

*Isocrates in the 18th Century. A Look at his Reception through the Editions and Translations**

1.

Isocrates, traditionally included in the list of the ten Attic orators, was actually a renowned master of rhetoric and a political writer of some influence in 4th-century Athens. He was also regarded for centuries as an enduring example of Attic prose and an admired moralist, and the hortatory writings he devoted to the Cypriot king Nicocles were especially widely read as a model of the so-called *specula principum*. These two texts, together with the very successful *Ad Demonicum* (in fact a spurious collection of pieces of advice purported, since antiquity, to be the work of Isocrates), were repeatedly translated into Latin in the age of European Humanism while the twenty-one speeches of Isocrates as a whole were among the first works of an ancient author to be printed in Greek (Milan, 1493). During the 16th century – when some of his political writings such as the *Panegyricus* or the *Philippus*, which proposed an alliance of Greek cities against Persia, were significantly reinterpreted in the formulation of anti-Turkish propaganda – a first important phase of philological study and overall

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interpretation of Isocrates was represented by the publication of the editions, translations and commentaries of Hieronymus Wolf (1516-1580). Wolf's 1570 *editio maior* in particular, the work of a lifetime, was afterwards widely reprinted and reused throughout the 17th century and had an extensive impact: «per 250 fere annos lucubrationum omnium ad Isocratem pertinentium fundamentum erat futura», as Engelbert Drerup, one of the major scholars on the history of Isocrates' text and its manuscript tradition, put it in the preface to his 1906 landmark edition of the orator's works¹.

The 18th century, on the other hand, marked a new step in the publishing history of the Athenian author, as Drerup likewise recorded: «Per totum fere saeculum XVII. et sequentis initium Isocrates neglectus iacuit, dum Guil.[*ielmus*] Battie medicus Britannus editionem novam elucubrandam suscepit»². The attempt by William Battie – to whom we will return shortly – to produce a new edition of Isocrates for the readers of his time, would take place in a country, England, where Isocrates had constantly featured in the teaching of ancient Greek since the age of Henry VIII, notably for his already mentioned easy-to-read paraenetic orations³. As is known, Isocrates had been the object of the specific interest of John Milton (1608-1674), an author deeply familiar with ancient Greek and who, in fact, in imitation of the former's *Areopagiticus*, had given the title *Areopagitica* to the speech he addressed to the English Parliament in 1644, in the middle of the English Civil War, advocating the freedom of the press from censorship. Isocrates' *Areopagiticus*, written around the time of the 'Social War' (the conflict between Athens and the allies of the Second Attic League of 357-355), was actually a speech that Isocrates pretended to address to the ancient Athenian council of the Areopagus and in

¹ Cf. Drerup 1906, pp. CLXVIII-CLXIX. A description of Wolf's edition can be found on the website 'Griechischer Geist aus Basler Pressen' of the University of Basel (<https://ub.unibas.ch/cmsdata/spezialkataloge/gg/higg0219.html>).

² Drerup 1906, p. CLXXI.

³ On Isocrates during the early Tudor period cf. Stewart 2002, and on the presence of Isocrates in Greek teaching curricula, see Iori 2015, *passim*. For an overview of the editions and Latin translations of Isocrates' works produced in England in the period 1600-1800, see Smith 2020, pp. 52-61.

which he pleaded for the restoration of its old powers. Milton, for his part, looked at Isocrates as an example of an influential author who took a stand on issues of public importance, and therefore as an authoritative model for legitimizing demands for civic liberties. Although not mentioning him explicitly, he refers to Isocrates at the beginning of the *Areopagitica*:

If I should thus farre presume upon the meek demeanour of your civill and gentle greatnesse, Lords and Commons, as what your publisht Order hath directly said, that to gainsay, I might defend my selfe with ease, if any should accuse me of being new or insolent, did they but know how much better I find ye esteem it to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece, then the barbarick pride of a *Hunnish* and *Norwegian* statelines. And out of those ages, to whose polite wisdom and letters we ow that we are not yet *Gothes* and *Jutlanders*, I could name him who from his private house wrote that discourse to the Parliament of *Athens*, that perswades them to change the forme of *Democracy* which was then establishd. Such honour was done in those dayes to men who profest the study of wisdome and eloquence, not only in their own Country, but in other Lands, that Cities and Siniories heard them gladly, and with great respect, if they had ought in publick to admonish the State⁴.

The political value of the figure of Isocrates re-emerged in Milton's *Sonnet X, To the Lady Margaret Ley*, the daughter of Sir James

⁴ Text after Sirluck 1959, p. 489. The words «from his private house» give an accurate idea of the purely literary nature of Isocrates' oratory. Apart from the title and the general situation of a speaker addressing a council in a written form, the two texts have nothing else in common, cf. Sirluck 1959, p. 486 n. 1. However, the *Areopagitica* contains an interesting amount of classical material, including a section dedicated to cases of book censorship in the ancient world. On the relation of Milton's pamphlet to Isocrates, see Wittreich 1972, Nelson 2001; on Milton's classical culture, cf. Hopkins 2010, Leonard 2010 and Martindale 2020. For a further recollection of Isocrates' *Areopagiticus* in contemporary republicanism, specifically in James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (in particular the well-known statement of *Areop.* 14: ἔστι γὰρ ψυχὴ πόλεως οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ πολιτεία, «the soul of a city is nothing else than its constitution»), see Nelson 2004, p. 117; on Isocrates in Harrington see also Hammersley 2019, pp. 112-114, 176-177.

Ley, former Lord High Treasurer and Lord President of the Council to King James I. Here the death of the dedicatee's father, which had taken place soon after the dissolution of Parliament in 1629, was compared, in the wake of an ennobling biographical tradition, to the 'heroic' suicide by inanition committed by the nearly century-old Isocrates after the announcement of the Athenian defeat at Chaeronea (338 BCE)⁵.

2.

