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 Edited by Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola
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CAROLYN DEWALD AND JOHN MARINCOLA

Introduction

Few historians, indeed few writers, of any era have been subjected to such widely divergent evaluations as Herodotus of Halicarnassus. Throughout antiquity we can detect two schools of thought about him, one seeing him as the ‘father of history’, the first person to put together an accurate account of the past and to infuse it with meaning by giving causes, consequences, and the intentions of the participants. But there was also a persistent strain of criticism that took Herodotus to task for his stories of the fabulous and the improbable, for the accuracy of his reports of non-Greek lands, and for his portrayal of a quarrelsome and disunited Greek force. Herodotus continued to be read, however, because of the beauty of his style, his obvious gifts as a narrator, and because enough people saw in him an appropriate predecessor for what they themselves were trying to achieve.

Like Herodotus’ *Histories*, this *Companion* is a product of its time and place. The ways in which scholars view Herodotus today have arisen from dependence on, but also debate with, those who have preceded them. In this Introduction, we first survey briefly the various strains of Herodotean scholarship (with special emphasis on more recent trends), and then discuss the various contributions to this volume, trying to situate the work to be found here in the larger context of contemporary Herodotean studies.

I

Although the nineteenth century, that great period of the systematic study of antiquity, produced important work on Herodotus, it is no exaggeration to say that the modern study of Herodotus depends directly and indirectly on one man, the great German scholar Felix Jacoby (1876–1959). His 1913 ‘article’ on Herodotus for the massive German encyclopedia known as Pauly-Wissowa comprised 316 closely-printed columns, in which he treated every aspect of Herodotus: his style, his dialect, his sources, the structure and content of his work, the manuscript tradition, and the influence he had on later

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antiquity. It is impossible to do justice to this landmark of scholarship, but suffice it to say that Jacoby illuminated every aspect of Herodotus that he touched, even if one might disagree with some of his individual interpretations. After Jacoby, several issues seem to have dominated much of the scholarship on Herodotus.

Of particular interest was the question of how Herodotus had come to write this work, the first Greek history, and whether the work could be viewed as an artistic whole. Jacoby argued that Herodotus had started out in the same tradition as his predecessor, Hecataeus of Miletus (born c. 560/550 BCE), who wrote works (now lost) entitled *Genealogies*, which sought to bring order to the various and at times conflicting Greek genealogies, and *Circuit of the Earth*, in which Hecataeus described the coastal areas of the Mediterranean, and the lands, climates, customs, and marvels of the individual settlements. It was this tradition of Ionian inquiry that initially shaped Herodotus' investigations. What changed Herodotus into an historian, argued Jacoby, was above all the Persian Wars, because through them Herodotus saw Persia as a connecting thread binding together the destinies of other lands and the Greek city-states. Just as important and influential was Athens and in particular its leading statesman in the mid-fifth century, Pericles. Jacoby believed (against some earlier scholars) that Herodotus' work was written roughly in the order we have it, that is, the Persian Wars narrative of Books 5–9 came last.

Jacoby's developmental view of Herodotus has had profound consequences, not least because he saw in Herodotus' progression from geographer and ethnographer to historian a personal evolution that was of profound importance not only for the historian himself but for the development of the entire genre of Greek historiography: indeed, Herodotus' development *was* the development of Greek historiography. For Jacoby Herodotus had no real predecessors and no real contemporaries; Hecataeus provided only a starting-point which Herodotus vastly transcended. That viewpoint has held sway for almost a century now, and only recently have some doubts about it been expressed.

The compositional question remained one of great interest for the early and mid-twentieth century, and scholars continued to debate how Herodotus came to write his history and which parts of it were written first. Jacoby's view found several adherents (who sometimes made minor changes to his schema), but other scholars argued against his developmental notion. For these scholars, Herodotus was from the beginning the historian of the Persian Wars, and it was in consequence of this initial interest that he examined the lands and customs of those nations which had been subjugated by the Persians. This debate was related to the larger question of whether

Introduction

Herodotus' history was part of a unified plan or was rather a collection of accounts, written at different times and with different aims, that were eventually 'stitched together' into a whole. This discussion (already in full swing before Jacoby) was clearly influenced by the debate then raging about the Homeric poems, where 'separatists' or 'analysts' had been arguing with 'unitarians' as to the genesis and nature of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. (Jacoby was clearly an 'analyst' as his developmental thesis indicated.)

