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## Sailing to Nuceria: Evidence for the Date of Xenophon of Ephesus

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SAILING TO NUCERIA: EVIDENCE FOR THE DATE OF  
XENOPHON OF EPHESUS\*

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of the episode in which Habrocomes puts in to Italy at Nuceria (καταίρει ... εἰς Νουκέριον τῆς Ἰταλίας, Xen. *Eph.* 5.8.1), this article argues that Xenophon of Ephesus was writing between the late Flavian and early Antonine age, after it became known that the harbours at Pompeii and Stabiae had been destroyed in the eruption of AD 79 and before the rehabilitation of Stabiae became common knowledge.

**Introduction**

Halfway through his circuitous travels in search of his wife Anthia, who is at that moment in the clutches of a brothel-keeper at Tarentum, Habrocomes, the hero of the novel by Xenophon of Ephesus, crosses from Sicily to the coast of Italy (Xen. *Eph.* 5.8.1):

καὶ ἡ μὲν ἐθεραπεύετο ὡς νοσοῦσα παρὰ τῷ πορνοβοσκῷ, ὃ δὲ Ἄβροκόμης ἀπὸ τῆς Σικελίας ἐπαναχθεὶς καταίρει μὲν εἰς Νουκέριον τῆς Ἰταλίας, ἀπορία δὲ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἀμηχανῶν ὅ τι ποιήσει, τὰ μὲν πρῶτα περιήει τὴν Ἀνθίαν ζητῶν

While Anthia, pretending to be ill, was being nursed at the brothel-keeper's premises, Habrocomes, setting sail from Sicily, puts in at

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\* This article is not about exile *per se*, but since the hero of Xenophon's novel must have felt himself exiled from his beloved as he roamed the Mediterranean in search of her, I hope that it bears some tangential relationship to one of the major topics for which Jo-Marie Claassen has become renowned in her exemplary career of commitment to teaching and scholarship. In executing this project, I have benefitted from the bibliographical assistance of Bettina Bergmann, Rob Cioffi and Christopher Jones, acute suggestions by David Elmer, the cartographical skills of Scott Walker, and, most especially, the archaeological expertise and scholarly generosity of Ferdinando De Simone, to all of whom I am most grateful.

Nuceria in Italy; not knowing what to do to supply his needs, he went initially in search of Anthia.

After failing to find Anthia in Nuceria, Habrocomes 'hired himself out to some stoneworkers' (αὐτὸν ἀπεμίσθωσε τοῖς τοὺς λίθους ἐργαζομένοις, 5.8.2). This can only mean labour in a quarry, which he found desperately hard work (5.8.3):

καὶ ἦν αὐτῷ τὸ ἔργον ἐπίπονον· οὐ γὰρ συνείθιστο τὸ σῶμα οὐδ' ὀλίγον (O'Sullivan: αὐτὸν F) ὑποβάλλειν ἔργοις εὐτόνοις ἢ σκληροῖς

The work was a great strain for him, for his body was not at all accustomed to undergo such strenuous and demanding labours.

Indeed, the toil was so unbearable that Habrocomes eventually decided to take a ship back to Ephesus (5.10.1):

ὁ δὲ Ἄβροκόμης τὰ μὲν πρῶτα ἐπιπόνως ἐν τῷ Νουκερίῳ εἰργάζετο, τελευταῖον δὲ οὐκέτι φέρων τοὺς πόνους διέγνω νεῶς ἐπιβὰς εἰς Ἔφεσον ἀνάγεσθαι

At first Habrocomes toiled in Nuceria under tremendous strain, but eventually, unable to bear the toil any longer, he decided to board a ship and sail to Ephesus.

So he went down to the sea by night (mode of transport unspecified) and took the first boat out – which took him not to Ephesus, but back to Sicily.