The kind of model Puritan citizen that Milton aspired to embody was already a distant memory when in 1729, during the new Georgian era, the twenty-six-year-old «*medicus Britannus*» William Battie (1703-1776) had the first volume of his edition of Isocrates printed in Cambridge⁶. After unsuccessfully devoting himself to the study of law, Battie would in fact become a well-known physician with advanced ideas on the treatment of psychiatric illnesses, as his seminal *Treatise on Madness* (1758) amply demonstrates⁷. His early studies at Eton and afterwards at King's College, Cambridge, in the 1720s had led him to a remarkable familiarity with classical languages and literatures, and especially with Greek (a situation not uncommon among 18th-century English doctors⁸),

⁵ *Sonnet X (To the Lady Margaret Ley, dated 1642-1645): Daughter to that good Earl, once President / Of England's Council and her Treasury, / Who lived in both unstained with gold or fee, / And left them both, more in himself content, / Till the sad breaking of that parliament / Broke him, as that dishonest victory / At Chaeronea, fatal to liberty, Killed with report that old man eloquent* (text after Bush 1966, p. 171). On the tradition of Isocrates' death soon after the battle of Chaeronea, cf. Brind'Amour 1967 and Signes Codoñer 2001, pp. 32-40.

⁶ *Ἰσοκράτους λόγοι ἑπτὰ καὶ ἐπιστολαί. Isocratis orationes septem et epistolæ. Codicibus mss. nonnullis, Et impressis melioris notae Exemplaribus collatis, Varias Lectiones subjecit: Versionem novam, notasque ex Hieronymo Wolfio potissimum desumptas adjunxit, Gul. Battie Coll. Regal. Cantab. Socius. Cantabrigiae, Typis Academicis MDCCXXIX.*

⁷ On Battie see Nichols 1812; Suzuki 2004.

⁸ Clarke 1945, pp. 4-5, mentions several cases of doctors who were also Hellenists (Anthony Askew, Richard Mead, Charles Combe, William Heberden, George Baker).

to the extent of leading him to produce an edition, along with a new Latin translation, of Isocrates. The previous year Battie had already published an edition of Aristotle's *Rhetorica* 'cum notis variorum'⁹, a fact that confirms his interest in ancient rhetoric, though nothing can be gleaned from the book about the reasons for his choosing to produce the work¹⁰. In the absence of a specific study of Battie's classical education, the reasons for the choice of Isocrates also remain unclear. We know almost nothing about the genesis of this edition or who Battie's mentor in the work was.

Battie's edition contained only seven orations, in addition to the nine letters attributed to Isocrates¹¹. Much material from Wolf's edition was included in the footnotes. As the young editor stated in his preface (p. [4]), the selection of speeches included those that «magis moratae essent», namely the ones most suited to guiding the conduct of men or, in other words, the parenetic speeches *Ad Demonicum*, *Ad Nicoclem* and *Nicocles*, plus those which «ad historiam ac statum civilem pertinerent», that is *Panegyricus*, *De pace*, *Areopagiticus* and *Philippus*, the most relevant orations from a historical and political point of view, written by Isocrates between 380 and 346. The choice to publish Isocrates

⁹ See Erickson 1975, p. 34 no. 134. Battie's work was described as «A very excellent edition» in Lowndes 1857, p. 67. It has been noted, however, that his edition was substantially based on the celebrated edition and Latin translation published by Theodore Goulston in 1619, see Raylor 2018, p. 147. The 'tabula generalis' prefaced to the volume contains a scheme of the contents of the *Rhetorica* and has a final note on the editions used for 'quotationes' (*sic*) from other Aristotelian works. In this barely visible note reference is made to an edition of Aristotle's *Poetica* that Battie was allegedly working on («editionem a nobis emittendam»), but which does not appear to have ever been published.

¹⁰ However, it should be noted that an interest in rhetoric in general was not unusual among law students in England at the time, cf. Raylor 2018, p. 142.

¹¹ At that time the small *corpus* of Isocrates' letters usually included a letter written by the Byzantine writer Theophylact Simocatta, *Ad Dionysium* (no. 79), that had infiltrated the collection in the editorial tradition, while the genuine letter *Ad Archidamum* was missing; the latter item, which had been known of since the 16th century, was reunited with the other Isocratean letters in an edition only at the end of the 18th century by Auger (see n. 36 below), cf. Martinelli Tempesta 2007, pp. 262-263.

appears therefore to be conventionally motivated by the appeal of a «virtus belle adornata» (p. [1]), that is to say the possibility of finding suggestions for good moral and political conduct in the carefully crafted (and thus exemplary) prose of Isocrates¹². On a more strictly political level, this attitude seems to move along the lines of a cautious moderatism, well suited to the enlightened English liberalism of the early 18th century, which considered the Attic orator a moral philosopher of a practical nature:

Hoc enim prae caeteris curasse visus est, ut et homines singulos et civitates universas feliciores redderet, ut mores emolliret, ut ab injuriis et vesana dominandi libidine ipsos liberaret, quae cum reliquam Graeciam, tum suam ipsius patriam jamdudum infestarat: quam tanta ille pietate fovebat, ut pro ipsius gloria contra Lacedemoniorum potentiam, pro salute contra perditorum civium scelera et audaciam declamitare numquam desierit, verum in ipso Areopago, et coram populo Atheniensi, de mutanda Reipublicae ratione, ac deponendo maris imperio contra fas suscepto, sententiam ferre auderet (p. [2]).

In this presentation Battie seems to adopt a more original stance only in reference to Isocrates' criticism of Athenian maritime imperialism (which was discussed in particular in the speech *De pace*, written by Isocrates in the midst of the Social War): one might be tempted to see a connection with the concern about the Anglo-Spanish war of 1727-1729. The following words «Ita enim exquisite sensit quam iniqua esset dominatio, ut ne suos quidem ipsius cives eam exercere pateretur; libertatisque adeo studiosus fuit, et tyrannidis impatiens, ut post praelium Chaeronense inedia sibi morte consciret» (p. [2]) demonstrate, however, that it was a criticism rooted within the tradition of an idealized vision of Isocratean politics (along the lines of the abovementioned story of the suicide by starvation after Chaeronea), which was actually bound up with the interests of specific social groups in contemporary Athens.

