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FATHERS OF HISTORY: METAMORPHOSES OF A METAPHOR

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ABSTRACT

Like all figurative language, father of history metaphors can be analyzed in various ways. Whereas historians of science often focus on the *functions* performed by “fathers” of a discipline – more concretely, on the legitimization of scholarly practices through mythic genealogies – this article studies the *meanings* attributed to historians honored as fathers of history. In particular, it focuses on intentional meaning, that is, on meanings those employing the metaphor sought to convey. Focusing, then, on four historians honored as “fathers of history,” I examine how the metaphor meant different things to different historians and underwent a number of significant metamorphoses between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. While granting that father figures helped legitimate scholarly practices of various kinds, I try to show that “father of history” has been a particularly rich metaphor, able to be adapted to different situations. Contributing, along these lines, to a historicization of the father of history metaphor, I conclude by commenting on the striking fact that many historians nowadays try to avoid genealogical language in their reflections on the discipline’s past. If this suggests that many historians no longer regard the father metaphor as *meaningful*, I argue that historians nonetheless still legitimize their work under reference to their predecessors, thereby reiterating one of the *functions* traditionally performed by the father of history metaphor.

When Robert Fruin in 1894 retired from his professorship at Leiden University, in the Netherlands, he was honored as “the father of modern Dutch historiography”¹. During much of the twentieth century, this father title remained associated with Fruin, the man who occupied the first chair in Dutch history – or ‘history of the fatherland’, as the chair was officially called – and left posterity some hundreds of well-elaborated, source-based case-studies, which have since been treated as model examples of critical scholarship². Especially at Leiden, Fruin’s memory has been cherished ever since his retirement in 1894. After more than half a century, Leiden’s professorship in Dutch history was still known as “Fruin’s chair”³. Students organized themselves in 1932 in a Robert Fruin Historical Society, which in turn was responsible for the publication, in the 1970s and 1980s, of a *Fruin Messenger*⁴. Fruin’s inaugural address, on ‘The Impartiality

¹ S. Muller Fz., “Robert Fruin”, *De Gids* (1894) II, 359. All translations are my own.

² Most of these essays are reprinted in *Robert Fruin's verspreide geschriften, met aantekeningen, toevoegsels en verbeteringen uit des schrijvers nalatenschap*, eds. P. J. Blok, P. L. Muller, and S. Muller Fz., 10 vols. (The Hague, 1900-1905).

³ Carel Gerretson to Pieter Geyl, March 1945, in *Briefwisseling Gerretson-Geyl IV*, eds. P. van Hees and G. Puchinger (Baarn, 1981), 289.

⁴ *De Fruinbode: lustrumuitgave 6 en 7 oktober 1972* (Leiden, 1972); *De Fruinbode: 6 oktober 1982* (Leiden, 1982). Cf. J. G. Bruggeman and A. V. N. v[an] Woerden, “Woord vooraf”, *Historie en metahistorie: “Robert Fruin” lustrumbundel 1952* (Leiden, 1952), 3-4.

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of the Historian' (1860), was considered enough of a milestone to be publicly commemorated at the occasion of its fortieth, hundredth, and hundred-fiftieth anniversaries (1900, 1960, 2010)⁵. Still, every year, the best master's thesis written in Leiden's History Department is awarded a Fruin Price.

These are, no doubt, expressions of local academic chauvinism, which as such are relatively uninformative about Fruin's reputation among historians affiliated with other Dutch universities, or more generally about his father status in twentieth century historiography. Yet, surprisingly perhaps, in spite of a chorus of critical voices that challenged Fruin's greatness, especially in the mid-twentieth century, and despite a thorough historicization of Fruin's life and work, most notably through editions of his correspondence and examination of the political agenda underlying his oeuvre⁶, Dutch historians never stopped referring to Fruin as the founding father of their profession. Even scholars who openly acknowledged that Fruin's interpretation of the Dutch Revolt and his rather influential views on the Dutch Republic in its so-called Golden Age were heavily laden with political intent continued to call him the father of Dutch historical scholarship. And although historians of historiography know well that some of Fruin's now almost forgotten contemporaries were equally devoted to and equally capable of careful study of sources, they still routinely credit Fruin with the establishment of modern, critical history in the Netherlands⁷.

What does it mean for historians to credit such figures as Fruin with father titles? At a certain level of abstraction, this question seems not particularly difficult to answer. Historians of science, for example, provide a high abstraction level answer when they speak about *disciplinary histories* that scholars create in order to justify their disciplinary practices. A disciplinary history, explains Stefan Collini, is 'an account of the alleged historical development of an enterprise the identity of which is defined by the concerns of the current practitioners of a particular scientific field'⁸. Typically, such disciplinary histories trace the discipline back to

⁵ P. J. Blok, "Redevoeringen van Fruin en De Vries gehouden bij de opening hunner colleges in september 1860", in *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1900-1901* (Leiden, 1901), 63-105; A. J. C. Rüter, "Fruin", Rüter, *Historische studies over mens en samenleving*, eds. Th. J. G. Locher, W. den Boer, and B. W. Schaper (Assen, 1967), 469-475; *Het vaderlandse verleden: Robert Fruin en de Nederlandse geschiedenis*, ed. H. Paul and H. Velde (Amsterdam, 2010).

⁶ *Correspondentie van Robert Fruin, 1845-1899*, eds. H. J. Smit and W. J. Wieringa (Groningen: Jakarta, 1957); J. van Heijst, "Robert Fruin in brieven en andere stukken", *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap*, 77 (1963): 239-392; E. E. G. Vermeulen, *Fruin over de wetenschap der geschiedenis* (Arnhem, 1956); P. Geyl, "Fruin tussen Ranke en Macaulay", Geyl, *Studies en strijdschriften* (Groningen, 1958), 377-389; J. W. Smit, *Fruin en de partijen tijdens de Republiek* (Groningen, 1958); P. B. M. Blaas, "De prikkelbaarheid van een kleine natie met een groot verleden. Fruins en Bloks nationale geschiedschrijving", Blaas, *Geschiedenis en nostalgie: de historiografie van een kleine natie met een groot verleden: verspreide historiografische opstellen* (Hilversum, 2000), 15-41.

⁷ Examples are provided in H. Paul, " 'De Hollandsche meester der streng-analytischen methode': Robert Fruin als vader van de Nederlandse geschiedwetenschap", Paul and Te Velde, *Vaderlandse verleden*, esp. 243-244.