The 'unitarian' interpretation, which argued for the essential unity of the *Histories*, was first decisively stated by Otto Regenbogen (1930), who related the individual stories within the *Histories* to the purposes of the larger whole. His work was taken up and expanded by Wolfgang Schadewaldt (1934) and then by Max Pohlenz in his *Herodot: Der erste Geschichtschreiber des Abendlandes* (1937). In the English-speaking world the unitarian viewpoint culminates in Henry Immerwahr's important and influential study *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (1966); here Immerwahr examines the structure of individual episodes and how these episodes are integrated into the entire work, arguing that the key to understanding Herodotus' intentions and view of history is to be found in its carefully articulated structure. A few years later Charles Fornara, in a short but immensely influential book, *Herodotus: An Interpretative Essay* (1971a), argued that the approaches of unitarians and analysts were complementary, not contradictory (p. 13): 'The one describes what we possess, the other attempts to explain how what we do possess could have come into the world.' Recent scholars, nonetheless, have definitely tended more towards a unitarian view of Herodotus.

Another issue with which twentieth-century scholarship was much concerned was the relationship between Herodotus and Athens. Jacoby had seen this as crucial for the historian's development, but he was careful not to make Herodotus the mouthpiece for Athens. Later scholars, however, eagerly made this leap, portraying Herodotus as a spokesman for – indeed in some cases a panegyrist of – Athens and its empire. Hermann Strasburger, however, in an influential article (Strasburger 1955) argued convincingly against these ideas, and scholars today are very reluctant to ascribe to Herodotus unalloyed praise of Athens. Here again Fornara's work played an important role, since he emphasised Herodotus' contemporary audience as the key to a proper understanding of his work: the *Histories* could not be read apart from the time in which Herodotus was actually writing – the years before the Peloponnesian War when Athens and Sparta were moving towards open conflict – and this context allowed us to see in Herodotus' work an ironic or dramatic detachment, in which the 'glories' of the Spartan and Athenian achievement in the Persian Wars had to be read against the backdrop of Athenian imperialism and the movement by the erstwhile allies towards war.

CAROLYN DEWALD AND JOHN MARINCOLA

Indeed, scholars have now come almost to the opposite view from their predecessors, namely that Herodotus is critical of Athens and his portrait of the Persian empire is meant to serve as a warning to the Athenians of the dangers of imperialism.

Jacoby's work was also influential in the matter of Herodotus' trustworthiness. The late nineteenth century had made many attacks on Herodotus' honesty and ability, and although Herodotus had his defenders, it was not until Jacoby's article that most scholars accepted the basic reliability of Herodotus' account. Jacoby saw Herodotus as an honest practitioner whose account was based on the historian's own inquiries and examination of oral sources from a wide variety of local informants (for these, and not written sources, were the basis of his account). Where Herodotus had made errors, these could be explained without impugning his good faith; he was naïve or had failed to understand what he had been told, or he was at the mercy of not always scrupulous informants. For most of the twentieth century this view held sway, and though doubts continued to be voiced about Herodotus' reliability, most scholars were content to accept Jacoby's picture of Herodotus' inquiries. The most striking challenge to this picture came with Detlev Fehling's 1971 book. Fehling focussed on Herodotus' source-citations, the numerous places where the historian reports that 'the Persians say' this or 'the Spartans say' that, and he attempted to show that these remarks followed predictable and unvarying rules in their deployment by Herodotus. He concluded from this that they were not the transparent and straightforward statements of a 'scientific' historian, but were rather the devices of a writer of fiction, chosen to give the *appearance* of reliability, while they were in fact the free invention of Herodotus himself. Perhaps not surprisingly, this work has been much criticised (although not always sensibly), and sits astride one of the great divides in modern Herodotean scholarship. There is, at least at the present, little dialogue between the two camps, although newer approaches have given this issue and others a different complexion.

In more recent decades, a number of intellectual developments, both in the field of classical studies and in the larger culture of which it is a part, have come together to reframe how we read the text of Herodotus. Four of them, briefly listed here, give some idea of the range of issues whose influences can be seen to be very much still at work in the study of Herodotus and in the chapters of this volume. Together they go some distance towards negotiating the split between analysts and unitarians, and between those who see Herodotus as a source-based historian and those who consider him little more than a fabulist.

First, by 1980 history itself as a discursive rhetoric was under investigation, as postmodernist thinkers and historiographers such as Roland Barthes,

Introduction

Michel Foucault, and Hayden White were beginning to redefine the goals, aims and nature of ‘history’. For them and others like them, any historian was no longer someone carefully collecting, assessing and recording facts from the past, to tell us ‘what really happened’, but was rather viewed to be almost in the position of a novelist, selecting and arranging material from the past that would produce a story that was by definition also an interpretation of that material. The genre of historical narrative now came to be viewed as deeply ideological, since the tacit assumptions shaping the historical text were at least as significant as the accuracy of the ‘facts’ presented in it. Obviously Herodotus, the father of history, was very much implicated in this project, as was his immediate heir, Thucydides, and the intellectual connections linking them to each other as co-creators of a new genre increasingly seemed significant.