¹² «Quippe in hoc laudatissimo Oratore praecepta mille veneribus ac suadendi lenociniis delenita reperies, tam ad vitam hominum privatam, quam ad Reipublicae bene gerendae rationem apprime utilia» (p. [1]).

The other point of interest in the preface is the figure of Philip II, the king who was the architect of the Macedonian expansionism that would ultimately lead to the end of the autonomy of the Athenian state. Isocrates saw him as a difficult enemy to subjugate and therefore tried to assimilate him as far as possible into the world of the Greek *poleis*. As a consequence, he put to Philip proposals for the safeguarding of the independence of the Greek cities such as the suggestion contained in his *Philippus* of 346, a speech in which he advised the king to place himself at the head of a Hellenic alliance in a great anti-Persian offensive. In early 18th-century England, where balance had been restored to the relations between Parliament and the monarch after the Glorious Revolution (1688-89) and the Bill of Rights, Philip might appear, retrospectively, as the only guarantee of unity for the Greeks, to the point that Battie glimpsed, illusorily, in the Isocratean project also precautionary measures to control and contain the power of the Macedonian sovereign:

Quem ideo dum ad haec praeclara facinora suscipienda adhortatur, quid ab illius potentia metuendum sit non dissimulat, callideque submonet, si quas libertati Graecorum struxerit insidias, eas minime clam fore, cum tot haberet hostes, qui ipsum tanquam Graeciae inimicissimum lacesserent, populi que suspiciones, si modo paululum obdormiverint, criminibus novis indies resuscitarent (p. [3]).

To produce a new edition, Battie was also aware of the need to use adequate manuscript documentation. In fact, in addition to the *editio princeps* of 1493 («codex impressus»)¹³, the Aldine, and Wolf's («Oporini») and Estienne's editions, all of which he consulted, he availed himself of four Oxford manuscripts (Bodleian Library, Barocc. 33, Laud. 16, Auct. F.6.1; New College, 254) and of readings culled from two manuscripts of the Robert Harley collection (today at the British Library, Harley 5660 and 6301) that were communicated to him by a «vir eruditissimus» who insisted on remaining anonymous but who was acknowledged at the end of

¹³ Battie's preface has the typo "1593" for "1493", cf. Drerup 1906, p. CLXXII.

the preface¹⁴. However, all these manuscripts allowed a collation of a very limited portion of Isocrates' works, since they only contained the texts of *Ad Demonicum* and *Ad Nicoclem*. Moreover, Battie was not properly able to evaluate the actual quality of the text that he encountered in those manuscripts: what is valid in his edition actually comes from Wolf's edition, while the innovations appear mostly haphazard and unconvincing. As far as his merits as an editor are concerned, we concur with Drerup¹⁵ that «post Stephanum primus totum Isocratem retractavit, post Aldum primus codices aliquos Isocrateos inspexit». Something remains to be said about Battie's Latin translation, which he wanted «ad verbum magis facta» in contrast with the 'difficult' Ciceronian version that Wolf had included in his edition and that had been circulating in the previous two centuries. Battie's intent was to make Isocrates' text readable by the greatest number of people:

Eo enim eram animo ut crederem Graecae linguae ineruditos postulare ut verba oratoris sermone magis familiari redderentur, non ut ipsius sententiae Latinitatis elegantis decorarentur, quae non minus intellectu difficiles essent quam Graecus ipse contextus. Quare sicubi inter caetera errata Hellenismi occurrerint, quos aut incuria aut interpretationis huiusmodi necessitas fuderit, facile, uti spero, condonabitur. Viris utriusque linguae sermones edoctis, qui nihil nisi exquisitam Latinitatem ferre possunt, non hoc destinatum est opus, sed iis solummodo qui interpretatione indigent (p. [4])¹⁶.

Battie completed his work with a second volume that appeared in London in 1748, in which he published the remaining part of the Isocratean *corpus*. Both volumes were afterwards reprinted together in London in 1749, with the 1729 preface reduced in length and slightly revised – here the «Juventus Academica» was explicitly identified as the privileged recipient – and other minor

¹⁴ Cf. Drerup 1906, p. CLXXII.

¹⁵ Drerup 1906, p. CLXXIII.

¹⁶ His decision to opt for this kind of translation was particularly appreciated by at least one critic: see e.g. the review in *Historia litteraria* 1731, pp. 321-323.

changes¹⁷. The work circulated fairly widely: it was for instance to be found on the desks of Adam Smith¹⁸, Edward Gibbon¹⁹ and George Grote²⁰. The 1729 edition was also included in the family library of Giacomo Leopardi and provided the text on which the poet-philologist made his conjectures in preparation for his ‘volgarizzamento’ of Isocrates (between the end of 1824 and the beginning of 1825)²¹.

3.

Oddly enough, just a few years after the reprinting of Battie’s edition, a new English translation²² (in which no mention was made of Battie) of the whole works of Isocrates appeared in London in 1752. It was the work of the otherwise unknown Joshua Dinsdale, who is recorded in library catalogues as the author of a poem in imitation of Virgil’s *Georgica* and the translator of a French romance²³. His translation of Isocrates was probably a

¹⁷ Ἰσοκράτους λόγοι τεσσαρεσκαίδεκα. *Isocratis orationes quatuordecim*. Varias lectiones, versionem novam, ac notas adjunxit Gul. Battie Coll. Regal. Cantab. Socius. Londini, Impensis C. Davis, J. Whiston, et B. Dod, MDCCXLVIII; Ἰσοκράτους ἅπαντα. *Isocratis opera*. Quae quidem nunc extant omnia. Varias lectiones, versionem novam ac notas adjunxit Gulielmus Battie M. D. Coll. Med. Lond. et Soc. Reg. Socius, I-II, Londini, Impensis C. Davis, J. Whiston, et B. Dod, MDCCXLIX. Volume I included also a certain amount of opening material selected from Wolf’s 1570 edition (the Greek text of Isocrates’ life from Pseudo-Plutarch’s *Vitae decem oratorum*, Philostratus’ *Vitae sophistarum* and Suda; «excerpta ex Hieronymo Wolfio»; sections from Cicero and Quintilian).