⁸ S. Collini, " 'Discipline History' and 'Intellectual History': Reflections on the Historiography of

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certain father figures – to Isaac Newton, René Descartes, or August Comte – and judge these ‘predecessors’ on the ‘contributions’ they have (supposedly) made to the discipline in its current state, or to science in a modern sense of the word⁹. Such disciplinary histories, then, provide a context in which father of history metaphors become intelligible. Father figures vindicate current-day scholarly practices by serving as their mythic origins. They represent the perceived identity of a discipline by embodying some of its core values, even if in embryonic form. Consequently, battles over father figures are often disputes over the values, aims, or methods conceived as proper to scholarly work. As Alvin W. Gouldner put it: “Where there are conflicts, by later generations, concerning who their ‘founding father’ was, we suspect that this may be a serious question essentially reflecting a dispute over the character of the profession”¹⁰.

True as this may be, one cannot fail to notice that this answer is so general as to provide little insight in what Fruin’s students actually meant when they honored their teacher with a father title. Although it is correct to observe that Fruin’s fatherhood, just like Newton’s, Descartes’s, or Comte’s, helped justify certain scholarly practices, it does say little about the motives, intentions, and expectations of the historians who proclaimed Fruin a father figure. While explaining the function of father metaphors in rather general terms, it operates at such a level of abstraction as to ignore that Fruin and Newton, or Descartes and Comte, were likely to perform their father roles rather differently, in the sense that their father titles had different meanings for those who honored them as predecessors. In other words, the functional approach, I as would like to call it, has little to offer for those interested in such questions as what sort of a father Fruin was in the eyes of his students, whether national father figures were perceived differently from transnational ones, whether or how the father of history metaphor changed from early-modern to modern times, or what different motives could inspire patricide. These are no questions of *function*, but questions of *meaning* (understood in an intentionalist sense of the word)¹¹.

the Social Sciences in Britain and France”, *Revue de Synthèse*, 109 (1988): 388. Similar analyses can be found in S. Collini, D. Winch and J. Burrow, *The Noble Science of Politics: a Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge, 1983), 4-5; W. Lepenies and P. Weingart, “Introduction”, *Functions and Uses of Disciplinary Histories*, eds. L. Graham, W. Lepenies and P. Weingart (Dordrecht, 1983), ix-xx; F. Samelson, “History, Origin Myth, and Ideology: The ‘Discovery’ of Social Psychology by Auguste Comte”, *Dialectics and Ideology in Psychology*, ed. K. S. Larsen (Norwood NJ, 1986), 14-29; C. Condren, S. Gaukroger and I. Hunter, “Introduction”, *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: the Nature of a Contested Identity*, eds. C. Condren, S. Gaukroger and I. Hunter (Cambridge, 2006), 1-2.

⁹ On these metaphors: R. A. Jones, “On Understanding a Sociological Classic”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1977), esp. 284-285.

¹⁰ A. W. Gouldner, “Introduction”, Emile Durkheim, *Socialism and Saint-Simon*, trans. C. Sattler (London, 1958), ix note 5.

¹¹ This intentionalist approach to the history of ideas is explained and defended at length in M. Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge, 1999). More precisely, Bevir advocates a “weak” intentionalism, which unlike its “strong” counterpart is not only interested in the meaning an utterance had for its author, but also in the meanings it acquired for others, including audiences at later moments

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The aim of this paper is to offer a first exploration of such meaning-questions. More in particular, I examine how the father of history metaphor could convey a variety of meanings, and was able to undergo a number of significant metamorphoses, not only among historians in modern Europe, but also in the still less extensively studied realm of sixteenth and seventeenth century historiography. While granting that fathers figures helped legitimate scholarly practices of various kinds, I try to specify what sort of meanings historians at various times and places attached to the father of history metaphor. I will start with Fruin and his close contemporaries, but increasingly move away from late nineteenth century Leiden, initially to Liège, in Belgium, then to seventeenth century Muiden (close to Amsterdam), and eventually to Tübingen or Leipzig in the mid-sixteenth century. The insight that will be gained along the way is that ‘father of history’ has been a particularly rich metaphor, able to be adapted to rather different situations and to convey a wide variety of meanings.

I.

In 1894, the seventy-year old Robert Fruin received this father title, not so much as the first chair-holder of Dutch history in the Netherlands, but rather because a younger generation of historians, mostly educated at Leiden, considered Fruin a living example of how to do history in a ‘modern,’ ‘critical’ sense of the word. “With unflinching patience”, wrote Samuel Muller, a former pupil who had become an influential archivist, “with an acuteness only matched by his ability to combine [*combinatievermogen*], he investigates the facts of the matter, the relationships between what seems utterly unrelated”. He sang the praises of Fruin’s “virtue of self-denial”, his “rigid self-restraint”, and the “high demands” he placed on himself, including the requirement to be “entirely fair towards everyone and everything”. For Muller, Fruin was an embodiment of “calm” intellect, “persistence”, and “full mastery”¹².

Others, too, saw Fruin as a personification of critical history. In a book series entitled *Significant Men in Our Days (Mannen van beteekenis in onze dagen)*, the historian A. W. Stellwagen praised Fruin’s ‘calm equanimity,’ ‘clear-headedness,’ ‘acuteness,’ and ‘noble impartiality.’ Page after page, the ode continued, not on the importance of Fruin’s historical work, not on the significance of what he had written on the Dutch Revolt, but on Fruin’s virtues as a careful and conscientious historian. Some of these virtues were moral ones: “He always elevates our sense of justice”. But Stellwagen was especially impressed by what one might call Fruin’s intellectual virtues: “his logical powers” and talent for “ingenious combinations”¹³.

in history. These meanings, to be sure, are not semantic or lexical meanings, but hermeneutic ones: meanings that utterances have for individuals in particular instances.

¹² S. Muller Fz., “Robert Fruin”, *De Gids* (1894), II, 359, 357, 358, 356, 355, 357, 360, 355.

¹³ A. W. Stellwagen, “R. Fruin”, *Mannen van beteekenis in onze dagen*, vol. XXV (Haarlem, 1894), 274, 294, 299, 312, 279.

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Fruin was thus celebrated as a father of history because he epitomized the professional ethos of late nineteenth century historical studies. In the Dutch context, his scholarly personality served as example and source of inspiration for all historians committed to critical source examination. He embodied the *persona* of the modern, critical historian and was a father in so far as he had children who earnestly tried to acquire a similar sort of “scholarly self”¹⁴.

Even though his example was not uncontested – the prestigious cultural magazine *De Gids* carried a series of rather critical articles on Fruin, written by a librarian who preferred romantic self-expression over academic self-restraint – it is worth noting that this criticism also focused on the virtues and vices of Fruin’s scholarly character. Even the critic agreed that fatherhood consisted of setting an example for future generations¹⁵. And although, for various reasons, this father role began to change in the 1910s and 1920s, Fruin’s epistemic virtues would long remain a standard for Roman-Catholic and Reformed historians trying to secure themselves a place in the Dutch historical discipline¹⁶.

