

Between Narrative and Interpretation: Writing History in the Ancient World

Unit 2: Herodotos

Introduction

Herodotos is the first surviving Greek historian and his innovative method earned him since antiquity the title “Father of History”. Herodotos was born in Halikarnassos in Asia Minor probably in the mid-480s BCE. Herodotos spent a part of his life at Athens and later immigrated to Thurii, probably at the time of the foundation of the colony in 440 BCE. He probably died in the late 420s or early 410s BCE in Thurii.

Unlike other Greek and Roman historians, Herodotos at no point claims to have taken part in the events he describes or alludes to in his *Histories*. However, it is probable that he was in contact to people who had been present and were in commanding positions at the time, as well as with their descendants. Herodotos’ work was in antiquity and remains until today the subject of controversy both in relation to the prejudices reflected in the *Histories* and regarding the truthfulness of his account.

Before continuing with this unit, it is strongly suggested that you familiarise yourself with the events of the Persian Wars.. A good introduction is Osborne, R. Classical Greece, 500-323, OUP 2000, p.171-176 [Available from NetLibrary: <http://www.netlibrary.com/>]

Herodotos’ Aims

Herodotos’ aim in writing the *Histories* is made known to the reader from the very first words of the work:

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This is the display of the inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that things done by man not be forgotten in time, and that great and marvelous deeds, some displayed by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians, not lose their glory, including among others what was the cause of their waging war on each other. Herodotos 1.1

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus CL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+1.1.0>)

Herodotos identifies three aims for his work in these first few lines of the *Histories*. Firstly, to records the deeds of men for posterity. Secondly, to records specifically those of the Greeks and the Persians. And thirdly, to find out the causes of the Persian Wars themselves.

The way that Herodotos expresses his aims is particularly interesting. The actual causes of the wars are the last of his aims with considerably more importance attributed to the recording of the past and particularly of the great deeds and people of the past. This relative order of priority expressed in the introduction is kept to throughout the work with the actual combatants not making an appearance until quite late. In terms of length, the actual narrative of the Persian Wars takes less than a third of the whole work.

In effect, the history of the Persian Wars is the excuse for the recording of a medley of information and stories about the past and distant lands. From a modern point of view, the greater part of Herodotos' work is more anthropological and ethnographical than historical. Certainly Herodotos does not concentrate exclusively on a conflict or period of time but prefers a larger view that provides him with the opportunity to relate an immense amount of information about the peoples around the Mediterranean and beyond.

To an extent, Herodotos' interest in a wider perspective can be attributed to his position in the development of historiography. His predecessors, both the poetic tradition and Hekataios, were interested in the wider world. Further, the amount of rigidly recorded information available was little in the time of Herodotos and thus there was ample scope for a work that spanned centuries and different aspects of life and the past.

On the other hand, Herodotos' wider view as relating to the Persian Wars is in many ways the true beginning of the historiographical tradition in the Greek world. History is a continuum of events that are interlinked and interdependent. A conflict such as the Persian Wars did not arise out of thin air but was the culmination of a long history of extensive contact and lesser conflicts between the Greeks and the eastern empires. Herodotos is clearly trying to provide the reader, or listener, with an account of the events leading up to the conflict. This aspect of historiography remained current in the post-Herodotean Greek historiographical tradition. Thucydides and more importantly Polybios gave background information and a longer view of events in the beginning of their works.

Herodotos' Method

Herodotos in addition to his aims also articulated his method of selecting and recording information in two separate passages:

These Egyptian stories are for the benefit of whoever believes such tales: my rule in this history is that I record what is said by all as I have heard it.
Herodotos 2.123

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+2.123.1>)

As for myself, although it is my business to set down that which is told me, to believe it is none at all of my business. This I ask the reader to hold true for the whole of my history. Herodotos 7.152.3

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+7.152.1>)

Herodotos' method is sharply different from that reported for Hekataios. While both are using informants and the existing oral tradition, Herodotos finds no interest in rational selection of the stories he records, unlike Hekataios who made that process of selection the main aspect of his method. It is possible that Herodotos' method was a direct critique and answer, or even alternative, to Hekataios.

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The search for truth appears to be a collective and communal process based on the individual in Herodotos' view of past events and their recording. Equally importantly, Herodotos is clearly trying to avoid prejudice in his work, playing both sides of the net at once in trying to present the different viewpoints and versions of different people. This in and of itself, while surprising in its inception and expression to the modern mind, is not far removed from the expectations of modern scholarly work.

Like a modern scholar, Herodotos is keen to present all the different views (the different sources) without prejudice. The greatest difference is that Herodotos has no underlying argument nor does he often reveal his own opinion of the verity of the stories he records. Herodotos' work is eminently interactive, since the author expects the reader or audience to make up their own opinion on the truthfulness of the stories recorded. This type of method is not what we expect from history but rather from other sciences such as anthropology.

Still, Herodotos' method is not only immeasurably helpful to the modern scholar but also is a step in the development of historiography. For the modern scholar, Herodotos' insistence on recording all and sundry provides a massive archive of knowledge about the ancient world, particularly the archaic world, as well as the oral tradition of the Greeks and non-Greeks around the Mediterranean.

As a step in the development of historiography, Herodotos' method is particularly important, not merely as a blue-print for later authors, albeit not necessarily historians, but more significantly as a step in the evolution of the genre. The truthfulness of the account is paramount in historiography. Herodotos clearly realises that beyond the eye-witness account or the near-witness hearsay account, oral tradition may offer variable explanations for any event or phenomenon.

