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978-0-521-87630-8 - Reading Herodotus: A Study of the *Logoi* in Book 5 of Herodotus' Histories

Edited by Elizabeth Irwin and Emily Greenwood

Excerpt

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Introduction
Reading Herodotus, reading Book 5
Elizabeth Irwin and Emily Greenwood

I. BACKGROUND

This volume is devoted to the *logoi* of a single Book of Herodotus' *Histories* (Book 5). It derives from a Colloquium entitled 'Reading Herodotus' held at the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge University in July 2002. The rationale behind the Colloquium was to gather together a group of Herodotean readers to explore the texture of individual *logoi*, their place in the structure of Herodotus' narrative, and their significance for interpreting the history that he offers us. To this end, each contributor undertook to focus on a *logos* in Book 5, examining not only its content, but also its logic and language. We hoped that the project of bringing together different readers to address the same book in concert, but with distinctive voices and guided by different *logoi*, would provide an apt demonstration of just how much may be required to read Herodotus in all his complexity.

When we took the decision to publish the papers that had been presented at the Colloquium, we were keen to preserve the spirit of the conference and the tone of the original papers, which varied in approach and took the kind of interpretative risks that are associated with exploratory reading and debate. We have tried to give the reader a sense of publication as conversation by throwing open our original discussions to a larger audience. To some extent this has already begun to happen in the published volume, as new voices have joined the original discussion and have opened it up in different directions. Three of the scholars (Carolyn Dewald, Alan Griffiths and Tim Rood) who took part in the original Colloquium decided not to publish their papers and we regret not having had the opportunity to include them here. However, some traces of the discussion that they initiated are visible in footnotes to the present volume. In the interest of achieving more extensive coverage of Book 5, we solicited additional essays from David Fearn, Vivienne Gray, Johannes Haubold, John Henderson, Rosaria Munson and Anastasia Serghidou. Of this second wave of contributors,

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John Henderson was a discussant at the original Colloquium; the others read written versions of the original papers. We can truly claim that our volume speaks with many voices. By offering twelve different contributions on a single book, we have tried to produce a graphic picture of the challenges entailed in reading and interpreting Herodotus, based on a dialogue between the different *logoi* in his work. The purpose of this Introduction is to explain what sense it makes to deal with Herodotus' work in this way, and to foreground broader themes and connections between the *logoi* of Book 5.

II. WAYS OF READING

Since there is no obvious precedent for this volume, we begin by explaining how it relates to other studies of Herodotus. Several book-length studies of Herodotus have already appeared in this young millennium; these studies include single-authored monographs, edited volumes, conference proceedings, and commentaries, to say nothing of the numerous articles published in journals and edited volumes.¹ The current volume is a hybrid of these different types of publication. It is, incidentally, an 'edited volume' – to use a term with minimal descriptive value – and, like other edited volumes on Herodotus, it boasts a diversity of subjects and approaches to Herodotus, pursuing many different lines of interpretation simultaneously. A common phenomenon in conventional edited volumes, which typically have their origins in conferences or colloquia, is that the unity provided by the occasion of the conference disappears in the conference proceedings, in which debates that may have taken place between the speakers fall out of sight. Correspondingly, in these volumes contributors' essays go their separate ways, with little or no continuity or dialogue.² The reader ends up knowing both more and less than he or she would learn from a good

¹ In the Anglophone field, these studies include two landmark monographs: Thomas (2000) and Munson (2001b), as well as several important edited volumes (Luraghi (ed.) (2001a); Bakker *et al.* (eds.) (2002); Derow and Parker (eds.) (2003); Karageorghis and Taifacos (eds.) (2004) and Dewald and Marincola (eds.) (2006)). In the same period a commentary on Book 9 appeared in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics Series (Flower and Marincola (2002)), and further commentaries on Herodotus have been commissioned for the same series. There is also a new commentary on Book 6 by Lionel Scott (Leiden, 2005) and the first volume of the English translation of the Italian commentary series on Herodotus (*Erodoto: le storie*) will be published by Oxford University Press in 2007 (*A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV*, by Asheri, Lloyd and Corcella).