II.

Four years after Fruin’s retirement, in 1898, the Belgian medievalist Godefroid Kurth, a 51-year old professor at the University of Liège, was also ceremoniously elevated to father status. Kurth’s fatherhood, however, was rather different from Fruin’s. What was applauded, in Liège’s *salle académique*, was not Kurth’s personal qualities, but the history seminar that Kurth, inspired by German examples, had introduced in 1874.

Hardiment essayée par le maître liégeois, successivement adoptée dans les différentes Universités belges, consacrée enfin par la loi, cette méthode a valu à la science historique les plus brillants progrès et les résultats les plus féconds,

declared the circular that invited the Belgian historical community to a solemn celebration of “le XXVe anniversaire de l’introduction en Belgique des cours pratiques d’histoire”¹⁷.

The speeches delivered at this occasion created a genuine myth of origin. Kurth’s seminars, declared one of the speakers, “ont été l’embryon de toutes les réformes si heureuses qu’a subi l’enseignement supérieur de l’histoire en Belgique”. New history chairs, a rehabilitation of the auxiliary sciences, the

¹⁴ See along these lines also “Fruin’s aftreden”, *De Nederlandsche Spectator* (1894), 184; “Dr. R. Fruin”, *Eigen Haard* (1885), 264; M. G. de Boer, “Robert Fruin (1823-1899)”, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis, Land-en Volkenkunde*, 14 (1899): 65-68; P. L. Muller, “Levensbericht van Robert Fruin”, *Handelingen en mededelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1899-1900* (Leiden, 1900), 22.

¹⁵ [W. G. C.] Byvanck, “R. Fruin (1823-1899)”, *De Gids* (1899), I, i-xxii; II, i-l; III, i-xx.

¹⁶ See Paul, “Hollandsche meester”, 231-235.

¹⁷ University Library Ghent, HS.2929, circular for “manifestation Kurth.”

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introduction of a Ph.D. degree in history – “[t]el est, mon cher Kurth, l’aboutissement de l’œuvre collective dont vous avez été le premier pionnier”¹⁸. Another speaker thought that Kurth’s seminar contained nothing less than “les origines du flambeau de la critique historique”¹⁹. Kurth most celebrated pupil, Henri Pirenne, told how such a seminar had been typically conducted – how modest the seminar room had been and with how much dedication Kurth had initiated his inexperienced students to the craft of history. Pirenne, however, also focused on the effect that this *cours pratique* had achieved: a professionalization or ‘scientification’ of Belgian history. “C’est à l’initiative de Godefroid Kurth que nous devons la réforme essentielle qui devait entraîner toutes les autres”²⁰. This was, finally, also the message the jubilee volume presented to Kurth conveyed. In this volume, Paul Fredericq, historian at Ghent and an old friend of Kurth, meticulously described how Kurth’s ‘practical exercises’ had been imitated at all Belgian universities and how much fruit these seminars had yielded in the form of monographs and source editions. Although this survey mentioned Kurth’s name every now and then, it was in the first place an ode to the professionalization of Belgian historiography. The seminar topics, the student numbers, and the bibliographies it contained were meant as a “tableau succinct des progrès réalisés à son exemple”²¹.

Unlike Fruin, then, Kurth was honored, not as an example, but as a predecessor. Although both were associated with historical scholarship in a ‘modern’, ‘critical’ sense, Fruin was praised for his scholarly *persona*, whereas Kurth was credited for the scholarly *praxis* he had initiated in Belgium. Whereas Fruin, because of his *persona*, could serve as an inspiring example, also for future generations, Kurth was seen as a pioneer of a *praxis* that had been further developed since the 1870s, and therefore as a source of gratitude rather than of inspiration.

III.

Things get more complicated if we try to explain the difference between Fruin and Kurth. Why was Kurth honored as an initiator, rather than as an example? Although there are several answers to this question, the most important reason lies in the realm of politics and religion. An earnest Roman-Catholic, with a wide reputation for both his apologetic writings and his engagement in Catholic politics, Kurth hardly drew any non-Catholic students. In the ‘pillarized’ context of late nineteenth century Belgium, liberal students – with the exception of Pirenne –

¹⁸ “Discours de M. Paul Fredericq”, in *À Godefroid Kurth, professeur à l’université de Liège, à l’occasion du XXV^{me} anniversaire de la fondation de son cours pratique d’histoire* (Liège, 1899), 176, 177.

¹⁹ “Discours de M. Paul Tschoffen”, *À Godefroid Kurth*, 179.

²⁰ “Discours de M. Henri Pirenne”, *À Godefroid Kurth*, 167.

²¹ P. Fredericq, “L’origine et les développements des cours pratiques d’histoire dans l’enseignement supérieur en Belgique”, *À Godefroid Kurth*, 149.

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almost invariably preferred to study with Kurth's liberal colleague, Nicolas Lequarré²². This religious and political context had important implications for Kurth's fatherhood. Admittedly, almost the entire historical profession, Catholic and liberal, attended the 'manifestation Kurth.' But if the event showed anything, it was that a Catholic father of history was unthinkable for the liberal colleagues.

For one thing, the celebration, "sous le haut patronage de M. Schollaert", the Catholic minister of education, was largely organized by Catholic historians. As the liberal Paul Fredericq recorded in his diary, the initiators included "Father de Smedt S. J., Father Cauchie, professor in Louvain, Dom Urmser Berlière of Maredsous, Father Balau of Pepinster, Delescluse, Halkin, Hanquet (all papists) and I"²³. In spite of Fredericq's rather ecumenical disposition, 'papists' was not exactly intended as a compliment. Neither did Fredericq have much appreciation for the Catholic minister, Frans Schollaert²⁴. His readiness to collaborate on this occasion with his Catholic colleagues not only reflected Fredericq's (liberal) view that historical scholarship ought to transcend religious disagreement²⁵, but also, more importantly, exhibited his deep attachment to Kurth, "my oldest friend" (with whom he had studied in Liège)²⁶. That religious sensibilities were hard to ignore also became apparent when the company moved from the *salle académique* to hotel De Suède. Some liberal students could not resist the temptation and began to hiss at the Catholics in the cortege. As was widely reported afterwards in the Belgian newspapers, even the police had to intervene in this disturbance²⁷. More in general, the papers said little about Kurth's seminars; they preferred to discuss Kurth's "opinions politiques et philosophiques" and the "grand nombre des adversaires politiques de M. Kurth" present at the jubilee²⁸.