#### A textual crux

Habrocomes' port of entry is conjectural: at 5.8.1 the sole manuscript, the thirteenth-century Codex Florentinus Laurentianus Conv. Soppr. 627, reads μουκέριον, and at 5.10.1 μουκερίῳ. The alterations to Νουκέριον and Νουκερίῳ, involving a very easy change, date to the *editio princeps* and are attributed to Antonio Maria Salvini. The feminine forms Νουκερίαν and (τῆ) Νουκερίῳ were advocated by Richard François Philippe Brunck in the second half of the eighteenth century (Cod. Mus. Brit. Add. 10378), but modern editors print Νουκέριον and Νουκερίῳ.<sup>1</sup> A place-name is required (a specialized category particularly liable to textual corruption by

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the transmission, see O'Sullivan 2005:V-XVII.

later copyists with insufficient geographical knowledge), and nothing more appropriate suggests itself. At first sight, however, Νουκέριον is not appropriate either: it is presumably to be identified with one of the sites called Nuceria in ancient Italy, none of which lies on the coast. While we do not know the sources of Xenophon's geographical knowledge, and some of his characters take unorthodox routes, the name Νουκέριον is too unusual to be a casual citation by an author choosing a famous city at random; its specificity must be meaningful.<sup>2</sup> One might try to wriggle out of the geographical difficulty by falling back on the statement in the *Suda*, derived from the historian Hesychius of Miletus (fifth or sixth century AD), that Xenophon's novel originally contained ten books, and argue that incongruities in the text are to be attributed to an inexpert epitomizer who created the five-book version that has survived.<sup>3</sup> There are, however, strong reasons to reject the theory that what we have is an epitome of the original, and in any case it would seem bizarre for an epitomator to conflate a disembarkation at a port and an onward journey overland, unless his command of Greek were extremely tenuous. We should therefore attempt to make sense of the text that has come down to us, including the places where the geography is hard to trace. This requires us to accept Νουκέριον and Νουκερίω as emendations to the text, and in what follows I shall assume that that is what Xenophon wrote.

The key factor in the identification of Νουκέριον has to be accessibility by boat, since the verb that Xenophon uses of Habrocomes' arrival, καταίρω, is properly used of ships putting in to port.<sup>4</sup> Xenophon uses this verb on four other occasions, alternating between the aorist and the historic present: 3.9.1 (of the robbers who have abducted Anthia at Tarsus): καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀνύσαντες ἡμέραις οὐκ ὀλίγαις τὸν πλοῦν κατήραν εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν (Pursuing their voyage, after several days they put in at Alexandria); 5.9.3 (Hippochoos, the robber baron, in search of Habrocomes): καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐπαναχθεὶς κατήρεν εἰς Ἰταλίαν (Setting sail, he

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<sup>2</sup> On Xenophon's knowledge of Egyptian geography (somewhat grudgingly described as 'pas absolument d'un fantaisiste'), and the demands of the plot in his portrayal of his characters' travels, see Henne 1936 (quotation from p. 106). Less charitably, for his ignorance of Upper Egypt he is castigated as a 'piètre géographe' by Schwartz 1985:201. The accuracy of his portrayal of Lower Egypt is emphasized by Griffiths 1978:428-31. On the plausibility of most of the places in Sicily and Italy in which the action is located, see Sartori 1985:171-88.

<sup>3</sup> *Suidae Lexicon* 3.495 ed. Adler. For a summary of the arguments for and against the view that the surviving text is an epitome, see Ruiz-Montero 1994:1094-96; O'Sullivan 1995:100-39.

<sup>4</sup> LSJ s.v. 2. The specificity of the verb does not seem to have been taken into account in previous scholarship debating the location of Νουκέριον.

put in at Italy’); 5.11.2 (Hippochoos, *en route* from Italy to Ephesus with Anthia): καὶ διανύσας μάλα ἀσμένως τὸν πλοῦν οὐ πολλαῖς ἡμέραις εἰς Ῥόδον **καταίρει** νυκτὸς ἔτι (‘Accomplishing the voyage with great satisfaction, in a few days he put in at Rhodes while it was still night’); 5.15.1 (Habrocomes and Anthia, finally united, sail with Hippochoos from Rhodes to Ephesus): καὶ ἡμέραις ὀλίγαις διανύσαντες τὸν πλοῦν **κατήραν** εἰς Ἐφεσον (‘In a few days, accomplishing their voyage, they put in at Ephesus’). In three of these four instances, the destination is a city with a harbour (Alexandria, Rhodes and Ephesus); in the fourth instance, it is a country (Italy), a harbour being implied. We should therefore assume that when Xenophon says that Habrocomes ‘put in at Nuceria’, that is what he means, however inexplicable it may seem.