¹⁸ Cf. Bonar 1894, p. 55 (only vol. I of the 1749 edition).

¹⁹ Cf. Keynes 1950, p. 158 (1729 edn.; see also p. 159 for Gibbon’s copy of the 1782 Greek-Latin edition by Auger, on which see below).

²⁰ See Frizzera 2024, p. 126, n. 30 (1729 edn.).

²¹ See Maisano 1974, pp. 259, n. 36; D’Intino 2012, pp. 107-139. Leopardi was also able to consult Auger’s Greek-Latin edition (on which see below) during his stay in Rome in 1822-1823, see Maisano 1974, pp. 259, n. 36.

²² *The Orations and Epistles of Isocrates*. Translated from the Greek by Mr. Joshua Dinsdale. And Revised by the Rev. Mr. Young. London: Printed for T. Waller, opposite Fetter-lane, Fleet-street, MDCCLII.

²³ Dinsdale was a Church of England divine according to a brief biographical note in Urbański-Fordoński 2010, p. 191 (Dinsdale’s imitations and translations

posthumous work, since the title page declares that it was revised by a similarly unknown “Reverend Young”²⁴. Apart from the acknowledgement of «the kind assistance I have had from a very learned, ingenious gentleman, in several difficult and obscure parts of this author» at the end of the preface (p. [6]), no further information about the writing and publication of the work is available.

As for the character of the translation, Dinsdale’s sensitivity to the issue was revealed by his assertion in the preface that he intended to provide a version that should be neither too literal nor too paraphrastic, but animated and lively: «A translation should be animated, which cannot be without freedom: you otherwise have but the dead spirit of an author, especially if a classic» (p. [4])²⁵. On the other hand, the main reason given for the choice of

of some Latin poems by the Polish humanist Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski follow at pp. 191-195). The information probably comes from the fact that «The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer» of 1740 (p. 408) recorded under Dinsdale’s name a *Sermon upon charity*. The title of his Virgilian poem was *The modern art of breeding bees* (London 1740); *Parmenides, Prince of Macedonia or, Fidelity crowned* (London 1752) was his translation of Madeleine Le Coq’s *La Fidélité couronnée, ou, Histoire de Parmenide, Prince de Macédoine* (Bruxelles 1706, Lyon 1711). The last page of *Parmenides* contained the following information about the translator: «N. B. *French, Latin, and Greek*, are taught young Gentlemen at their own Houses by *Joshua Dinsdale*, who lives at the Sign of the *Fiddle*, in *Middlerow, Holborn*». No other translation of Dinsdale’s from ancient Greek is known.

²⁴ It is a curious coincidence that Edward Young (1683-1765), the famous pre-romantic poet and author of *Night-Thoughts*, also authored a play (1719) called *Busiris*, which is the title of one of Isocrates’ speeches. Cf. Gallien 2010.

²⁵ This aspect was actually criticized in a review that appeared in the «Monthly Review» for November 1751, pp. 424-433 (the date of the article suggests that the reviewer worked from drafts or a non-final copy). The anonymous author limited himself to reprinting two extensive extracts from Dinsdale’s translation, pp. 115-121 (*Philippus* 96-127) and pp. 392-394 (*Aegineticus* 16-29) and to appending a limiting final judgement: «We shall therefore only add this observation, that if the translator had studied ornament a little more, his book would have not only been more pleasing to the *English* reader, but likewise more agreeable to the genius of his author, whose meaning, we

Isocrates was identified, once again, as contents that were considered morally edifying, especially for the young, and that were communicated in a highly refined and elevated style («magnanimous, moral eloquence»), qualities for which Isocrates should, according to the translator, be preferred to Demosthenes and Cicero:

I first entertained the thought of translating this author's remains, because I believed his writings the properest of any orator's for the instruction of youth. There is a candour, lenity, and magnanimity every-where visible in his orations which are left us. He inculcates virtue in the simplest and sublimest manner, by the clearest precepts, and noblest examples. In fine, the orator and philosopher seem to rival each other in his works (p. [1]).

However, the preface did not lack some tentative political suggestions for the good of the entire nation:

Patriotism and philanthropy shine in their brightest blaze; and if it was possible, by exhortation, to recover a depraved, sinking people from ruin to virtue and courage, his magnanimous, moral eloquence would have done it; but to effect such a wonderful change, a generous-minded king, or an united people, must, with a noble ardor, stir up all to the pursuit of what is laudable. The body politic alone can preserve alive languishing popular virtue: all must awaken from the lethargy of avarice and voluptuousness to recover a country's happiness and glory (pp. [1]-[2]).

Like Battie, Dinsdale was interested in Isocrates' conduct towards Philip. His policy of dialogue with the Macedonian king through the circulation of written texts was credited with having overthrown the Persian tyranny and was in contrast with the policy of the «Athenian haranguers», namely Demosthenes and the anti-Macedonian orators who spoke in the assembly, all of whom were inclined to corruption according to our translator:

he certainly effected more in a retired way, by his exhortations to Philip of Macedon, towards the destruction of the Persian

must say, is every where expressed with much exactness, perhaps more than was consistent with the nature of a free translation» (p. 433).

tyranny, than all the Athenian haranguers, who were all, in a degree, subject to bribery (p. [2]).