The second development influencing Herodotean studies had to do with the growing sophistication of cultural studies and the application of anthropological and sociological modes of analysis to ancient Greek culture. The year 1980 saw the publication of François Hartog’s groundbreaking *Le miroir d’Hérodote*, a structuralist reading of Herodotus’ text. Hartog was deeply influenced by the anthropologically-trained classicists, especially in France, who had created a radical reassessment of the culture of the late archaic and early classical period in Greece. Louis Gernet, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Marcel Detienne, Pierre Vidal-Naquet and others had substantially redrawn the outlines of early classical culture, depicting it through the lens of a sociology and anthropology whose codes and objectives were not at all those of a nineteenth-century European historiography. Work by contemporary anthropologists such as Jan Vansina on orality also led to a reassessment of the quality of Herodotean historiography, by emphasising the distinctiveness of oral ways of transmitting and preserving memories of the past. As Oswyn Murray saw, Greek society remained largely oral at least through the Hellenistic period, and Herodotus’ relation to his (mostly oral) informants and material needed to be rethought, to play an important part in our changed understanding of his text. Herodotus’ text was now seen to be the repository of ways of thinking, speaking, and writing that came out of a complex and interlocking set of traditional Greek cultural codes.

This trend in Herodotean studies was closely linked to a third development. With the advent of the postcolonial studies of Edward Saïd and others came a growing understanding of how deeply Eurocentric were the traditional ways of viewing classical Greece and its great early historian. Although the claims of scholars arguing that Greek culture largely came ‘out of Africa’ were not ultimately sustained, it became increasingly clear how many of the

CAROLYN DEWALD AND JOHN MARINCOLA

cultural roots of the classical Greek experience lay in the larger world of East Mediterranean culture that Herodotus inhabited. Herodotus' interest in and awareness of Egypt, Scythia, Lydia, Babylon and other lands were now seen not as incidental to the purposes of his text (there only to explain who these enemies were that came to attack Greece in the early fifth century BCE) but deeply central to its meaning, and to contemporary Greek definitions of and ways of understanding themselves.

And finally, as ancient Greek history and its historians were now viewed as much more connected to an archaic Greek past and a non-Greek contemporary world, paradoxically they were also being viewed as more intimately connected to the world of a mid-fifth-century Greek culture and politics. In contrast to an earlier view that depicted Herodotus as an old-fashioned purveyor of an 'archaic' world view, new studies emphasised his deep connections to the thought world of the great figures of the fifth-century intellectual revolution such as Protagoras and Gorgias. The political representations of his text, moreover, were increasingly seen as embedded in the issues emerging in Athens, its enemies, and the cities of its empire, in the years leading up to the Peloponnesian War, in ways that Jacoby and his followers could not have envisioned. Work on the intellectual milieu and politics of democratic Athens has argued that much of Herodotus' depiction of early fifth-century political dynamics was framed by but also tacitly critiqued the political and social problems of contemporary mid-century Athens.

From all these viewpoints a new question has emerged, as Robert Connor observed in 1987: 'just what sort of text is this and how does it work?' Part of his answer is worth quoting as a summation of what was now opening in Herodotean studies (Connor [1987] 261):

When we read Herodotus we move in a world of unexpected outcomes. Great powers become small; poor states defeat grand and mighty ones; mythic patterns are contraverted; oracles have hidden layers of meaning. In such a world there are no laws of history, no neat lessons or maxims, no sure way to success or even survival. That leaves little room for advice or sermons in historical writing. But if one wrestles enough, the result may be a certain alertness and suppleness, a readiness for the unexpected that is the condition for survival in such a world.

This 'new' Herodotus may at first sight seem to have little in common with the historian constructed by Jacoby and his immediate successors, although many of those early concerns continue to be represented in recent work. What has changed is that older assumptions about the writing of history and how it is managed have been complicated by the various methodologies

Introduction

mentioned above, that is, by the recognition that historiography is neither a straightforward and transparent activity nor a matter merely of recording unproblematic ‘facts’.

