituting his own will to the common law¹⁶.

¹⁵ Up until that point, every impious or cruel act Cambyses had committed was directed against the Egyptians, and while those were still condemned by Herodotus (especially the killing of Apis), they could all the same be seen as the act of a conqueror towards a conquered people. After this episode, instead, Herodotus reports only acts of cruelty Cambyses commits against the Persians.

¹⁶ Although Herodotus never explicitly calls Cambyses a tyrant, since his title as a Persian king remains legitimate and in Herodotus the word is used only in a Greek context or others similar (as the Medes, whom Deioces deprives of freedom by making himself king), still the psychological traits of his portrait in Herodotus abide by the traditional features associated with the tyrant. Cf. Lanza 1977 for the building of this

This context and the meaning underneath it, as we saw, are absent in Seneca's version, and in Chaucer's (which was inspired by it), but are instead present in Carion's *Chronica*; in fact, the version we found in the German historian is, in a sense, a sort of conflation of Herodotus and Seneca:

Cum Prexaspes inter delectos consiliarios unus liberius monuisset eum, dixissetque laudari eum a Persis plurimum, caeterum hoc ipsis displicere, quod ebrietatis vicio obnoxius esset, convocari ille iussit primores regni, interrogavit num aliqua in re merito reprehendus esset, at illi nequaquam responderunt, sed virtutem etiam antecellere patrem Cyrum, siquidem eius regno Aegyptum adiectam esse. Contra vero Croesus, cui in primis commendaverat Cyrus Cambysen filium instituendum ad honestatem: nondum, inquit, Cambysen aequari posse patri Cyro, quandoquidem non procreatum adhuc ab eo talem filium, qualem reliquerit Cambysen Cyrus. Placuit tum id venuste dictum Cambysi. (Carion 1537, 65v-66r)

Whan Prexaspes one of hys chefe counselors had admonyshed hym somewhat boldelye, and sayde that the Perses dyd alow hym greatly, but that the same mysliked them, that he was geuen to dronkenesse. He caused the Peeres of hys realme to be called together, and demaunded whether he might worthily be blamed in any thyng. But they answered, No, but that he also surmounted hys father Cyrus in vertue: for by hys activenesse was Egypte also ioyned to his kyngdome. But Cresus (to whom Cyrus had chiefly commended his sonne Cambyses to be taughte and nortured in honesty) sayd the contrary: Cambyses (quoth he) can not yet be compared to hys father Cyrus, for he hath not left such a sonne of his begettinge, as Cirus hath left Cambyses. This delectable sayenge pleased Cambises [*sic*] at that tyme. (Carion 1550, xxxviii^r-v)

The beginning is the same as in Seneca, with Praxaspes privately admonishing the king, and so is the ending, with Cambyses killing his son as a means to punish him. However, the middle part is clearly modelled on Herodotus, with Cambyses questioning the Persians on his behaviour, the Persians telling him he is superior to his father and Cresus ironically distancing himself from the others. The same sequence is then repeated in *The Garden of Wysedome*, where Taverner rewrites Carion's text almost *verbatim*:

Wherefore when Prexaspes one of hys choosen counsaylors advertysed hym very freely and sayde unto hym, that the Persians praysed hym verye muche, but thys one thinge dyspleased them, that he was so subiecte to the vice of dronkenness anone he commanded the chyefe estates and

image and its political and cultural significance; see also Giorgini 1993; McGlew 1993; Catenacci 1996; Seaford 2003 and Ugolini 2017.

lordes of theypyre [*sic*] to be called together, and asked of them, whether in anye thyng he were worthy to be reprehended. They espyenge how thankfull and plausible a thinge flattery is, answered, no, but that in vertue and prowess, he also exelleth his father Cyrus, forasmuche as unto his empire and dominion he had gotten by waye of conquest the kyngedome of Egypte. But contrary wyse Cresus a worthy lorde, unto whose cure and governaunce Cyrus had committed hys sonne cambyses [*sic*] to be instructed and brought up in honestie and virtue, by cause he woulde merelye, as muche as myghte be borne, abate the kynges pryde, aunswered, and sayd, that Cambyses myght not yet compared to hys father Cyrus, forasmuche as there is not yet begotten suche a sonne of hym, as Cyrus lefte Cambyses. Thys thyng then, as feastlye spoken, pleased the kyng welynough. (Taverner 1547, xviii^v-xix^r)