Dinsdale was in fact echoing an idealized view of ancient Greek history, since Philip II had turned out to be the ultimate enemy for the Athenians, and the annihilation of the Persian empire was actually achieved by his son Alexander when Athens was already under Macedonian control. With his contempt for the role of the assembly in Athenian democracy, Dinsdale is therefore embracing the view that Demosthenes and Isocrates espoused opposing policies towards Philip, an idea that would re-emerge more forcefully in the European cultural debate between the 1870s and the 1930s.

A more historically aware view of Isocrates and his time emerges in another contemporary work that is worth recalling here. In this case, what we have is not an edition but a partial translation included in an original project by a Scottish historian of antiquity, John Gillies (1747-1836)²⁶. His book²⁷ contained a selection of speeches of Isocrates and Lysias, mostly presented side by side or intertwined, in order to provide an accurate historical and social picture of 4th-century Greece²⁸:

²⁶ Gillies was the author of wide-ranging works such as a *History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies and Conquests* (1786) and a *History of the World, from the Reign of Alexander to that of Augustus* (1807). He also translated some of Aristotle's works, including *Rhetorica* (1823), like Battie. On Gillies cf. Wroth-Cunningham 2004 and Whitaker 2004; see also Ampolo 1997, esp. pp. 58-60, and most recently Murray 2024, *passim*.

²⁷ *The Orations of Lysias and Isocrates, translated from the Greek: with Some Account of Their Lives; and a Discourse on the History, Manners, and Character of the Greeks, from the Conclusion of the Peloponnesian War, to the Battle of Chaeronea*. By John Gillies, LL. D. London: Printed for J. Murray, Fleet Street; and J. Bell, Edinburgh. MDCCLXXVIII.

²⁸ As well as the ample preliminary *Discourse* (pp. [iii]-cvi), and an introduction to the lives and works of the two orators (pp. [cvii]-cxxxv), the edition contained the translations with brief introductions (to mention just the Isocraean pieces) to *Panegyricus* (pp. [1]-74), *Archidamus* (pp. [99]-142), *De pace* (pp. [143]-182), *De bigis* (pp. [205]-219), *Plataicus* (pp. [295]-314), *Areopagiticus* (pp. [473]-498).

Isocrates in the 18th Century

The orations of Isocrates furnish us with a general account of the history and political interests of the Greeks: the pleadings of Lysias contain a curious detail of their domestic manners and internal œconomy. The works of the two orators together, exhibit an interesting picture, not only of the foreign wars and negotiations, but of the private lives and behaviour of this celebrated nation. Taken separately, their writings are imperfect; when combined, they afford a system of information equally extensive and satisfactory (*Preface*, p. [1]).

Although Gillies' main interest was historical, he did not underestimate the importance of translation work:

The task of translating into English the authors whom I adduce as authorities, was the most laborious part of this undertaking; and that on which the greatest pains have been bestowed. As a translator, I have endeavoured to express the meaning, and to preserve the spirit of the original; to retain the distinctive characters of both writers, and to clothe their sentiments in a dress agreeable to the taste of modern times (*Pref.*, p. [9]).

A footnote (*Pref.*, p. [10]) devoted to translations in English and other modern languages also contained a harsh judgement on Dinsdale's translation: «There is a book entitled 'The translation of Isocrates, by Mr. Dimesdale [*sic*]'. I turned over an hundred pages of it without finding ten sentences that are intelligible»²⁹.

4.

In 18th-century France too the study of Isocrates was bound up with the name of a particular scholar and with an edition and translation project. The scholar in question was, in a sense, a professional classicist, the abbot Athanase Auger (1734-1792) who, after starting out as a professor of rhetoric in Rouen, was then able to devote himself to a life of study in Paris thanks to his being

²⁹ Praise was reserved, on the other hand, for the work of Bréquigny, on which see n. 35 below.

appointed to the offices of provincial canon and Vicar General³⁰. Ancient oratory, especially Attic oratory (Lysias, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Lycurgus), but also Roman oratory (in particular Cicero), as well as the Christian oratory of Basil and John Chrysostom), was central to his interests as a scholar and translator from the mid-1760s to the very last years of his life. His translations became very popular, were variously reprinted and were used for teaching until well into the 19th century³¹. His Isocrates appeared in 1781 and 1782, when Auger was almost fifty years old³², and was an undertaking comparable, in terms of commitment and general design, to the publication of Lysias in the years

³⁰ He was canon of Saint-Ouen, in the Loire region, and Vicar General to the Bishop of Lescar (Pyrenees), Marc-Antoine De Noé. On Auger, see Hérault de Séchelles 1792 and Prevost 1948.

³¹ Cf. e.g. *Harangues d'Eschine et de Démosthène sur la couronne, traduites du grec*, R. Lallemand, Rouen- P.-D. Brocas et Humblot, Paris 1768; *Oeuvres complètes de Démosthène et d'Eschine, traduites en français*, Lacombe, Paris 1777; *Discours de Lycurgue, d'Andocide, d'Isée, de Dinarque, avec un fragment sous le nom de Démade, traduits en français*, De Bure, Barrois, Jombert, Paris 1783; *Discours choisis de Cicéron, à l'usage des classes*, Didot fils et al., Paris 1786; *Discours grecs choisis de divers orateurs*, P.Fr. Didot, Paris 1788; *Homélies et Lettres choisies de Saint Basile le Grand*, Crapart, Paris 1788; *Harangues tirées d'Hérodote, de Thucydide, des Histoires grecques de Xénophon, de sa Retraite des Dix mille, et de sa Cyropédie*, Nyon l'aîné et fils, Paris 1788; *Oeuvres complètes de Démosthène et d'Eschine, traduites en français*, Crapart, Paris 1788; *Demosthenis et Aeschinis quae supersunt omnia, [...] Cum versione nova, triplice indice, variantibus lectionibus et brevioribus notis*, I, P. Didot, Paris 1790 (only the first volume was published); *Les Orateurs athéniens, ou les Harangues de Lycurgue, d'Andocide, d'Isée, de Dinarque, et de Démade*, traduites en français, Volland, Paris 1792. See the following notes for Isocrates and Lysias.

