

THE POPULARITY OF ANCIENT HISTORIANS, 1450–1600*

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ABSTRACT. *The histories of ancient Greece and Rome are part of a shared European heritage, and a foundation for many modern Western social and cultural traditions. Their printing and circulation during the Renaissance helped to shape the identities of individual nations, and create different reading publics. Yet we still lack a comprehensive understanding of the forms in which works of Greek and Roman history were published in the first centuries of the handpress age, the relationship between the ideas contained within these texts and the books as material objects, and thus the precise nature of the changes they effected in early modern European culture and society. This article provides the groundwork for a reassessment of the place of ancient history in the early modern world. Using new, digital resources to reappraise existing scholarship, it offers a fresh evaluation of the publication of the ancient historians from the inception of print to 1600, revealing important differences that alter our understanding of particular authors, texts, and trends, and suggesting directions for further research. It also models the research possibilities of large-scale digital catalogues and databases, and highlights the possibilities (and pitfalls) of these resources.*

I

In 1966, Peter Burke published a survey of the popularity of ancient Greek and Roman historians in early modern Europe.¹ History – and the history of the classical past, in particular – occupied a special place in the culture of Europe in this age of intellectual development and new print technology, on account of its perceived moral value, as well as its practical political and military applications, and Burke’s article has become an extremely influential study, informing

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¹ Peter Burke, ‘A survey of the popularity of ancient historians’, *History and Theory*, 5 (1966), pp. 135–52.

numerous pieces of work in the fields of history, literature, and classical reception.²

The premise of Burke's survey is that the number of editions of a book produced in any one period can be used as a blunt tool to assess its popularity, and that popularity is an indicator of taste. As Burke points out, the ancient historians 'were not equally popular in this period, nor with the same people, nor for the same reasons', and it is a sense of how and why the relative fortunes of the various historians shifted over the years 1450 to 1700 that his article seeks to provide.³ But as the legacy of Burke's article has shown, a survey of this kind has the potential to do far more than merely indicate changing tastes in history. History, in the early modern period, was a means by which debates on current affairs could be conducted; history not only shaped, but also reflected, the most pressing issues of the time.⁴ Popularity could also be said to be synonymous with significance, relevance, or influence, rather than representing simply the appetites of the market. After all, publication is not, and never has been, a neutral event, but rather a conscious decision made on the part of one or more individuals, be they publishers or patrons; it can therefore give an insight into more than the 'taste' of readers. In the early modern period, books were published for financial gain, when someone invested money in order to make a profit by supplying the demand of an existing market, or creating a new one; publishing was also driven by political motives, by factors to do with status and social standing, and by ideological aims.⁵ These last might include the desire to promulgate a particular moral or religious message, or to create an identity; they might also include the broader humanist ideals

² For a comprehensive assessment of the role of history in early modern Europe, see Anthony Grafton, *What was history? The art of history in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007). Work drawing upon Burke includes J. H. Whitfield, 'Livy>Tacitus', in R. R. Bolgar, ed., *Classical influences on European culture, A.D. 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 281-93; Markku Peltonen, *Classical humanism and republicanism in English political thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1995); Patricia J. Osmond, "'Principes Historiae Romanae': Sallust in Renaissance political thought", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 40 (1995), pp. 103-43; Eric Nelson, *The Greek tradition in republican thought* (Cambridge, 2004); Robin Sowerby, 'Ancient history', in Gordon Braden, Robert Cummings, and Stuart Gillespie, eds., *The Oxford history of literary translation in England, II: 1550-1660* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 301-11; Warren Chernaik, *The myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his contemporaries* (Cambridge, 2011); Philip Hicks, 'The ancient historians in Britain', in David Hopkins and Charles Martindale, eds., *The Oxford history of classical reception in English literature, III: 1660-1790* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 569-91.

³ Burke, 'The popularity of ancient historians', p. 135.

⁴ See, for example, Ronald Syme, 'Roman historians and Renaissance politics', in *Society and history in the Renaissance: a report of a conference held at the Folger Library on April 23 and 24, 1960* (Washington, DC, 1960), pp. 8-10; Peter Burke, *The Renaissance sense of the past* (London, 1969); Paulina Kewes, ed., *The uses of history in early modern England* (San Marino, CA, 2006); Arnaldo Momigliano, *The classical foundations of modern historiography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1990); Gary Ianziti, *Writing history in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the uses of the past* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

⁵ Andrew Pettegree, *The book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT, 2010), pp. xiv, 65-7, 69-74.

that deemed education and active citizenship to be necessary virtues in a successful commonwealth, inspiring across Europe the ‘vigorous cultural programme’ designed to create such a society.⁶

New resources, developed over the half-century since Burke’s article first appeared, make it possible to reassess the popularity of the ancient historians, and this is what I aim to do here, in order to make it possible for scholars to re-evaluate accurately the role of these authors in the early modern world. In particular, the *Universal short title catalogue* (USTC) now provides a ‘collective database’ of books printed on the continent of Europe, to 1600, bringing together existing national catalogues and new comprehensive surveys of early print in such areas as Iberian Peninsula and the Netherlands.⁷ It is this database that I have used to conduct my survey. Its scope far exceeds that of the tools available to Burke: the three volumes of F. L. A. Schweiger’s *Handbuch der klassischen Bibliographie* (Leipzig, 1830–4), and the supplementary works used to supply its shortcomings.⁸ Nothing comparable to the USTC yet exists for the seventeenth century, so I have ended my survey at the close of the sixteenth century.⁹ Following Burke, I have counted the works of the ancient historians he selected as most worthy of attention, and classified them, as he did, by language and date of publication. My results suggest modifications to Burke’s appraisal of the relative popularities and probable readers of some of these books; my reworking of Burke’s data provides, I hope, a more representative foundation for subsequent work on the reception of the ancient historians in the early modern world, and indicates alternative lines of inquiry to those that have been pursued to date.

Printing statistics are the most useful and comprehensive way to begin to make arguments about the relative popularity, or significance, of various texts and authors. Indeed, in the absence of many other indicators that would allow the effective comparison of books – size of print run, proportion of books sold and unsold, evidence of ownership, and so on – the fact that a book was produced in a certain year is one of the only ways to do this.¹⁰ Nevertheless, there are some problems with using these data, and limitations to the arguments that can be made, and it would be dishonest, as well as counter-productive, not to acknowledge these fully.

⁶ Jill Kraye and M. W. F. Stone, eds., *Humanism and early modern philosophy* (London, 2000), p. xii. See also Rebecca Bushnell, *A culture of teaching: early modern humanism in theory and practice* (Ithaca, NY, 1996); James Hankins, ed., *Renaissance civic humanism: reappraisals and reflections* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁷ For more information, see www.ustc.ac.uk.

⁸ Including A. Palau y Dulcet, *Manual del librero Hispano-Americano* (Barcelona, 1948–77), cited in Burke, ‘The popularity of ancient historians’, p. 139.

⁹ The USTC is currently being extended into the seventeenth century, but coverage is incomplete, so I have avoided it here.

¹⁰ On the lack of other useful evidence, see James Raven, *The business of books: booksellers and the English book trade, 1450–1850* (New Haven, CT, 2007), p. 374.

A focus on information about book production, such as the year and place of printing, assumes, to some extent, a national model of book production and consumption, which was manifestly not the case in early modern Europe. Not only is it anachronistic to map modern geopolitical concepts onto the early modern world, but given that the majority of printing took place in a small number of printing centres, whence the books were then exported across borders and boundaries, the place of publication is unhelpful in representing accurately either where a book was consumed, or the popularity of that book in a place other than its country of origin. There is not necessarily a correlation between place of printing and language, Spanish books being frequently produced in both France and the Netherlands, for example, as Burke shows in his study.¹¹ The situation is, perhaps, slightly different for vernacular translations, which are more likely to have found a substantial share of their market primarily within one region or country; moreover, since scholars have been keen to trace connections between vernacular translation and the popularization of the classics as education improved across the continent, a focus on the language in which a book was printed may be a more useful approach.¹² Even then, however, it should be noted that vernacular editions were often produced in cities and countries far from where they were destined to be sold, and evidence of book ownership reminds us that many vernacular editions found readers outside their ‘home’ country.¹³

Given that print runs are unknown for the vast majority of books produced in the early modern period, it is also impossible to reach any conclusions about the absolute number of a book in circulation at any one time.¹⁴ This, in turn, means that the number of editions of a book is not necessarily a reliable indicator of

¹¹ Burke, ‘The popularity of ancient historians’, pp. 138–41.

¹² For example, James Hankins, ‘Humanism in the vernacular: the case of Leonardo Bruni’, in Christopher S. Celenza and Kenneth Gouwens, eds., *Humanism and creativity in the Renaissance: essays in honour of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 11–29; Andrew Galloway, ‘John Lydgate and the origins of vernacular humanism’, *Journal of English and German Philology*, 107 (2008), pp. 445–71; Brian Jeffrey Maxon, ‘“This sort of men”: the vernacular and the Humanist movement in fifteenth-century Florence’, *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Sept. 2013), pp. 257–71. For recent considerations of decisions to write and/or print in Latin or a vernacular, see Jan Bloemendal, *Bilingual Europe: Latin and vernacular cultures, examples of bilingualism and multilingualism, c. 1300–1800* (Leiden, 2015).

¹³ These issues are highlighted by the various essays in José Mariá Pérez Fernández and Edward Wilson-Lee, eds., *Translation and the book trade in early modern Europe* (New York, NY, 2014). See also the various volumes compiled by R. J. Fehrenbach and Elisabeth Leedham-Green, *Private libraries in Renaissance England: a collection and catalogue of Tudor and early Stuart book-lists* (Binghamton, NY, 1992–); H. M. Adams, *Catalogue of books printed on the continent of Europe, 1501–1600*, in *Cambridge libraries* (Cambridge, 1967).

¹⁴ On print runs, see, for example, D. F. McKenzie, ‘Printers of the mind: some notes on bibliographical theories and printing-house practices’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 22 (1969), pp. 1–75, at pp. 13–14; Brian Richardson, *Printing, writers and readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 21ff; Eljo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden, ‘Charting the “rise of the West”: manuscripts and printed books in Europe, a long-term perspective from the sixth through eighteenth centuries’, *Journal of Economic History*, 69 (2009), pp. 409–45, at p. 415.

absolute reach or popularity: if Book A entered three editions within ten years, but each of these editions had a print run of 500 books, then as many copies of that book would be available as of Book B, which was produced in a single edition with a print run of 1,500. If all these copies were bought (an unknowable fact), then both books could be said to be equally popular, yet counting the number of editions would suggest that Book A was three times as popular. Nor is it always clear what the production of a new edition meant, without closer examination of the details of that particular book, something that often proves difficult in a large-scale, statistical survey, where the extant copies of many of the books are spread all over the world. If a second or third edition of an existing book was produced after an interval of several years, we might reasonably infer that the first edition had sold out, and more copies were needed; we might also infer that for any edition to be printed, the publisher investing in its production had good reason to think that it would sell, whether this turned out to be the case or not. But a book that differed substantially from earlier products might be offered to the market for any number of reasons – it might cater for a different readership altogether, or it might be intended as a direct competitor to an existing product, which it might or might not outsell – and treating books as numbers obscures these nuances.

Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of a survey of the production of printed editions of ancient historians' works is the distorting effect upon the realities of the way that early modern people acquired and interacted with books. The analysis of editions is only possible once the technology of print starts to be used, but, of course, the beginning of print did not mean the end of manuscript production.¹⁵ Any study based on printing statistics necessarily privileges print technology and fails to take account of manuscript transmission, a vital part of textual circulation during the whole early modern period. Nor does a survey of new editions entering the marketplace take account of the used book trade, another highly significant component in the global picture of buying and selling books.¹⁶

There is no satisfactory way to correct for these biases, and to ignore the possibilities offered by the analysis of print production data because the data are

¹⁵ See, for example, Brian Richardson, *Manuscript culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2014); Harold Love and Arthur F. Marotti, 'Manuscript transmission and circulation', in David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller, eds., *The Cambridge history of early modern England literature* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 55–80.

¹⁶ Frederic Barbier, 'Bouquinistes, libraires spécialisés', in Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin, eds., *Histoire de l'édition française*, III: *Le temps des éditeurs, du romantisme à la belle époque* (Paris, 1990); Malcolm Walsby, 'Book lists and their meanings', in Malcolm Walsby and Natasha Constantinidou, eds., *Documenting the early modern book world: inventories and catalogues in manuscript and print* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 6–10; Angela Nuovo, *The book trade in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden, 2013). The phenomenon was not limited to books: see Laurence Fontaine, ed., *Alternative exchanges: second-hand circulations from the sixteenth century to the present* (New York, NY, 2008), pp. 1–12.

imperfect would be foolish. As long as we bear in mind that they cannot ever provide us with the whole picture, and that any statistical data of this kind can only ever be incomplete and imperfect, we may proceed with caution.

II

In preparing these revised statistics, a number of methodological choices have been made, which have necessarily influenced the outcome. Burke's methodology is not explicitly discussed in detail in his 1966 article, making it difficult to reproduce his study accurately; this is something I hope to avoid here, in explaining the decisions I have taken, and the implications of these for what this study can, and cannot, do. I have followed, for this survey, the methods of the USTC project team regarding editions, issues, and states. The USTC is 'constructed on the principle of recording bibliographically distinct states of a book as separate items. It should be emphasized that these do not always represent separate editions.'¹⁷ I have counted as a separate entity every item that has been given an individual USTC number; otherwise-identical texts issued at the same time, but with slightly different details on the title page – usually the name of a different bookseller, publisher, or printer – have therefore been identified as discrete entities, though they do not represent different editions. For example, the eight French octavos of Thucydides's *History* printed in Paris in 1555 have been identified as eight separate items, because each bears a different imprint, and therefore has its own USTC number.¹⁸ The same is true if long works were published in multiple volumes, usually in small format: each volume has its own USTC catalogue number, and has therefore been counted as separately, that is, as a distinct collection of pages that a consumer could, in theory, purchase.¹⁹ My figures are therefore not a record of editions, but of books in different states. I am concerned, throughout, with the production of books: with the choices made by the actors engaged in the production process in order to create books and to sell them, in the course of business; I am therefore interested in the various individual artefacts on the market, and the ways in which they were presented to prospective consumers, so I have counted each of these items, rather than the number of editions, and I refer to 'books' rather than to 'editions'. If a book exists in multiple states within the same edition, it is probably not 'as popular', or popular in the same way,

¹⁷ Andrew Pettegree, Malcolm Walsby, and Alexander Wilkinson, eds., *French vernacular books: books published in the French language before 1601* (2 vols., Leiden, 2007), p. ix.

¹⁸ Thucydides, *L'histoire contenant les guerres qui ont esté entre les Peloponesiens et les Atheniens* (Paris, 1555), USTC 49556, 49557, 29885, 56017, 56708, 60329, 60330, 89543. On terminology, see Terry Belanger, 'Descriptive bibliography', in Jean Peters, ed., *Book collecting: a modern guide* (New York, NY, and London, 1977), pp. 97–101.

¹⁹ Plutarch is a prime example of this, and printing in France and Switzerland is particularly notable for publishing practices giving rise to different states of a 'book' within the same edition; these examples will occur in my survey with somewhat greater frequency than would otherwise be the case, though they do not distort the general trends unduly.

as one that enters several editions – though, of course, without knowing the size of each print run, and the proportion of the edition sold, it is impossible to say this for certain. Histories existing in multiple states will therefore inevitably be somewhat over-represented as a result of my method of counting, and the individual figures should be treated as containing a small margin of error.

I have searched the USTC for the ancient authors in Burke's study, using first the 'author' field, and then the 'keyword' field. I have recorded the books printed in the years up to, and including, 1599, in order to facilitate a comparison with Burke's analysis, which is conducted using fifty-year intervals ending in 1499, 1549, 1599, and so on. To maintain congruity with the sources, I have used the dates in the style given on the books themselves. When works by more than one ancient historian appear within a book, that book has been counted for each author. The sum total for all the authors is therefore slightly greater than the total number of discrete books, since the same book sometimes appears more than once. I have conducted my search by the name of the author: my results only include works by authors that the USTC database identifies by name; therefore, if a collection claiming to be 'collected out of various ancient authors' does not bear the name of an author, I will not have found that work, even though substantial portions of an ancient, historical text may be reproduced within that book.

Burke counted the number of particular works by his chosen ancient historians, with the exception of Caesar, whose works he considered together, simply as *Commentaries*, despite the existence of several books containing only the *Gallic Wars* or the *Civil Wars*. I have not followed his lead, instead counting each individual book containing any historical work by the historians Burke selected. Identifying which text by an ancient historian a particular book contains, using the information provided by the USTC, is not always straightforward; consultation of additional printed catalogues, and examination of the books themselves (physically, or via digital facsimile where these exist), is sometimes necessary to determine accurately the precise textual contents.²⁰ Often, a book contains more than one text: a volume entitled *Opera*, for example, will usually contain all the extant works by that author. Ancient historians of whose works several survive – such as Josephus, Tacitus, Caesar, among others – present further difficulties, since numerous combinations of these works appeared in printed form. I have simply counted each book that provided readers with access to one or more of the histories by that author. My study therefore provides information about the relative 'popularity' of the ancient historians, not of their individual works.

²⁰ This has been done wherever possible. Of the books initially appearing doubtful, in themselves no more than 5 per cent of the total sample, I have been able to verify over 75 per cent. However, it has not been possible to inspect a copy of every one of the >2,000 books in hard copy in the course of this study, though I hope, in time, to do so; the collections in which some sole copies survive are spread around the world, and their examination calls for substantial resourcing, and there are still some books about whose contents I am unsure.

Some books present particular difficulties. Numerous books bear the title *De viris illustribus*; this could refer to a work by Aurelius Victor (also frequently attributed to Pliny the Younger), Nepos (also known as Aemilius Probus), Suetonius, Plutarch, or another author. The distinctions between, and attributions of works to, some of these authors were the subject of much mistake and a considerable degree of scholarly debate in the Renaissance; whether an error matters to a modern scholar depends on whether it is the content of the text that is of primary interest, or what people at the time believed they were buying or reading; or, to be more accurate, what producers at the time chose to advertise to their customers. My current focus here is necessarily on the ways in which books were offered for sale – on their marketing and advertising by means of their title pages – because this is the level of information it is possible to extract from a short-title catalogue. This study therefore reflects the world of book selling (encompassing the various ways in which producers marketed their texts to prospective buyers and readers), rather than the world of reading and reception. So, for example, I have chosen to include works purporting to be and advertising themselves as such in their titles, Plutarch's *Life of Hannibal and Scipio*, or *Life of Homer*, because although modern scholarship does not recognize these as the work of Plutarch, that is how they were offered for sale in the early modern period. It is the inclusion of Plutarch's name, as author, in the title that determines the inclusion of this book in my survey, rather than anything else; therefore other works containing this same portion of text but not advertising Plutarch's authorship will not have been included, and the same doubtless applies to a number of other texts.²¹

My method also allows for a consideration of historical works wider than those selected by Burke. Of Xenophon's several historical pieces, for example, he selected only two, which he chose to refer to as *Cyrus* and *Expedition*.²² My method necessitates the inclusion of all Xenophon's historical works, although I have excluded the Socratic dialogues such as the *Oeconomicus*, or the Renaissance favourite, *Hercules* (i.e. Heracles), the story of which is spoken by Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Admittedly, these do function as records for the history of Socrates, and for the history of society in the time of Xenophon, and the episode of 'Hercules' is often presented as a piece of

²¹ For example, I have counted as 'Plutarch' the following: Homer, *De homeri vita homeri opera Graecolatina, quae quidem nunc extant omnia: praeter operam Sebastiani castalionis, nunc ad postremam Henrici Stephani, ac aliorum quorundam editionem diligenter collata, ac fideliter expressa. Quibus accessit item commentarij vice liber Plutarchi de homero. Cum indicibus locupletissimis. Liber de homero* (Basel, 1582), USTC 663912. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to the frequent inclusion of this pseudo-Plutarchan biography in the works of Poliziano (see, for example, Philip Ford, *De Troie à Ithaque* (Geneva, 2007)), as well as in the various editions of Homer. I have not found the work to be advertised on the title page of editions of Poliziano, so these are not included in here; and to give an indication of scale, I have found only ten instances where Plutarch's name being advertised as author of the *Life of Homer* in the title of the book in question, out of more than 300 books of Plutarch's *Lives* printed to 1600.

²² Burke, 'The popularity of ancient historians', p. 136.

historical narration or story: *Ein sehr liebliche historische narration oder erzehlung von dem edlen jungen helde dem Hercule; aus dem Xenophonte genommen und mit schonen Auflegungen erkleret*.²³ Some of the dialogues also seem intended to function in the same way as histories in the early modern world, as useful guides for the present, such as *Xenophontis socratici rhetoris Hieron sive tyrannus, liber utilissimus his qui rempublicam administrant*.²⁴ The exclusion of these works, on the grounds that they are ‘not historical’, is therefore a decision with which I am not wholly content, but it does facilitate a better comparison with Burke, and some publishers clearly did distinguish between historical and moral works, and entitled their books accordingly, as with *L'opere morali* (Venice, 1558).²⁵

All Tacitus's works have been included in my tally, except the *Dialogus*. In the case of Suetonius, too, I have incorporated more works than simply the *Twelve Caesars* selected by Burke. Other partially surviving works include various components of the *De viris illustribus*, on the lives of the poets, the historians, the grammarians, and the rhetoricians. On many occasions, these fragments appear alongside the *Twelve Caesars*, but even when they were published separately, readers would have been able to learn about some of the same kind of ‘history’ from these minor works as from the *Twelve Caesars*: the history of the chief actors in classical history. I have thus included books containing these fragments in my list.

