

### Chapter 3

## Interpretation and Evaluation

A narrative text encourages its recipient to understand the events it recounts in a certain way through strategies that are largely indirect, such as the selection of the facts it narrates and the words by which it chooses to represent them. But when we hear the narrator express the main point about the facts of a narrative, speculate on its less obvious aspects, express a judgment, or draw the moral of the story, we have an interpretive gloss. This is a very broad metanarrative category, potentially coinciding with the range of referential metanarrative itself. Among explicit comparisons, a bold case of interpretation appears in the gloss that points out that Cleisthenes of Athens reproduced in his democratic reforms certain actions of his grandfather, the tyrant of Sicyon. The gloss “just like the Greeks” attached to the factual statement of Egyptian monogamy bids the listeners to think of the Egyptians in terms of affinities with themselves, rather than differences. Both these elements of the discourse provide, as do interpretive glosses in general, directions for “reading” (in the sense of decoding) the narrative.

The narrator also enhances the listener’s understanding of what is being narrated by expressing or implying his approval or disapproval. Evaluation of worth is always based on certain interpretive assumptions about the meaning of the action that is praised or blamed; conversely, to explain meaning even in neutral terms often promotes a judgment in terms of “Good” or “Bad.” The distinction between evaluation and interpretation, in other words, is bound to lack rigor, but its usefulness for the purposes of the present book has to do, once again, with the differences we notice in the approaches of history and ethnography, respectively. History first and foremost investigates the meaning of events—why they occur and what general laws one can derive from the accumulation of factual data. We therefore provisionally subsume evaluation to interpretation. Herodotus’ ethnographical descriptions, in contrast, often leave unanswered (and unasked) why people customarily do what they do (e.g.,

sacrifice) in a certain way. Even in cases that may appear controversial to us, Herodotus tends to report the meaning of actions as a matter of fact.<sup>1</sup> Although cumulatively ethnography leads Herodotus to an understanding of the world, the main problem in individual ethnographic statements and sections is rather the extent to which his discourse either valorizes difference or encourages the assumption of its inferiority. As I examine the ethnographies, therefore, I will begin by subsuming interpretation to evaluation and focus on the ways and means by which Herodotus promotes approval or disapproval of his ethnographic subjects.

### Evaluation in the Ethnographies

#### Explicit Evaluation

I have argued in the preceding chapter that Herodotus' insistence on the strands of cultural similarity connecting different *ethne* around the world contributes to undermining the notion of a clear-cut separation between Greeks and non-Greeks and questions the validity of those categories. But the canonical antithesis pervades the *logos* and implicates the *histor*. The Spartan ambassadors in Athens declare that "with barbarians there is no faith or truth" (8.142.5). Pausanias tells the Aeginetan Lampon that to mutilate the corpse of Mardonius would be an action "befitting barbarians rather than Greeks" (9.79.1). Both these judgments occur in ironical contexts and have no authority from the point of view of the text.<sup>2</sup> When Xerxes lashes and brands the Hellespont, however, the evaluation of his words as "barbarian and impious" [βάρβαρά τε καὶ ἀτάσθαλα] (7.35.2) comes directly from the narrator and testifies to his acceptance of the negative ethical connotations of the word *barbaros*.

The exclusive application of the word in this sense to the most symbolic monarchical transgression in the entire *logos* helps to explain the partial dissociation between the *barbaroi* of the ethnographies and the concept of *barbaron* in the history. Because of the regocentric character of the historical narrative of non-Greek actions from Croesus to Xerxes,

1. E.g., from our point of view, Herodotus "interprets" the ritual described at 4.62 as a sacrifice to Ares. Mora (1985, 124–25), e.g., disagrees on both counts. But from the point of the text, this *is* a sacrifice to Ares.

2. On irony in the sequence of speeches at 8.140–9.11, see Fornara 1971a, 84–86; Raaflaub 1987, 240. Spartan deceitfulness is a contemporary stereotype, at least in Athens. See Hdt. 9.54.1, 9.11, 6.108; Powell 1988a.