Those events are then staged by Preston in scene 5 of *Cambises*, where the dramatist effectively combines elements from all previous versions of the story in one effective dramatic sequence. The scene opens with Praxaspes who, as in Seneca, reproaches Cambises because drunkenness is a vice unfit for a king and indeed for a moderate man (5.479-482). The King dismisses his words («of this I wil not hear», 5.483), and then welcomes two Persians lords, coming to congratulate him on the success of the expedition against Egypt. Cambises asks them, as he does in Carion and Taverner, whether he is «worthy of any crime once to be reprehended» (5.492). Praxaspes seizes the chance to repeat once again his reprisal, this time saying that «the *Persians* much doo praise your grace, but one thing discommend: / In that to Wine subject you be, wherein you doo offend» (5.493-494). His words here are clearly those of Herodotus. The two texts also share the feature of having Praxaspes relate what he affirms to be the general opinion of the Persian people, a fact which gives his words a greater weight than that they would have as a simple private admonition. The fact that this second reprehension is made in public only highlights his explicitly political undertone; it also works, from a dramatic standpoint, as an attempt to invite the other characters to support Praxaspes. However, the other dignitaries, once again as in Carion and Taverner, choose instead to flatter the King. The first one affirms that Cambises is indeed a great king, even superior to his father:

No, no, my Lord, it is not so, for this of Prince they tel:
For vertuous proof and Princely facts, *Cirus* he dooth excel.
By that his grace by conquest great, the *Egiptians* did convince;
Of him reporte abroad dooth passe, to be a worthy Prince. (5.497-500) ¹⁷

¹⁷ It is worth remembering that Cyrus was a traditional figure of the ideal monarch for Renaissance culture (cf. Grogan 2014, 40-57), for the most part thanks to the

The other, on his part, reports Cresus' judgment as another form of homage to the sovereign:

In person of Cresus I answer make, we may not his grace compare
In whole respect for to be like, *Cirus* the kings father.
In so much you grace hath yet no childe, as *Cirus* left behind:
Even you so I meane, *Cambises* king, in whome I favour finde. (5.501-504)

In this way, Preston manages to perform an effective translation, in dramatic terms, of the conflict between the only honest advisor and the flatterers. Only after that dialogue does Cambises go on to kill Praxaspes' son.

It cannot be denied that two great differences remain between Preston's tragedy and its sources on the one hand, and Herodotus on the other. First of all, in Herodotus, the king asks two separate questions: he asks Praxaspes what the Persians think of him, and inquires of the Persians how he fares in comparison to his father. In Carion, Taverner and Preston, Cambises asks only one question to the Persians, whether he has done anything worthy of blame, while instead Praxaspes, as in Seneca and Chaucer, speaks of his own volition when blaming Cambises for drunkenness. Secondly, in Herodotus the answer given by the Persians about Cambyses being a better king than Cyrus is not presented as flattery (although that may be implied). However, this is clearly the perspective of the Renaissance texts, including Preston's tragedy. These two features of the three texts are more than enough proof of Preston's tragedy being closer to Carion and Taverner than it is to Herodotus.

It is more difficult to evaluate a third important difference between Herodotus and the Renaissance texts concerning Cresus' character. In both Carion and Taverner, the former Lydian king is presented as Cambises' pedagogue, a position he does not hold in Herodotus. In *Cambises*, Cresus' words (the character himself never appears in the tragedy) are reported by an anonymous lord in an act of flattery which, given the way it is uttered, may be potentially charged with a double meaning, in a similar way to Cresus' original sentence. This difference between Preston and his sources may be interpreted as evidence of Preston reading Herodotus and adapting the scene so that it would include the sentence in the original meaning. This would, in turn, allow Preston to include three different types of response to the tyrant's question (the forward honesty of

wide appeal of Xenophon's *Ciropedia*, which was seen by many as the most illustrious example of *speculum principis* (cf. Humble 2017). In Preston's tragedy, Cyrus' shadow hangs heavily on his son, who seems to be obsessed by the thought of being either equal to him or superior (cf. Dall'Olio 2019, 48).