Deciding which books to count is always a subjective, critical exercise, and it becomes even more problematic with books that are ‘versions’ of a text. These might be excerpts, collections or commentaries, or paraphrases or digests. To include only the ‘original’ source text, in translation or in the vernacular, may at first seem a desirable strategy; but there is no such thing as an ‘original’ text of any of the ancient histories. The texts were all necessarily altered, to various extents, in their transmission over the centuries since their composition; a translation from one language into another always results in a transformation of the source text as the translator imbues it with new meanings, intentionally or subconsciously; and excerpts or paraphrases incur yet another layer of modification.²⁶ It is therefore sometimes difficult to draw an absolute line between

²³ Xenophon, *Ein sehr liebliche historische narration oder erzehlung von dem edlen jungen helde dem Hercule; aus dem Xenophonte genommen und mit schonen Auflegungen erkleret* (Barth, 1593), USTC 646762.

²⁴ My emphasis. Xenophon, *Xenophontis socratici rhetoris Hieron sive tyrannus, liber utilissimus his qui rempublicam administrant, Des. Erasmo Roterodamo interprete. Opus recens* (Basel, 1530), USTC 707481.

²⁵ Xenophon, *L'opere morali* (Venice, 1558), USTC 864005. On rare occasions, I have simply had to guess whether a book contains histories or not: for example, Xenophon, *Selecta quaedam e Xenophontis operibus* (Rome, 1588), STC 864016, the only extant copies of which are held in Italian libraries I have not yet been able to visit.

²⁶ Peter Burke, ‘Translating histories’, in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural translation in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 133–7; see also Carlotta Dionisotti, ‘Les chapitres entre l’historiographie et le roman’, in Jean-Claude Fredouille, Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Philippe Hoffmann, and Pierre Petitmengin, with Simone Deléani, eds., *Titres et*

texts ‘by’ the ancient authors, and texts derived from their works but so substantially different as to be wholly new texts in their own right, without close reading of each individual book; even then, given the differences in our understanding of originality, creativity, and plagiarism compared with the norms of early modern Europe, it is possible to make credible cases for a judgement either way.²⁷ I have generally erred on the side of generosity when choosing what to count, allowing the advertised author to determine inclusion or exclusion where my own reading has been inconclusive. I have omitted works that, although they resemble the histories of an ancient author, claim to be innovative works by medieval or early modern scholars, but I have included books advertised as commentaries or notes on particular authors, in which large sections of those authors’ histories are included, and collections of excerpts in which parts of multiple texts have been combined. Thus, I have counted books like *Le tresor des vies de Plutarque* (Antwerp, 1567); compiled from several of Plutarch’s works, including the *Apophthegms*, it contains much historical material from the *Lives*.²⁸ I have cast my net widely when searching for authors whose works circulated under multiple names, in line with predominant fifteenth- and sixteenth-century belief: Josephus’s histories existed in several versions, for example, the provenance of which was often misrepresented in the early modern period, and I have thus included books ascribed to Hegesippus and Ben Gorion as works by Josephus.²⁹ I have not, however,

articulations du texte dans les oeuvres antiques: actes du colloque international de Chantilly, 13–15 décembre 1994 (Paris, 1997), pp. 529–47; Tania Demetriou and Rowan Tomlinson, eds., *The culture of translation in early modern England and France, 1500–1660* (Basingstoke, 2015).

²⁷ As explained above, n. 20, I have examined as many of the full texts as I have been able to access, but not yet the entire sample.

²⁸ Plutarch, *Le tresor des vies de Plutarque, contenant les beaux dictz & faits, sentences notables, responses, apophthegmes, & harangues des Empereurs, Roys, Ambassadeurs & Capitaines, tant Grecs que Romains: aussi des philosophes & gens scauans* (Antwerp, 1567), USTC 48165.

²⁹ Works by pseudo-Josephus, widely believed to be authentic in the medieval and early modern tradition, include the book of *Josippon*, attributed to ‘Joseph Ben-Gorion’. This was the so-called ‘Hebrew’ version of Josephus, drawing on Jewish sources for the period other than Apocrypha and Josephus. See Irina Wandrey, ‘Jossipon’ [sic], in *Brill’s New Pauly Online*, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/jossipon-e526760>; see also Abraham A. Neuman, ‘Josippon and the Apocrypha’, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 43 (1952), pp. 1–26. Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, *I have always loved the Holy Tongue: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a forgotten chapter in Renaissance scholarship* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 206–16, discuss Joseph Scaliger’s and Casaubon’s appreciation of the difference between the historical Josephus and the *Josippon*, a distinction not commonly made by sixteenth-century readers. A fourth-century AD Latin reduction or ‘free translation’ of the *Jewish wars*, the so-called Latin Hegesippus, was also popular in early modern Europe, and elided with Josephus: see Louis H. Feldman, ‘Flavius Josephus revisited: the man, his writings, and his significance’, in Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase, eds., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, Teil 2, Band 21, Halbband 2 (Berlin, 1984), pp. 770–5; and Albert A. Bell, Jr, ‘Josephus and pseudo-Hegesippus’, in Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, eds., *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Detroit, MI, 1987), pp. 349–61.

included the *Discorsi* by Macchiavelli or Ciccarelli on Livy as a form of Livy's history; numerous of Plutarch's other extant essays, for example the piece on the fortune of the Romans, might also be deemed historical, but I have not included them here. Neither have I included books whose titles contain only vague references to miscellaneous material drawn from the ancient historians, like Sebastiano Corradi's *Sebastiani corradi egnatius, sive quaestura, cuius praecipua capita haec sunt: M. T. Ciceronis vita undique collecta, & defensa. Multa è Plutarcho, caeterisque Graecis conversa*; although the book contains arguments and quotations from Plutarch, some of which are historical in nature, these have been woven together in such a way that they constitute a wholly new work.³⁰

In summary: I have attempted to locate all the books advertised to the market as containing the historical works of the ancient historians in substantial form, books in which readers might access their historical works and thereby learn about the Greek and Roman past, distinguishing these from medieval or early modern works. The numbers of works of the ancient historians that follow are the numbers of the books advertised by their titles as being those in which readers could read a version of an historical text by a particular author.

III

The USTC is a revolutionary resource, the scope, ambition, and execution of which must always command great admiration. It is not, however, without a few challenges for the user. It will always be preferable to consult a copy of the original book, especially where the catalogue is vague, but this has not been practicable in each and every case, so the constraints of the database and the necessarily limited information it provides have sometimes determined the choices I have made.³¹ For example, it is difficult, from the information visible to a USTC user, to distinguish between some works. A book by Xenophon with the short title *Cyrus* might refer to the *Expedition* or the *Education*, or both, but users of the USTC will be unable to determine the exact content without reference to the book itself. Nor can one always tell a text from a commentary on that text from the search results; the USTC does not differentiate between the two with any discernible regularity. Then there are the occasional errors inevitable in a project of such great size, and with so many contributors. Where early modern authors used names similar to those of ancient authors, some mistakes have arisen in a few entries. Some Swiss texts listed as the work of Julius Caesar Scaliger are in fact by Gaius Julius Caesar;³² some entries, which have short titles advertising particular works

³⁰ My emphasis. Sebastiano Corradi, *Sebastiani corradi egnatius, sive quaestura, cuius praecipua capita haec sunt: M. T. Ciceronis vita undique collecta, & defensa. Multa è Plutarcho, caeterisque Graecis conversa* (Basel 1556), USTC 692731.

³¹ See also above nn. 20, 27.

³² *Rerum a se gestarum commentaria* (Geneva, 1586), USTC 452125; *De bello gallicao cometarii VII* (Geneva, 1574), USTC 452228.

within them, do not in fact contain those works; but these instances are admirably few, and I have corrected for them.

Equally problematic are the occasions on which the information one expects from the USTC is missing. This particularly applies to language and format. The language of the title is sometimes the only clue available as to the language in which the text is printed, which may mean that Greek texts, in particular, are under-represented. Then, for example, no size is given for the edition of Suetonius's *Twelve Caesars* published in Madrid in 1579.³³ Sometimes, recourse to the hard copies of the various catalogues of which the USTC is comprised provides an answer, for French, Iberian, or Netherlandish books.³⁴ For books from the Holy Roman Empire, the Swiss Confederation, and the Italian states, the entries in the online bibliographies VD 16, GLN 15–16, and EDIT 16, to which the USTC provides a link, usually supply the missing details, as well as other valuable information, but this is only helpful for books produced in the areas those resources cover, and certain details are not recorded in any of these catalogues.³⁵

Some questions can arise over authorship. *The fardle of facions* (London, 1555) contains a 'Treatise of Josephus, conteyning the ordres, and Lawes of the Jewes commune wealth'; this is returned under an author search for 'Josephus', but the author field visible to the user is blank.³⁶ The identity of 'secondary authors' causes more confusion. These are listed, separated by commas, with rather erratic capitalization, making it initially unclear to whom the entry refers, or even whether it is one person with more than one name, or multiple individuals. Thus, for example, one secondary author listing appears as 'diodorus, crusius, martin', signifying that both Diodorus (Siculus) and Martin Crusius are secondary authors; another, 'diodorus, gambrivius', denotes Gambrivius Diodorus, and is nothing to do with Diodorus Siculus; and the order in which multiple parts of a name are listed is not always consistent. It should be noted that not all the contributing authors are listed by the USTC as secondary authors; this makes it difficult to see from the USTC which works a book actually contains. For example, a search for 'Suetonius' as author returns nine hits under Aurelius Victor, suggesting that something by Suetonius is contained within each of these nine books, but the individual entries for each book do not list Suetonius as a secondary author. An edition

³³ Suetonius, *Vida de los doce cesares* (Madrid, 1579), USTC 341986.

³⁴ Pettegree, Walsby, and Wilkinson, eds., *French vernacular books*; Andrew Pettegree and Malcolm Walsby, eds., *Netherlandish books: books published in the Low Countries and Dutch books printed abroad before 1601* (2 vols., Leiden, 2010); Alexander Wilkinson, *Iberian books: books published in Spanish or Portuguese or on the Iberian Peninsula before 1601* (Leiden, 2010); Andrew Pettegree and Malcolm Walsby, eds., *French books: books published in France before 1601 in Latin and languages other than French* (2 vols. Leiden, 2011).

³⁵ Homepages for the three bibliographies may be found at: www.gateway-bayern.de; www.ville-ge.ch; www.edit16.iccu.sbn.it.

³⁶ Josephus, *The fardle of facions* (London, 1555), USTC 505168.

attributed to Aurelius Victor, published in Paris in 1545, and entitled *De viris illustribus liber. De Claris grammaticis et rhetoribus liber. Prodigiorum liber imperfectus* lists Julius Obsequens as the secondary author, although the *De Claris grammaticis* is by Suetonius.³⁷ The *Historia Augusta* presents a particular problem: sometimes, some authors are named as contributors, when they have been listed on the title page – Plutarch, Suetonius, Dio, and Tacitus, for example – but other times they are not, and appear simply as the ‘authors of the *Historia Augusta*’.³⁸ The contents of the database behind the USTC website will inevitably be fuller than the information presented to the user, but the lack of details like these does present a challenge.