Two, three, four, or conceivably five communities compete for identification as Xenophon’s (conjectural) Νουκέριον.<sup>5</sup> Nuceria in Umbria lies in the middle of the Apennines and is therefore an impossible destination for someone sailing from Sicily.<sup>6</sup> Luceria in Apulia (modern Lucera), regularly rendered Λουκαρία or Λουκερία in Greek, is called Νουκερία Ἀπουλῶν at Ptol. 3.1.72 and Νουκερία at App. BC 2.151;<sup>7</sup> it could therefore conceivably come into play, but it lies more than fifty kilometres from the Adriatic as the crow flies, which puts it out of the question. Another Nuceria, on the Via Aemilia, is believed to be a chimaera.<sup>8</sup> Between the other two candidates, Philistus (c. 430-356/5) mentions a Νουκρία (Jacoby, *FGH* 556 F 43), nowadays identified as Nocera Terinese, in Calabria, situated on a hillside approximately five kilometres from the mouth of the R. Savuto at the northern end of the Gulf of St Eufemia. Coin legends testify to the ethnic Νουκρίνων; the harbour itself was called Terina. But, even though its location in a region suitable for quarrying stone could accommodate the demands of the plot, the place was very obscure and there seems no reason for Xenophon to choose somewhere that is likely to have meant nothing to his readers. Admittedly, Nocera Terinese is closer to Taormina (ancient Tauromenium) in Sicily, where Habrocomes embarked, than the remaining candidate, Nuceria Alfaterna in the hinterland of the Bay of Naples, but proximity does not drive the routes followed by the characters in Xenophon’s novel, and in

<sup>5</sup> For a brief summary, see Ruiz-Montero 1994:1123.

<sup>6</sup> *RE* 17.1.1237-38 s.v. Nuceria 4 (H. Philipp).

<sup>7</sup> *Bibliografia Topografica della Colonizzazione Greca in Italia e nelle Isole Tirreniche* 9.261-69 s.v. Lucera (E. Lippolis & M. Mazzei).

<sup>8</sup> Ptol. 3.1.42, *RE* 17.1.1237 s.v. Nuceria 3 (H. Philipp). Ptolemy’s credibility is questioned at *KIP* 4.185 (G. R[adke]).

this case Habrocomes seems to be acting on a mere hunch, going off to look for the needle of Anthia in the haystack of Italy.<sup>9</sup>

Nuceria Alfaterna, identified with modern Nocera Superiore, lies on the R. Sarno in the coastal plain east of the Bay of Naples (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup>

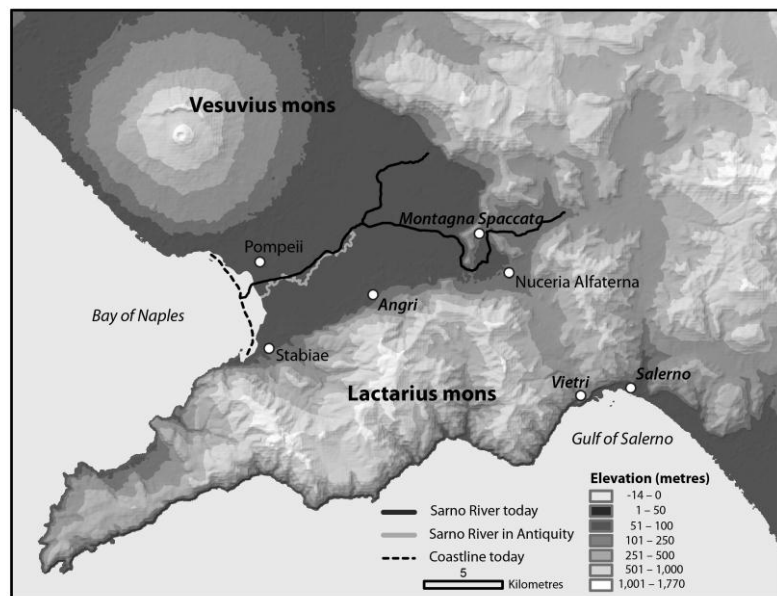


Fig. 1: Campania between Mount Vesuvius and the Gulf of Salerno.  
Map: Scott Walker.