² See, for instance, Flory (2004) who identifies this divergence as a feature of a recent collection of conference proceedings on Herodotus: 'I have attempted here to make at least some of the widely-divergent essays in this volume enter into conversation with one another, a conversation not explicitly intended by the authors or their editors.'

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single-authored monograph: more, because the volume covers more angles with more contexts and intertexts, but less because the knowledge on display is divergent rather than convergent. The reader is left to reflect on the questions that the respective essays pose for each other: can they all be true of the same text at the same time? How do you reconcile essays that start with Herodotus' text, with those that start with grand historical narratives and apply them to Herodotus' text? As editors we have confronted this problematic head-on by putting Herodotus' text and the exercise of 'reading Herodotus' in the foreground. By focusing on a single book, both we and our contributors have been compelled to think about connections across adjacent *logoi* and, consequently, between the interpretations offered in adjacent chapters.³

In contrast to the edited volume, the single-authored monograph is necessarily single-minded. Granted, single-mindedness does not preclude open-mindedness, but by its very nature this type of book cannot possess the many-mindedness of an edited volume, or a book by two or more authors. The author's commitment to a single thesis means that questions are pursued and resolved as s/he attempts to square Herodotus' text with her/his own understanding of it. In this sense the reader may emerge from the book knowing more in the form of a portable thesis, but ultimately knowing less since the exposition of a single thesis has suppressed other lines of enquiry in order to reach its conclusion. While there are many different ways of reading the conventional monograph and it is certainly possible for an author to sustain parallel narratives or even counter-arguments in footnotes, a single narrative and thesis must usually prevail. What this volume lacks in terms of single-minded unity, it makes up for through the richness of interpretation supplied by many intelligent and distinctive voices.

To turn to yet another genre of academic interpretation, insofar as it resembles any genre of publication, this volume is perhaps most akin to the conventional Commentary. Like the commentary, it addresses a single Book of Herodotus' *Histories* and is intended to be read alongside the text in question: if the volume achieves its aims, the readings offered here will send the reader back to Herodotus, rather than stand in as a substitute for his text. We cannot pretend to offer readers comprehensive coverage of Book 5, nor do we claim to present a definitive study: this is beyond the scope of any scholarly volume. Even in the case of the Commentary

³ This formulation is indebted to Griffiths (2001), a study that examines the logic that binds together 'adjacent material' in Herodotus.

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form, which is coextensive with the text and in principle covers every line or chapter of the work in question, total coverage is as much a fantasy as Borges' total library. A Commentary does not gloss all of the words in a given text and, more significantly, it cannot account for all of the conjunctions of words and their potential significance, both those imputed to the author and to readers/audiences. In addition, much is made of the tendency of commentaries to atomize texts into disconnected fragments (*lemmata*). Indeed, this is almost an inevitable consequence of the genre. Problems arise in trying to determine what constitutes an atom of text and where the lines of division occur. We have faced similar challenges with the anatomy of the *Histories*, but unlike many commentaries we have tried to make these challenges an explicit topic of interpretation.⁴

Whereas the conventional commentary can accommodate the needs of the 'hit-and-run' user,⁵ this volume expects from its readers engagement with Herodotus' narrative in all its complexity. Readers who are tempted to use the indices to finger passages of text or discussions of specific subjects (tyranny, contingency in history, Aristagoras, Medism, onomastics . . .) will miss the point of this volume. With each successive chapter, the process of reading Book 5 should become increasingly dynamic and interactive, as successive contributors alert the reader to different aspects of Herodotus' narrative. For instance, the chapters on the Ionian Revolt acquire an additional dimension from those chapters that highlight the importance of the theme of revolutions of power in the *Histories* (Gray, Henderson, Moles, Munson, Pelling). To give another example, questions of aetiology and onomastics feed into broader debates about contingency and the way in which Herodotus constructs webs of causation (Henderson, Hornblower, Irwin, Osborne). The question of Greek relations with Persia is informed by the broader field of Herodotean ethnography, which includes competing myths of origins (Fearn, Haubold, Serghidou). Then there are essays which focus on apparent geographical detours in Herodotus' narrative (Fearn, Greenwood, Hornblower, Serghidou). Each of our contributors brings a *logos* into the foreground, and the fact that we all do this in concert counterbalances the selective vision of the single reader who privileges those aspects of the narrative from which s/he can make meaning, leaving others to the side. What our multiple voices bring out in relation to Book 5 is that