The USTC’s commitment to contextual accuracy creates further difficulties, especially where the names by which authors are commonly known vary across Europe. Authors are listed under the names by which they were known in the early modern period; an anglophone user looking for books by Livy must therefore search for ‘Livius’ instead. This is, on the whole, not a problem for anyone familiar with early modern classical culture; but the user must also search for authors by their vernacular tags in order to be sure that they recover the full range of titles. A search for ‘Sallustius’ will return all works by Gaius Sallustius Crispus except those printed in England, which can only be found by searching for ‘Sallust’. The search for ‘Sallustius’ will also reveal that Sallust is variously given the praenomen ‘Gaius’ or ‘Caius’; the same is true of Julius Caesar, and similar issues apply to Josephus, Cassius Dio, and Eutropius. Each variant is listed as a separate entity in the ‘author’ section of the results page, and a search for one will not give results associated with the other, which is to say the USTC has not standardized or unified its entries. Again, this does not represent a problem for those familiar with all variant forms of an author’s name, or skilled in Boolean, truncation, and wildcard searching, but it is a trap into which the unwary user may easily fall.

In order to return all the works by an author within the USTC, it is therefore necessary to search for all possible variant forms of all parts of their name, in all languages. It is also necessary to repeat this search using the names as ‘keywords’ instead, as an editor is sometimes listed as the author, with the ancient historian’s name appearing only in the short title. And, of course, with Latin spelling, different vernacular names for authors, a lack of orthographical uniformity, and the ever-present possibility of printing errors, the user must also search for all likely forms, spelling variants, and possible mistakes: Svetonii as well as Suetonius, Senophonte as well as Xenophon, and so on.

What does this mean for statistical analyses using the USTC? First and foremost, it means that it is not possible to use the features that seem, at first, to promise a very quick route to statistical success. Each search is automatically

³⁷ Aurelius Victor, *De viris illustribus liber. De Claris grammaticis et rhetoribus liber. Prodigiorum liber imperfectus* (Paris, 1545), USTC 149360.

³⁸ USTC 146274 is one example where several authors are named.

sorted, and the user is given the number of books in each language, each format, by each author, and so on; but given the high number of multiple, independent searches that must be undertaken to arrive at all possible books containing work by a particular author, these tallies are effectively useless. The individual checks that must also be performed for each individual book returned in a search, and the subjective critical judgement that must be exercised to determine whether a book ‘counts’ or not, further renders the analysis subjective and, ultimately, irreproducible to 100 per cent accuracy. A statistical study deriving its data from the USTC is therefore not a scientific experiment that can be repeated, by anyone following the same method, to achieve identical results. I do believe, though, that it could be repeated to deliver results that would not, in their essentials, differ substantively from those given here.

IV

In his article of 1966, Peter Burke produced the following table of results – [Table 1](#) – showing the number of editions for his chosen ancient historians and their works, to the end of the seventeenth century. Since I have used the USTC, which only currently comprehensively catalogues books produced up to, and including, the year 1600 for the whole continent, these figures cannot be used to make a direct comparison with my own. However, a subsequent table in Burke’s article demonstrates the number of editions produced in each fifty-year period, starting with 1450 to 1499. Burke’s totals for the number of editions published to 1599, arranged from most- to least-frequently printed, are shown in [Table 2](#); the order of popularity is not identical with that of the years 1450 to 1700 as a whole, but it is not dissimilar.

[Table 3](#) presents the results of my survey of the works of the ancient historians, in order of most- to least-frequently printed, according to the method outlined above. A direct comparison of my figures with those of Burke, arranged in Burke’s order of popularity, is seen in [Figure 1](#). From this comparison, a few points are immediately apparent:

1. Far more books containing the works of all the ancient historians were printed in the period 1450 to 1599 than has previously been acknowledged.
2. The relative order of popularity posited by Burke is not borne out by evidence in the USTC.
3. The popularity of several authors has, until now, been greatly underestimated: this is particularly true of Plutarch and Josephus.

In order to offer more useful, critical suggestions about the relative popularity of particular authors, Burke provides an assessment of the shifts in their popularity, in fifty-year periods. I have done the same, to 1599, in [Table 4](#), presenting the authors in order of most- to least-frequently printed in each period.

Table 1 *Burke's findings, 1450–1700*

Sallust	<i>Catiline</i>	282
Sallust	<i>Jugurtha</i>	271
Valerius	<i>Words and deeds</i>	198
Caesar	<i>Commentaries</i>	189
Curtius	<i>Alexander</i>	179
Tacitus	<i>Germany</i>	164
Livy	<i>Decades</i>	160
Suetonius	<i>Twelve Caesars</i>	155
Tacitus	<i>Annals and histories</i>	152
Florus	<i>Epitome</i>	147
Josephus	<i>Antiquities</i>	73
Josephus	<i>Jewish war</i>	68
Plutarch	<i>Parallel lives</i>	62
Xenophon	<i>Cyrus</i>	54
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	44
Thucydides	<i>Peloponnesian war</i>	41
Eutropius	<i>Compendium</i>	40
Polybius	<i>Histories</i>	36
Xenophon	<i>Expedition</i>	30
Diodorus	<i>Historical library</i>	25
Dio	<i>Roman history</i>	25

Source: Burke, 'The popularity of ancient historians', p. 136.

Understanding how frequently authors were printed within half a century is useful in determining broad trends in rising or decreasing popularity, but it is rather a vague measure of assessing change; the Europe of the 1540s was, after all, dramatically different, politically and religiously, from the Europe of the early 1500s. A rolling two- or three-year analysis is probably preferable in order to discern any correlation between significant political events and an increase in the printing of a particular ancient historian, but it is not easily displayed on the printed page; I have therefore chosen to present my results by decade, to allow a slightly closer comparison between printing frequency, and historical changes, shown in [Table 5](#) and [Figure 2](#).

The languages in which histories were printed was also of interest to Burke, who compared the number of vernacular editions with editions printed in Latin and ancient Greek in order to make arguments about likely readers.³⁹ I have performed a similar comparison – [Table 6](#) – adding an indication of the proportion of books circulating in the vernacular.

³⁹ Burke, 'The popularity of ancient historians', p. 138.

Table 2 *Burke's findings, 1450–1599*

Sallust	<i>Catiline; Jugurtha</i> ^a	201; 194
Valerius	<i>Words and deeds</i>	151
Caesar	<i>Commentaries</i>	135
Livy	<i>Decades</i>	118
Suetonius	<i>Twelve Caesars</i>	86
Curtius	<i>Alexander</i>	67
Tacitus	<i>Germany; Annals and histories</i>	61; 49
Florus	<i>Epitome</i>	56
Plutarch	<i>Parallel lives</i>	49
Josephus	<i>Jewish war; Antiquities</i>	47; 42
Xenophon	<i>Cyrus; Expedition</i>	39; 26
Thucydides	<i>Peloponnesian war</i>	30
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	26
Polybius	<i>Histories</i>	23
Dio	<i>Roman history</i>	21
Diodorus	<i>Historical library</i>	20
Eutropius	<i>Compendium</i>	? ^b

^a I have chosen to present Burke's entries with multiple texts by an author combined in the table, so that each author appears only once, and a comparison with my own results is clearer.

^b Eutropius does not feature in any of Burke's tables other than Table 1.

Source: Derived from Burke, 'Popularity of the ancient historians', p. 137.

Burke then listed the top three vernacular languages for each author. The USTC indicates that these languages are almost invariably French, followed by Italian, with English, Spanish, Dutch, or German some way behind in third place, so I have not produced a table of these results. Not only are the vernaculars other than French and Italian represented in such small numbers as to render a comparison unhelpful, but the even more infrequent and interesting instances of translation into one of the eastern European languages, for example, will not be represented in such a table. Figure 3 therefore shows when a vernacular edition of part of an historian's work first becomes available for the first time.

Translations into various vernacular languages were produced from the 1470s on, but it was from the 1530s that such translation began to occur in substantial quantities. The publication of ancient historians most popular in the European vernaculars is shown in Table 7. Although some authors were printed often in German, Spanish, or English, the majority of vernacular translations were into French and Italian.⁴⁰ The distribution of French and Italian

⁴⁰ The exceptions are Livy, Florus, Curtius, and Josephus. Livy was printed 25 times in German, compared with 21 in Italian, and 57 in French. Florus was printed 8 times in

Table 3 *My findings, 1450–1599*

Sallust	427
Livy	362
Plutarch	330
Valerius	294
Josephus	271
Caesar	265
Suetonius	209
Florus	170
Tacitus	149
Xenophon	133
Curtius	102
Thucydides	67
Herodotus	63
Diodorus	56
Eutropius	52
Dio	52
Polybius	48

Note: A comparison of data for the authors for whom Burke counted two texts is necessarily problematic, as I have simply counted books of histories by those authors (Sallust, Tacitus, Josephus, and Xenophon). Without repeating Burke's original research – an impractical and unfruitful exercise – it is not possible to tell which work is contained in which book in his survey. Adding the totals together to arrive at a sum for these authors certainly does not represent an accurate total of their works in print: many books contain both histories, and, indeed, my research using the USTC suggests that, if an author wrote more than one history, very nearly all – or at least, far more than half – of the books by that author contain all his histories. For the sake of a moderately useful comparison in graphical form, I have simply taken then mean of the two figures given by Burke. The 'Burke' number on the figure is therefore not an accurate reflection of the number of editions, but a nominal average, for illustrative purposes.

books most frequently printed in the vernacular, from the 1530s, may be seen in [Figure 4](#). The French enthusiasm for printing in the vernacular, and for translating into French, is well known, and amply supported by this evidence, while the Italian example perhaps demonstrates the legacies of the earlier Renaissance, now extended to wider audiences through the harnessing of

German, 4 in Italian, and 5 in French. Curtius was not printed in German, compared with 11 times in French, 6 in Italian, and 7 in English. Josephus was printed 53 times in German, compared with 30 in Italian, and 62 in French.