It was a strategically important city on the inland route to Magna Graecia, commanding the pass behind the range of Mons Lactarius (the modern Monti Lattari) leading to the gulf of Salerno. Archaeological excavations have uncovered remnants of a substantial urban site with a long history from the archaic period to Late Antiquity. It is marked on the Tabula Peutingeriana as twelve Roman miles distant from the coast of the Bay and

<sup>9</sup> Arguments for identifying Νουκέρτιον as Nocera Terinese, based on the proximity of stone suitable for quarrying and accessibility to Sicily, are put forward by Scarcella 1977:80-81.

<sup>10</sup> For major treatments, in chronological order, see Beloch 1890:239-47; *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica*, Suppl. 1970 (1973) 547-48 s.v. Nocera Superiore (B. d'Agostino); Fresa & Fresa 1974; *Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (1976) 634 s.v. Nuceria Alfaterna (L. Richardson, Jr.); De Caro & Greco 1993:135-42; Pecoraro 1994; Pucci 2006.

eight miles from Salerno;<sup>11</sup> but in Antiquity it was more immediately connected to the Bay, because the route over the coastal plain was easier, whereas the pass from Salerno rose to an elevation of well over 150 metres.<sup>12</sup> Nuceria Alfaterna also lies close to a quarry, *Montagna Spaccata* (otherwise known as *Passo di Annibale*), three kilometres to the north, which could have provided the back-breaking labour that ultimately drove Habrocomes back to Sicily.<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that Xenophon, who habitually names places of arrival and departure, does not say where Habrocomes caught the boat for his return voyage (5.10.2):

ὁ μὲν νύκτωρ κατελθὼν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ἐπιφθάνει πλοίῳ ἀναγομένῳ  
καὶ ἐπιβὰς ἔπλει τὴν ἐπὶ Σικελίαν πάλιν

Coming down to the sea by night, he boarded the first ship he found that was ready to depart, and he sailed to Sicily again.

The omission of Habrocomes' place of embarkation requires explanation, as does his point of entry, since if the hinterland of the Bay of Naples was his original destination, it would seem much more natural for him to have put in at either Pompeii or Stabiae, both of which had harbours, and proceed overland from there.

#### A changing landscape

The fact that Xenophon elides Pompeii and Stabiae from his narrative suggests that these harbours were out of commission in his day. A plausible reason for this is their disappearance during the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, when the entire area was buried by as much as four metres of volcanic deposits and the coastline was pushed westwards into the Bay of Naples by more than a kilometre (see fig. 1). Pompeii's harbour, which was probably located in the estuary of the R. Sarno or just north of its mouth, disappeared.<sup>14</sup> At Stabiae, the radical change to the landscape is even more dramatically visible than at Pompeii, in that the villas that originally stood on the cliff overlooking the sea now overlook the modern town of Castellammare di Stabia instead; the old coastline at Stabiae, the

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<sup>11</sup> Reproduced at Fresa & Fresa 1974:44 fig. 14; De Caro & Greco 1993:127; Russo 1998:85 fig. 11.

<sup>12</sup> See fig. 1 and, for contours marked in colour, *Barrington Atlas*, Map 44.

<sup>13</sup> Adduced by Sartori 1985:188 as further support for his arguments in favour of identifying Nuceria Alfaterna as Xenophon's *Νουκέριον* (1985:181-85).

<sup>14</sup> Stefani & Di Maio 2003:169; De Carolis & Patricelli 2003:49-52.

harbour, and the road to Nuceria are now buried deep at the foot of the cliff, hundreds of metres from the modern waterfront.<sup>15</sup>

The Sarno, rising on the slopes immediately north of Nuceria, was vital to the economic life of the region.<sup>16</sup> In modern times, land-reclamation schemes have diverted some of its tributaries and its water has been drawn off for irrigation, but in Antiquity, while almost certainly never deep enough for sea-going vessels, it had a capacity and regular flow that made it navigable by shallow craft, as is amply attested by its vivid depiction on Pompeian wall-paintings, personified as a recumbent deity accompanied by flat-bottomed boats and amphorae.<sup>17</sup> Samples taken from recent stratigraphical drilling have made it possible to map the course of the river before the eruption, showing that it debouched into the bay some two kilometres south of Pompeii (fig. 1).<sup>18</sup> When the volcanic deposits suddenly choked the riverbed, the water, with no means of egress, must have spread over the surface where the mouth used to be, until the river cut a new channel to the coast. The disappearance of the riverbed in its lower reaches will have greatly extended the wetlands at Pompeii, which were famous for their fertility and their adjacent salt-works (Colum. 10.135-36). This marsh probably enabled merchandise to be floated on barges across the plain to the Sarno, whence it could be transported onward to Nuceria, as before.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore possible that Habrocomes could have disembarked from a sea-going vessel into a flat-bottomed craft to negotiate the swamps and then proceed directly up the Sarno to Nuceria, except that Xenophon's phrase, *καταίρει ... εἰς Νουκέριον*, implies that Nuceria was the immediate goal of the sea-borne voyage; the wording cannot plausibly accommodate a two-stage journey, the latter phase of which was accomplished by barge.