⁴ For the anatomical metaphor applied to the organization of Thucydides' and Herodotus' narratives, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 3 (cited at the beginning of de Jong (2002)). See also Munson (2001b) 2 on the (analytic) tradition of treating the ethnographies in Herodotus as *disiecta membra*.

⁵ For the 'hit-and-run' user see Kraus (2002) II.

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no other book so challenges an audience to decide on where its dominant narrative lies. Ostensibly the dominant narrative is the Ionian Revolt, but Herodotus uses the Revolt as an occasion for narrating histories of mainland Greece, past and present, playing intricate games with geography and temporality as he does so.

Insofar as this volume comments on Book 5, it does so in discursive mode. Firstly, our approach is discursive in that we explore the work fully in relation to its contexts: religion, history, politics, geography, intertextuality. Secondly, individual contributors all enter into discussion with other interpretative studies of the work in question. Thirdly, and this is something that is seldom attempted in edited volumes, our approach to Book 5 is discursive because it is conducted as a dialogue between different readers and offers an overview of a single book that comprises different points of view. Finally, through the intervention of the reader, this volume seeks further discussion and dialogue and invites repeated re-readings of the *Histories*. At the same time, the parallel readings of Book 5 put forward by different scholars provide for readers a suggestive if implicit commentary on the breadth of academic reception of Herodotus at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

III. THE READER'S AUTOPSY

Scholars are familiar with the conflicting pull of unitarian and analytic approaches to Herodotus,⁶ a distinction further complicated by the study of traces of oral performance in the written text;⁷ however, as an interpretative community, we seldom stop to ask how the form in which we read and interpret Herodotus affects the kind of text that emerges.⁸ The unique format of this volume has made us acutely aware of the ways in which patterns of academic engagement tend to delimit a text's potential meaning.

Readers will note that the title of this volume refers to the '*logoi*' of 'Book' 5, signalling two different units into which one might divide Herodotus' narrative. We will address the question of Herodotean book divisions below (pp. 14–19), but at this point in our discussion it seems pertinent to define how we use the terms *logos* and *logoi* in this work. By evoking the explanatory power of *logoi* we are not attempting to carve up the narrative into different parts, but rather to focus on connections and continuities between the *logoi*

⁶ See, e.g., Lateiner (1989) 3–5, Munson (2001b) 1–19, and de Jong (2002).

⁷ See Thomas (1993) and (2000) 249–69, and Munson (2001b) 14–17.

⁸ See Kraus (2002) 10: 'what divisions, structural and thematic, do we impose on the text when we read?' See also Griffiths (2001) 178: 'of which reading are you guilty?'

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and the overarching *logos*. Contributors were all given free rein to define the formal beginning and end of our *logoi*, and to respond individually as readers to the gestures by which the narrative punctuates itself. At the same time, each contributor was invited to trace the relevance of his/her *logos* in ever-widening narrative contexts, the widest being the entire *Histories* itself. Each accepted the text's several invitations at given junctures to pause, to mark a beginning and a *telos* to which to look. And yet we all acknowledge how provisional these *termini* must be, embedded in the text as staging-posts at which the reader may choose to rest, even reflect, or simply drive on.⁹

Our title also alludes to the problem of defining *logoi* on another, implicit level. What constitutes a *logos* is subject to ongoing debate in Herodotean scholarship. As several recent studies have emphasized, there is a discrepancy between the way in which Herodotus uses this term self-reflexively, in reference to his own work,¹⁰ and the way in which scholars have appropriated the term to categorize different sections of the *Histories*.¹¹ In the case of the latter, *logos* is used loosely to refer to (a) the work as a whole; (b) individual sections within the larger story; and (c) discernible patterns or themes that run throughout the narrative. While we take the point that the term *logos* is used loosely in the secondary literature, this looseness reflects the complex and loose-weave narrative structure of Herodotus' *Histories*, a work in which individual units of narrative work both independently and in concert.