Thus, for such matters the truth, beyond physical and personal discovery, can only be a matter of opinion. In such cases, the opinion that clearly influences the rigid account, and thus the account preserved for posterity, is that of the author. As is well-known and clearly important to Herodotos, the opinion of the author is not necessarily the most valid

one. Herodotos preferred to allow the reader or audience to form their own opinions of the truthfulness of past events.

Later historians did not follow Herodotos' method of unprejudiced inquiry and record but moved on to the more evolved stage of historiography, where the historian selects and criticizes his sources. However, when dealing with the distant past where only oral tradition and the recording of their different oral accounts were available, later Greek historians preferred to follow to an extent the Herodotean method of indiscriminate recording before offering their own take on events.

Herodotos and the testimony of witnesses

While the events of the distant past belong to the realm of oral tradition and thus of variable versions, the events of the recent past belong to memory and the testimony of witnesses. Herodotos made use of both eye-witnesses and near-witness hearsay testimonies for his account of the events immediately preceding the Persian Wars and of the wars themselves.

Dicaeus son of Theocydes, an Athenian exile who had become important among the Medes, said that at the time when the land of Attica was being laid waste by Xerxes' army and there were no Athenians in the country, he was with Demaratus the Lacedaemonian on the Thriasian plain and saw advancing from Eleusis a cloud of dust as if raised by the feet of about thirty thousand men. They marvelled at what men might be raising such a cloud of dust and immediately heard a cry. The cry seemed to be the "Iacchus" of the mysteries, [2] and when Demaratus, ignorant of the rites of Eleusis, asked him what was making this sound, Dicaeus said, "Demaratus, there is no way that some great disaster will not befall the king's army. Since Attica is deserted, it is obvious that this voice is divine and comes from Eleusis to help the Athenians and their allies. [3] If it descends upon the Peloponnese, the king himself and his army on the mainland will be endangered. If, however, it turns towards the ships at Salamis, the king will be in danger of losing his fleet. [4] Every year the Athenians observe this festival for the Mother and the Maiden, and any Athenian or other Hellene who wishes is initiated. The voice which you hear is the 'Iacchus' they cry at this festival." To this Demaratus replied, "Keep silent and tell this to no one else. [5] If these words of yours are reported to the king, you will lose your head, and neither I nor

any other man will be able to save you, so be silent. The gods will see to the army.” [6] Thus he advised, and after the dust and the cry came a cloud, which rose aloft and floated away towards Salamis to the camp of the Hellenes. In this way they understood that Xerxes' fleet was going to be destroyed. Dicaeus son of Theocydes used to say this, appealing to Demaratus and others as witnesses. Herodotos 8.65

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+8.65.1>)

While the barbarians were engaged in this task, Attaginus son of Phrynon, a Theban, made great preparations and invited Mardonius with fifty who were the most notable of the Persians to be his guests at a banquet. They came as they were bidden; the dinner was held at Thebes. What follows was told me by Thersander of Orchomenus, one of the most notable men of that place. Thersander too (he said) was invited to this dinner, and fifty Thebans in addition. Attaginus made them sit, not each man by himself but on each couch a Persian and a Theban together. [2] Now as they were drinking together after dinner, the Persian who sat with him asked Thersander in the Greek tongue from what country he was. Thersander answered that he was from Orchomenus. Then said the Persian: “Since you have eaten at the board with me and drunk with me afterwards, I would like to leave a memorial of my belief, so that you yourself may have such knowledge as to take fitting counsel for your safety. [3] Do you see these Persians at the banquet and that host which we left encamped by the river side? In a little while you shall see but a small remnant left alive of all these.” As he said this, the Persian wept bitterly. [4] Marvelling at these words, Thersander answered: “Must you not then tell this to Mardonius and those honorable Persians who are with him?” “Sir,” said the Persian, “that which a god wills to send no man can turn aside, for even truth sometimes finds no one to believe it. [5] What I have said is known to many of us Persians, but we follow, in the bonds of necessity. It is the most hateful thing for a person to have much knowledge and no power.” This tale I heard from Thersander of Orchomenus who told me in addition that he had straightway told this to others before the battle of Plataea. Herodotos 9.16

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+9.16.1>)

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Eye-witness testimonies of the type presented in the above passages show Herodotos' usage of eye-witness accounts. Certainly for the narrative of the wars themselves, most of Herodotos' evidence came from eye-witness account. To some extent, this explains Herodotos' mainly Atheno-centric account of the wars, particularly the expedition of Xerxes. It is a common feature of his account of the expedition of Xerxes that the events, particularly the detailed ones, recorded take place where Athenians were present.

Of particular interest is the choice of Herodotos to name his sources as eye-witness accounts in specific cases, such as the above. This has a lot to do with his perceived audience. Herodotos wrote and published in Athens and probably in Thurii, an Athenian colony. Consequently, his Atheno-centric accounts would probably be wholly or partly known to his audience or easily verified. When, however, he is tackling issues or events without an Athenian presence, then he takes pains to mention his source specifically.

As mentioned above, Herodotos uses not only eye-witness accounts but also the descendants of eye-witnesses as his informants:

There never was in Darius' judgment any Persian before or after who did better service than Zopyrus, except Cyrus, with whom no Persian could compare himself. Many times Darius is said to have declared that he would rather Zopyrus were free of disfigurement than have twenty Babylons on top of the one he had. [2] He honored him very much; every year he sent him such gifts as the Persians hold most precious, and let him govern Babylon all his life with no tribute to pay, giving him many other things besides. This Zopyrus was the father of Megabyzus, who was general of an army in Egypt against the Athenians and their allies; and Megabyzus' son was that Zopyrus who deserted from the Persians to Athens. Herodotos 3.160

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+3.160.1>)

The world Herodotos lived in, especially when he moved to Athens, was a world where diverse people could travel, meet and become vessels of information. The use of the descendants of eye-witnesses shows clearly Herodotos' desire to acquire as accurate information as possible. On the other hand, the times when he mentions these informers

are strategically placed. The case of Zopyrus above is a case in point, since his audience would have included people who had either met this Persian exile or knew of his presence in Athens. Herodotos, when not relying on the power of collective memory or the expert testimony of an eye-witness, makes certain that his audience will feel secure in the historian's effort to uncover the truth.