II

All of the following chapters have incorporated some aspect of this new attitude into their reading of Herodotus. Some issues, expressed in the chapters of this volume in different ways, strike us as especially prominent and interesting, although each reader will of course come up with others on his or her own. And yet, as we shall see at the end of this essay, a distinctive feature of Herodotus’ prose is that it can be read in a multiplicity of ways, depending on what interests each reader brings to the task.

Regarding Herodotus’ deep engagement with mid-fifth-century Greek culture, Rosalind Thomas, James Romm, and Scott Scullion consider the complexities of his engagement with contemporary Greek intellectual issues, especially in the realms of biology and geography, often expressed in the language of the argumentative rhetoric prevalent in mid- and late-fifth-century Athens. Although Romm and Scullion approach the issue from different directions, both emphasise that Herodotus sees the world that human intelligence understands and manipulates as connected to larger questions of cosmic balance and order. Romm connects Herodotus’ interest in the natural sciences to his deep-seated moral and ethical concerns, while Scullion sharply distinguishes Herodotus’ belief in an abstract, enduring cosmic order from his occasional mention of names and features of specific Greek and foreign divinities, respected by Herodotus rather as aspects of human culture than as independently powerful individual personalities. Interestingly enough, both Romm and Scullion have read Herodotus’ depictions of bridge building not as involving the hubris of boundary transgression, but rather as his acknowledgment of positive achievement, in the realm of human *sophiē*. By their readings, Herodotus plays an active part in the generation of the fifth-century Greek enlightenment, and is alert and engaged in making sense of his world very much like that of his contemporaries, the first sophists.

Thomas deepens this connection still further, pointing out that Herodotus’ interest in *nomos*, law or custom, pervades the *Histories*. Both Thomas and Robert Fowler emphasise the degree of Herodotus’ engagement with other intellectual figures of his day, although Thomas sees a subtle, courteous disagreement among colleagues, while Fowler points to a *mélange* of competitive, argumentative positions, in what he calls the ‘gallimaufry’ that makes up the *Histories*; Herodotus’ competitive voice is particularly apparent in

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Book 2. Sara Forsdyke also considers Herodotus' political philosophy as an engagement in issues of contemporary importance; Herodotus' exploration of the nature of imperialism, the value of political freedom, and the relation between geography, climate, and political culture, though expressed in the context of the Persian imperial adventures of the early fifth century, are pointedly if tacitly relevant to the Athenian imperialism of his own day as well. It is not just an Athenian issue, either: Philip Stadter comments on how many sons of Greek leaders from the Persian Wars, from different cities, are mentioned in Herodotus' narrative. For both Forsdyke and Stadter, there is considerable irony in Herodotus' picture of the united Greek effort that expelled the Persians, since the various cities that helped one another in the near past had in his own time become hostile and competitive instead. Stadter emphasises how distinct and sharply differentiated Herodotus' portraits of the major Greek cities are from one another; Lawrence Tritle makes the same point about his account of the major battles that formed the Persian Wars, from Marathon through Mycale. Clearly part of Herodotus' own engagement with contemporary Greek material entailed recording information from the past that was specific and as accurate as possible, in this way resembling, as both Thomas and Fowler point out, a contemporary Hippocratic discourse. As Marincola puts it: 'Herodotus relishes the individual, the contingent, the unforeseen.' In this, his goals are different from those of the doctors.

But Herodotus was not only interested in Greeks and contemporary Greek issues and ideas. A number of the chapters in this volume investigate Herodotus' interest in, and portrait of, other cultures than his own, with a new and more nuanced appreciation that stems from our growing awareness of the problems and interpretive limitations of our own more recent colonialist and Eurocentrist assumptions. Both Michael Flower and Tim Rood consider Herodotus' interest in the *nomoi* or customs of others as a fascination with gridding the specific details of cultural distinctiveness, and also in investigating the more general phenomenon of foreignness. Flower makes the point that Herodotus, though limning a Greek victory, does not write a triumphalist history but rather builds underlying thematic parallels that enable a Greek audience to understand and make sense of the Persian experience of the war; for instance, Herodotus emphasises the pervasiveness of human suffering (e.g. the suffering endured by the Persian dinner guest in 9.16). He does not create a simple-minded dichotomy or clichéd portrait of the hubris of autocratic kings; both retribution for the sacking of Sardis and the needs of an expansionist imperialism are in play in the Persian war effort, as well as a code of Achilles-like military honour that the Greeks