This religious and political situation helps explain why Kurth was too much contested to serve as an example for the entire Belgian historical community. Although liberal colleagues like Lequarré felt annoyed by Kurth's glorification of the Catholic Church²⁹, they were able to participate in the celebration as long as

²² H. Pirenne, "Notice sur Godefroid Kurth", *Annuaire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique 1924* (Brussel, 1924), 205.

²³ University Library Ghent, HS. 3704, diary Paul Fredericq, vol. II, 88r (June 14, 1898).

²⁴ University Library Ghent, HS. 3704, diary Paul Fredericq, vol. II, 116r (March 22, 1899).

²⁵ Tollebeek mentions Fredericq's high appreciation for the *Principes de la critique historique* (1883) by the Bollandist historian, Charles De Smedt (*Fredericq & Zonen: een antropologie van de moderne geschiedwetenschap* (Amsterdam, 2008), 50-51).

²⁶ University Library Ghent, HS. 3704, diary Paul Fredericq, vol. II, 79r (January 17, 1898).

²⁷ "M. Schollaert violemment hué à Liège", *Le Petit Bleu* (November 21, 1898); "Des sifflets", *La Gazette* (November 22, 1898); "A Liège", *La Flandre Libérale* (November 23, 1898); "M. Schollaert sifflé à Liège", *La Liberté* (November 27, 1898).

²⁸ "Manifestation Kurth", *Journal de Liège* (November 21, 1898). Cf. "Manifestation en l'honneur de M. le professeur KURTH", *La Gazette de Liège* (November 21, 1898); "Manifestation Kurth", *Le XXe siècle* (November 21, 1898); "Un anniversaire scientifique", *Le patriote* (November 21, 1898).

²⁹ L.-E. Halkin, "Godefroid Kurth: documents sur les débuts de sa carrière universitaire", *Bulletin de la Société d'Art et d'Histoire du Diocèse de Liège*, 41 (1959): 195-231; L.-E. Halkin, "Trasenster contre Kurth", *Chronique de l'université de Liège*, eds. Marcel Florquin and Léon-E. Halkin (Liège, 1967), 319-333.

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Kurth's personality was kept in the background. Therefore, in this case, fatherhood heavily depended on religious factors. It was Kurth's Catholicism that made the Liegean historian into a father-as-predecessor rather than into a father-as-example. This case, then, shows that father figures cannot only reflect scholarly ideals, but religious and political sensibilities as well.

IV.

The need to contextualize the memory cultures created by those invoking 'fathers of history' becomes even more apparent if we examine what happened to Kurth's father status after 1898. Most significant was that Kurth's most talented student, Henri Pirenne, developed a reputation that far surpassed that of his former teacher³⁰. The novelty of his socio-economic perspectives on Belgian history, combined with the heroic status he achieved during World War I and the honors with which he was showered afterwards, made Pirenne into an 'historien national'. Moreover, with no less than eighteen students who acquired a professorship, his 'school' at Ghent became so influential, that Pirenne found himself described as "fondateur", not merely of the "l'école socio-économique" in Belgium, but of the "entire école historique belge"³¹. In a sense, the Belgian historical community thus created a new myth of origin. In this new narrative, Kurth appeared no longer as father of history, but as a formative influence on Pirenne. In this context, Pirenne did not count as son of father Kurth; Kurth and his generation were rather said to have contributed "to the splendid merits and inspiring influence of Pirenne"³².

Simultaneously, however, Kurth continued to be admired in Catholic circles. The decades between his death, in 1916, and the hundredth anniversary of his birth, in 1947, saw the publication of many articles and booklets that honored Kurth as "catholique fervent, avocat passionné de la religion et de l'Eglise"³³. Whereas Kurth in 1898 had been treated as icon of a scholarly praxis, his Catholic admirers rather revered him as a saint³⁴. "Il fut un chrétien de toutes pièces", wrote Bishop Thomas-Louis Heylen:

Sa touchante simplicité, sa ponctualité aux moindres devoirs de la vie chrétienne, son obéissance pleine de respect à l'autorité spirituelle, sa constante fidélité aux anciennes et fortes traditions religieuses étaient pour tous ceux qui l'ont connu un grand sujet d'édification³⁵.

³⁰ On the dominance of the "Pirennean paradigm" in the interwar period, see M. Beyen, *Oorlog en verleden: nationale geschiedenis in België en Nederland, 1938-1947* (Amsterdam, 2002), 388-389.

³¹ G. Des Marez, *Henri Pirenne, historien national: discours prononcé à la manifestation du 30 avril 1921* (Bruxelles, 1921), 1, 4; *Henri Pirenne: hommages et souvenirs* (Bruxelles, 1938), 591.

³² J. Cuvelier, "Honderd jaar historiographie", *Verslagen en mededeelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* (1930), 457.

³³ F. Neuray, *Une grande figure nationale: Godefroid Kurth: un demi siècle de vie belge* (Bruxelles; Paris, 1931), 38.

³⁴ For this terminology: W. Frijhoff, *Heiligen, idolen, iconen* (Nijmegen, 1998), 19.

³⁵ Quoted in C. Hanlet, *Godefroid Kurth: le savant, le patriote, le démocrate, le chrétien* (Liège, 1947), 43.

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Belgian and Dutch admirers described him as a “seer” and “prophet”³⁶. Cardinal Désiré Mercier even wondered: “Que manquerait-il donc à cette personnalité supérieure pour mériter l’auréole de la sainteté”³⁷? In this Catholic context, Kurth thus served an example, rather than a predecessor. However, this exemplarity rested, not so much on his epistemic virtues, as in Fruin’s case, but rather on what one might call his religious virtues.

More in particular, Kurth served, in Vincent Viaene’s apt phrase, as “un maître à penser pour une nouvelle génération d’historiens catholique”³⁸? The young Catholic historian Gerard Brom, for example, so much identified with Kurth that his sole wish was to continue the latter’s work. “Master, on the mountain of thy works, my hands spontaneously fold themselves for a prayer asking God’s blessing on this posthumous work”³⁹. As this Dutch example illustrates, Kurth’s status as an identification figure for historians committed to the cause of Catholic historiography was not limited to Belgium. In fact, as an ‘historien catholique’, Kurth was remembered much broader than as a renovator of ‘l’enseignement supérieur de l’histoire’. Whereas the father of the *cours pratique* had only Belgian sons, so to say, the author of *Les origines de la civilisation moderne* and *L’église aux tourments de l’histoire* was revered in an international Catholic historiographical community, which extended itself from Italy all the way to the American Mid-West⁴⁰. Therefore, in spite of the nationalist sentiments responsible for the proclamation of a great many father figures in late nineteenth century historiography⁴¹, Kurth was a transnational father figure and, moreover, a father venerated in an international religious community.