Praxaspes, the open flattery of the first lord and the somewhat dubious flattery of the second one), a perspective which, given Preston's interest in the topic of tyranny and the people's response to it, would be in total agreement with the dramatist's interests and purpose (see below).

Cresus' character is not the only element linking Preston's scene to Herodotus' text; on the contrary, in spite of the differences we saw, it is undeniable that the version of the story the dramatist takes after Carion and Taverner is much more similar to Herodotus than Chaucer's, which was inspired by Seneca. All three texts moderate the purely moralistic tone in order to give space and voice to the political aspect of the matter, evident in the contrast between the honest advisor Praxaspes and the other Persians, who flatter the tyrannical king. In doing so, they fall short of their duty as courtiers, as this role was intended by Renaissance political thinking: that of freely speaking the truth to the sovereign, even if it displeased him, so that the king could reform to the benefit of both himself and the kingdom¹⁸. The king also is to be reprehended, in all three texts, for not listening to the only honest man in his court, but instead insisting impiously on imposing his pleasure above what would be honourable for his role – the very nature of a tyrant according to medieval and early Renaissance political thinking¹⁹.

In all three texts, this deed is also presented as the first one in the succession of Cambises' crimes as a tyrant, the same dramatic function it held in Herodotus' original text. This is even more marked in Taverner and in Preston, whose texts both begin with Sisamnes' punishment presented as the only good action done by the king. In Taverner, this serves

¹⁸ This ideal had been expounded by Baldassarre Castiglione in his famous treatise *Il Cortegiano*, the first English translation of which, by Thomas Hoby, was printed in 1560, around the same time Preston wrote *Cambises*. Even more traditional was the idea that the task of the humanist intellectual was that of advising the sovereign – so that, when in England this became impossible after the Act of Supremacy (1533), it generated a deep cultural crisis, on which see Walker 2006.

¹⁹ Both medieval and early Renaissance political theory had no doubt in signalling the tyrant as the bad king, even a legitimate one, who reigned not for the sake of his people but for his own, and allowed and justified an eventual rebellion of his subjects against him. Things were changing, though, in Renaissance England, where Henry VIII declared it to be high treason to accuse the king of tyranny and encouraged the formulation of a new political theory, according to which the only tyrant is a usurper of the throne: a legitimate king, ordained by God, was still legitimate even if he behaved badly. This was later to become the official view of the English crown on the matter, but it was never fully adopted by the intellectual elite; in fact, in the 1550s, Protestant thinkers reprised the traditional thought and gave it a new impulse. On these issues, cf. Parsons 1942; Mack 1973; Miola 1985; Walker 1998 and 2006; Woodbridge 2010, 138-149 and Dall'Olio 2017, 476-477.

to prove, in his words, that «ther is no prince of so dysperate an hope of so naughty a life but that at the less have otherwyles dothe some honeste acte»; immediately after, though, the author affirms that «otherwyse [...] [Cambyses] lyved a very tyrannouse and wycked life», and goes on to relate all his acts of cruelty «to thyne rent all rulers, what so ever the be, maye take example at hym, to feare God, to preserve the common weale, to execute iustice and iudgement, to use theyr subiectes as men and not as beastes» (Taverner 1547, xviii). He then goes on to tell the story of Praxaspes, which becomes the most immediate evidence of what he just said.

As for Preston, he takes Taverner's succession of events and uses it to create a more striking character development for his protagonist. At the start of the tragedy, Cambises behaves like a righteous king: he sets up a military expedition against Egypt, consults his advisors about it, follows their advice in appointing Sisamnes as a regent, and rightly punishes him after he proves to be corrupt. Then, after that, not only does he refuse Praxaspes' invitation to moderation, but he also punishes him, which acts as a visual sign to the audience of the mutated character of the king²⁰. From now on, he does not tolerate any criticism from his subjects and rules only for his personal sake, reducing them to silence²¹. In short, the murder of Praxaspes' son in both *The Garden of Wyse-dome* and *Cambises* reacquires an importance strikingly similar to that it had in Herodotus: in both texts, it marks the beginning of Cambyses' tyranny.