Herodotos' Autopsy

Herodotos also relied on autopsy for part of his *Histories* and in those areas where he visited himself, his account is fuller and certainly more secure than elsewhere:

XCIX. So far, all I have said is the record of my own autopsy and judgment and inquiry. Henceforth I will record Egyptian chronicles, according to what I have heard, adding something of what I myself have seen. [2] The priests told me that Min was the first king of Egypt, and that first he separated Memphis from the Nile by a dam. All the river had flowed close under the sandy mountains on the Libyan side, but Min made the southern bend of it, which begins about twelve and one half miles above Memphis, by damming the stream, thereby drying up the ancient channel, and carried the river by a channel so that it flowed midway between the hills. [3] And to this day the Persians keep careful watch on this bend of the river, strengthening its dam every year to keep the current in; for were the Nile to burst its dikes and overflow here, all Memphis would be in danger of flooding. [4] Then, when this first king Min had made dry land of what he thus cut off, he first founded in it that city which is now called Memphis (for even Memphis lies in the narrow part of Egypt), and outside of it he dug a lake from the river to its north and west (for the Nile itself bounds it on the east); and secondly, he built in it the great and most noteworthy temple of Hephaestus. Herodotos 2.99

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+2.99.1>)

XXIX. I was unable to learn anything from anyone else, but this much further I did learn by the most extensive investigation that I could make, going as far as the city of Elephantine to look myself, and beyond that by question and hearsay. [2] Beyond Elephantine, as one travels inland, the land rises. Here one must pass with the boat roped on both sides as men

harness an ox; and if the rope breaks, the boat will be carried away by the strength of the current. [3] This part of the river is a four days' journey by boat, and the Nile here is twisty just as the Maeander; a distance of twelve schoeni must be passed in the foregoing manner. After that, you come to a level plain, where there is an island in the Nile, called Takhompso. [4] The country above Elephantine now begins to be inhabited by Ethiopians: half the people of the island are Ethiopians, and half Egyptians. Near the island is a great lake, on whose shores live nomadic Ethiopians. After crossing this, you come to the stream of the Nile, which empties into this lake. [5] Then you disembark and journey along the river bank for forty days; for there are sharp projecting rocks in the Nile and many reefs, through which no boat can pass. [6] Having traversed this part in forty days as I have said, you take boat again and so travel for twelve days until you come to a great city called Meroe, which is said to be the capital of all Ethiopia. [7] The people of the place worship no other gods but Zeus and Dionysus; these they greatly honor, and they have a place of divination sacred to Zeus; they send out armies whenever and wherever this god through his oracle commands them. Herodotos 2.29

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+2.29.1>)

There is a lively scholarly debate as to the extent of Herodotos' autopsy of different areas and particularly whether all the areas he mentions were actually visited by him (see on this: Armayor, O. Kimball, 'Did Herodotus Ever Go to the Black Sea?', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 82. (1978), pp. 45-62. (available from JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311020>).

Ever since antiquity, Herodotos has been criticized for suffering from flights of fancy and at times creating details to fit his, or his audience's, perception of different places without actually having any dependable information:

XXI. On the whole, however, the conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied on. Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggeration of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense; the subjects they treat of being out of the reach of evidence, and time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend. Turning from these, we can rest satisfied with having proceeded upon the clearest data, and having arrived at conclusions as exact as can be

expected in matters of such antiquity. [2] To come to this war; despite the known disposition of the actors in a struggle to overrate its importance, and when it is over to return to their admiration of earlier events, yet an examination of the facts will show that it was much greater than the wars which preceded it. XXII. With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. [2] And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. [3] My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. [4] The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time. Thucydides 1.21-22

Translation: Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Thuc.+1.22.1>)

Probably the most scathing ancient review of Herodotos' work and method can be found in Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus* (An online translation is available at: http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/plutarch/moralia/malice_of_herodotus.htm).

The truthfulness of Herodotos' accounts, particularly in relation to lands in the periphery of the Mediterranean is a matter that can not be truly resolved. Certainly parts of Herodotos' accounts do not agree with the archaeological and geographical evidence from the areas concerned. On the other hand, other parts of Herodotos' accounts have a ring of truth and are verifiable archaeologically. On this see further Evans, J. A. S. 'Father of History or Father of Lies; The Reputation of Herodotus', *The Classical*

Journal, Vol. 64, No. 1, (Oct., 1968), pp. 11-17, JSTOR:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3296527>

Herodotos' Own Opinion

As discussed above, Herodotos' method specifically calls for the recording of all different traditions and opinion on a subject without the prejudicial input of the author. However, in some issues, Herodotos does give his own opinion and even an alternative explanation of his own:

When the Nile is in flood, it overflows not only the Delta but also the lands called Libyan and Arabian, as far as two days' journey from either bank in places, and sometimes more than this, sometimes less. Concerning its nature, I could not learn anything either from the priests or from any others. [2] Yet I was anxious to learn from them why the Nile comes down with a rising flood for a hundred days from the summer solstice; and when this number of days is passed, sinks again with a diminishing stream, so that the river is low for the whole winter until the summer solstice again. [3] I was not able to get any information from any of the Egyptians regarding this, when I asked them what power the Nile has to be contrary in nature to all other rivers. I wished to know this, and asked; also, why no breezes blew from it as from every other river. But some of the Greeks, wishing to be notable for cleverness, put forward three opinions about this river, two of which I would not even mention except just to show what they are. [2] One of them maintains that the Etesian winds are the cause of the river being in flood, because they hinder the Nile from emptying into the sea. But there are many times when the Etesian winds do not blow, yet the Nile does the same as before. [3] And further, if the Etesian winds were the cause, then the other rivers which flow contrary to those winds should be affected like the Nile, and even more so, since being smaller they have a weaker current. Yet there are many rivers in Syria and many in Libya, and they behave nothing like the Nile. XXI. **The second opinion is less grounded on knowledge than the previous, though it is more marvellous to the ear:** according to it, the river effects what it does because it flows from Ocean, which flows around the whole world. XXII. **The third opinion is by far the most plausible, yet the most erroneous of all.** It has no more truth in it than the others. According to this, the Nile flows from where snows melt; but it flows from Libya through the midst of Ethiopia, and comes out into Egypt. [2] How can it flow from snow, then, seeing that it comes from the hottest places to lands that are for the most part cooler? In fact, for a man who can reason about such things, the principal

and strongest evidence that the river is unlikely to flow from snows is that the winds blowing from Libya and Ethiopia are hot. [3] In the second place, the country is rainless and frostless; but after snow has fallen, it has to rain within five days; so that if it snowed, it would rain in these lands. And thirdly, the men of the country are black because of the heat. [4] Moreover, kites and swallows live there all year round, and cranes come every year to these places to winter there, flying from the wintry weather of Scythia. Now, were there but the least fall of snow in this country through which the Nile flows and where it rises, none of these things would happen, as necessity proves. XXIII. **The opinion about Ocean is grounded in obscurity and needs no disproof; for I know of no Ocean river; and I suppose that Homer or some older poet invented this name and brought it into his poetry.** XXIV. **If, after having condemned the opinions proposed, I must indicate what I myself think about these obscure matters, I shall say why I think the Nile floods in the summer.** During the winter, the sun is driven by storms from his customary course and passes over the inland parts of Libya. [2] For the briefest demonstration, everything has been said; for whatever country this god is nearest, or over, it is likely that that land is very thirsty for water and that the local rivers are dried up. XXV. A lengthier demonstration goes as follows. In its passage over the inland parts of Libya, the sun does this: as the air is always clear in that region, the land warm, and the winds cool, the sun does in its passage exactly as it would do in the summer passing through the middle of the heaven: [2] it draws the water to itself, and having done so, expels it away to the inland regions, and the winds catch it and scatter and dissolve it; and, as is to be expected, those that blow from that country, the south and the southwest, are the most rainy of all winds. [3] Yet I think that the sun never lets go of all of the water that it draws up from the Nile yearly, but keeps some back near itself. Then, as the winter becomes milder, the sun returns to the middle of the heaven, and after that draws from all rivers alike. [4] Meanwhile, the other rivers are swollen to high flood by the quantity of water that falls into them from the sky, because the country is rained on and cut into gullies; but in the summer they are low, lacking the rain and being drawn up too by the sun. [5] But the Nile, being fed by no rain, and being the only river drawn up by the sun in winter, at this time falls far short of the height that it had in summer; which is but natural; for in summer all other waters too and not it alone are attracted to the sun, but in the winter it alone is afflicted. XXVI. I am convinced, therefore, that the sun is the cause of this phenomenon. The dryness of the air in these parts is also caused by the sun, in my opinion, because it burns its way through it; hence, it is always summer in the inland part of Libya. [2] But were the stations of the seasons changed, so that the south wind and the summer had their station where the north wind and winter are now set, and the north wind was where the south wind is now--if this were so, the sun, when driven from mid-heaven by the winter and the north wind, would pass over the inland parts of Europe as it now passes over

Libya, and I think that in its passage over all Europe it would have the same effect on the Ister as it now does on the Nile. Herodotos 2.19-26

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

The above passage is quite difficult to understand and is at times almost obscure (for a discussion of the textual and contextual difficulties of this passage, see Baxendale, J. W., 'Herodotus and the Missing Nile αὔραι', *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Sep., 1994), pp. 433-453, JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4432396>).

In spite of its textual and contextual difficulties, this passage is indicative of Herodotos' ability to criticize his sources and apply an intellectual selectivity process on them. Although, he faithfully records all three available explanations, he, faithfully following his method, does not feel compelled to endorse any of them. On the contrary, and here the power of his autopsy can be seen clearly, Herodotos prefers to put forward his own explanation of the phenomenon. While his refutation of the previously proposed explanations is quite strong, Herodotos does not try to distance the reader from the alternative explanations to his own by affording them less space or detail.

Herodotos and the Fantastic

A problem for the modern student of Herodotos, as much as for his ancient rationalising readers and commentators, is the inclusion of the fantastic and the irrational in his work. There are two aspects of the inclusion of the irrational: firstly, the inclusion of stories regarding distant lands and events that verge on the fantastic, and, secondly, the inclusion of accounts within the historical memory that contain the irrational. These two aspects are sharply different, not only in the explanation of their inclusion in Herodotos' works but, more importantly, in the background of their inclusion.