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<sup>15</sup> On the pre- and post-eruption topography of Stabiae, Beloch 1890:248-51 is still valuable. See also Miniero 1988 and, for more precise data achieved by recent stratigraphic drilling, Di Maio & Pagano 2003 (with an especially helpful map of the old and new coastline at fig. 8).

<sup>16</sup> For a succinct account of the importance of the river, see De Carolis & Patricelli 2003:47-49.

<sup>17</sup> Most famously the depiction in the 'House of the Sarno Lararium', I.14.7: Fröhlich 1991:262-63 (= catalogue number L33) and pl. 6, De Carolis & Patricelli 2003:47-48 and figs. 37-38.

<sup>18</sup> Vogel, Märker & Seiler 2011: esp. figs. 5A and 6B.

<sup>19</sup> The problem of maritime access to the Sarno in the decades immediately following the eruption has received almost no scholarly discussion. For this reconstruction of the effect of the eruption on the river channel, see Esposito 1994:116 and fig. 1.



There is, however, another explanation for Habrocomes' point of disembarkation: the alignment of successive phases of centuriation between Nuceria and the coast before the eruption shows that, even before AD 79, the entire territory was controlled by Nuceria.<sup>20</sup> The close identification of an ancient city with its larger territory is famously illustrated by a decree at Pergamon recording the ceremonial reception of Attalus III, in which the king's arrival at the edge of the χώρα of the city and at the actual πόλις are described in the same terms.<sup>21</sup> In a general sense, therefore, travellers putting in at the harbours of Pompeii or Stabiae could *also* have been said to be entering Nuceria, in whose territory these cities lay. But, once both harbours had disappeared, ships making landfall along this coast, whether in the marshes that flooded the plain after the eruption or at the new mouth where the Sarno forced its way to the coast, could *only* have been said to be entering Nuceria; there was nowhere else for them to go.

If Nuceria as the point of disembarkation means the territory of Nuceria, rather than Nuceria Alfaterna itself, then the quarries where Habrocomes laboured need not be specifically associated with Montagna Spaccata (mentioned above), but could also refer more generally to quarrying in the area, which has recently been discovered to have yielded volcanic scoria ('cruma di lava', lava foam) that was widely used in buildings at Rome in the second and third centuries, including the Markets of Trajan and the Pantheon.<sup>22</sup> Supposing that the provenance of this material was well known in Xenophon's day, the novelistic trope of Habrocomes' hard labour among the stoneworkers may have had a contemporary resonance.

Efforts to rehabilitate the area devastated by Vesuvius began almost immediately after the eruption. It is not clear how quickly the road between Pompeii and Nuceria was rebuilt, although it has been argued from the presence of a roadway discovered approximately one metre above the pre-79 road that emergency repairs were undertaken quite soon;<sup>23</sup> nevertheless, major reconstruction was probably not completed until the reign of Hadrian, which is when Stabiae also seems to have recovered. (Statius' optimistic reference to *Stabiae ... renatae* in the early

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<sup>20</sup> Soricelli 2002:125-27, with pl. V fig. 1 (a colour-coded map of centuriation in the Sarno plain, on which the pre-eruption phases, clearly picked out in red and orange, align with the orientation of Nuceria Alfaterna and the routes leading out of it).

<sup>21</sup> OGIS 332, Robert 1984:479-81 = 1987:467-69.

<sup>22</sup> Lancaster *et al.* 2011.