Speaking of Sisamnes' punishment, this tale too offers another excellent case for highlighting similarities between Preston, its sources and Herodotus. First of all, it is worth pointing out that, as William Armstrong noticed, this deed enjoyed an altogether different tradition than the other actions of Cambyses; the texts of Carion, Taverner and Preston are the first instances in early modern literature to put it back in connection with the other stories about the tyrant (cf. Armstrong 1950, 130-131). It is not unlikely to think that this may happen because all the three

²⁰ This change had been anticipated not only in the Prologue of the play, but also in scene 4, where the allegorical character of Shame informed the audience, in a monologue, of the king's moral downfall. However, this monologue immediately preceded Sisamnes' punishment, the only deed of Cambises traditionally seen as righteous, so Preston needed another action to immediately counterbalance it and show, visually, that even if a tyrant performed one deed of justice, this did not make him less a tyrant.

²¹ Denial of free speech is the main effect of tyranny depicted in *Cambises*: every victim of the tyrant will be punished because he/she dared to reprehend (directly or indirectly) the king (cf. Dall'Olio 2019, 59-60).

authors were familiar with Herodotus, and could then reconstruct a link which had gone missing in previous literary tradition, where the story had been reduced to merely another moral *exemplum*. This is due to the fact that the main source of the medieval texts was Val. Max. VI 3, *ext.* 3:

Iam Cambyses inusitatae severitatis, qui mali cuiusdam iudicis e corpore pellem detractam sellae intendi in eaque filium eius iudicaturum considerare iussit. ceterum et rex et barbarus atroci ac nova poena iudicis ne quis postea corrumpi iudex posset providit.

In this version, which the author presents as an *exemplum* of excessive severity, Cambyses retains his name, but both the judge and his son are unnamed characters, and no context is given to explain the king's decision for so severe a punishment, while instead, in Herodotus, it is clearly specified that Sisamnes is being punished because he allowed himself to be bribed (ὅτι ἐπὶ χρήμασι δίκην ἄδικον ἐδίκασε, Her. V 25, 1). What is more, Sisamnes' charge is also changed: while in Valerius' text Sisamnes is just a judge, in Herodotus he is one τῶν βασιλῆων δικαστέων, a charge which could include also a political bearing, rather than merely a juridical one. The same anonymity, the same uncertainty on the judge's fault and the same change in Sisamnes' actual charge will be maintained in all the reprises of the tale in medieval literature, where sometimes even Cambyses lost his name, thus completing the reduction of the story to just a moral example.

On the contrary, in Carion, Taverner and Preston, not only do both the judge and his son recover the names they had in Herodotus (Sisamnes and Otianes/Otanes respectively), but all the details lacking from previous versions of the story are reinstated. In Carion, Sisamnes is called a «praefectus» (Carion 1537, 68r) or a «governour» (Carion 1550, xlr); as for Taverner, in *The Garden of Wyse dome* Sisamnes is referred to as «deputie» (Taverner 1547, xviii) – all words indicating a political authority of some sort other than a purely administrative one. All three texts also openly say that he was condemned by Cambyses because he was a corrupt judge, having accepted a bribe. Preston goes even further. On the one hand, 'his' Sisamnes is not simply a deputy or a governor, but the regent Cambyses leaves in charge while he departs for the military expedition to Egypt; on the other, he shows in scene 3 Sisamnes first being convinced by Ambidexter, the Vice, to take advantage of the power bestowed on him, and then openly refusing to aid the allegorical character Small Habilitie because he cannot pay for his service. This time, there are virtually no differences between Herodotus' text, Carion and Taverner's works and the version Preston stages, aside from those elements added

by the dramatist himself; and even those emphasize and reformulate elements already present in Herodotus.

As for Smirdis' death, nothing substantial can be said, since in all Renaissance texts the plot involving the fake Smirdis is absent²². In Carion and Taverner, the death of the king's brother takes just one line. In *Cambises*, Smirdis' death occupies the entirety of scenes 6-7 of the tragedy, but both scenes are composed of original material written by Preston himself with no reference to Herodotus. A great deal can instead be said about the incestuous marriage of the king with his sister and her death. First of all, this is the only story not to have earlier versions in English medieval literature. Second, the way it is told in both Carion and Taverner is very similar to one of the two versions of her death contained in Herodotus (the one, maybe not by chance, ascribed to Greeks):