³² French translation: *Oeuvres complètes d'Isocrate, Auxquelles on a joint quelques Discours analogues à ceux de cet Orateur, tirés de Platon, de Lysias, de Thucydide, de Xénophon, de Démosthène, d'Antiphon, de Gorgias, d'Antisthène et d'Alcidas*; traduites en français, par M. l'Abbé Auger [...], I-III, Chez De Bure fils aîné, Theoph. Barrois jeune, Paris 1781. Greek-Latin edition: *Isocratis Opera omnia Graece et Latine, cum versione nova, triplici indice, variantibus lectionibus, et notis*, edidit Athanasius Auger [...], I-III, Franc. Ambr. Didot l'aîné, Paris 1782.

immediately following³³: in both cases, a French translation in octavo and an edition of the Greek text accompanied by a new Latin translation in quarto were almost simultaneously published, with the first volume of the translation appearing first.

In the preface to the first volume of his translation of Isocrates, dedicated to his patron, the bishop De Noé, Auger emphasized above all the original organization of the work³⁴. The edition in fact also included a certain number of texts by other ancient authors that in form or character bore resemblance to the speeches of Isocrates – an editorial choice that suggests a comprehensive idea of Attic oratory as a literary phenomenon. Thus in the first volume, which contains *In Sophistas*, Auger also inserted the speech of Alcidas' *De sophistis*, while the second volume, containing Isocrates' eulogies and *Panegyricus*, also features for instance Gorgias' *Helena*, Plato's *Menexenus*, the so-called *Epitaphius* of Pericles from Thucydides (II 35-46), and the *Epitaphius* for those who had fallen at Chaeronea preserved in the Demosthenic corpus.

Auger also claimed the merit of having produced a complete translation of the Isocratean *corpus*, since not all of Isocrates' speeches had been translated into French up to that time³⁵. The

³³ French translation: *Oeuvres complètes de Lysias*, traduites en français par M. l'Abbé Auger [...], Chez De Bure fils aîné, Théoph. Barrois, Alexandre Jombert jeune, Paris 1783. Greek-Latin edition: *Lysiae Opera omnia Graece et Latine*, cum versione nova, triplici indice, variantibus lectionibus, et notis, edidit Athanasius Auger [...], I-II, Franc. Ambr. Didot l'aîné, Paris 1783.

³⁴ The work was in three volumes (see n. 32 above), the first containing, in order, the dedication (pp. [iii]-vi), the *Préface* (pp. [vii]-xviii), a *Discours préliminaire* on Isocrates and on the translation (with new pagination [i]-liii), a *Précis historique, pour l'intelligence des harangues d'Isocrate* (pp. [liv]-lxxxvii), a *Dictionnaire géographique* (pp. [lxxxviii]-civ), and then *Ad Nicoclem*, *Nicocles*, *Ad Demonium*, *Archidamus*, *Areopagiticus*, *De pace*, *Philippus*, the *Epistulae* (including both the authentic *Ad Archidamum* and Theophilact's *Ad Dionysium*, see n. 11 above), and *In sophistas* followed by Alcidas' *De sophistis*, all with introductions. The order of the orations and letters was different from the traditional one established by Wolf.

³⁵ He included also a brief section (*Préface*, pp. ix-x) devoted to previous French translations, in which he expressed admiration only for the works of

object of his translation was to inspire a taste for reading the orators and to facilitate acquaintance with them, with a view to enabling subsequent, deeper understanding of the text in the original language: «mon dessein, en traduisant les orateurs Grecs, n'est pas de dispenser de les lire dans leur langue, mais plutôt d'en inspirer le goût & d'en faciliter la lecture» (*Préface*, p. x). Closely connected with this topic was Auger's announcement of his Greek-Latin edition («que je fais actuellement imprimer», *ibid.*) within the broader plan to publish similar editions of, it would seem, all the Attic orators:

En traduisant les orateurs d'Athenes, j'ai écrit beaucoup de notes sur le texte ; j'ai tâché d'éclaircir les endroits obscurs, de corriger ceux qui étoient altérés, de remplir les lacunes, &c. Je voudrois que ce travail ne fût point perdu pour le public, & en conséquence j'ai formé le projet de donner une édition de ces orateurs sur un plan nouveau, de l'accompagner d'une version latine la plus claire possible, & de notes latines, courtes, substantielles, placées au bas des pages, sans aucun appareil d'érudition (*Préf.*, p. xi).

This in some ways innovative approach to the publication of ancient texts was, however, tinged with nationalism: «je n'épargnerai aucun travail pour que cette édition puisse faire quelque honneur à la France, & que les étrangers cessent de nous reprocher que nous avons perdu le goût des bonnes études» (*Préf.*, p. xi). Accordingly, the remaining part of the preface was devoted to issues related to the teaching of classical languages, with proposals addressed in particular to the professors of the University of Paris, whose ranks, for all his great aspirations, Auger would never succeed in joining.

Louis-Georges-Oudard Feudrix de Bréquigny (1714-1795), a worthy historian, palaeographer and Hellenist, on whom see at least Prevost 1954. He was the author of *Vies des anciens orateurs grecs* (I-II, Paris, Nyon fils, Robustel, 1752; the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France also records an edition dated 1750 published by Mérigot, and an edition published by Nyon fils in 1751-1752), the first volume of which was actually an essay on Isocrates' life, eloquence and works and the history of his time, and included French translations of *Nicocles*, *Panegyricus*, *Evagoras* and *In Euthynum*. Auger openly acknowledged his debt to Bréquigny's work in the Preface (pp. viii-ix).