In this religious context, then, Kurth was not primarily compared to Ranke, as was Fruin by those pupils who considered him “the Dutch Ranke”⁴². Kurth’s admirers rather compared him to such Catholic heroes as Augustine, Jerome, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and John Henry Newman. One author even noticed an

³⁶ G. Brom, “Voorrede”, G. Kurth, *De kerk van Christus bij de keerpunten der geschiedenis*, [trans. J. Ruyter] (Sittard, 1902), v; M. E. Belpaire, “Godfried Kurth”, *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, 21, n° 2 (1921): 418.

³⁷ Quoted in Hanlet, *Godefroid Kurth*, 48.

³⁸ V. Viaene, “Au long de la ‘Voie Appienne’: un cercle d’historiens catholiques belges à Rome 1902-1922,” *Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome 1902-2002*, eds. M. Dumoulin, D. Vanyacker and V. Viaene (Bruxelles; Rome, 2004), 23.

³⁹ G. Brom, “Godefroid Kurth †”, *De Beiaard*, 1, n° 1 (1916): 68. Cf. Brom’s autobiography, *Een katholiek leven: autobiografische aantekeningen*, eds. P. Luykx and J. Roes (Baarn, 1987), 117-120, 186.

⁴⁰ G. Goyau, “Un historien belge: M. Godefroid Kurth”, *Revue des deux mondes*, 37 (1907): 367-395; G. Faraoni, “Goffredo Kurth”, *Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali e discipline ausiliarie*, 71 (1916): 33-53; “Een groote figuur,” *Het Centrum* (January 8, 1916); J. P. Carroll, “Foreword”, G. Kurth, *The Church at the Turning Points of History*, trans. Victor Day, rev. ed. (Helena MT, 1918) 3-11. Cf. also A. M. C. van Cooth, review of *De kerk van Christus bij de keerpunten der geschiedenis*, *De Katholiek*, 121 (1902): 341-352 and *De Katholiek*, 126 (1904): 92.

⁴¹ S. Berger, “‘Fathers’ and Their Fate in Modern European National Historiographies”, elsewhere in this issue.

⁴² Muller, “Robert Fruin”, 355.

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analogy with Kurth's namesake, Godfrey of Bouillon, the crusader⁴³. This is a nice example of how father names can proliferate and interfere. Apparently, Augustine and Bossuet, both known as fathers of Catholic historical writing, were not incompatible with Kurth. Whereas Fruin, in the panegyric prose of his admirers, had overshadowed his predecessors to such an extent that historical studies in the Netherlands seemed to have begun anew in 1860, Kurth was rather inscribed into an older tradition. If Augustine, Bossuet, and Kurth could be simultaneously remembered as fathers of Catholic historiography, this implied that all three, in their respective ages, had been models, rather than initiators, of how Catholic authors could interpret history. This, again, suggests that the father of history metaphor can acquire rather different meanings.

V.

Kurth's most famous book, *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, not only became a classic among Catholic historians, it was also seen as reminiscent of an ancient Roman classic: Tacitus. Kurth, said the Belgian historian, Joseph van den Gheyn, engraved his "masculine language" as with "Tacitus's graver"⁴⁴. This historical analogy was a long-standing *topos* in European historiography. Although ancient historians – especially Roman authors such as Sallust, Livy, and Suetonius – had been read and imitated everywhere in early-modern Europe⁴⁵, Tacitus had gained a special reputation as historiographical model, initially (around 1550) primarily because of his much-praised insight in political affairs, but later (near the end of the sixteenth century) increasingly also in matters of style and composition⁴⁶. It is worth exploring what the father of history metaphor signified in such a context, long before the so-called 'professionalization' of historical studies in the nineteenth century. When Philippes de Commines was called the "le Tacite français", or Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft "the Dutch Tacitus", what did such praise convey⁴⁷? How did it invoke the Roman senator as a father figure for sixteenth or seventeenth century authors?

⁴³ A. Cauchie, *Godefroid Kurth (1847-1916): le patriote, le chrétien, l'historien* (Bruxelles, 1922), 29, 64, 73; L. van der Essen, "Après trente ans: Godefroid Kurth (1847-1916)", *Revue Générale Belge*, 10 (1946): 478.

⁴⁴ J. van den Gheyn, review of Kurth's *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, *De wetenschappelijke Nederlander* II, 1 (1886): 159.

⁴⁵ P. Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700", *History and Theory*, 5 (1966): 135-152.

⁴⁶ J. H. M. Salmon, "Cicero and Tacitus in Sixteenth-Century France", *The American Historical Review*, 85 (1980): 307-331; K. C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago; London, 1976), esp. Chapter 3. See also, more broadly, P. Burke, "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State", *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, eds. J. H. Burns and M. Goldie (Cambridge, 1991), 479-498.

⁴⁷ A. E. Bakos, "'Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare': Louis XI and Raison d'Etat During the Reign of Louis XIII", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991): 408; S. Groenveld, *Hooft als historieschrijver: twee studies* (Weesp, 1981), 56.

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Hooft, the seventeenth century Dutch historian, poet, and playwright, offers a case in point. In 1618, in the midst of the political turmoil of the Twelve Years' Truce, Hooft decided to write a history of the Dutch Revolt. Unlike most of his previous work, which included two historical tragedies in verse (*Geraerd van Velsen* and *Baeto*), this history was intended to be a work of prose and a manual of instruction for the Dutch political elite. Although Hooft was not the first historian of the Dutch Revolt, he noted that few of his predecessors, including in particular Emanuel van Meteren, Pieter Bor, and Everhard van Reyd, had done more than collected and condensed a large variety of sources. Indispensable as he considered these sources to be, Hooft hoped to write a full-fledged narrative, but found himself without guidance on how to treat the Revolt in a truly "historical style and character", as he put it in 1618 in a letter to Hugo Grotius⁴⁸.

When, twenty-four years later, his *Neederlandsche Histoorien* appeared, Hooft appeared to have found such an "historical style and character" in Tacitus⁴⁹. This was hardly a surprise, if only because Grotius had used the same recipe in his Tacitus-inspired *Annales et historiae de rebus Belgicis* (largely finished by 1612, but published only posthumously in 1657)⁵⁰. Although Hooft's book mentioned "the world's most wise [*wereltwyste*] Tacitus" only sporadically, its dramatic opening passage strikingly resembled that of Tacitus's *Histories*⁵¹. Moreover, as few later commentators have failed to notice, Hooft's style – his phrasings and expressions, his figurative language, but especially his syntax – followed Tacitus's example so closely, that the *Neederlandsche Histoorien* became more of a monument of Dutch Latinisms than the accessible history that Hooft's intended audience might have been hoping for⁵².