Ἕλληνες μὲν λέγουσι Καμβύσεια συμβαλεῖν σκύμνον λέοντος σκύλακι κυνός, θεωρεῖν δὲ καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα ταύτην, νικωμένου δὲ τοῦ σκύλακος ἀδελφεὸν αὐτοῦ ἄλλον σκύλακα ἀπορρήξαντα τὸν δεσμὸν παραγενέσθαι οἱ, δύο δὲ γενομένους οὕτω δὴ τοὺς σκύλακας ἐπικρατήσαι τοῦ σκύμνου. καὶ τὸν μὲν Καμβύσεια ἡδεσθαι θεώμενον, τὴν δὲ παρημένην δακρύειν. Καμβύσεια δὲ μαθόντα τοῦτο ἐπειρέσθαι δι' ὃ τι δακρύει, τὴν δὲ εἰπεῖν ὡς ἰδοῦσα τὸν σκύλακα τῷ ἀδελφεῷ τιμωρήσαντα δακρύσειε, μνησθεῖσά τε Σμέρδιος καὶ μαθοῦσα ὡς ἐκείνῳ οὐκ εἶη ὁ τιμωρήσων. Ἕλληνες μὲν δὴ διὰ τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος φασὶ αὐτὴν ἀπολέσθαι ὑπὸ Καμβύσειῳ. (Her. III 32, 1-3)

Praeterea et sororem germanam in uxorem duxit, cum tamen ab hoc genere contrahendi matrimonio natura abhorreat. Porro evenit quod cum una cum regina sorore accumberet inter epulas rex Cambyses, voluptatis capiundae causa catulum leonem et acerrimum canem inter se commisit, et cum leo robore et ferocia superior esset, magna vi alter canis, non minus acer, ruptis vinculis quibus ligatus erat, fratri cani opem tulit, et victus leo est. Delectatus in primis hoc spectaculo rex est, ob fidelitatem canum inter se. Caeterum eodem facto mota regina familiariter admodum flere coepit, et cum hoc ipsum egerime ferret rex, quaereretque causam luctus, respondit: Nihil minus suo fratri a fratre contigisse, quam huiusmodi fidem, qua videret canes a se mutuo iuvari. Responsum hoc indigne ferens rex, illico eam abripi e suo conspecto, et necari iussit. (Carion 1537, 66v-7r)

He maryed also hys owne syster, where neuerthelesse nature doth abhorre such kynde of maryage. It fortunēd upon a tyme, that whan kynge Cambyses sat at borde wyth the queen, at that meale tyme, set he a lyons whelpe and a strong dogge together to make a game: and whan the lyon

²² Technically, in Carion's *Chronica* it is related that, while Cambises is away, some Mages conspire to occupy the throne, but the conspiracy is not connected to Smirdis' character: Carion just says that «Magus quidam per dolum regium sibi nomen usurpabat» (Carion 1537, 68r).

had the overhanded by reason of hys fearcenesse and strength, another dogge of no lesse fearcenesse brake wyth great strength the bandes that he was bound withal, and holpe his brother the dogge, and so was the Lyon overcome. The kyng had great delyte at that game, because of the faythfulnesse of the dogges. But the quene moued wyth the same dede, began to wepe very bitterly, and whan the kynge toke that sorrowfully, and asked the cause of her weping, she answered: To my brother happend nothyng lesse, than such faythfulnesse, as I haue sene in these dogges helping eche other. The kyng taking this answe wrothfully, caused her straight waye to be had out of hys syght, and slew her. (Carion 1550, xxxixr-v).

Furthermore he toke to wife hys omwne suster germayne, wheras nature abhorreth from suche kynde of copulation. Nowe it befell so, that when kynge Cambyses sat at a feaste with hys syster the quene, for theyr sporte and pleasure he set a Yonge Lyon and a very eger dogge togyther by the eares, so when the Lyon in strength and fyercesnes had prevayled, an other dogge no les fyerce, brastyng his bander wherewith he was bounded dyd helpe the dogge hys brother and vanquyshed the Lyon. The kynge was exceedingly delyted wyth thys syght for the faythfulnes of the dogges between them selves. But by the same facte the queen beyng moved began verye largelye to wepe and poure oute teares and to water her tender chekes. The kynge toke thys her wepyng verye hevely and demaunded of her the cause of her sorowe. She aunswere in thys wyse. Certes, my dere husband and brother, even so greates a faythfulnes might have chaunced unto us of oure brother as we se here betwene these two dogges that be of all one lytter. The kinge grievously taking thys aunswere, commanded she shulde forthwith be taken out of hys syght and put to deathe. (Taverner 1547, xxr-xxir)