Often in Herodotos' *Histories* stories about distant lands move from the rational and believable to the realm of the irrational, if not the plainly fantastic. Possibly the most well-known of these stories is the story of the Indian gold-digging ants:

CII. Other Indians dwell near the town of Caspatyrus and the Pactyic country, north of the rest of India; these live like the Bactrians; they are of all Indians the most warlike, and it is they who are sent for the gold; for in these parts all is desolate because of the sand. [2] In this sandy desert are ants, not as big as dogs but bigger than foxes; the Persian king has some of these, which have been caught there. These ants live underground, digging out the sand in the same way as the ants in Greece, to which they are very similar in shape, and the sand which they carry from the holes is full of gold. [3] It is for this sand that the Indians set forth into the desert. They harness three camels apiece, males on either side sharing the drawing, and a female in the middle: the man himself rides on the female, that when harnessed has been taken away from as young an offspring as may be. Their camels are as swift as horses, and much better able to bear burdens besides. CIII. I do not describe the camel's appearance to Greeks, for they know it; but I shall tell them something that they do not know concerning it: the hindlegs of the camel have four thighbones and four knee-joints; its genitals are turned towards the tail between the hindlegs. CIV. Thus and with teams so harnessed the Indians ride after the gold, being careful to be engaged in taking it when the heat is greatest; for the ants are then out of sight underground. [2] Now in these parts the sun is hottest in the morning, not at midday as elsewhere, but from sunrise to the hour of market-closing. Through these hours it is much hotter than in Hellas at noon, so that men are said to sprinkle themselves with water at this time. [3] At midday the sun's heat is nearly the same in India as elsewhere. As it goes to afternoon, the sun of India has the power of the morning sun in other lands; as day declines it becomes ever cooler, until at sunset it is exceedingly cold. CV. So when the Indians come to the place with their sacks, they fill these with the sand and drive back as fast as possible; for the ants at once scent them out, the Persians say, and give chase. They say nothing is equal to them for speed, so that unless the Indians have a headstart while the ants were gathering, not one of them would get away. [2] They cut loose the male trace-camels, which are slower than the females, as they begin to lag, one at a time; the mares never tire, for they remember the young that they have left. Such is the tale. Most of the gold (say the Persians) is got in this way by the Indians; they dig some from mines in their country, too, but it is less abundant. Herodotos 3.102-5

TranslationL Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

Such stories have born part of the accusations regarding the inclusion of the fantastic in the *Histories*:

His information about the distant Indian tribes is supposed to come from a Persian source; and, fantastic though much of it is, it seems to satisfy him. He seems equally satisfied with the schematic grouping of the Libyan tribes, which probably comes from Hecataeus. In fact, his geographical scepticism seems to be confined to the distant parts of Europe. What can be the reason for this? Can it be that he was antagonized by the tales of feathers and bees blocking the traveller's way and griffins guarding the gold of the far north? But he was perfectly capable of rationalizing these tales, and indeed they are no more fantastic than those of the giant ants of India. He is irritated by the maps of "the Ionians," with their neat arrangement of the ocean surrounding a carefully rounded world, but their schematic arrangement of the Libyan tribes is just as suspiciously artificial. The truth seems to be that he is no more consistent in his critical attitude towards geographical reports than towards accounts of barbarian customs. The only distinct tendency which can be noticed is a greater readiness to believe reports about peoples and regions with which Persian authorities have come into contact.

Pearson, Lionel 'Credulity and Scepticism in Herodotus', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 72, (1941), p. 346 JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/283060>

On the other hand, defenders of Herodotos have also latched onto these stories in an effort to find the kernel of truth behind all tall stories, myths and legends. Possible explanations for the kernel of truth regarding these Indian gold-digging ants have been many and even now, scientists do purport to find this kernel of truth. [For different explanations see: (1) McCartney, Eugene S. 'The Gold-Digging Ants', *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 5, (Feb., 1954), pp. 234-234 JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3293717>, (2) Regenos, G. W. 'A Note on Herodotus III, 102' *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 7, (Apr., 1939), pp. 425-426 JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3291327>, (3) Simons, M. 'Himalayas Offer Clue to Legend of Gold-Digging 'Ants', *New York Times* 25/11/1996

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9806E5DC133DF936A15752C1A960958260&scp=1&sq=&st=nyt>]

The possibility of a kernel of truth, be it wizened dark-skinned miners, badgers or woolly marmots, in the story of the gold-digging ants as reported in Herodotos cannot be disputed. Of importance, however, is not an elusive kernel of truth but the reason and the rationale behind the inclusion of such tales about distant lands in the *Histories*. Herodotos himself provides the most likely explanation:

CXVI. But in the north of Europe there is by far the most gold. In this matter again I cannot say with assurance how the gold is produced, but it is said that one-eyed men called Arimaspians steal it from griffins. [2] But I do not believe this, that there are one-eyed men who have a nature otherwise the same as other men. [3] **The most outlying lands, though, as they enclose and wholly surround all the rest of the world, are likely to have those things which we think the finest and the rarest.** Herodotos 3.116

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+3.116.1>)

Herodotos, like many of his contemporaries, viewed the borders of the known world as places beyond the realm of the ordinary. Rationalisation was not a process that could be applied to such places or peoples, since any firm basis for the rational did not exist for what neither personal nor communal experience could verify. Thus, the historian, like the reader or the listener, can perfectly well disbelieve the veracity of such tall stories but the possibility of their being true or holding a measure of truth because of the place of their origin and existence cannot be discounted.

Herodotos, like most Greeks in the classical period, lived in a world centered on the Mediterranean and its immediate hinterland. While the areas and people near the coasts or within the possible travel of the coast were relatively well-known, any cultural misunderstandings aside, people and areas further away were not. India, like the far north and the islands in west of Europe and the east beyond the Black Sea were areas little known to the Greeks. Consequently, the Greek idea of such places were as places of the

fantastic, in a way places of magic. Herodotos in his record of the stories regarding such places plays to his audience's conceptions and misconceptions of far away places.