The essays here embody the view that Herodotus' *logos* always comprises several different *logoi* (arguments, accounts, versions) about history both more remote and recent. There are the individual *logoi*, which need to be read within the overarching narrative(s) to which they belong and which, indeed, they constitute when taken together. But there are also those *logoi* – 'accounts', but also 'reasons' – that are external to the text, but implied every time Herodotus tells us that one group or another chooses to tell the version of the past that they do: these are the contemporary fifth-century contexts, and audiences, for which the *logoi* had their meaning, and those which

⁹ We owe the metaphor of staging-posts to John Henderson.

¹⁰ For an example of the self-reflexive use of *logos* in Book 5, see 5.36.4, where Herodotus reminds the reader that he has already illustrated the substance of Croesus' dedications to the oracle at Branchidae 'in the first of my *logoi*' – using *logos* here in the sense of an extended stretch of narrative on Croesus' dealings with Persians and Greeks.

¹¹ For recent bibliographical discussions of the use of *logos* as a construct in Herodotean scholarship see de Jong (2002) 255, who comments on variations in the use of the term and concludes that it is time for an in-depth study of the term *logos*; see also Gray (2002) 291 with n. 5; and Brock (2003) 8. All of these works refer back to Immerwahr (1966) 79–147 ('chapter 3: The units of the work').

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we as scholars can only attempt to reconstruct. While their extradiegetic status makes it precarious to involve these contexts in interpretation, it is no less dangerous to exclude them. Moreover, such extratextual comparison can in fact claim to be an intrinsic dimension of the text: namely, the intellectual process promoted by the narrator of the *Histories* and conveyed by the verb συμβάλλειν, 'to throw things together', 'bring information to bear on a situation', 'to engage with something', and (in the middle voice: συμβάλλεσθαι) 'to conjecture/infer knowledge from diverse sources of information', 'to comprehend a situation by being able to apply this knowledge'.¹² Herodotus' text sends us back and forth as readers, trying to establish the significance that a *logos* holds within the narrative, the significance it might have held for his contemporary audiences, and the metahistoriographical significance it holds for us as interpreters. To put these different tiers together is to begin to comprehend the structure of Herodotus' narrative.

It is only through this process of paying close attention to Herodotus' text and relating it to its due contexts, that we can hope to counteract – if never avoid – our own biases as readers and those of the scholarship upon which we draw, and only through such a process that we are able to confront the inevitability that our own writing will be no less a product of its cultural, political and historical context than that of Herodotus. We have left our approaches open to examination and have tried to offset our individual angles of interpretation through continual recourse to Herodotus' own commentary on ways of seeing and their significance.

It is here that the centrality of autopsy in Herodotus' work must come into play. Like the narrator-researcher who has undertaken the travels, interviews, and reasoning processes that underlie the narrative, readers of the *Histories* have to negotiate their way through a text which travels to the frontiers of what is and can be known about other lands and peoples, and the near and distant past. However, whereas the Herodotean narrator claims autopsy for much of the information in the text, or direct engagement with his sources, what the reader sees and hears recounted in Herodotus' text is only ever virtual. We see and hear Herodotus' *logos*, as opposed to the objects, phenomena, and first-hand accounts which he claims to have experienced himself. For us as readers, the object of our autopsy is Herodotus' text. The primary challenge for the reader is not therefore to achieve an authentic account of the customs of the Sigynnae (5.9),¹³ the

¹² See Hohti (1977), *passim*; and Munson (2001b) 83–5. For further discussion see Irwin's chapter, pp. 47–56 below.