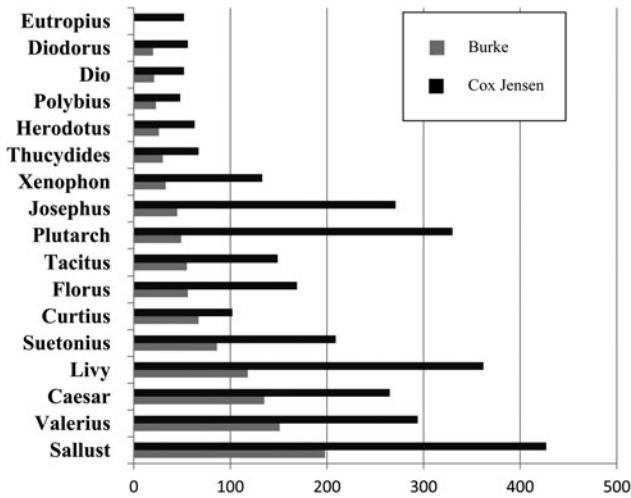


Fig. 1. Comparison of Burke and Cox Jensen, 1450–1599.

print technology;⁴¹ both cases also reflect the cultural appropriation of the classics as part of the strengthening of various identities in the face of confessional and territorial conflict, division, and expansion.⁴² The intended purposes of these translations from the classics, and their effects, are beyond the scope of the present survey, but speak to a wide range of scholarly investigations into the relationship between vernacular translation and cultural exchange, the processes of Renaissance and Reformation, and the coalescence of linguistic and national identities throughout the early modern period, and will doubtless repay closer investigation.⁴³

V

This study has, from the outset, sought to engage with Peter Burke's 1996 'Survey' in order to provide an updated set of data useful to scholars interested in the printing and publishing of the ancient historians in early modern

⁴¹ Alexander S. Wilkinson, 'Vernacular translation in Renaissance France, Spain, Portugal and Britain: a comparative survey', *Renaissance Studies*, 29 (2015), pp. 19–35; Outi Merisalo, 'Translating the classics into the vernacular in sixteenth-century Italy', *Renaissance Studies*, 29 (2015), pp. 55–77.

⁴² Leigh Oakes, *Language and national identity: comparing France and Sweden* (Amsterdam, 2001), p. 56; Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, eds., *Artistic exchange and cultural translation in the Italian Renaissance city* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1–3.

⁴³ A. Rizzi, *Vernacular translators in Quattrocento Italy: scribal cultural, authority, and agency* (Turnhout, 2017); Lucia Binotti, 'Cultural identity and ideologies of translation in sixteenth-century Europe', *History of European Ideas*, 14 (1992), pp. 769–88, at pp. 770–2; Paola Gambarota, *Irresistible signs: the genius of language and Italian national identity* (Toronto, ON, 2011), pp. 6, 9–12.

Table 4 *Number of books produced in each fifty-year period*

1450–99		1500–49		1550–99	
Sallust	65	Sallust	227	Plutarch	226
Valerius	36	Livy	168	Josephus	168
Livy	23	Valerius	158	Livy	167
Suetonius	20	Suetonius	121	Caesar	137
Plutarch	19	Caesar	111	Sallust	134
Florus	17	Josephus	89	Tacitus	106
Caesar	16	Plutarch	85	Valerius	97
Josephus	14	Florus	79	Xenophon	92
Curtius	9	Curtius	50	Florus	72
Tacitus	6	Xenophon	40	Suetonius	68
Diodorus	5	Tacitus	37	Curtius	43
Herodotus	4	Diodorus	29	Thucydides	41
Eutropius	3	Thucydides	25	Herodotus	35
Xenophon	2	Polybius	25	Dio	32
Polybius	2	Herodotus	24	Eutropius	26
Thucydides	1	Eutropius	23	Diodorus	22
Dio	1	Dio	19	Polybius	21

Note: Some books are undated; while it is possible to estimate which fifty-year period many of these fall into, it is not always the case, especially without seeing or handling the books. It has not been possible to date three editions of Livy, one of Florus, three of Valerius Maximus, and one of Caesar.

Table 5 *Number of books printed in each decade*

	1460–9	1470–9	1480–9	1490–9	1500–9	1510–19	1520–9
Caesar	1	Sallust 25	Valerius 13	Sallust 29	Sallust 41	Sallust 56	Sallust 45
Livy	1	Valerius 11	Sallust 11	Plutarch 11	Valerius 28	Valerius 36	Valerius 28
Curtius	0	Suetonius 8	Livy 9	Valerius 11	Livy 14	Livy 31	Livy 25
Dio	0	Florus 6	Caesar 5	Suetonius 8	Florus 10	Florus 27	Suetonius 23
Diodorus	0	Livy 6	Florus 5	Livy 7	Suetonius 10	Suetonius 24	Josephus 18
Eutropius	0	Plutarch 6	Josephus 5	Florus 6	Curtius 8	Plutarch 18	Plutarch 17
Florus	0	Caesar 5	Suetonius 4	Caesar 5	Plutarch 8	Caesar 14	Caesar 15
Herodotus	0	Josephus 5	Curtius 2	Curtius 4	Caesar 7	Josephus 12	Florus 15
Josephus	0	Curtius 3	Plutarch 2	Josephus 4	Diodorus 7	Diodorus 9	Xenophon 9
Plutarch	0	Tacitus 3	Diodorus 1	Diodorus 2	Xenophon 5	Tacitus 8	Thucydides 6
Polybius	0	Diodorus 2	Eutropius 1	Herodotus 2	Tacitus 4	Eutropius 6	Herodotus 5
Sallust	0	Herodotus 2	Tacitus 1	Tacitus 2	Josephus 2	Curtius 5	Curtius 4
Suetonius	0	Eutropius 1	Thucydides 1	Dio 1	Dio 1	Dio 5	Polybius 4
Tacitus	0	Polybius 1	Dio 0	Eutropius 1	Herodotus 1	Polybius 3	Tacitus 4
Thucydides	0	Xenophon 1	Herodotus 0	Polybius 1	Polybius 1	Xenophon 3	Eutropius 3
Valerius	0	Dio 0	Polybius 0	Xenophon 1	Thucydides 1	Herodotus 1	Dio 1
Xenophon	0	Thucydides 0	Xenophon 0	Thucydides 0	Eutropius 0	Thucydides 1	Diodorus 1
	1530–9	1540–9	1550–9	1560–9	1570–9	1580–9	1590–9
Livy	59	Livy 39	Josephus 52	Plutarch 55	Plutarch 56	Plutarch 45	Tacitus 45
Sallust	48	Suetonius 37	Livy 51	Sallust 32	Caesar 37	Tacitus 41	Plutarch 33
Caesar	43	Sallust 36	Plutarch 37	Josephus 27	Josephus 31	Livy 40	Josephus 31
Josephus	37	Caesar 33	Caesar 32	Livy 24	Xenophon 27	Sallust 28	Livy 27

Valerius	34	Valerius	32	Sallust	32	Valerius	23	Livy	25	Caesar	28	Sallust	19
Suetonius	27	Plutarch	25	Xenophon	24	Caesar	21	Sallust	24	Josephus	27	Caesar	19
Plutarch	17	Josephus	20	Valerius	23	Suetonius	18	Valerius	21	Valerius	18	Suetonius	16
Curtius	14	Curtius	19	Suetonius	20	Xenophon	12	Florus	11	Florus	16	Florus	16
Herodotus	11	Florus	17	Florus	17	Florus	11	Suetonius	9	Xenophon	16	Xenophon	13
Tacitus	11	Xenophon	15	Curtius	16	Thucydides	10	Tacitus	8	Curtius	12	Valerius	12
Florus	10	Polybius	12	Thucydides	16	Eutropius	8	Curtius	5	Herodotus	8	Dio	11
Thucydides	7	Dio	10	Herodotus	12	Dio	5	Herodotus	5	Thucydides	7	Curtius	8
Xenophon	7	Eutropius	10	Dio	10	Herodotus	4	Diodorus	5	Diodorus	7	Thucydides	8
Diodorus	6	Tacitus	10	Polybius	10	Polybius	4	Polybius	1	Eutropius	6	Herodotus	6
Polybius	5	Thucydides	8	Diodorus	8	Tacitus	4	Dio	1	Suetonius	5	Eutropius	6
Eutropius	4	Diodorus	6	Tacitus	8	Curtius	3	Eutropius	1	Dio	5	Polybius	5
Dio	2	Herodotus	6	Eutropius	5	Diodorus	2	Thucydides	0	Polybius	1	Diodorus	0

Note: Slightly fewer books are represented here, compared with [Table 4](#), as there are a few that it has not been possible to date to a particular decade.

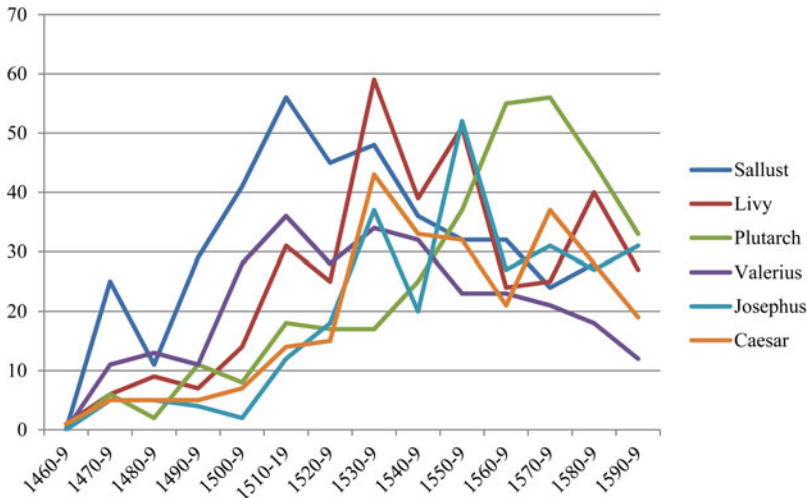


Fig. 2. Number of books printed in each decade, for the six most-printed authors.

Europe. It also serves as an example of the kind of work that digital resources like the USTC make possible, together with the advantages and challenges they pose. The exposition of similarities with and differences from Burke's findings is intended to facilitate a reappraisal of existing historiographical assertions and assumptions, and to provide an improved (if not wholly perfect) foundation for the field. To explore in detail the various implications of the new data compared with the old would take far more space than is available here, and requires sustained, critical analysis of numerous books, authors, and nations; I have therefore, like Peter Burke before me, confined myself to a brief discussion of the chief points arising, in the hope that others will use this as a starting point for further investigation.

The primary conclusion to be drawn from the results above is that the volume of the trade in ancient histories is far larger than the traditional bibliographies allow.⁴⁴ More books containing the works of the ancient historians were produced than has previously been thought; there were therefore more books containing ancient history available, and more men and women in early modern Europe had the opportunity to engage with them. Several thousand editions of the ancient historians were printed and disseminated across the continent, each amounting to at least several hundred copies. Although they do not compete with the writing of the major religious Reformers, for example, nor

⁴⁴ It is unprofitable to re-enter the debate about the total number of copies in circulation here. Estimates of average print runs in the early modern period seem to converge on 1,000 as a plausible number: see above, n. 14. See also Burke, 'The popularity of ancient historians', p. 136, where, citing Renouard's 1908 *Bibliography of Josse Badius*, he notes that an edition of Thucydides printed in French in 1527 ran to 1,225 copies.

