

THEOPHRASTUS' APPRAISAL OF THUCYDIDES
AND HERODOTUS (CICERO, *ORATOR* 39 = FR. 697 FHS&G):
THE CHARACTER OF CICERO'S TESTIMONY*

by

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ABSTRACT: This paper concerns a short reference to Theophrastus in Cicero's *Orator*, in which Herodotus' and Thucydides' contribution to historiography is evaluated. The focus is on the character and accuracy of the testimony, which until now have not been examined in detail. Arguments are put forward for the thesis that the sentence in question is Cicero's attempt at a translation of Theophrastus' words. Overall, the paper is a step forward in our knowledge about this fragment in particular, but also in terms of methods that can be applied to the study of historical and philosophical fragments in general.

In the *Orator* Cicero adduces Theophrastus in the context of a brief "history" of artful prose¹. It is a short account, beginning with Thrasymachus and Gorgias, going through Theodorus of Byzantium, and ending up with Isocrates (*Or.* 37–42). Cicero praises Herodotus and Thucydides for their restraint in employing excessive rhetorical devices. Then comes our reference to Theophrastus (*Or.* 39 = fr. 697 FHS&G):

* This paper is a result of my research stay at the Institute of Classical Studies in London, funded by the Polish National Science Centre (Preludium 6 Grant, no. 2013/11/N/HS3/04886). A large part of the study was also carried out during the doctoral scholarship held at the University of Vienna in 2015 and awarded by the Scholarship Foundation of the Republic of Austria. Here I wish to thank Professor Hans TAEUBER from the Institut für Alte Geschichte und Altertumskunde, Papyrologie und Epigraphik for supporting my application, and for providing me with excellent working conditions. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to this journal's anonymous referee for his or her critical remarks on the article, which have alerted me to many mistakes. Last but not least, I am deeply indebted to Professor Han BALTUSSEN, who read the initial draft of this paper and made a lot of valuable comments on its structure and argumentation.

¹ On the *Orator* in general see: SANDYS 1885: LI–LXXVI; SCHLITTENBAUER 1903; SABBADINI 1916; YON 1958; HUBBELL 1962: 297–302; NARDUCCI 2002. The standard text of the *Orator* is WESTMAN 1980.