¹³ Still defying scholars see Irwin, pp. 83–6 below.

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statistics about the road and journey-time to Susa (5.52–4), or the fate of Dorieus in Sicily (5.45). Instead, the reader's project is to construct an authentic account of Herodotus' *logos* on the basis of what he or she has seen on the page and in the work; everything that we claim to know about this book emerges from our reading of it.

When we leave the text and attempt to describe it, as we are doing here, we ourselves begin to create and spread *logoi* about the text, transforming our own readers into consumers of *akoē* (evidence from hearsay) about Herodotus' *Histories*. Our reading may conflict with their own autopsy of Herodotus' work, or with what is said (λέγεται) in the scholarly literature. In his first extended *logos* (1.8–12), Herodotus warns the reader of the disparity between seeing for oneself and hearing from others (*akoē*). Candaules may be foolish to urge Gyges to view his beautiful wife on the grounds that 'for men ears are less trustworthy than eyes' (1.8.2),¹⁴ but his statement flags up the epistemological hierarchy that operates in the *Histories*, and poses a challenge to the external audience of the text: will we as voyeurs of the *logos* about the beauty of Candaules' naked wife remember that we are only *hearing* about this woman and everything else on offer in Herodotus' text – and for how long? As Candaules makes clear and as the ensuing consequences of Gyges' autopsy confirm, the experience of hearing is qualitatively different from seeing. The point has implications for us as audiences who only *hear* about the events and wonders that the *Histories* will narrate. Herodotus' style of attributing his *logoi* to various sources makes one thing clear: it is not enough to know a story and the information that it contains; one must also notice who is telling it, and grasp their motivation. Will we forget this when it comes to the grand story, and its master narrator?

This is not the whole story: arguably Herodotus encourages us to see his text both as an event and as a monument, as an object of reflection in its own right. If we immerse ourselves unguardedly in the aesthetic enjoyment of the deeds, monuments, and sights that are narrated in the text, we may fail to notice the all-important contexts in which we encounter them.¹⁵ It is not easy to separate the events within the narrative from the *logoi* about them, for sure, and it is also not easy to divorce these *logoi* from the interpretative frame supplied by the rest of the work. The closer the reading, the more one becomes aware that *logoi* have been designed to be read in concert, and are separated from each other at a price. This brings

¹⁴ ὅτι γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἔοντα ἀπιστότερα ὁφθαλμῶν. Only an audience can determine whether this is heard as 'commonplace' (cf. Austin and Olson (2004) 53–4 (*ad Ar. Thesmo.* 5–6)) or seen as embedded philosophy (Heraclitus DK 101a and 55, with Robb (1991), Kurd (1991)).

¹⁵ On the 'aesthetic enjoyment' of monuments in the *Histories*, see Immerwahr (1960) 270.

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us back to the way in which the interpretative choices that we make, and the academic genres that we employ, (re)configure the text. The potential for partial, myopic readings, or oversights, is starkly illustrated in the case of the commentary form, where unlemmatized text slips out of view and falls through gaps in scholarly debates. This phenomenon of the vanishing text has been discussed elegantly by Christina Kraus:

As a reflection of someone else's reading, lemmata can guide our interpretation – but if we are responsible readers, they are also an open invitation to challenge the commentator's articulation. If 'looking' is at the root of theory (θεωρία), then the processes of selection and lemmatization are fundamental to theorizing, as they put a pattern onto a text which shows it in a different light. A lemmatized text literally looks different, and the reader in turn sees the text differently. Unlemmatized text is absent, unmarked, invisible, whether literally (if one does not return from commentary to text) or figuratively, as it is disregarded by the cumulative authority of the commentary tradition to date.¹⁶

Our volume was conceived in the joint knowledge that readers see different patterns in Herodotus, and that the subject of *theōria* is at the heart of his work. Since our contributors all come at the same book from different angles of vision, and from the perspectives afforded them by their different sections, this volume constitutes a many-sided reading. And although a panoramic view of the *Histories* is beyond the scope of a single academic work, the juxtaposition of different readings presented here means that we cover some of each other's blind spots. We believe that this volume offers an important experiment in reading Herodotus discursively and in dialogue with the interpretations of others, and hope that it will stimulate new debates.

