

Photius on Ctesias

Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 72, p. 45a 10–15 Bekker = I, p. 133 Henry reads: *Τῶν μὲντοι γε μύθων ... οὐδ' οὗτος (Ctesias) ἀφίσταται ... Ἡ δὲ ἡδονὴ τῆς ἱστορίας αὐτοῦ τὸ πλεῖστον ἐν τῇ τῶν διηγημάτων αὐτοῦ γίνεται διασκευῆτι, τὸ παθητικὸν καὶ ἀπροσδόκητον ἐχούσμη πολύ, καὶ τὸ ἐγγυὺς τοῦ μυθώδους αὐτὴν διαποικίλλειν.*

(1) The scholars take the clause *τὸ ἐγγυὺς τοῦ μυθώδους αὐτὴν διαποικίλλειν* as the object of *ἐχούσμη*. So does René Henry (Budé, 1959), while translating: “L’agrément de son récit provient surtout de sa façon de construire les narrations: elles suscitent de l’émotion, offrent beaucoup d’inattendu et des embellissements variés qui les portent aux confins du récit légendaire.” But this is not at all likely, for then the words *αὐτὴν διαποικίλλειν* look superfluous.

(2) That is why Robert Renehan, in *A.J.P.*, LXXXIV (1963), p. 71, had conjectured *τῶι ἐγγυὺς* for the transmitted *τὸ ἐγγυὺς*, while governing the phrase by the *ἐν*. According to Renehan, “the pleasure we derive from reading Ctesias’ history is to be found in two causes:” (a) *ἐν τῇ ... διασκευῆτι*, and (b) *ἐν τῶι ... διαποικίλλειν*.

I don’t think Renehan’s solution is likely. First, *τῶι* can hardly imply *ἐν τῶι*, since the *ἐν* is too far from it. Second, the most natural way is to take *τὸ* as the article to the immediately following *ἐγγυὺς*.

(3) Consequently, I would suggest the following reading and interpretation: *καὶ ἀπροσδόκητον ἐχούσμη πολύ, (ὡς) καὶ τὸ ἐγγυὺς τοῦ μυθώδους αὐτὴν διαποικίλλειν*, “... with the result that his narrative is adorned (or embellished) even by the elements which touch the realm of fable.” This reading can be supported by the following points.

(a) As is known, the abbreviations for *ὡς* and *καὶ* are very similar, almost identical: S. I think some scribe had dropped *ὡς* before *καὶ*.

(b) Photius uses *ὡς καὶ* in the same meaning (standing for *ὥστε καὶ*) in the immediately following lines (15–17): *Καὶ διαλελυμένος δέ ἐστι πλέον τι τοῦ δέοντος αὐτῶι (Ctesias) ὁ λόγος, ὡς καὶ εἰς ἰδιωτισμὸν ἐκπίπτειν.*

(c) *αὐτὴν* refers to *ἱστορία* and is the object to *διαποικίλλειν*, the subject of the clause being *τὸ ἐγγυὺς τοῦ μυθώδους*. For the construction and the idea: *καὶ τὸ μυθώδες τὴν ἱστορίαν αὐτοῦ διαποικίλλει* cf. Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 596 D ... *καὶ καθάπερ δρᾶμα τὴν πράξιν ἡμῶν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς διαποικίλλουσα (sc. ἡ τύχη) κινδυνώδεσιν ἐπεισοδίοις*. Isocrates, *Evagoras* 9. 9 *Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ποιηταῖς πολλοὶ δέδονται κόσμοι ... πᾶσιν τοῖς εἶδεσιν διαποικίλαι τὴν ποιήσων.*