Table 6 *Number of books in the vernacular compared with Latin/Greek*

	Ancient languages	Vernacular	Unclear	Total	% of total in the vernacular ^a
Sallust	388	42	–	427	10
Livy	235	125	2	362	35
Plutarch	159	171	–	330	52
Valerius	252	42	–	294	14
Josephus	91	180	–	271	66
Caesar	170	94	1	265	35
Suetonius	181	26	2	209	12
Florus	150	19	–	169	11
Tacitus	117	32	–	149	21
Xenophon	84	49	–	133	37
Curtius	76	26	–	102	25
Thucydides	36	31	–	67	46
Herodotus	48	15	–	63	24
Diodorus	34	22	–	56	39
Eutropius	38	14	–	52	27
Dio	35	17	–	52	33
Polybius	30	18	–	48	38

^a To the nearest whole number. Given the error margin contained in the data, it should be borne in mind that the percentages should only be taken as a rough indication of the proportion translated into the vernacular, especially for the less frequently printed authors, where one edition more or less would necessarily change the percentage by a greater degree. The same is true for [Table 7](#).

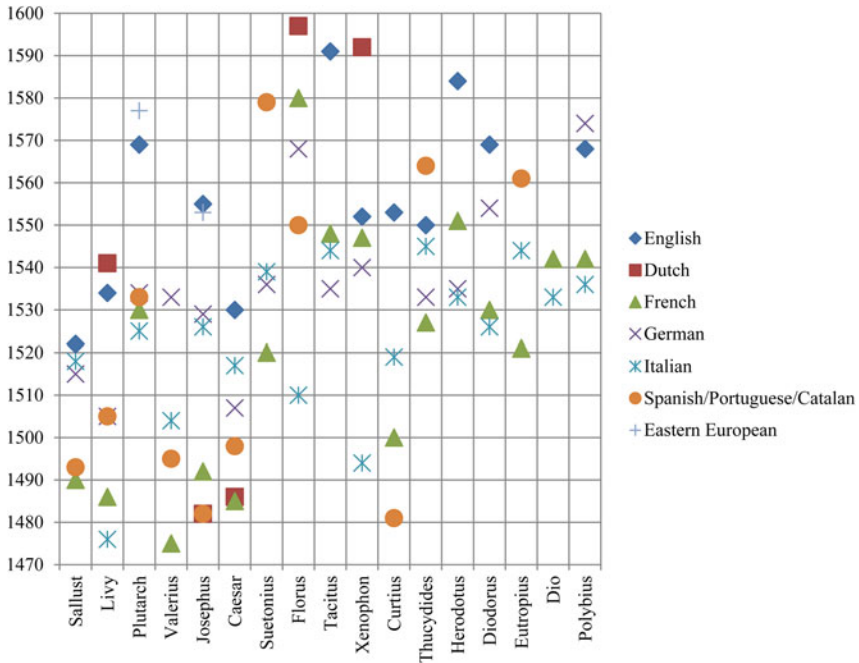


Fig. 3. First vernacular edition of each author, in each language.

Note: I have counted books containing all or part of an author's history or histories, therefore this is what is represented in this figure. It does not, therefore, necessarily show the better-known first editions of whole works, or collected works, such as North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* into English (London, 1579), USTC 508873 and 508840.

Table 7 *The six ancient historians most popular in European vernaculars*

	No. in vernacular	% in vernacular
Josephus	180	66
Plutarch	171	52
Thucydides	31	46
Xenophon	49	37
Livy	125	35
Caesar	94	35

Note: I have selected those whose works appeared in more than thirty vernacular books in the period to 1599, and of whose works more than one third were printed in the vernacular. This is the assumed market share in the vernacular; since an edition size is always uncertain, it does not represent the actual market share.

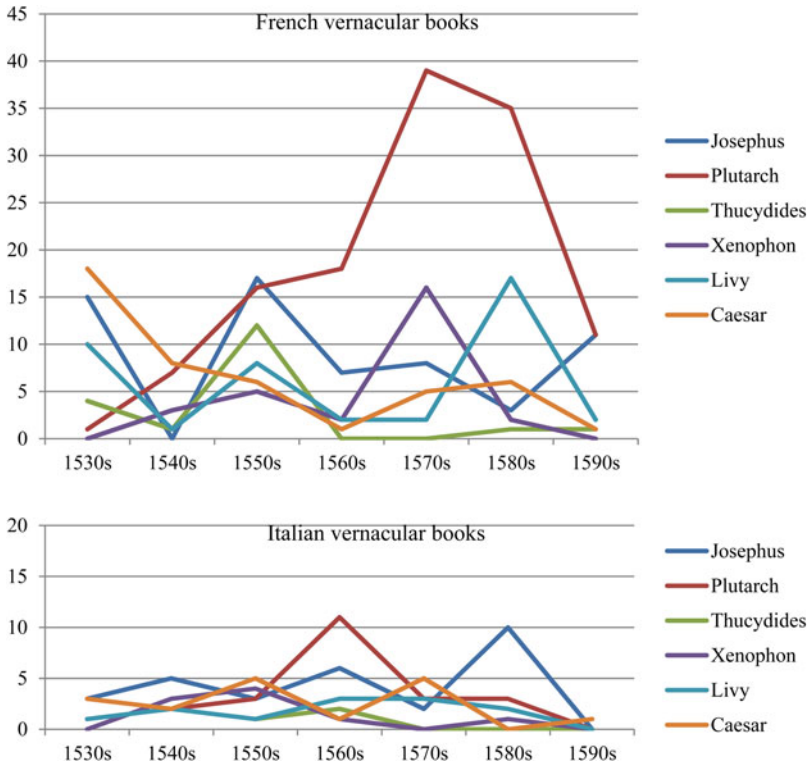


Fig. 4. Number of books in French and Italian vernaculars, from 1530.

with the most popular classical poets, the texts of the ancient historians circulated in substantial quantities in the early modern world.⁴⁵

The five most frequently printed ancient historians of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were Sallust, Livy, Plutarch, Valerius Maximus, and Josephus. Caesar and Suetonius, previously thought to be the third and fifth most-printed authors respectively, are now shown to have been the sixth and seventh most 'popular'; significant and important, but not printed as frequently as Plutarch and Josephus. This indicates a very different picture of the taste for, and function of, ancient history in the first fourteen decades of print, from that suggested by Burke and assumed, until now, to be the case:

⁴⁵ I have not collected evidence for other authors as carefully as for the ancient historians, but a brief search in the USTC indicates that there were perhaps 1,500 editions of Ovid produced to 1600, and a similar number of Vergil; there were almost 5,000 editions of works by Martin Luther, some 2,000 by Melancthon, approximately 3,000 by Erasmus, and nearly 700 by Calvin.

It will be noted that arranged in order of popularity, as measured by the number of editions, almost all the Roman historians are ahead of all the Greeks; the only exception is Eutropius. They are so far ahead that (Eutropius apart) the least popular of the Romans, Florus, is just over twice as popular as the most popular Greek history, the *Antiquities* of Josephus. In other words, we have here an example of the general rule that the Renaissance was predominantly the rebirth of Roman antiquity, not of Greek.⁴⁶

It is no longer possible to argue that the ‘Greek’ historians were less popular than the Romans; the popularity of Plutarch and Josephus conclusively disproves it. But the labelling of the historians as ‘Greek’ and ‘Roman’ is itself problematic. Burke apparently uses the term to refer to the languages in which the historians wrote, but given the increasing prominence of vernacular translations of the period, the difficulties of printing in Greek,⁴⁷ and the fact that the ancient histories written in Greek were more usually printed in Latin translation,⁴⁸ the definition is not always useful.

It would seem reasonable, given the preoccupation with Rome, rather than Greece, as a model for Renaissance politics and *mores*, to assume that Roman subject matter would be more popular than Greek content, yet this is not the distinction Burke draws. Across the whole cohort of ancient historians, Roman subject matter is generally more popular than Greek: Sallust, Livy, Caesar, along with other historians of Rome, are more popular than Xenophon, Herodotus, and Thucydides and the other historians of Greece. Once again, Plutarch and Josephus are anomalous; the extent to which their histories are ‘Roman’ is debatable. Plutarch’s biographies certainly include prominent Roman figures, but each Roman life is paired with a Greek. There is no way to determine if Plutarch’s Roman or Greek characters were generally of greater interest to the majority of readers; nor do the collections of smaller selections of the lives, published separately rather than as a complete work, provide any clue. Josephus’s *Jewish antiquities* and *Jewish war* describe aspects of the Roman empire, but it is far from clear that early modern readers used Josephus as a source of specifically Roman history. Much of the existing evidence points to Josephus’s popularity arising from the value the texts held for Christianity across the confessional divide.⁴⁹ To think of Josephus as an

⁴⁶ Burke, ‘The popularity of ancient historians’, p. 136.

⁴⁷ See Robert Proctor, *The printing of Greek in the fifteenth century* (Oxford, 1900); Nicholas Barker, *Aldus Manutius and the development of Greek script and type* (2nd edn, New York, NY, 1992).

⁴⁸ For example, Cassius Dio: of the 35 books printed in the ancient languages by the end of the sixteenth century, 27 were in Latin, with the remaining 9 in bilingual Greek–Latin editions. The first edition containing the Greek text was not published until 1547 (USTC 149894), by which time 13 Latin books had been printed, along with 3 Italian translations, and 1 in French.

⁴⁹ Rene Bloch, ‘Iosephus Flavius (Flavius Josephus), *Bellum Iudaicum*’, in Christine Walde and Brigitte Egger, eds., *The reception of classical literature*, Brill’s New Pauly Supplements (5th edn, Leiden, 2012), p. 193; Pauline M. Smith, ‘The reception and influence of Josephus’ *Jewish war* in the late French Renaissance, with special reference to the *Satyre Menippée*, *Renaissance Studies*, 13 (1999), pp. 173–91, at p. 174. On the connection between

ancient historian qualitatively similar to non-Judaeo-Christian authors is perhaps somewhat misleading, or at the very least only captures part of his appeal for an early modern audience.

Some changes in popularity may be observed over the years to 1600. Among the authors most popular during the period as a whole, the relative popularity of Livy decreased slightly over the period, as did that of Sallust, while the relative popularity of Caesar increased a little, and Plutarch and Josephus increased greatly in popularity in the second half of the sixteenth century. Among the lesser authors, the popularity of Xenophon increased substantially, with a particular focus on printing in the years 1550 to 1579, while Curtius became slightly less popular by the end of the period, compared with the early years of the sixteenth century. The prominence of Tacitus in the final decades of the sixteenth century is, of course, well documented.⁵⁰

Is it hard to discern with any certainty the implication of these trends in publication. An increase in the number of books produced seems relatively straightforward: it represents an increase – or perceived increase – in demand for the work of that particular author, in some form, or it represents an increase in the size of the market. This might mean that the author was becoming more popular among a relatively stable group of people, or it might indicate a growth in the number of people buying books of ancient history. We know that literacy increased over the sixteenth century, as did education, and in many parts of Europe there was an improvement in the living standards of the ‘middling’ sort of people, all of which increased the number of people able to afford and read books of history.⁵¹ The number of books produced in each half-century shows a general rise in the number of editions of the ancient authors as a group, over the period; any arguments for an increase in popularity based on an increase in the number of editions produced must therefore also take account of the general trend towards greater book production.