The other side of the Herodotean inclusion of the irrational in his *Histories* has to do with the miraculous, specifically the miraculous in the sphere of religion. There are several stories in Herodotos' *Histories* regarding the intervention of the divine in the course of history. These interventions are not confined to the mythological past but take place in historical times and even during the Persian Wars themselves:

XXXVII. Now when the barbarians drew near and could see the temple, the prophet, whose name was Aceratus, saw certain sacred arms, which no man might touch without sacrilege, brought out of the chamber within and laid before the shrine. [2] So he went to tell the Delphians of this miracle, but when the barbarians came with all speed near to the temple of Athena Pronaea, they were visited by miracles yet greater than the aforesaid. Marvellous indeed it is, that weapons of war should of their own motion appear lying outside in front of the shrine, but the visitation which followed was more wondrous than anything else ever seen. [3] When the barbarians were near to the temple of Athena Pronaea, they were struck by thunderbolts from the sky, and two peaks broken off from Parnassus came rushing among them with a mighty noise and overwhelmed many of them. In addition to this a shout and a cry of triumph were heard from the temple of Athena. XXXVIII. All of this together struck panic into the barbarians, and the Delphians, perceiving that they fled, descended upon them and killed a great number. The survivors fled straight to Boeotia. Those of the barbarians who returned said (as I have been told) that they had seen other divine signs besides what I have just described: two men-at-arms of stature greater than human, they said, had come after them, slaying and pursuing. XXXIX. These two, say the Delphians, were the native heroes Phylacus and Autonous, whose precincts are near the temple, Phylacus' by the road itself above the shrine of Athena Pronaea, and Autonous' near the Castalian spring, under the Hyarapean Peak. [2] The rocks that fell from Parnassus were yet to be seen in my day, lying in the precinct of Athena Pronaea, from where their descent through the foreigners' ranks had hurled them. Such, then, was the manner of those men's departure from the temple. Herodotos 8.37-40

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

It is clear from Herodotos' testimony that these episodes of divine intervention were reported by those who took part in the battle (interestingly from both sides). Further, Herodotos provides proof of the intervention by the gods through his own autopsy regarding what is verifiable half a century or more after the event. Herodotos, unlike Thucydides, does not exclude religions from his work, nor does he take a pragmatic view of events and the irrational.

Herodotos is deeply religious in his opinions, at least as far as any educated Greek of his era could be. The gods can and do take part in human history in Herodotos' view of events and we may assume that of the majority of his audience as well. Interestingly, the gods take interest in events that are of direct relation to them, as in the above passage, where the temple of Delphi must not be desecrated by the Persians and thus various divine or semi-divine entities take action to protect the temple.

The influence of the gods in the Persian Wars as a whole cannot be ignored either. The Persians had the unfortunate tendency to desecrate temples during their conquest, as Herodotos records in several instances:

XXXII. When they entered Phocis from Doris, they could not take the Phocians themselves, for some of the Phocians ascended to the heights of Parnassus. The peak of Parnassus called Tithorea, which rises by itself near the town Neon, has room enough for a multitude of people. It was there that they carried their goods and themselves ascended to it, [2] but most of them made their way out of the country to the Ozolian Locrians, where the town of Amphissa lies above the Crisaeian plain. The barbarians, while the Thessalians so guided their army, overran the whole of Phocis. All that came within their power they laid waste to and burnt, setting fire to towns and temples. XXXIII. Marching this way down the river Cephissus, they ravaged everything that lay in their way, burning the towns of Drymus, Charadra, Erochus, Tethronium, Amphicaea, Neon, Pediea, Tritea, Elatea, Hyampolis, Parapotamii, and Abae, where there was a richly endowed temple of Apollo, provided with wealth of treasure and offerings. There was also then as now a place of divination at this place. This temple, too, they plundered and burnt, and they pursued and caught some of the Phocians near the mountains. Certain women too perished because of the multitude of their violators. Herodotos 8.32-3

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley.
Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL:
www.perseus.tufts.edu)

The theme of the desecration of temples, and the potential it creates for divine intervention, is recurrent in the *Histories*, since clearly not only it was part of the fighting reality of the Persian Wars but also was a major component in the propaganda of both sides:

CI. They were prevented from plundering the city by the fact that most of the houses in Sardis were made of reeds, and those made of brick had roofs of reeds. Accordingly, when one of these was set on fire by a soldier, the flames spread from house to house all over the whole city. [2] While the city was burning, the Lydians and all the Persians who were in the citadel, being hemmed in on every side since the fire was consuming the outer parts and having no exit from the city, came thronging into the marketplace and to the river Pactolus, which flows through the marketplace carrying down gold dust from Tmolus and issues into the river Hermus, which in turn issues into the sea. They assembled in the marketplace by this Pactolus and were forced to defend themselves there. [3] When the Ionians saw some of their enemies defending themselves and a great multitude of others approaching, they were afraid and withdrew to the mountain called Tmolus, from where they departed to their ships at nightfall. CII. **In the fire at Sardis, a temple of Cybebe, the goddess of that country, was burnt, and the Persians afterwards made this their pretext for burning the temples of Hellas.** At this time, the Persians of the provinces this side of the Halys, on hearing of these matters, gathered together and came to aid the Lydians. [2] It chanced that they found the Ionians no longer at Sardis, but following on their tracks, they caught them at Ephesus. There the Ionians stood arrayed to meet them, but were utterly routed in the battle. [3] The Persians put to the sword many men of renown including Eualcides the general of the Eretrians who had won crowns as victor in the games and been greatly praised by Simonides of Ceos. Those of the Ionians who escaped from the battle fled, each to his city. CIII. This, then is how they fared in their fighting. Presently, however, the Athenians wholly separated themselves from the Ionians and refused to aid them, although Aristagoras sent messages of earnest entreaty. Despite the fact that they had been deprived of their Athenian allies, the Ionians fervently continued their war against the king (for they remained committed by what they had done to Darius). [2] They sailed to the Hellespont and made Byzantium and all the other cities of that region subject to themselves. Then sailing out from the Hellespont they gained to their cause the greater part of