Introduction

themselves less consistently embody. In sketching out Herodotus' broader understanding of foreignness, Rood sees a number of the (foreign) actors in the *Histories* as stand-ins for Herodotus' own authorial efforts to encounter 'the other'. Croesus, after all, undertakes a *historiē* or investigation of his own, in exploring which of the Greek cities to invite to be his ally (1.56); Darius actively explores the problem of cultural relativism, and himself becomes king through the manipulation of Persian custom (3.38, 3.72 and 84–7). Herodotus' interest in ethnography is unusual, moreover, in that it is not undertaken from the point of view of the imperialist aggressor (as, say, more recent nineteenth-, twentieth-, or twenty-first-century efforts have been), but rather from the point of view of the invaded people, the Greeks. Perhaps for that reason, he gives special attention to the ethnographic descriptions of other peoples who actively resist the Persians (Egypt, Scythia), but he also emphasises the multiple ironies implicit in the mindset of the Persians that might explain their decision to invade Greece as an especially valuable source of new resources (see, for instance, Pausanias' contrast of the Spartan and Persian dinners in 9.82, discussed in the chapter by Christopher Pelling).

Rosaria Vignolo Munson and Rachel Friedman both contemplate some of the ironic complexities of Herodotus' stance as an Asiatic Greek transplanted to the west, writing about a war that took place mostly between mainland Greeks and Asians. Munson's focus is on the Greek West, Italy and Sicily; she points out that Herodotus resists assimilating the narratives about the western Greeks, in particular the Greek tyrants, to those about the cities of central Greece and the Peloponnese, but rather renders the western experience exotic, even somewhat foreign, by using the traditional language and tropes of Greek colonialist discourse to depict the harshness of the early fifth-century western tyrannies. Friedman emphasises Herodotus' own status as an itinerant savant, his corresponding interest in other Greek *dēmiourgoi*, or travelling experts, and the tension between home and away that the career of the travelling Greek expert entails. Both chapters consider the massive dislocations that the political crises of the Persian Wars engendered, Munson to emphasise the harshness of the western Greek tyrants, Friedman to emphasise the degree to which Herodotus problematises the issue of cultural identity and its connections to specific geography.

Many of the chapters already mentioned include an anthropological or structural component in their reading of Herodotus. Forsdyke and Rood consider the effects of social memory in the *Histories*, and the confrontation with Greek or foreign information that is necessarily transmitted by oral tradition, refracted through what fifth-century Greek audiences needed

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to remember. Tritle also comments that the war reports that formed the backbone of Herodotus' accounts in the last five books of the *Histories* were of necessity somewhat vague as regards military *technē* because (unlike Thucydides) Herodotus was dealing not with reports from the various war planners and chiefs-of-staff, but with memories retained for decades by men who would have been young foot-soldiers or sailors in the wars of the 490s and 480s. What he got right and transmitted accurately was the 'fog of war' experienced by all combatants, and the brutality that war entailed. Both Carolyn Dewald and Alan Griffiths discuss more generally the way that the *logoi* that provide the substance of Herodotus' narrative have been shaped originally as (retold) stories; oral repetition creates story, either by giving it a humorous point relevant to an ongoing local political context or, more generally, by smoothing it out and creating out of memory an anecdote with a particular narrative shape that guarantees its later preservation.

Nino Luraghi considers the implications of oral transmission as the basis for Herodotus' *historiē* or investigation, and he analyses at length the processes through which the *logoi* or oral reports might have been collected and formulated. It is worth noting that, since Hartog, not only has it proved fruitful to analyse Herodotus through anthropological or structuralist lenses, but it has also seemed increasingly necessary to acknowledge the sophistication of Herodotus' own deep interests in culture as a sphere where politics intersect with religion, geography, ethnography, and law. As we have already seen, many of the chapters in this volume move easily among these different spheres of concern and consider the intersections between them; Jasper Griffin, Forsdyke, Marincola, and Scullion in particular focus on the extent to which various tropes of a conventional Greek value-world fall under Herodotus' tacitly relativist, if not actively ironic, ongoing examination.

Perhaps the area that involves some of the most interesting advances in our understanding of Herodotus' achievement has to do with his skills as a writer, and the genre of writing of which he seems to have been the first practitioner. A number of chapters in this volume deal with Herodotus as a literary craftsman. History as a genre and mode of discourse influenced by other Greek genres, is discussed by Marincola, in the context of its dependence on the legacy of earlier Greek poetry, especially epic, by Griffin for the themes and some of the habitual tropes of Attic tragedy, by Fowler for Herodotus' engagement with contemporary and previous prose authors, and by Griffiths for motifs and ways of patterning narrative often found in storytelling. Taken together, all of these chapters make clear how generously Herodotus drew on the formal opportunities available to him from the literary past of his own culture, and what excellent use he made of them.