The lack of previous versions and the almost *verbatim* reprisal of Herodotus' text suggests a direct rewriting of the *Histories*. Of course, also in this case, a great difference can be noted. In Herodotus, the actual wedding is preceded by a scene where the King asks the Mages for their opinion, and they, fearing for their lives lest they give him a negative reply, choose to answer him by saying that, although Persian laws forbid such unions, still the king can do whatever he likes (Her. III 31, 2-5). This section is absent in both Carion and Taverner: both say that only nature forbids such a union, and no mention is made of the law or the subjects. However, given that this scene follows in natural succession the murder of Praxaspes' son, we may think that the authors did not want to repeat themselves, by showing once again the Persians flattering Cambyses. On the other hand, the fact that both Praxaspes and the queen get punished because they dared speak their mind, was probably sufficient to draw a similarity between the two episodes.

Interestingly enough, this aspect of the law is somehow present in Preston's staging of the scene, and may constitute the other evidence

proving that he adapted elements directly from Herodotus. In *Cambises*, the king falls in love with the woman in scene 9, and immediately proposes to her. She refuses his love because «it is a thing that natures course dooth utterly detest» (9.910), the same reason Carion and Taverner used to condemn the marriage. However, Cambises insists, threatening to kill everyone who contradicts him on the matter (9.919-923). She then asks him, as a last defence, to consult his advisors, to know whether such a marriage could eventually be allowed: «Your counsell take of Lordings wit, the lawes aright peruse: / If I with safe may graunt this deed, I wil it not refuse» (9.925-926) – in a sense, she is inviting him to do here what the king did in Herodotus' text. But Cambises refuses: «No, no, what I have said to you, I meane to have it so: / For counsell theirs I meane not I, in this respect to go» (9.927-928). The impression is that Preston had combined elements from different versions of the story, including Herodotus', in order to create an effective dramatic sequence, with the king first refusing the more general obligation to nature, and then afterwards breaking his duties to the law of the country by refusing to take counsel. The evil nature of the king as a ruler indifferent to morality and willing to break the law if this gives him pleasure is made obvious once again, in a way that goes to somehow recover another aspect of the tyrant's decision which was present in Herodotus' text²³.

To sum up, the version of Cambyzes' story Thomas Preston adapted for the stage, after taking it from Carion's *Chronica* and from Taverner's *Garden of Wyshedome*, is in many aspects rather similar to Herodotus' text. It includes and exploits the political background of the murder of Praxaspes' son, albeit reshaped in Renaissance terms; it reinstates not only the names of the unjust judge and his son, but also the nature of his guilt and the real essence of his charge; it features the story of the incestuous marriage of Cambyzes with his sister, which seems to have no previous literary tradition. If we look at these similarities altogether, we cannot avoid the impression that either Preston or his sources have indeed read Herodotus, and included details from the *Histories* into their version of Cambyzes' life. It is even perfectly possible, as we saw at the

²³ This may also happen because in Preston, unlike in Carion and Taverner, Smirdis' killing is represented as in some way the opposite of Praxaspes and the queen's fate: while they get punished for having spoken, Smirdis is killed even though he chooses to be silent about his brother's behaviour and wait for his time to be king. As Ward 2008, 159-160 pointed out, silence was actually one of the possible ways to react against tyranny, and Preston wanted to deal with it; this, in turn, justified a longer treatment of the queen's story, where he came back to another character killed for openly criticising the tyrant.

beginning, that Preston himself read Herodotus: some details of his staging do in fact make his version the one more similar to the *Histories*, even when compared to the other two. Still, these aspects are too few and far between, in my opinion, to override the much greater evidence of Preston readapting the story he found in Carion and Taverner; therefore, I still think we should follow previous scholarship according to which Preston likely used his more contemporary sources on the matter (although he may have reprised some minor details directly from the historian). On the other hand, my analysis has also shown that many details from Herodotus' text are present in Preston's sources too, so that we can say with confidence that the version of the story which Preston found in Carion and Taverner was influenced by Herodotus. Indeed, we may go even further and affirm that this did not happen by chance: the use of this version of Cambyses' story had, instead, a clear political meaning.