Caria, for even Caunus, which till then had not wanted to be their ally, now joined itself to them after the burning of Sardis. CIV. The Cyprians did likewise of their own free will, all save the people of Amathus, for these too revolted from the Medes in such manner as I will show. There was a certain Onesilus, a younger brother of Gorgus king of the Salaminians, son of Chersis, whose father was Siromus, and grandson of Euelthon. [2] This man had often before advised Gorgus to revolt from Darius, and now when he heard that the Ionians too had revolted, he was insistent in striving to move him. When, however, he could not persuade Gorgus, he and his faction waited till his brother had gone out of the city of Salamis, and shut him out of the gates. [3] Gorgus, after having lost his city, took refuge with the Medes, and Onesilus, now king of Salamis, persuaded all Cyprus to revolt with him, all save the Amathusians, who would not consent. He accordingly stationed his forces in front of their city and besieged it. CV. Onesilus, then, besieged Amathus. When it was reported to Darius that Sardis had been taken and burnt by the Athenians and Ionians and that Aristagoras the Milesian had been leader of the conspiracy for the making of this plan, he at first, it is said, took no account of the Ionians since he was sure that they would not go unpunished for their rebellion. Darius did, however, ask who the Athenians were, and after receiving the answer, he called for his bow. This he took and, placing an arrow on it, and shot it into the sky, praying as he sent it aloft, [2] "O Zeus, grant me vengeance on the Athenians." Then he ordered one of his servants to say to him three times whenever dinner was set before him, "Master, remember the Athenians." Herodotos 5.101-105

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

For the Greeks, and for the Persians as well to an extent, the desecration of the temples by the enemy gave them the moral high-ground as well as a surety of the gods' support for their cause. The Greeks in Herodotos, particularly the Athenians, express this certainty of divine intervention on their behalf most eloquently:

CIX. When Themistocles perceived that he could not persuade the greater part of them to sail to the Hellespont, he turned to the Athenians (for they were the angriest at the Persians' escape, and they were minded to sail to the Hellespont even by themselves, if the rest would not) and addressed them as follows: [2] "This I have often seen with my eyes and heard yet more often, namely that beaten men, when they be driven to bay, will rally and retrieve their former mishap. Therefore I say to you,--as it is to a fortunate chance that we owe ourselves and Hellas, and have driven away so mighty a band of

enemies--let us not pursue men who flee, [3] for it is not we who have won this victory, but the gods and the heroes, who deemed Asia and Europe too great a realm for one man to rule, and that a wicked man and an impious one who dealt alike with temples and bones, burning and overthrowing the images of the gods,--yes, and one who scourged the sea and threw fetters into it. [4] But as it is well with us for the moment, let us abide now in Hellas and take thought for ourselves and our households. Let us build our houses again and be diligent in sowing, when we have driven the foreigner completely away. Then when the next spring comes, let us set sail for the Hellespont and Ionia.” [5] This he said with intent to have something to his credit with the Persian, so that he might have a place of refuge if ever (as might chance) he should suffer anything at the hands of the Athenians--and just that did in fact happen. Herodotos 8.109

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+8.109.1>)

CXLIII. But to Alexander the Athenians replied as follows: “We know of ourselves that the power of the Mede is many times greater than ours. There is no need to taunt us with that. Nevertheless in our zeal for freedom we will defend ourselves to the best of our ability. But as regards agreements with the barbarian, do not attempt to persuade us to enter into them, nor will we consent. [2] Now carry this answer back to Mardonius from the Athenians, that as long as the sun holds the course by which he now goes, we will make no agreement with Xerxes. We will fight against him without ceasing, trusting in the aid of the gods and the heroes whom he has disregarded and burnt their houses and their adornments. [3] Come no more to Athenians with such a plea, nor under the semblance of rendering us a service, counsel us to act wickedly. For we do not want those who are our friends and protectors to suffer any harm at Athenian hands.” Herodotos 8.143

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hdt.+8.143.1>)

The inclusion of the divine and of belief in the divine is a major issue in Herodotos. The gods do take part in human affairs and for the historian there is no reason to exclude the gods and their intervention from his work. In such cases, the irrational is part of the Greek view of life rather than an aspect of the fantastic. On Herodotos and the role of the

gods in human actions, see Vignolo Munson, Rosaria 'Ananke in Herodotus' *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 121, (2001), pp. 30-50 JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/631826>

Herodotos and the Barbarian

A great part of the *Histories* is about non-Greeks, specifically the ones sharing the Mediterranean with the Greeks. Herodotos' view of the non-Greeks is a big issue in our understanding of the *Histories*. More importantly, it is our main source for the Greeks' view of non-Greeks in the 5th century.