This overt Tacitism was not without political substance. Whereas Grotius, in imitating the Roman historian, implicitly compared the Dutch Revolt to the decline of the Julio-Claudian dynasty that was the subject of Tacitus's *Annales*, thereby offering an interpretation of the Revolt that supported the Republican

⁴⁸ P. C. Hooft to Hugo Grotius, May 19, 1618, *De briefwisseling van Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft*, ed. H. W. van Tricht, vol. I (Culemborg, 1976), 330.

⁴⁹ Legend has it that Hooft read Tacitus no less than fifty-two times: E. O. G. Haitsma Mulier, "Grotius, Hooft and the Writing of History in the Dutch Republic", *Clio's Mirror: Historiography in Britain and the Netherlands*, eds. A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse (Zutphen, 1985), 65.

⁵⁰ H. Grotius, *Annales et historiae de rebus Belgicis* (Amsterdam, 1657). On Grotius's Tacitism, see J. Waszink, "Shifting Tacitisms: Style and Composition in Grotius's *Annales*", *Grotiana*, 29 (2008): 85-132, a revised version of which will appear in *History of European Ideas* under the title "Your Tacitism or Mine? Modern and Early-Modern Conceptions of Tacitus and Tacitism".

⁵¹ P. C. Hooft, *Neederlandsche Histoorien, sedert de overdraght der heerschappye van kaizar Karel den Vyfden, op kooning Philips zynen zoon* (Amsterdam, 1642), 4, 2.

⁵² L. Peeters, "Een Latijnse traditie in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlands: P. C. Tacitus-P. C. Hooft", in Peeters, *Taalopbouw als Renaissance-ideaal: studies over taalopvattingen en taalpraktijk in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw*, eds. G. R. W. Dibbets, J. Noordegraaf and M. J. van der Wal (Amsterdam, [1990]), 79-90. Cf. J. D. Meerwaldt, "Hooft en Tacitus", Meerwaldt, *Vormaspecten* (The Hague, 1958), 89-96 and J. D. M. Cornelissen's pioneering but now outdated study, *Hooft en Tacitus: bijdrage tot de kennis van de vaderlandsche geschiedenis in de eerste helft der 17de eeuw* (Nijmegen; Utrecht, 1938).

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(*staatsgezinde*) side in the Truce Conflicts⁵³, much the same was true for Hooft, Grotius's politically kindred spirit. Besides, as Leopold Peeters has shown, especially in the first books of his lengthy work, Hooft used Tacitus as an example when he encountered the miraculous or supernatural. In passages on comets and unusual star constellations, which contemporaries took as God-sent warnings, Hooft almost invariably adopted a rather skeptical stance. Like Tacitus, he was interested, not in the presumed divine reality behind such occurrences, but in the particularities of human nature that he saw reflected in such popular belief in miracles⁵⁴.

For Hooft, then, Tacitus served as a twofold model: as a stylistic example and as a judge of human character. In good Renaissance-humanist fashion⁵⁵, Hooft's aim was to imitate and emulate this father figure. This did not imply, however, that Hooft considered himself part of a tradition that could be traced back to Tacitus. Rather than serving as the mythic origin of a historiographical genealogy, his father figure offered a (timeless) model of a 'historical style and character'. Also, in marked contrast to the exemplary status attributed to Fruin, Tacitus did not exemplify a scholarly *persona*. For Hooft, far more important that Tacitus's personal qualities were the stylistic *tour de forces* that he admired in Tacitus's *Annales* and *Historiae* (both of which he translated in Dutch)⁵⁶. Finally, although the choice for Tacitus as father-as-example is highly informative about Hooft's views on the 'character of the profession' – to use Gouldner's phrase, quoted in the introduction – the profession he knew did, of course, not even vaguely resemble a 'scholarly discipline' in the modern sense of the word. The seventeenth century bailiff of Muiden thus illustrates that fathers of history were older than scholarly disciplines and served more specific needs than those of disciplinary justification.

VI.

This is even more apparent in the case of Joachim Camerarius the Elder, a German classical scholar and humanist who in 1541 exchanged the University of Tübingen for the University of Leipzig⁵⁷. In that same year, in either of these places, he wrote an ode to one of the oldest fathers of history, Herodotus of

⁵³ J. Waszink, "Hugo Grotius' *Annales et Historiae de Rebus Belgicis* from the Evidence in his Correspondence, 1604-1644", *Lias*, 31 (2004): 249-250.

⁵⁴ L. Peeters, "P. C. Hooft en P. C. Tacitus: Nederlandse historie in Romeins gewaad", *Geschiedenis, godsdienst, letterkunde: opstellen aangeboden aan dr. S. B. J. Zilverberg ter gelegenheid van zijn afscheid van de Universiteit van Amsterdam*, eds. E. K. Grootes and J. den Haan (Roden, 1989), 114-120.

⁵⁵ T. Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca NY; London, 1990); A. Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007). Some elaborated case-studies can be found in *Recreating Ancient History: Episodes from the Greek and Roman Past in the Arts and Literatures of the Early Modern Period*, eds. K. Enekel, J. L. de Jong and J. De Landsheer (Leiden, 2001).

⁵⁶ H. Mulier, "Grotius, Hooft", 65.

⁵⁷ G. Wartenberg, "Joachim Camerarius: Mitgestalter der Kultur- und Bildungslandschaft Mitteldeutschlands", *Joachim Camerarius*, eds. R. Köbbling and G. Wartenberg (Tübingen, 2003), 15-16.

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Halicarnassus. Although the Greek historian had been honored as *pater historiae* by no one less than Cicero, and received commendations from classical authors as diverse as Lucian, Quintilian, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Herodotus had also been heavily criticized. Thucydides, Ctesias, and Aristotle, among others, had challenged his factual accuracy⁵⁸, while Plutarch, in *De malignitate Herodoti*, had portrayed Herodotus as a ‘barbarophile’, who had been so unpatriotic as to criticize the Greek, while praising their enemies, often on the base of contestable evidence⁵⁹. In so far as Herodotus had remained known in subsequent centuries, this mixed reputation had accompanied him. “Ever since Plutarch”, writes Justin Marozzi, “Herodotus has never quite escaped the slur that he was a bit of a fibber, a fantasist, an elegant charlatan, a classical-world Walter Mitty who told whoppers, a peerless stylist who simply made a lot of it up”⁶⁰.