Let us start with Johannes Carion and his *Chronica*, a work which enjoyed a widespread diffusion throughout Europe, due also to the fact that Carion provided a thorough account of the whole history of the world, integrating as many sources as possible²⁴. As a German intellectual writing in the 1530s, he would have easily gained access to both Manutius' *princeps* edition of the Greek text and Valla's Latin translation, especially since Renaissance historiography came to see Herodotus as a sort of integration of the Bible for what concerned Egyptian and Persian history²⁵. However, if Carion could not ignore Herodotus, it was also true that he was not obliged to take out so many details and elements from the historian's version of events: Cambyses was already a well-known tyrant figure, especially in Protestant religious writing, where he was charged with obstructing the reconstruction of Jerusalem's temple after his father Cyrus delivered the Jews from exile²⁶. The various tales contained either in Latin or in vernacular literature could have easily provided Carion with enough material to fill in his chronicle. My opinion is that there is something more at work in Carion's choice to

²⁴ In the frontispiece of Walter Lynne's translation, it is written that «John Carion [...] Gathered» his work «of the beste Authours that haue written in Hebrue, Greke or Latine» (Carion 1550); also cf. Esteve 2018, n. 29, where he quotes the Italian translator of the work, Pietro Lauro, highlighting this particular aspect of the *Chronica*.

²⁵ Cf. Earley 2016, 138, where he reports the case of French historians David Chytraeus and François Baudouin, explicitly acknowledging their use of Herodotus' text as an integration of what the Bible said about Persia and Egypt. While they lived and worked in the 1560s, it is very likely that this consideration of Herodotus preceded them.

²⁶ Cf. Hill 1992, 419-422 on this tradition, based on both the Bible and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, and its presence in Protestant writings.

make his account of Cambyses' life more similar to Herodotus, and that is the fact that, unlike his most immediate predecessors, Herodotus' text focused very much on the political aspect of Cambyses' rule, and especially on how the king's behaviour contradicted and broke Persian law and customs. This was something of the greatest importance for Carion, whose *Chronica* had a clear political and religious agenda, even more so because the author was operating during one of the most heated times of contrast between Catholics and Protestants²⁷. By taking Herodotus as his main source, Carion could go beyond the purely ethical view of previous versions (traditionally focused on condemning the private behaviour of the sovereign as inappropriate) and give it a clearer political edge, more pertinent to his times and purposes. Therefore, Carion reprised the political background of the murder of Praxaspes' son, rewriting it as a contrast between honest advice and flattery; included the tale of the queen's death, who also pays with her life her courage to speak up against injustice; called the unjust judge Sisamnes and his son by their names and recovered the original background of the tale, including them in the story of Cambyses. Thanks to those changes, Cambyses' tyranny emerges not only as the action of a bad king, but also as a disgrace with dreadful consequences for the well-being of his subjects, deprived of the right of telling the truth and forced to silent obedience (or, worse, flattery). In the religious perspective of the *Chronica*, this made Cambyses an eminent example of impious leadership not only as a human being, but also a sovereign, so that his final punishment by God was not only the doom of a sinful person, but also a deliverance for his oppressed subjects²⁸.

The same perspective lies underneath *The Garden of Wysedome*, a work belonging to the Humanist literary tradition of the *specula principum*, whose author, Richard Taverner, was a prominent figure among early English Humanists²⁹. A favourite of Thomas Cromwell, the author of a new translation of the Bible printed in 1539, a renowned Greek scholar, and later a member of Parliament under Edward VI, Taverner wrote his collection of stories about eminent princes and statesmen with a clear political and ethical message in mind. There then could be no doubt that Taverner chose carefully which version of its various stories he should present; it is even telling that, as Eugene D. Hill noted, his version

²⁷ Let us not forget that the original edition of the *Chronica* finished with the reign of Emperor Charles V, a formidable opponent of the Reformation.

²⁸ This, of course, only made its status as a cautionary tale to the rulers of the time even more significant.