XXXV. It is sufficient to say this much concerning the Nile. But concerning Egypt, I am going to speak at length, because it has the most wonders, and everywhere presents works beyond description; therefore, I shall say the more concerning Egypt. [2] Just as the Egyptians have a climate peculiar to themselves, and their river is different in its nature from all other rivers, so, too, have they instituted customs and laws contrary for the most part to those of the rest of mankind. Among them, the women buy and sell, the men stay at home and weave; and whereas in weaving all others push the woof upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards. [3] Men carry burdens on their heads, women on their shoulders. Women pass water standing, men sitting. They ease their bowels indoors, and eat out of doors in the streets, explaining that things unseemly but necessary should be done alone in private, things not unseemly should be done openly. [4] No woman is dedicated to the service of any god or goddess; men are dedicated to all deities male or female. Sons are not compelled against their will to support their parents, but daughters must do so though they be unwilling. Herodotos 2.35

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

XXXVIII. I hold it then in every way proved that Cambyses was quite insane; or he would never have set himself to deride religion and custom. For if it were proposed to all nations to choose which seemed best of all customs, each, after examination, would place its own first; so well is each convinced that its own are by far the best. [2] It is not therefore to be supposed that anyone, except a madman, would turn such things to ridicule. I will give this

one proof among many from which it may be inferred that all men hold this belief about their customs. [3] When Darius was king, he summoned the Greeks who were with him and asked them for what price they would eat their fathers' dead bodies. They answered that there was no price for which they would do it. [4] Then Darius summoned those Indians who are called Callatiae, who eat their parents, and asked them (the Greeks being present and understanding through interpreters what was said) what would make them willing to burn their fathers at death. The Indians cried aloud, that he should not speak of so horrid an act. So firmly rooted are these beliefs; and it is, I think, rightly said in Pindar's poem that custom is lord of all. Herodotos 3.38

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

XLVI. Nowhere are men so ignorant as in the lands by the Euxine Pontus (excluding the Scythian nation) into which Darius led his army. For we cannot show that any nation within the region of the Pontus has any cleverness, nor do we know of (overlooking the Scythian nation and Anacharsis) any notable man born there. [2] But the Scythian race has made the cleverest discovery that we know in what is the most important of all human affairs; I do not praise the Scythians in all respects, but in this, the most important: that they have contrived that no one who attacks them can escape, and no one can catch them if they do not want to be found. [3] For when men have no established cities or forts, but are all nomads and mounted archers, not living by tilling the soil but by raising cattle and carrying their dwellings on wagons, how can they not be invincible and unapproachable? Herodotos 4.46

Translation: Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. (Perseus DL: www.perseus.tufts.edu)

To understand Herodotos' view of non-Greeks, or barbarians as they are commonly called in the sources, it is necessary to understand the climate that Herodotos was writing in. On the one hand, Herodotos was writing in the generation after the Persian Wars and spent a great part of his life in Athens. A conflict as large and as bloody as the expedition of Xerxes is immensely influential in the outlook of the peoples that have experienced it.

That is particularly true of those who were dispossessed or under foreign occupation. The nearest parallel in the modern world of the relative extent of the influence of this conflict on the culture of the Greeks is the European experience of the WWII.

More importantly, and in this the Greeks had a sharply different experience than the European after 1945, the conflict with Persia did not end in 479 BCE. Until at least the middle of the century, the Greeks, particularly those belonging to the Delian League, remained in conflict with Persia experiencing not only a number of small skirmishes in the border areas (ex. Eion) but also full-blown battles and expeditions (Eurymedon, the two expeditions to Cyprus, the Egyptian Expedition). Herodotos lived and wrote in a state of war, certainly not as all-encompassing as the actual time of the expedition of Xerxes but, importantly, more embedded in everyday life.

The Persians for the Greeks of Herodotos' generation, especially the historian's main audience: the Athenians, were the enemy. Memories of the destruction of poleis in Asia Minor, most importantly Miletus, during and after the Ionian Revolt and more significantly the destruction of Athens by Xerxes' troops would still be current among Herodotos' readers and listeners. Not only would the destruction have been a part of communal memory but importantly the defeat of the Persians would also have been a matter close to the heart. Not only had the Greeks, especially the Athenians, suffered greatly in the hands of the Persians but also they had managed to defeat the greatest enemy host in living memory or legend.

In this environment, Herodotos' aims in his *Histories* and the amount of space and consideration he gives to non-Greeks is both brave and a definite political statement. To an extent, Herodotos' choice to make the barbarians as much as the Greeks the heroes of his work can be explained by his own position. Herodotos, unlike the vast majority of surviving classical writers was not an Athenians, nor did he come from mainland Greece. Herodotos was born and raised a Halikarnassian.

Halikarnassos was a Greek colony in Caria in south-western Asia Minor opposite the island of Kos. Halikarnassos was a very important city in Caria and along with Knidos

was considered the unofficial capital of the area. Mausolus in the 4th century actually made Halikarnassos the capital of his satrapy. One of the most interesting features of this polis was that it had a combined Greek-Carian population and non-Greeks were apparently a lot more integrated in society than in other Greek poleis in Asia Minor, particularly in Ionia and Aiolis.

Herodotos' background was such that he had a greater contact and understanding of Persia and the areas and peoples in the Persian Empire than the average Greek in the mainland or the Aegean. It is probable that Herodotos' aims and the way he portrayed non-Greeks in his *Histories* are directly influenced by his own perception of non-Greeks in his native Halikarnassos. The situation in Halikarnassos was quite different from that of the average Greek polis, particularly in Old Greece and the Aegean, where non-Greeks were mainly slaves, ex-slaves and transient traders. On Halikarnassos in the 5th century BCE, see Meiggs, R. *The Athenian empire* OUP 1972, p.54-6 [Available from NetLibrary: <http://www.netlibrary.com/>] and Eddy, Samuel K., 'The Cold War between Athens and Persia, ca. 448-412 B.C.' *Classical Philology*, Vol. 68, No. 4, (Oct., 1973), pp. 241-258 JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/268868>

Herodotos' view of non-Greeks is Hellenocentric but not malicious. While his view is that the Greeks are in many ways superior, non-Greeks are given substance and purpose in the *Histories* without resorting to caricature. On this, see further Pelling, C. 'East Is East And West Is West - Or Are They? National Stereotypes In Herodotus' *Histos*, Vol. 1, (Mar., 1997) <http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1997/pelling.html>

Suggested reading:

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Short assignment: Did Herodotus view women as "other?"