IV. CHOOSING BOOK 5

Beginning with the middle, looking to the end

The notion of 'beginning at the beginning' is a powerful literary fiction that derives its authority from the claim that one's point of departure is somehow natural. It is, of course, always an artifice, the choice of a narrator; and narrators can be more or less candid about revealing the artificiality of their beginning. Consider Thucydides: in the first sentence of the work Thucydides informs the reader that he began to write down the Atheno-Peloponnesian war, beginning (ἀρξάμενος) at a 'natural' beginning,

¹⁶ Kraus (2002) 13–14.

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as soon as it broke out (1.1.1), only to spend the first Book on material that constitutes a 'pre-beginning' by way of explanation for the conflict that is his subject. Then both the war and the work (insofar as Thucydides encourages us to view the war and his work as a unity) begin again at the start of the second Book: ἀρχεται δὲ ὁ πόλεμος ἐνθ' ἐνδε ('the war begins at this point' – 2.1). At a symbolic level, there is yet another beginning at 2.12.3–4, with a statement by the Spartan Melesippus that 'this day will be the beginning of great evils for the Hellenes' (μεγάλων κακῶν ἄρξει), a passage that resonates with our own Book 5 (5.97, see below). Whereas Thucydides' staggered beginnings are understated, Herodotus' account of the Persian War draws full attention to his choices as narrator, the subjectivity and particularity of his chosen beginning, 'I am not going to say how thus or otherwise these [past mythic] events happened, but I know who first perpetrated unjust acts against the Greeks, and telling this I will proceed . . . Croesus was the first of those we know . . .' (1.5.3–6.1). And in contrast to Thucydides' one-book beginning which denies almost all its past events any meaningful status as *aitiai*,¹⁷ Herodotus will provide some two centuries of context in which to begin to understand the cause of his war, focusing intently and extensively precisely on those fifty-odd years that precede it.

Our volume begins, artificially enough, at the middle of Herodotus' work, but we too can claim this artificial beginning is not entirely unnatural from the text's point of view. The narrative of Book 5 builds up to a beginning, the twenty ships that the Athenians sent to Ionia in c. 499 BC that constitute a symbolic 'beginning of evils' (ἀρχὴ κακῶν – 5.97.3) heralded from the very first paragraph of the work.¹⁸ Herodotus' *archē kakōn* screams artifice. The phrase not only looks back intertextually to Homer and forward to the events of 431 BC, if not also to Thucydides,¹⁹ but it also punningly gestures towards a meaning that it will only acquire after the events narrated in the *Histories* with the arrival of Athenian *archē* ('empire') – an 'evil' that is already in force in real time for Herodotus' contemporary audiences, but has yet to begin in narrative time.²⁰ Book 5 presents us

¹⁷ Only the most recent events, Epidamnus, Corcyra, Potidaea can be called 'causes', but never the truest cause (1.23.6).

¹⁸ See Pelling, p. 187 below, and Munson, p. 146 below, on the way in which Book 5 echoes themes from the beginning of the work.

¹⁹ On the intertextual link between Herodotus (5.97.3) and Homer *Iliad* 5.63 and 11.604, see Munson, p. 153 with n. 34, Hornblower, pp. 171–2, Pelling, p. 186, and Haubold, p. 234 below.

²⁰ The 'evil' of Athenian *archē* is a matter of perspective, depending on the different audiences that we posit for the *Histories*. For the pun on *archē* (beginning) to *archē* (empire), see Irwin (p. 47, n. 16), Munson (p. 155), Pelling (p. 182), and Henderson (p. 305) below.