<sup>23</sup> de' Spagnolis Conticello 1994:53, 78, 94-96.

nineties should perhaps be attributed to the rhetorical imperative demanded by the context, a *suasoria* urging his wife to retire with him to Naples.)<sup>24</sup> The eleventh milestone from the road between Stabiae and Nuceria, found near the cathedral at Castellammare di Stabia in 1879, testifies that by AD 121 under Hadrian the road had been re-opened.<sup>25</sup> Another milestone, also dated by Hadrian's titulature to 120/1, but lacking a distance-marker, was found in 1950 at Angri, approximately halfway between Nocera Superiore and Castellammare di Stabia.<sup>26</sup> The rebuilding of this road suggests that by AD 121 port facilities had been re-established at Stabiae, and it was possible for ships to offload their cargo for onward transport inland.<sup>27</sup>

Endorsement, albeit chronologically less precise, for the second-century revitalization of Stabiae as a port comes from a touching funerary epigram for C. Longinius Proculus, who drowned at Stabiae a fortnight before his fifth birthday.<sup>28</sup> His father, C. Longinius Priscus, was trierarch of the *classis praetoria Misenensis*, which appears to have had a *statio* at Stabiae from the second half of the first century onwards; Proculus' epitaph is to be assigned to the first half of the second century on the basis of the epithet *praetoria*, which was acquired by the *classis Misenensis* no earlier than AD 100.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Galen in the second half of the second century mentions a man suffering from an illness who undertook a four-day voyage from Rome to 'Tabiae' (Ταβία) to take advantage of the wholesome properties of the milk produced by herds on Mons Lactarius, the range separating the Sarno plain from the Gulf of Salerno; clearly, Stabiae is where the ailing man disembarked.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stat. *Silu.* 3.5.95-104: *nec desunt uariae circa oblectamina uitae | siue uaporiferas, blandissima litora, Baias | enthea fatidicae seu uisere tecta Sibyllae | dulce sit ... Stabiasque renatas.*

<sup>25</sup> CIL 10.6939: XI | Imp(erator) Caes[a]r | diui Traia[ni] | Parthici [f(ilius)] | diui Nerua[e] n(epos) | Traianu[s] | Hadrianus | Augustus | pontif(ex) maximus | trib(unicia) pot(estate) V co(n)s(ul) III | fecit; Miniero 1988:244, 265; Russo 1998:27.

<sup>26</sup> Identical to CIL 10.6939 (see previous note), except for the absence of XI at the beginning, and slight variation in the abbreviations: see Varone 1965-1984:60, with a photograph at fig. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Varone 1965-1984:77-78; Russo 1998:27.

<sup>28</sup> CIL 10.8131 = CLE 428 = AE 2001, 786. The prose dedication reads: C(aius) Longinius Priscus pater | trierarc(hus) cl(assis) pr(aetoriae) Mis(enensis) et | Licinia Procilla mater | filio dulcissimo.

<sup>29</sup> Parma 2002:186-87.

<sup>30</sup> *De methodo medendi* 5.12 = 363-65 Kuhn. Since Ταβία occurs six times in this passage, the error of nomenclature may be Galen's own, rather than deriving from

Despite this evidence for the rehabilitation of Stabiae, we should not assume that its revival instantly became common knowledge throughout the Mediterranean world; the notion that the territory of Nuceria provided landfall for vessels sailing into the Bay of Naples immediately south of Vesuvius may have persisted for some time after Stabiae's renaissance.<sup>31</sup> It therefore seems safe to assume that Xenophon was writing within a few decades of AD 79, when the harbours at Pompeii and Stabiae had disappeared, along with the towns themselves, and not many decades after the road between Stabiae and Nuceria Alfaterna was rebuilt in AD 121 and a new harbour at Stabiae was able to receive sea-going vessels. During the intervening period, Nuceria will have been regarded as the default destination for anyone sailing in to the Bay of Naples south of Vesuvius.

### A timeless plot

Xenophon's novel is notoriously difficult to date, being characterized by a striking 'historical vagueness'.<sup>32</sup> By contrast with Chariton, for example, who specifically sets his novel in the late fifth century, Xenophon seems to aim for a timeless setting in a Greek world from which Roman influence is virtually eradicated. Hence any internal clues as to the date of composition are hard to identify. The implications of Habrocomes' voyage to Nuceria, however, narrow the chronological range hitherto canvassed.<sup>33</sup> First, they demonstrate that the conventional *terminus post quem* of 30 BC is too early. This date is based on several references to 'the ruler of Egypt' (in the non-

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the instability of toponyms in the transmission of manuscripts, as illustrated by the corruption of Νουκέρτιον into μουκέρτιον in Xenophon's novel.