The heralded Greek-Latin edition appeared in 1782 and confirms the importance of Auger's work in 18th-century Isocratean studies³⁶. The preface is in fact structured like an introduction to a modern critical edition. Auger started by emphasising his awareness that he was dealing with the text of a Greek author which, although more accurate than that of other Attic orators, was tainted by a number of errors that had been propagated by previous editions. Hence the need to improve it («ut textum resarcirem multis modis depravatum», p. i). The editor then discussed some aspects of the history of Isocrates' text and questions of authenticity relating to certain writings of the *corpus*. After briefly reviewing the previous Isocratean editions known to him and stating that he had taken in particular Estienne's edition of 1593 as the basis for his work to improve the text, Auger focused on the features of his own Latin translation. This was conceived as a new version pursuing a middle way between Wolf's translation, which had already seemed difficult to Battie (see above § 2), and Battie's own, which the French scholar saw as unadorned («litterae omnino serviens sermonis latini veneres et suavem verborum concentum negligit prorsus et dedignatur», p. vii). The aim of Auger's translation was rather «ut sensus auctoris clarus esset et nitidus» (p. vii). In this regard, Auger's view of the practice of Latin translation itself turns out to be original and in some ways radical: «Mihi enim ridiculum videtur et absurdum linguam aliquam mortuam per mortuum sermonem explicari» (p. vii). His own adoption

³⁶ The work was in three volumes (see n. 32). The first volume included the *Praefatio* (pp. [i]-xvii), the usual biographies of Isocrates by Pseudo-Plutarch (pp. [xviii]-xxxvii) and Philostratus (pp. [xxxviii]-xliiii), the treatise on Isocrates by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (pp. [xliv]-cxi), and the entries in Suda (p. cxii-cxiii), «Varia testimonia de eodem Isocrate» (pp. [cxiv]-cxix), all with Latin translation. The Greek text and the Latin translation of the orations and letters followed with introductory materials (as in the translation, here too the texts were arranged in a different order than Wolf's edition). The third volume contained *indices* of Greek words (pp. [346]-384), history ([385]-397), geography ([398]-401) and *variantes lectiones* ([402]-426). For the first time Auger's edition added the letter *Ad Archidamum* to the collection of Isocratean letters (vol. I, pp. 490-507; see also vol. I of the French translation, pp. 286-293).

of it appears then to be more a sign of adaptation to an erudite tradition that was difficult to jettison completely (especially for a scholar who aspired to recognition from the official academy) than acknowledgement of its usefulness. On the other hand, through his extremely intensive work as a translator into French, Auger, who was also attentive to teaching needs, tried to promote a more modern vision of the way in which knowledge of ancient authors was to be disseminated. It was in this way that he imagined he could invite people to approach and progressively understand the texts written in ancient Greek, «la plus belle langue qui ait jamais été parlée», as he had stated in the preface to his French translation (p. x).

The final section of the preface to the Greek-Latin edition (pp. ix-xvii) once again reveals the modernity of the Parisian abbot's working methods: just as we would expect in a critical edition today, the typographical criteria and those applied to the emendation of the text are explained; and there follows a list of all the manuscripts used, with *sigla* and brief descriptions (Auger was in fact able to make use of the many manuscripts of Isocrates preserved at the Bibliothèque Royale of Paris). Although not yet fully reliable as regards the effective evaluation of the manuscript tradition according to the critical standards of today, Auger's Isocrates was certainly the most important editorial work on this author in the 18th century and it was considered the authoritative work in France³⁷ until the beginning of the 20th century, when the publishing house Les Belles Lettres brought out a new edition of Isocrates with a French translation that was destined to achieve a wide popularity³⁸.

³⁷ It was to be found, for example, in the library of Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, together with Auger's French translations of Isocrates, Lysias, Demosthenes and Aeschines, and the 1748 and 1749 editions by Battie, cf. *Catalogue Barthélemy* 1800, p. 45. Barthélemy devoted considerable space to Isocrates in his *Voyage*, cf. Barthélemy 1788, ch. VIII, pp. 339-350. However, for the drawbacks and impact on the following scholarship of Auger's edition see Drerup 1906, pp. CLXXIV- CLXXV.

³⁸ Mathieu-Brémond 1928-1962. Another French translation, of more limited circulation, had actually appeared in the meantime, cf. Pinto 2010.

The affinity that Auger felt with this Athenian writer deserves perhaps to be investigated more thoroughly, with a focus on the possible connection with his own political writings. In the last years of his life the abbot in fact authored some of the huge number of publications of the French Revolution period, including: a pamphlet devoted to the means of ensuring the achievement of the Revolution and benefit from it for the happiness and prosperity of France, which appeared in “year I of Liberty”; a national education plan; and a *Catéchisme du citoyen français* written in the spirit and in line with the letter of the new constitution³⁹. In these pamphlets, aimed at promoting union and harmony among the French in times of revolution, some have detected a certain political and social moderation⁴⁰, probably partly inspired by the ancient Isocratean lesson.

5.

Before concluding, I would like to briefly mention two other editorial projects concerning Isocrates that belong to that memorable offshoot of the ‘long 18th Century’ that was the Napoleonic Age, a period predating the success of the ‘scientific’ Isocratean philology of the 19th century. These two editions were both conceived

³⁹ Cf. *Moyens d’assurer la Révolution, d’en tirer le plus grand parti pour le bonheur et la prospérité de la France* (1789); *Projet d’éducation pour tout le royaume, précédé de quelques réflexions sur l’Assemblée nationale* (1789); *Catéchisme du citoyen français, composé de l’esprit et de la lettre de la nouvelle constitution* (1790). See also *Organisation des écoles nationales* (1791). Some of these writings can probably be traced back to Auger’s connection with the député Marie-Jen Hérault de Séchelles (1759-1794), who worked alongside Georges Danton and would later be President of the National Convention. He was also the author of *Éloge d’Athanasie Auger [...] lu à la séance publique de la Société des Neuf-Sœurs*, see Hérault de Séchelles 1792. For two curious cases of reception of Isocrates at the beginning of the Revolution, it is worth mentioning in passing a drawing by the eccentric and visionary architect Jean-Jacques Lequeu, cf. Pinto 2024, pp. 173-177 and the choice of the name Isocrates for one of the characters in the anticlerical dialogue *Isocrate, le prêtre Testis unus et l’abbé Thise* by Alexandre-Nicolas Courtois (s.l. 1791).