Christianity and Judaism in early modern Europe more generally, see Richard H. Popkin, ‘Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the seventeenth century’, in Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner, eds., *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Dordrecht, 1994), pp. 57–72.

⁵⁰ See Jan Waszink’s introduction in his translation of Justus Lipsius, *Politica: six books of politics or political instruction* (Assen, 2004); also Kenneth C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance political thought* (Chicago, IL, and London, 1976); Peter Burke, ‘Tacitism, scepticism, and reason of state’, in J. H. Burns and M. Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge history of political thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 479–98.

⁵¹ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in early modern Europe: culture and education, 1500–1800* (2nd edn, Harlow, 2002), pp. 166–72, 203–26. See also Margaret Jacob and Catherine Secretan, eds., ‘Introduction’, in their *In praise of ordinary people: early modern Britain and the Dutch Republic* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 1–16; Maarten Prak, ed., ‘Introduction’, in his *Early modern capitalism: economic and social change in Europe, 1400–1800* (London, 2001), pp. 1–19; Peter Burke, ‘The language of orders in early modern Europe’, in M. L. Bush, ed., *Social orders and social classes in Europe since 1500: studies in social stratification* (London, 1992), pp. 1–13.

A decline in the number of editions produced might appear to demonstrate a decline in popularity, but this need not necessarily be the case. If the size of the market did not grow greatly, then its demands might have been satisfied by the availability of second-hand editions entering the marketplace, after their owners died, for example. A decline in the number of editions of an author's works might also indicate a saturation of the market: all the people who were interested in owning a French copy of Xenophon and were able to do so might already have access to a copy. This seems a plausible inference to draw from some of the publishing patterns, in the vernaculars, especially: a large number of books printed in French or German in one decade was often followed by one or two decades in which few appeared in those languages, suggesting that the existing stock was still being sold, and there was no demand for more.

In nearly all cases, there were more books containing the works of the ancient historians in the classical languages than in the vernacular. Authors whose original Latin texts are relatively straightforward and easily digestible – Sallust, Florus, Suetonius – were printed least frequently in the vernacular, proportionate to their global popularity, with only 10 to 12 per cent of books appearing in translation. Nor were authors whose primary function was to supply Latin phrases for recycling often printed in translation, Valerius Maximus, in particular. These are the authors who were used in schools, and who were frequently recommended for those beginning their reading of ancient history; the formal educational setting in which many of these books were being read thus goes some way to explaining the overwhelming proportion printed in Latin.⁵²

The exceptions, once again, are Plutarch and Josephus, of whose works more books were printed in modern languages than in Latin translation or the original classical Greek: these authors are the great anomalies of this survey. The other authors whose works circulate in the greatest proportion in the vernacular also originally wrote in Greek: Thucydides and Xenophon, Diodorus Siculus and Polybius. Given the difficulties of Greek printing, and the disproportionate risks for even the most illustrious printers of producing books in Greek, a translation would make the production of such a text easier and cheaper, as well as marketable to a broader readership.⁵³ The translation of Greek texts into neo-Latin formed a central part of the humanist endeavour, first in Renaissance Italy and later throughout Europe, and some vernacular

⁵² Paul F. Grendler, 'Renaissance humanism, schools, and universities', in his *Renaissance education between religion and politics* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 6ff; Charles G. Nauert, *Humanism and the culture of Renaissance Europe* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2006), pp. 38–54; J. H. M. Salmon, 'Precept, example and truth: Degory Wheare and the *ars historica*', in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks, eds., *The historical imagination in early modern Britain: history, rhetoric and fiction, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 11–36.

⁵³ Ian Maclean, *Scholarship, commerce, religion: the learned book in the age of confessions, 1560–1630* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), p. 54.

translations were made via these scholarly intermediaries, presenting their impeccable scholarly antecedents as a unique selling point on the title page. Other vernacular editions were not, but existed alongside them, either as competitors or aimed at a different market, pretending less to a level of classical sophistication and erudition and instead capitalizing on the greater connection with contemporary life that a vernacular translation implied.⁵⁴

The popularity of vernacular translations of Greek histories, and the success of Plutarch and Josephus, deserve further study, representing as they do a significant means for a growing readership to interact with the classical past. In the flourishing field of translation studies, Greek texts have attracted comparatively little attention, and the focus has been chiefly on Greek works as sources for translation into Latin, as part of the recent surge in neo-Latin scholarship, and on scientific translations.⁵⁵ Book history studies have not often integrated translation into their analyses as deeply as they might, and it is only very recently that the full potential of the two areas to illuminate one another has begun to be realized.⁵⁶ Just as the popularity of ancient Greek histories suggests avenues for further inquiry, so Alexander Wilkinson's comparative survey of vernacular translation in Britain, France, and the Iberian Peninsula provides preliminary data for the investigation of the relative significance of Greek texts compared with source texts in other languages, and of histories and classical texts

⁵⁴ Andrew Taylor, 'The translations of Renaissance Latin', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 41 (2014), pp. 329–53, at pp. 32–3; Margo Todd, *Christian humanism and the puritan social order* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 94; Douglas Howland, 'The predicament of ideas in culture: translation and historiography', *History and Theory*, 42 (2003), pp. 45–60, at p. 45; see also Kevin Sharpe, *Reading revolutions: the politics of reading in early modern England* (New Haven, CT, 2000), p. 314; Frejja Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman republic in early modern England* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 216–17; Paul White, 'Marketing adaptations of the *Ship of fools*: the *Stultiferae naves* (1501) and *Navis Stultifera* (1505) of Jodocus Badius Ascensius', in Pérez Fernández and Wilson-Lee, eds., *Translation and the book trade*, pp. 22–39; Miguel Martínez, 'The heroes in the world's marketplace: translating and printing epic in Renaissance Antwerp', in Pérez Fernández and Wilson-Lee, eds., *Translation and the book trade*, pp. 81–106.

⁵⁵ For example, Paul Botley, *Latin translation in the Renaissance: the theory and practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus* (Cambridge, 2004); Stuart Gillespie, 'Vernacular translations of classical and neo-Latin writings in the European renaissance: the Germanic languages', in H. Kittel et al., eds., *Übersetzung: ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung*, II (Berlin, 2007), pp. 1441–7; Timothy Kirchner, 'Wrestling with Ulysses: humanist translations of Homeric epic around 1440', in Luc Deitz, Timothy Kirchner, and Jonathan Reid, eds., *Neo-Latin and the humanities: essays in honour of Charles E. Fantazzi* (Toronto, ON, 2014), pp. 61–91; Iolanda Ventura, 'Translating, commenting, re-translating: some considerations on the Latin translations of the pseudo-Aristotelian *problemata* and their readers', in Michèle Goyens, Pieter de Leemans, and An Smets, eds., *Science translated: Latin and vernacular translations of scientific treatises in medieval Europe* (Leuven, 2008), pp. 123–54; Sietske Franssen, Niall Hodson, and Karl A. E. Enekel, eds., *Translating early modern science* (Leiden, 2017).

⁵⁶ Most notably, Wilkinson, 'Vernacular translation'; Pérez Fernández and Edward Wilson-Lee, eds., *Translation and the book trade*; Belén Bistué, *Collaborative translation and multi-version texts in early modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2013).

compared with other kinds of writing.⁵⁷ Detailed assessments of the reception of the Greek historians in print across early modern Europe seem likely to elucidate further the complexities and instabilities of translation as a cultural practice, and the role of Greek historical writing in the development of early modern society.⁵⁸

In the case of Josephus, the religious significance of the text explains why so many vernacular books were produced; reading in the vernacular would undoubtedly emphasize the contemporary relevance of a text, and make it more accessible to a greater number of readers. Other than Plutarch's juxtaposition of Greek and Roman biographies, which may perhaps have represented an ideal 'interface' of both ancient cultures,⁵⁹ there is no such reason for the overwhelming popularity of Plutarch's historical works in the vernacular, although his *Moralia* were similarly extremely successful, especially in France; the *Lives* contain some moral comment sympathetic to Christian ideas of virtue and vice, but the same can be said of other authors whose works were nowhere near as popular in the vernacular. Since French translations account for nearly 75 per cent of the total 'histories' by Plutarch in all vernaculars, it is clear that there was a special relationship between Plutarch and the French, and an especially strong market for vernacular histories more widely in France; it was the popularity of the translations of Claude de Seyssel and George de Selve in the first half of the sixteenth century, followed by the immense success of Amyot's translation which first appeared in 1559, that accounts for the trends in the statistics.⁶⁰ That some French translations were made at second- or third-hand, from Latin texts that had been translated from the Greek, does not seem to have detracted from the popularity of these texts; if anything, it seems to have added an extra element to a work's pedigree.⁶¹ French vernacular translations, then, are a special case, fulfilling a different function from other books in more ways than the merely linguistic. Translations into other vernaculars, and the ways in which these books are described and advertised on their title pages, possess a qualitatively different

⁵⁷ Wilkinson, 'Vernacular translation', pp. 26–33.

⁵⁸ A succinct summary of the most significant theoretical approaches informing the field is provided by Brenda M. Hosington, 'Translation and print culture in early modern Europe', *Renaissance Studies*, 29 (2015), pp. 5–18.

⁵⁹ Taylor, 'The translations of Renaissance Latin', p. 332.

⁶⁰ On Seyssel's translations and their intended function, see Rebecca Ard Boone, *War, domination, and the monarchy of France: Claude de Seyssel and the language of politics in the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 85–100; for an overview of Plutarch's *Lives* in sixteenth-century France, see Alain Billault, 'Plutarch's *Lives*', in Gerald N. Sandy, ed., *The classical heritage in France* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 219–31, as well as the works of Aulotte, for example, R. Aulotte, *Amyot et Plutarque* (Geneva, 1965); see also Francoise Frazier, 'Amyot traducteur des oeuvres morales', in Francoise Frazier and Olivier Guerrier, eds., *Plutarque: éditions, traductions, paratextes* (Coimbra, 2016), pp. 69–87.

⁶¹ James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 1 (Rome, 2003), pp. 189–90.

character. This is sometimes true, too, of Latin books produced in particular cities; the Italian books, for example, differ in nature from those produced elsewhere. Is this a product of the southern, rather than the northern, Renaissance, and particular networks of producers? Are the differences in printing fashions the result of trade conditions and practices, or reflective of two, or more, traditions of scholarship and culture in Europe? There are certainly correlations between the editors of particular editions, and the location of printing, and it is likely that other distinctive characteristics of the physical books produced in certain places might be instructive as to regional variations not only in taste or in printing traditions, but also in reading practices.