²⁹ For details about Taverner's life, cf. the entry on him in Oxford DNB 2020.

of Cambyses' story is preceded by a long encomium of England under Henry VIII, where Taverner rejoices that under Henry's rule there are no judges of Sisamnes' sort in England³⁰. The encomium serves undoubtedly as an indirect comparison between Cambyses and Henry, the king who started his reign as a good sovereign and a supporter of Humanist ideals, and ended up as a tyrant, unwilling to listen to his advisors and only intent on satisfying his own pleasures. In such a context, Carion's version of Cambyses' story, with the details reprised by Herodotus and the stress upon the social consequences of tyranny, was the best version Taverner could choose.

As for Thomas Preston, born in 1537, when he wrote *Cambises* he had recently graduated in Greek Literature at Cambridge (1561), and was at the start of what would be a rather successful academic career³¹. It was not his first attempt as a literary author, since in 1560 he composed a Latin poem in honour of two Protestant professors, Martin Bucer and Paul Fagius, on a festive occasion when Elizabeth rehabilitated their memory after the Marian persecutions³². Three years later, in 1564, he would meet the queen herself during a royal visit to Cambridge, and would attract her attention enough to be granted the honour of kissing her hand and being nominated *scholarem suum*, a title he proudly had displayed in his epitaph. He would go on to write other poems, both in English and in Latin, all of them having either a political or an ethical content, and all of them written in support of the queen and the Protestant cause. All his literary and academic activity is the work of an intellectual with a great interest in the political and religious topics of the time. In 1560, this was even more valid because the death of Mary I, and the ascension of Elizabeth, had not only stopped the persecution of Protestants, but also gave them a new hope for another chance to create a truly Protestant England. Preston wrote *Cambises* as a work whose function was to express a fierce condemnation of the tyrant as the bad king who rules against God's will and oppresses his subjects, in a way that was clearly intended to echo the feelings and hopes of his Protestant

³⁰ Cf. Hill 1992, 424-425.

³¹ He would become Master of Trinity College Hall in 1584 and Prorector of Cambridge University in 1589-1590. Cf. Oxford DNB 2020.

³² Bucer and Fagius were two prominent Protestant thinkers who, under Edward VI, through the intercession of Thomas Cranmer obtained the position of professors in Cambridge (Bucer as Professor of Theology and Fagius of Hebrew Literature). They died respectively in 1549 and 1551. During the Marian persecutions, Mary I had their bodies dug out, processed for treason and burnt at the stake.

fellows on one hand, and give advice to the Queen on the other³³. Once again, these circumstances gives sense to Preston's choice to adapt Taverner's version of the story of Cambyses, whose political background was explicit, and rework it for the stage.

In conclusion, then, we can say that Thomas Preston's tragedy really *did* have Herodotus as its source, in a sense. The political value of Cambyses' story as related by the Greek historian led a German chronicler to take details from it in order to give a new meaning to the traditional picture of the Persian tyrant, highlighting more than before the political consequences borne out of his conduct. Carion's version made its way into English literature, where first Richard Taverner and then Thomas Preston, two politically engaged intellectuals, adapted it in their works, rewriting the new tale so that they could infuse its new-found meaning into their cultural context. The result was that, maybe unknowingly, Preston's tragedy contributed to the rediscovery of Herodotus' work in Renaissance England, some twenty years before the first official English translation of the text, by putting one of his stories at the heart of the earliest surviving tragedy of the Elizabethan stage.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Cambridge Digital Library</i>	<i>King's College, Cambridge Library</i> https://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/library , 2020
ISTC 2020	<i>Incunabula Short Title Catalogue</i> https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search , 2020
MS. Nn. 3.18	Thucydides, <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i> , MS. Nn. 3.18 https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00003-00018/1 , 2020.

³³ The political undertones of *Cambises* are a much-studied subject in the critical history of the play. Initially, the tragedy was seen as a work upholding and defending traditional Elizabethan thinking on tyranny and how subjects should behave under it (suffering it without rebelling). Starting from the 1990s, it has come to be seen as a more complex take on the subject, strongly condemning it in any way it was possible for Preston to do, and also allowing subjects some slight form of rebellion against the oppression. Cf. Armstrong 1955; Hill 1992; Ward 2008, 150-160; Mathur 2014 and Dall'Olio 2019, 56-61.

- Oxford DNB 2020 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
<https://www.oxforddnb.com>, 2020
- Pinakes* 2020 *Pinakes*
<https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>, 2020.

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