<sup>31</sup> Traces of centuriation between the pre-AD 79 coastline and the modern coast align with traces on both sides of the road between Stabiae and Nuceria, and have therefore been associated with the efforts to rehabilitate the area under Hadrian; see Soricelli 2002:127-28, with pl. V fig. 1 (the post-eruption centuriation is picked out in green).

<sup>32</sup> Hägg 1971:55.

<sup>33</sup> For a summary of approaches to the dating of the novel, see Ruiz-Montero 1994:1091-94. The range of probability is narrowed to *c.* AD 100-170 at *RE* 9A.2086-87 s.v. Xenophon von Ephesos (H. Gärtner). On the basis of similarities with the narrative style, plot, characterization and motifs found in other forms of prose fiction, including surviving papyrus fragments – and Latin redactions – of the 'Troy romances' of Dictys and Dares from the late second or early third century, the *Ephesiaca* is dated after AD 175 by Tilg 2010:91-92. By his own admission, these are 'soft' criteria adduced to give a 'sense of orientation' (Tilg 2010:92); an hypothesis based on Habrocomes' voyage to Nuceria is scarcely 'hard fact', but perhaps counters the argument from literary correspondences.

technical locution ὁ ἄρχων τῆς Αἰγύπτου, or variants thereof),<sup>34</sup> which would most naturally mean the Prefect; if one of the Ptolemaic monarchs were meant, the term βασιλεύς would be more natural.<sup>35</sup> The position of *praefectus Aegypti* was established by Augustus in 30 BC. The duties and sphere of authority associated with the office correspond closely to those of ὁ ἄρχων τῆς Αἰγύπτου in the novel, and it therefore supplies a rare whiff of Roman atmosphere in the work.<sup>36</sup> The inferences to be drawn from Habrocomes' arrival at Nuceria, however, suggest that, when the novel was composed, the Prefect had already been a fixture in Egypt for more than a century; a date between AD 79 and the mid-second century, perfectly consistent with references to a *praefectus Aegypti*, shrinks the chronological span that a reference to that office can accommodate. The proposed chronological range also limits the scope at the other end: it has been observed that the reference to the office of *praefectus Aegypti* would no longer be current after Egypt was divided by Diocletian c. 293/294;<sup>37</sup> for a scenario involving a voyage to Nuceria to be plausible, however, that *terminus* would have to be brought forward by about 150 years.

Similarly, the chronological span consonant with supposed references to the eirenarch of Cilicia, described by Xenophon – like the *praefectus Aegypti* – in non-technical language characteristic of verse inscriptions and literary prose (προΐστημι/ἄρχω + gen.), would also be circumscribed by a voyage to Nuceria.<sup>38</sup> The position of eirenarch of Cilicia is first attested in three different sources, all to be dated c. AD 116-117: an inscription from Caria datable to the last eighteen months of the reign of Trajan, i.e. February 116 to August 117;<sup>39</sup> an inscription from Ancyra honoring a certain Latinus Alexander, who had been eirenarch by 117-118 at the

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<sup>34</sup> For a demonstration that Xenophon's wording belongs to the literary realm, in contrast to officialese (ἑπαρχος Αἰγύπτου) or colloquial usage (ἡγεμών), see Hägg 1971:32; Rife 2002:105-6.

<sup>35</sup> The attempt by O'Sullivan 1995:3-4 to deny that the Prefect of Egypt is meant is convincingly refuted by Rife 2002:104-6.

<sup>36</sup> Hägg 1971:31 maintains that the atmosphere of the novel is entirely Greek, barring the implication that Egypt is ruled by a Prefect. For a detailed comparison between the role of ὁ ἄρχων τῆς Αἰγύπτου and the duties of the historical Prefect, see Rife 2002:104-5.

<sup>37</sup> Rife 2002:106.

<sup>38</sup> For a thorough comparison of the technical terms εἰρηναρχος, εἰρηναρχης and εἰρηναρχήσας with the circumlocutions employed in verse inscriptions and classicizing prose, see Rife 2002:95-96, with the appendix of *testimonia* at 107-8.