Burke uses translators' assertions in their prefaces to infer an expected audience for a particular work; he also assumes that translators and their readers will share similar backgrounds and interests.⁶² And he believes that there is a difference between vernacular and ancient-language editions, and the people reading them are not the same:

If Curtius and Tacitus rise in popularity at the same time, this does not necessarily mean that they rise in popularity with the same people. A preliminary hypothesis is that those who read the books in Latin or Greek (usually in Latin) will be found to have had different tastes from those who read the books in vernacular translations. So it turns out.⁶³

I have implied above that this is partially true, but it is not possible to prove it; nor do I think it is always the case. A closer analysis of the physical nature of the various books is necessary in order to be able to estimate the likely cost of particular editions, and therefore their likely consumer. In order to determine whether the ancient histories functioned in similar ways, in different vernacular translations, the nature or quality of the books must be known. The 1570s saw the production of eight books of Josephus in the French language, for example, three in folio, and the rest in octavo; the 1570s also saw fifteen books of Josephus printed in German, of which only the first, printed in 1570, was in octavo. The rest, printed consistently throughout the decade, were folio editions, and were thus certainly intended for a different purpose, which is to say a different market, from the French octavo translations. As the sixteenth century progressed and education improved, a greater number of people were able to read, both in Latin and the vernacular, and only in the vernacular. More people could read in the vernacular than could read Latin and Greek, and vernacular editions were undoubtedly accessible to more people than original-language editions.⁶⁴ However, vernacular editions also provided a 'short cut' to classical learning for those who possessed reading ability in Latin and Greek, but for whatever reason chose to read in their native language. Once

⁶² Burke, 'The popularity of ancient historians', p. 140.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁴ Houston, *Literacy in early modern Europe*, *passim*.

a man left formal education, his need to use Latin on a daily basis lessened, as daily life was conducted in the vernacular; vernacular editions thus represented an easier way to consume the classics, more similar to the daily practices of most people. Moreover, there are other reasons why vernacular editions might be preferable, even among an audience more than capable of reading in Latin or Greek: reasons of status or fashion, reasons to do with prestige and being seen to own a culturally significant or relevant book, and the creation of national literatures.⁶⁵

In the absence of any convincing method by which to survey comprehensively the reading and reception of ancient histories, the study of the marketing of these books, and thus of the publishers' perception of their likely or intended reception, is a useful alternative. Individual case-studies of particular readers at certain moments in time can shed valuable light on the practices of extraordinary or identifiable men and women, but it is only through examining the production of these books that we can begin to generalize. Many features of the physical nature of a book are the result of decisions that would now be thought of as product design and marketing, including the content, phrasing, and layout of the title page, and the size and quality of a book. Burke's survey discusses the reputation of several ancient historians in a series of case-studies, in order to determine why certain authors enjoyed the popularity they did, or why they failed to attain greater significance. Much work has been done since then on the place of particular ancient historians in early modern Europe, but so far, less attention has been paid to the way that the reputations of individual authors were constructed by, and reflected in, the physical attributes of the books in which their works appeared.⁶⁶ The use of print technology to disseminate a particular version of history marks the point at which marketing becomes visible, as a tool for selling the new product. The appearance of a text, or edition of a text, in printed form rather than as a scribal publication, is the first time it is offered to a true mass market, and the first time a publisher has taken the risk of investing in the production of a large excess. Marketing can provide clues as to the envisaged consumers of a book: for whom was the book intended, for what purpose, and, perhaps, for people in which area? When new and different editions entered the marketplace, rather than reprints of older editions, the publishers must have intended

⁶⁵ See, for example, Freyja Cox Jensen, "‘Precious treasures made cheap’? The real cost of reading Roman history in early modern England", in Eve Patten and Jason McElligott, eds., *The perils of print culture* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 35–50.

⁶⁶ To name but a few studies: Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Polybius' reappearance in western Europe', in Olivier Reverdin, ed., *Polybe: entretiens sur l'antiquité classique XX* (Geneva, 1974), pp. 347–72; Marianne Pade, *The reception of Plutarch's Lives in fifteenth-century Italy* (2 vols., Copenhagen, 2007); Fred Schurink, 'Print, patronage, and occasion: translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* in Tudor England', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 38 (2008), pp. 86–101; Fred Schurink, 'War, what is it good for? Sixteenth-century English translations of ancient Roman texts on warfare', in B. Hosington and S. Barker, *Renaissance cultural crossroads: translation, print and culture in Britain, 1473–1640* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 121–38.

something different, either in terms of product, or in terms of market, otherwise there would be no reason to invest extra money in the production of something new; claims to novelty, either truthful or disingenuous, were used to market these editions more effectively. A study of when new editions of the works of the ancient historians enter the marketplace therefore seems likely to offer an insight into changing patterns of use, or taste, in a more detailed way.

The combination of works in multi-authored books, and their advertisement – or not – on the title page is of significance here, as is the selection of episodes from particular authors' histories. Some editions of Diodorus selected the Trojan War for presentation in the book, others the life of Alexander, but the title pages did not always make it clear precisely what was included. Livy's history was often published with Florus's epitome of that work, for example, but editions of Florus's epitome were usually advertised using Livy's name, even when Livy's text was not contained in the book.⁶⁷ Livy's marketing potential was therefore clearly far greater than that of Florus, to the extent that publishers misled customers about the content of the product being sold. Editions of Eutropius that were enlarged and continued by Diaconus and then by Sagax were printed with Eutropius's name on the title page in varying degrees of prominence.⁶⁸ Readers who read the text within would therefore consume the work of Eutropius, but the book had sometimes been marketed with only minimal reference to that fundamental source. What people thought they were buying, or what publishers and printers chose to tell people they were buying, is therefore not always identical with the real nature of the books; it is something this survey does not capture, but which would profit from further investigation.

Burke's survey of the popularity of ancient historians includes the authors published most frequently during the early modern period, as they appeared in his sources. The USTC reveals new patterns of popularity for the authors in Burke's study; it is therefore reasonable to infer that there are other authors equally worthy of consideration, who may have been printed more often than Dio or Polybius, for example. Other ancient historians were printed and read in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and their significance, numerically at least, will only become apparent if they are compared with the classical historians of Greece and Rome Burke chose for his study. Authors

⁶⁷ For example, *Titus Liuius Vnd Lucius Florus Von Ankufft vnnnd Vrsprung des R[oe]mischen Reichs, Jetzund auff daß neue auß dem Latein verteutsch* (Strasbourg, 1587), USTC 698337. The text is Florus's *Epitome*, yet Livy is credited as 'first author' on the title page.

⁶⁸ For example, *Chronologia historiae miscellae a Paulo aquilegiensi diacono primum collectae, post etiam à landulpho sagaci auctae productaeque ad imperium leonis IIII. id est, annum Christi dCCCvi. Libri XXIII. In quibus praeter eutropii, flori et aliorum historias* (Basel, 1569), USTC 663514; *De gestis langobardorum libri VI eutropii insigne volumen quo Romana historia uniuersa describitur, ex diversorum authorum monumentis collecta additae sunt Graecorum imperatorum vitae de rebus in oriente & Constantinopoli, persia, arabiaque gestis* (Basel, 1532), USTC 654914; *De gestis Romanorum libri octo ad Eutropii historiam additi* (Paris, 1531), USTC 203470

such as Appian, Aurelius Victor, and Ammianus Marcellinus also wrote the history of ancient Rome, to name but three among many.

A larger survey is therefore required in order to reach an accurate, global picture of the publishing of ancient histories in early modern Europe. A re-evaluation of the kinds of authors included may also reveal additional, nuanced insights for our understanding of early modern engagement with the ancient past. The definition of ‘history’ has, to some extent, dictated the authors selected for Burke’s study, yet the precise nature of such a definition is inherently subjective. Strictly speaking, according to the definitions used in the ancient world in which they were produced, not all the texts are histories, and not all the authors are historians. History, in the narrowest sense, charted the changes in states and constitutions over long swathes of time, as in the works of Tacitus and Livy. Caesar, on the other hand, wrote *commentarii*, precise records of military campaigns prepared from his field notes by the commander in charge.⁶⁹ Plutarch and Suetonius wrote biographies, accounts of the lives of prominent men with a strong moral element often taking the place of historical details.

An early modern definition of ‘history’ was rather broader than the one understood in the ancient world, and wider, too, than the academic understanding of the term today. Any writings about the past that told the stories of the deeds of men as part of an inquiry into the real or truthful nature of things could count as ‘history’ in the early modern world.⁷⁰ The distinction between ‘literature’, in modern terms, and history, was far from clear, and history could encompass many forms of writing. Burke thus counted Plutarch, Suetonius, and Caesar among the ancient historians; after all, much can be learned from their texts about ancient Greece and Rome. Much can also be learned from a more ‘literary’ text like Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, which presents for his readers the constitutional struggle between Caesar and Pompey; epic poetry it may be, but it is historical writing, too. If Valerius Maximus is included among the historians, then Aulus Gellius, another commonplacener, perhaps deserves a place there too? I have chosen not to count him among the historians, since his *Attic nights* covers a far wider range of topics than the *Words and deeds* of Valerius Maximus, which focuses on the actions and words of prominent historical figures, but others might choose to include Gellius, and maybe also Pliny the Younger, or indeed the Elder. And since Livy’s history contains some elements of the mythic, it therefore seems reasonable to consider the works of Dares and Dictys as qualitatively similar works.⁷¹

The ‘ancient historians’ could therefore be taken to be all those whose works aimed primarily to provide their readers with historical information about ancient Greece or Rome, whatever form that work might take. The difficulty

⁶⁹ Charles W. Fornara, *The nature of history in ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley, CA, and London, 1983), pp. 181–2.

⁷⁰ Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin literature: a history* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1994), pp. 441–3; see also Grafton, *What was history?*; Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi, eds., *Historia: empiricism and erudition in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

⁷¹ I have counted them together, as they were often published with one another.

Table 8 *Number of books of more ancient 'historians', 1450–1599*

Sallust	427
Livy	363
Plutarch	330
Valerius	294
Josephus	271
Caesar	265
Suetonius	209
Florus	169
Justin	152
Tacitus	149
Lucan	135
Xenophon	133
Nepos	115
Diogenes Laertius	106
Aurelius Victor	105
Curtius	102
Appian	99
Thucydides	67
Herodotus	63
Herodian	57
Diodorus	56
Eutropius	52
Dares and Dictys	52
Cassius Dio	52
Polybius	48
Festus (Sextus Rufus)	38
Dionysius of Halicarnassus	33
Velleius Paterculus	19
Procopius	19
Ammianus Marcellinus	16

in defining the limits of a larger, more inclusive study then becomes a matter of periodicity: how late in antiquity should we look for our authors and their subject matter? And an appreciation of the generic differences between the various works, in combination with a broader survey of their popularity, would allow a more subtle interrogation of the tastes of early modern readers: how did people like their history?

I have suggested in [Table 8](#) an expanded list of ancient historians, with their relative popularities, to 1600. The finer details of their *fortuna*, and the implications thereof for our understanding of early modern history and culture, are subjects for another discussion.