When Herodotus had been rediscovered in the fifteenth century, this case against the Halicarnassean historian had quickly been reopened. In 1531, the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives dared to call Herodotus “the father of lies” (“quem verius *mendaciorum patrem* dixeris, quam quomodo illum vocant nonnulli, *parentem historiae*”)⁶¹. This low opinion was reflected in the number of Herodotus editions or translations that appeared in Europe. With only eight editions in the first half of the sixteenth century, the *Histories* ranked no higher than eighteenth in the list of most frequently reissued Greek and Roman history books (in the same time-span, Sallust’s *Catilene* and *Jugurtha* went through 103 and 99 editions, respectively)⁶². Also, as Arnaldo Momigliano observes:

The very fact that each translator and editor of Herodotus felt it necessary to defend him against Thucydides and Plutarch shows that at the beginning of the sixteenth century his reputation was, generally speaking, bad⁶³.

However, when Camerarius, in a 1541 edition of the *Histories*, described Herodotus as “in all respects the chief writer of history”, this praise was more than a tepid defense of a writer fallen in disgrace⁶⁴. For one thing, the German scholar

⁵⁸ B. Boudou, “La réception d’Hérodote au XVI^e siècle”, *Grecs et Romains aux prises avec l’histoire: représentations, récits et idéologie*, eds. G. Lachenaud and D. Longrée, vol. II (Rennes, 2003), 729-743; A. Momigliano, “The Place of Herodotus in the History of Historiography”, Momigliano, *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (Rome, 1960), 34-37.

⁵⁹ Plutarch, *De malignitate Herodoti*, ed. A. Bowen (Warminster, 1992), xii.

⁶⁰ J. Marozzi, *The Way of Herodotus: Travels with the Man Who Invented History* (Philadelphia, 2008), 4.

⁶¹ J. L. Vives, *Libri XII de disciplinis* (London, 1612), 87.

⁶² Burke, “Survey”, 137. Under reference to Burke, James Allen Evans notes that Thucydides’s publication record was even worse. True as this may be in the long term (41 editions or translations between 1450 and 1700, compared with 44 of Herodotus), in the first half of the sixteenth century, Thucydides did slightly better than his predecessor with eleven editions or translations. See J. A. S. Evans, “Father of History or Father of Lies: The Reputation of Herodotus”, *Classical Journal*, 64, (1968): 15.

⁶³ Momigliano, “Place of Herodotus”, 42.

⁶⁴ *Herodoti libri novem (...) una cum Joach. Camerarii praefatione, annotationibus (...)* (Basel, 1541), x*. This edition is dated 1540 in F. Baron and M. H. Shaw, “The Publications of Joachim

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admired Herodotus for his beautiful, flawless style. Not unlike Hooft, who found his model in Tacitus, Camerarius presented Herodotus as an exemplar of eloquence and elegance. His stories are full of expression, his reports clear and articulated, and his explanations accurate and unambiguous⁶⁵. Moreover, unlike some other classical historians – Camerarius referred to Heliodorus of Emesa, whose *Aethiopica* had been published seven years earlier by the same press⁶⁶ – Herodotus had always dealt with the most exalted historical topics, such as the fortunes of the ancient Greek and Persians.

Yet, for Camerarius, Herodotus was more than a stylistic example, and therefore a more complicated father figure than Tacitus for Hooft. For instance, the German humanist went at great length to defend Herodotus's sincerity and truthfulness, especially against Plutarch, some of whose accusations he proved to be as inaccurate as Plutarch had believed the *Histories* to be. Camerarius argued, among other things, that Plutarch had overlooked how evenly Herodotus had distributed his blame and praise among Athenians and Persians. And why should the father of history be called a father of lies, given that whenever he had dealt with less-documented events he had sprinkled his prose with 'as one says' and other cautious qualifiers? Throughout his work, Herodotus had carefully delineated the differences between fables, questionable stories, and true histories⁶⁷. So, Camerarius's case for Herodotus as *pater historiae* involved a defense of what one might call his epistemic virtues⁶⁸.

Nonetheless, the German scholar could not fail to admit that critics had correctly pointed out a number of inaccuracies in the *Histories*. His solution to this problem reveals another reason for his admiration of Herodotus. Whenever the Greek historian included fables or mythic stories in his histories, this was not to claim historical accuracy for them, but to enliven his narratives. This neatly corresponded to Camerarius's conviction that histories ought not to be 'unadorned, naked, and brief', but 'beautiful' and 'dressed'. To be sure, such a dress had to be more than rhetorical finery: Camerarius identified it in particular with moral instruction. For him, history had not merely to satisfy a desire for knowledge, but also to provide enjoyment, instruction, and edification. Accordingly, even if Herodotus's fabulous asides were not historically accurate, they could still symbolically illustrate the moral of the stories told⁶⁹.

Camerarius", in *Joachim Camerarius (1500-1574): Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus im Zeitalter der Reformation*, ed. F. Baron (Munich, 1978), 238.

⁶⁵ *Herodoti libri novem*, iii*.

⁶⁶ *Heliodori historiae aethiopicæ libri decem* (...) (Basel, 1534).

⁶⁷ *Herodoti libri novem*, vii*, iii*. Interestingly, in his famous 1566 defense of Herodotus, the Parisian printer and classical scholar, Henri Estienne, would make ample use of these arguments, though without mentioning Camerarius. See Henrici Stephani, *Apologia pro Herodoto*, ed. J. Klammer (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), esp. 14 and Boudou, "Réception d'Hérodote", 731-736.

⁶⁸ At another occasion, Camerarius praised Herodotus as the first historian worthy of that name, because of his careful attempts to unravel the truth in even the most complicated cases: *Historica narratio de fratribus orthodoxorum ecclesiis in Bohemia, Moravia, & Polonia* (Heidelberg, 1605), 4.

⁶⁹ *Herodoti libri novem*, v*.

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That history could serve as a means for moral edification was a *topos* dear to the heart of Camerarius⁷⁰. A protégé of Philipp Melanchthon, Camerarius agreed with the Lutheran reformer that the main purpose of the study of history was to offer moral examples. The biographies he wrote – the one about Melanchthon became his most famous work⁷¹ – testify to this belief in so far as they focus in particular on the exemplary virtues of their protagonists⁷². Yet, if this made Camerarius sympathetic towards the *exempla* provided in Herodotus, couldn't he find much of the same in other Greek historians, such as Thucydides or Livy⁷³? Indeed, in a preface written for a 1540 edition of Thucydides, Camerarius adopted an equally panegyric style. Arguing that no single Greek historian had surpassed the work of this “most prominent author” (“praestantissimum autorem”), he especially praised Thucydides for the useful instruction he provided by describing situations similar to those of his own sixteenth century⁷⁴. If anything, this shows that superlative praise could have an occasional character, and that Herodotus was not the only historian Camerarius was prepared to recognize as father figure.