<sup>39</sup> Paris & Holleaux 1885:346-47 no. 30 = Robert 1937:339-41 = Robert & Robert 1954:317 no. 168.

latest;<sup>40</sup> and a passage in Aelius Aristides concerning the eirenarchy at Smyrna, which had been established there some time before his native city of Hadriani became a πόλις in AD 123 and probably before Aristides was born there in 118.<sup>41</sup> These three pieces of evidence imply that the eirenarchy was well established by the reign of Hadrian. While the activities associated with the Cilician peace-keeper in Xenophon correspond closely to the sphere of operation of the eirenarch, Xenophon's wording is sufficiently loose to refer to any official whose job it was to keep the peace, and since there must have been people in charge of putting down civil unrest in Cilicia long before the position of eirenarch was created, it has been argued that the references to a peace-keeper do not help to establish a *terminus post quem*. The implications of Habrocomes' voyage to Nuceria, however, make it more likely that the office of eirenarch is envisaged, since this voyage does not accommodate a date before the later Flavian period, which is within a very few decades of the accession of Hadrian; this is precisely the period in which the office must have become established.

Another historical reference has been seen in the episode where Habrocomes is captured by ποιμένες in the Nile delta (3.12). These brigands are reminiscent of the βουκόλοι, outlaw shepherds operating in the delta, who are first mentioned in the historical record for having revolted against Roman authority in AD 171 (Dio 72.4). This incident is believed to have informed an episode in Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon* 3.9, from which it has been inferred that the surviving text of the *Ephesiaca*, whether Xenophon's original or the work of an epitomator, must be influenced by Achilles Tatius and therefore postdate his novel.<sup>42</sup> But it has recently been shown that the βουκόλοι are a feature of earlier Egyptian Demotic literature, so that cross-fertilization of Egyptian and Greek fiction may have occurred as early as the Hellenistic period.<sup>43</sup> In that case, we need not suppose that Xenophon's ποιμένες are modelled upon the βουκόλοι of Achilles Tatius; both may derive from a much older tradition. Habrocomes' abduction by the ποιμένες therefore does not provide evidence for the date of Xenophon relative to that of Achilles Tatius, and the episode is perfectly compatible with the chronological span to be inferred from the hero's subsequent voyage to Nuceria.

A *terminus post quem* of AD 79 also has implications for the relative chronology of the novels by Xenophon and Chariton. It seems likely that

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<sup>40</sup> SEG 6.57 = IGRRP 3:208.

<sup>41</sup> Aristid. Or. 50(26).72-73.

<sup>42</sup> Schwartz 1985:203.

<sup>43</sup> Rutherford 2000.

at *Sat.* 1.134, *his mane edictum, post prandia Callirhoen do*, Persius is referring to Chariton.<sup>44</sup> Given, therefore, that Persius died in AD 62, Chariton cannot have written any later than the reign of Nero, whereas Xenophon cannot have written before the reign of Titus at the very earliest. Similarities between the novels of Xenophon and Chariton will therefore have to be attributed to the influence of Chariton upon Xenophon, rather than the other way round.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

The eruption of Vesuvius and the re-building of the road between Stabiae and Nuceria fix theoretical limits for dating Xenophon's novel. But we also have to allow for the effects of natural disasters and subsequent recovery efforts to become common knowledge; that would not have happened instantly in the ancient world, although doubtless the horror-story of the eruption travelled fast, even in a world before tragedies could be witnessed in 'real time' on TV and the internet. If Xenophon could treat Nuceria as a destination for sea-going vessels, he must have been writing long enough after the eruption of Vesuvius for this to have become a general assumption, so probably no earlier than the latter years of the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96). Similarly, it would presumably have taken a while for it to become known that Stabiae had been re-equipped with a harbour and a route inland across the Sarno plain. So we should allow that Xenophon could still have envisaged his hero sailing to Nuceria later in the reign of Hadrian (117-138) or even some years into the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161). At the same time, it seems unlikely that he was writing much later than that, since, if he were deliberately projecting his novel into the past, a reference to sailing to Nuceria would be a very oblique signal to his readers to place the action in the late first or early second century. Habrocomes' voyage to Nuceria seems most likely to be an unself-conscious contemporary reference on the part of Xenophon, an author of the late first century AD or the first half of the second.

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<sup>44</sup> See the evaluations by Tilg 2010:69-78; Henrichs 2011:311.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed attempt to demonstrate that Xenophon pre-dated Chariton, see O'Sullivan 1995:145-69, eloquently refuted by Tilg 2010:85-92.

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