⁴⁰ Prevost 1948, col. 502.

for other European countries, even though they were created and published in Paris.

The first was part of a larger project connected with the political and cultural activities organised in support of Greek independence in the first two decades of the 19th century, specifically the edition of Isocrates published in 1807 for Firmin Didot by the great Hellenist Adamantios Korais (1748-1833)⁴¹. Korais had arrived in Paris in 1789 at the age of forty, and there he was inspired by the democratic ideas of the Revolution, becoming over the years a point of reference for the intellectuals and scholars of the Greek diaspora. Isocrates was the first author to be published in the 'Hellenike Bibliotheke' that Korais had designed, a series that was meant to collect the texts of Greek authors at the pinnacle of the ancient Greek linguistic experience. The project was financed by Greek patrons, the Zosimas brothers, a family of merchants from Ioannina, and was intended as a tool for the education of a nation in the process of being reborn. The edition of Isocrates was in two volumes: written in modern Greek, the first included an *Ἀκολουθία τῶν αὐτοσχεδίων στοχασμῶν* (a sequence of 'improved reflections') on the Greek language and culture (pp. α-μς) and on the editions of Isocrates (pp. [μζ]-ρβ) and the text of Isocrates' speeches and letters; the second contained notes, also in modern Greek, and an *apparatus criticus*. The extensive preface included an important discourse on the role of ancient writers in the education of the people of modern and independent Greece and, above all, on the role that the authors collected in the 'Hellenike Bibliotheke' were to have in the creation of a modern Greek language (which, in Korais's view, as is known, should be the literary-based *katharevousa*). Korais's edition was a careful and documented work. The main innovation was the use of the oldest manuscript known at that time and the most ancient witness of the two families of the manuscript tradition, as we know it today, the Vaticanus Graecus 65 (Λ, of the year 1063), which was at the time in the Bibliothèque Imperiale, where it had been transferred

⁴¹ *Ἰσοκράτους λόγοι καὶ ἐπιστολαί, μετὰ σχολίων παλαιῶν*, I-II, F. Didot, Paris 1807. On Korais see Thereianos 1889-1890 and Kitromilides 2010.

after the occupation of Rome by the French in 1798. In addition, the text included numerous conjectures by Korais that were later confirmed by the discovery of the manuscripts of the other family of Isocratean manuscripts⁴².

The first modern complete Italian translation of the Isocratean *corpus* was also carried out in Paris a few years later. It was published by Pierre Didot (François-Ambroise's firstborn) and signed by the otherwise unknown «G. M. Labanti», with a dedication to «Napoleon the Great, Emperor of the French, King of Italy, Protector of the Rhenish Confederation, etc. etc.»⁴³, who appeared in the preface as another reincarnation of Philip of Macedon, as the man who fulfilled his plan to create an international empire. This two-volume work is interesting for several reasons, including the identity of Labanti and its editorial fate. We will try to tell the story of this book in a future paper. For the moment, suffice to say that the actual quality of the translation and the information apparatus is not to be disregarded; and that the first version in a modern language of the recently rediscovered complete text of Isocrates' *Antidosis* was also included⁴⁴. A second, partial edition (it contained only Volume I) of this undeservedly unsuccessful work by Labanti was published in Milan in 1828 and finally reprinted in its entirety in Parma in 1842. Despite its limited circulation,

⁴² On the edition see Drerup 1906, pp. CLXXVI-CLXXVII and Mandilaras 1984.

⁴³ *Opere d'Isocrate, recate dal greco nell'italiano idioma, con annotazioni illustrate, e dedicate alla Maestà di Napoleone il Grande, Imperatore de' Francesi, Re d'Italia, Protettore della Confederazione Renana, ec. ec. da G.M. Labanti, Professore di Lingua italiana in Parigi, approvato dall'Università Imperiale*, in Parigi, da' torchi di P. Didot il magg., I-II, 1813. After the vernacular version by Pietro Carrario (Venice 1555), there had been no other attempts to present the whole of Isocrates in Italian, except for Angelo Pietro Galli's (1762-1812), *Opere d'Isocrate tradotte dal greco ed illustrate con note*, of which only a first volume containing the translations of the usual *Ad Demonicum*, *Ad Nicoclem* and *Nicocles* was published in Venice in 1798.

⁴⁴ See Pinto 2017, esp. pp. 227-228.

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it was the only Italian translation of the whole of Isocrates available until well beyond the mid-20th century⁴⁵.

Abstract.

The paper deals with the reception of Isocrates in 18th-century Britain and France. In particular, the editions and translations by William Battie, Joshua Dinsdale and Athanase Auger are taken into consideration. Brief references are made to the work of other contemporary scholars.

Keywords.

Isocrates, Milton's *Areopagitica*, William Battie, Joshua Dinsdale, Athanase Auger, History of Classical Scholarship, Classical Tradition.

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⁴⁵ *Isocrate. Orazioni ed Epistole recate dal Greco nell'italiano idioma ed illustrate da G.M. Labanti. Corredate in questa seconda edizione di nuove aggiunte ed importanti annotazioni del Bréquigny, Cesarotti, Coray, Mustoxidi ed altri critici*, Milano, Sonzogno, 1828; *Opere d'Isocrate tradotte e corredate di annotazioni da G.M. Labanti*, I-II, P. Fiaccadori, Parma 1842. A new Italian version of the Isocratean *corpus* appeared only in 1965; by Argentina Argentati and Clementina Gatti, it included an introduction by Mario Attilio Levi, and was part of the UTET publishing house's 'Classici politici' series.

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