If Herodotus nevertheless stood out among his fellow historians, this may well have been caused at least in part by feelings of nostalgia on Camerarius's side. The 1541 edition was based on a codex that had belonged to Richard Croke, Camerarius's teacher of Greek in Leipzig in the 1510s. Croke had privately taught him Herodotus and left him the codex on the occasion of his return to Cambridge⁷⁵. Ever since, Camerarius declared, he had returned to this work, browsing through its pages, reading a few fragments here and there, and admiring the little notes his former teacher had jotted down in the margins of almost every single page. Therefore, when Camerarius declared that Herodotus was his best-loved author, this confession did not seem to be entirely devoid of melancholic or nostalgic

⁷⁰ Cf. R. Landfester, *Historia magistra vitae: Untersuchungen zur humanistischen Geschichtstheorie des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts* (Geneva, 1972).

⁷¹ *De Philippi Melanchthonis ortu, totius vitae curriculo et morte (...) narratio diligens et accurata Ioachimi Camerarii* (Leiden, 1566). Cf. T. J. Wengert, “‘With Friends Like This...’: The Biography of Philip Melanchthon by Joachim Camerarius”, *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Europe: Forms of Biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV*, eds. T. F. Mayer and D. R. Woolf (Ann Arbor MI, 1995), 115-131.

⁷² S. Kunkler, *Zwischen Humanismus und Reformation: Der Humanist Joachim Camerarius (1500-1574) im Wechselspiel von pädagogischem Pathos um theologischem Ethos* (Hildesheim; Zürich; New York, 2000), 195, 187.

⁷³ As a Hellenistic scholar, Camerarius was significantly less interested in Roman classical authors. For Livy's reputation among early-modern historians, see B. L. Ullman, “The Post-Mortem Adventures of Livy”, in Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1973), 53-77; L. Jardine and A. Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy”, *Past and Present*, 129 (1990): 30-78.

⁷⁴ *Thucydides cum scholiis et antiquis et utilibus (...) accessit praeterae diligentia Ioachimi Camerarii (...)* (Basel, 1540), v*, iv*.

⁷⁵ On Croke's career, which led him from Cambridge, London, and Oxford to Paris, Louvain, Cologne, and Leipzig, see Jonathan M. Woolfson, “A ‘Remote and Ineffectual Don’? Richard Croke in the Biblioteca Marciana”, *Bulletin of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 17, n° 2 (2000): 1-11.

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overtones. When Camerarius hailed Herodotus as *pater historiae*, this was in part also a tribute to his fatherly tutor in Leipzig⁷⁶.

Accordingly, in this sixteenth century case, the father of history metaphor took on a more ambiguous meaning than in any of the three previous situations. For Camerarius, the father figure was more than a stylistic model: he also exemplified the historian's epistemic virtues (not unlike Fruin, in the appreciation of his students) and his didactic role as provider of moral *exempla*. Unlike Kurth, however, he did not serve as mythic origin of a professional tradition. There are no indications that Camerarius ever thought of historical scholarship in terms of an enterprise developing itself in time. Moreover, whereas the German classical scholar brought up a variety of exemplary figures, his preference for Herodotus seemed to be colored by his esteem for a father figure from his student years.

VII.

What does this brief journey through modern and early-modern historiography in Europe tell us about the father of history metaphor? One insight we have gained along the way is that the metaphor is a particularly rich and flexible one. While Fruin's fatherhood was a matter of exemplary scholarly performance, especially in so far as his epistemic virtues were concerned, Tacitus served more as a stylistic model, offering a 'historical style' that Hooft tried to imitate in his *Neederlandsche Histoorien*. Kurth never acquired such an exemplary status, except among his Roman Catholic followers, but was nonetheless remembered as a father figure. Also, if the example of Kurth showed to what an extent fatherhood could depend on religious and political sensibilities, the case of Herodotus in the mid-sixteenth century suggested that personal sympathies and nostalgic memories could also rank among the factors shaping a father role. Apparently, fatherhood is not an unambiguous thing: fathers of history come in sorts and shapes.

Obviously, these divergent connotations of the father metaphor are especially relevant for scholars interested in the memory cultures that historians create. Although, at some level of abstraction, it can well be argued that most of these memory cultures serve such purposes as legitimization and justification of current-day scholarly practices, there is a wealth of different ways in which these aims can be pursued. Moreover, although legitimization of present-day activities can be one reason to commemorate someone as father of history, the examples surveyed above also suggest that inspiration, admiration, and role modeling can be important rationales behind commemorative practices revolving around fathers of history. In order, then, to achieve a richer, more finely textured understanding of what the father of history metaphor meant to those presenting themselves as 'sons' of a 'father', contextualization of such father language along the lines suggested in this paper may be a first priority. 'Father of history' is a metaphor, the meaning of which depends on the discourse in which it is situated.

⁷⁶ *Herodoti libri novem*, i*, ii*.

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If this conclusion clearly reflects an intentionalist approach to the history of ideas, focused on the meanings that words or concepts acquire in specific historical circumstances⁷⁷, we may, nonetheless, also draw a more general conclusion from the observations made above. As long as fathers of history are identified with the mythic origins of disciplinary histories, as Collini and others tend to do, we may presume that fathers of history nowadays share the fate of disciplinary histories. Widely criticized for their Whiggish assumptions⁷⁸, they become an object of study rather than a genre historians try to continue. Yet, even if Tacitus no longer enjoys the prestige he had in the early seventeenth century, and if historians have stopped tracing their discipline back to such figures as Kurth, this does not imply that current-day scholars no longer admire some of their predecessors, cite them as sources of inspiration, or legitimize their work with (requisite) references to their work. Although, for example, Michael Foucault and Hayden White are seldom referred to as ‘fathers’, they are nowadays frequently cited as authorities that help legitimize certain (unconventional) scholarly practices⁷⁹. More in general, we may wonder: if fathers of history came in so many different forms, what sort of (tacit) strategies of legitimization do we, twenty-first century scholars, employ? Who are the uncrowned fathers of current-day historical scholarship, or what are canonical sources of inspiration in our days? Along these lines, then, a historicization of the father of history metaphor such as practiced in this paper may not only contribute to a richer understanding of historiography in previous centuries, but also function as a mirror for contemporary historians⁸⁰.

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⁷⁷ See note 11 above.

⁷⁸ See the literature cited in note 8.

⁷⁹ Cf. A. Megill, “The Reception of Foucault by Historians”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48 (1987): 117-141; and the introduction to H. Paul, *Hayden White: The Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁸⁰ I would like to thank Eric Schliesser, Anna Tijsseling, Arnoud Visser, and Markus Völkel for their helpful comments and suggestions.