entire cultures tend to become identified with their less typical specimens and bear the burden of providing the negative paradigm as either ruler or ruled. Monarchy carries such powerful negative connotations that it cannot help affecting the evaluation of the peoples who accept and perpetuate this form of government.<sup>3</sup> This evaluative constraint also has a certain carryover in points of representation of a nonpolitical nature. Thus, in the ethnography, the Lydians are authors of inventions later adopted by the Greeks (1.94.1–2), but in the history, the Greek Thales scientifically predicts the eclipse that appears as a terrifying portent to the Lydians and the Medes (1.74.2). In the ethnography, the Egyptians do things earlier and more intelligently than the Greeks, yet in the history, a Greek doctor proves superior to the Egyptian physicians (3.129–30). The main feature of the discrepancy is, however, that the historical narrative of the actions of kings is likely to be the locus of orientalist representation.<sup>4</sup> The ethnographies—which describe a wider range of cultures and take a broader outlook on culture—go a long way to repair the damage. Indeed, one might argue that from the point of view of the overarching message of the *Histories*, this is one of their primary functions. Nowhere in the *logos*, at any rate, do we find the narrator evaluating a known historical people with a statement remotely resembling the following statement that Thucydides appends to one of his narratives, despite Thucydides' more limited opportunities for characterizing foreigners.

For the Thracian race, like the bloodiest of the barbarians, is even more so when it has nothing to fear. (Thuc. 7.29.4, trans. Crawley in Strassler 1996).

Herodotus applies negative evaluations to a few remote peoples, who play a very small role in the historical narrative and whose customs he cannot regard as morally equivalent to those of more advanced *ethne*.<sup>5</sup> An extreme and unique case is represented by the utterly unregulated Androphagoi, who illustrate Herodotus' identification of law/custom/culture with morality: they “have the most savage ways of all men

3. See the implicitly evaluative interpretive gloss to the report that the Egyptians, after gaining their freedom, set up twelve kings, “for at no time they were able to live without a king” (2.147.2). In the historical narrative, cf. 3.143.2, on the Ionians of Samos, and 1.62.1, on some Athenians in the time of Pisistratus.

4. On orientalism, see Saïd 1978, 5–9 and *passim*.

5. E.g., he describes peoples who couple “like cattle” (1.203.2, 3.101.1, 4.180.5).

[ἀγριώτατα ἦθεα], and they do not practice justice as a custom nor do they have any law/custom [οὔτε δίκην νομίζοντες, οὔτε νόμῳ οὐδενὶ χρεώμενοι].”<sup>6</sup> Two evaluative statements that explicitly praise a people’s morality are designed to overcome the “Bad” impression that the report of their customs may have created. The funeral practices of the Issedones involve cannibalism and the fashioning of the dead man’s skull into a cup. Here, Herodotus’ effort to promote in his audience a relativistic attitude has already expressed itself in the comparative gloss that made these practices manifestations of piety on the same level as a Greek ritual. In the subsequent gloss that “otherwise these also are said to be just and to enjoy equal rights, both men and women” (4.26.2), *also* (καί) assimilates the Issedones to the Bald Men, who are at the opposite end of the spectrum to the Androphagoi and paradigmatically just.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, *otherwise* (ἄλλως) insists on the principle that justice is a virtue that transcends cultural differences; but it also reveals the difficulty of the relativistic position. Similarly, the totalizing statement that the Getae are the “most courageous and just” [ἀνδρηνότατοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι] of the Thracians (4.93) counterbalances, on the one hand, the information that they were conquered by the Persians and, on the other hand, the description of their cruel ritual in honor of their god Salmoxis, whose absurdity the text can hardly conceal.<sup>8</sup>

A different application of this compensatory strategy consists in punctuating the nonjudgmental account of practices that are bound to strike a listener as savage with very specific praise of certain items of material culture. In his description of the brutal Scythian sacrifice, for example, the narrator conveys the idea that despite differences and deficiencies, things nevertheless get done in a satisfactory way. Since the land of Scythia is “terribly poor” in wood, the Scythians “have invented” [ἔξεύρηται] a special procedure for cooking the meat by lighting the fire with the bones. They cook the meat in local cauldrons, “if they have them, **very similar to Lesbian craters, except that they are much bigger.**” If they do not have a cauldron, then they throw all the meat into the stomachs of the victims: “The meat cooks beautifully [αἰθεταὶ κάλλιστα], and the stomachs

6. 4.106. As Redfield explains (1985, 98–99), animals also have *ethea*, but only human beings have *nomoi*.

7. See 4.23.2–5. Equality between the sexes also obtains among the Bald Men. See chap. 2, n. 187 and corresponding text.

8. 4.94; see Hartog 1988, 84–109; Lateiner 1990, 235–45.

contain the meat easily [εὐπετέως] after it has been boned. And so the ox cooks itself, and the same goes for the other victims.”<sup>9</sup>

*Sophie* constitutes a conspicuous field of ethnographic evaluation.<sup>10</sup> It is a diverse quality that may include resourcefulness, practical or theoretical intelligence, learning or wisdom; when it is attributed to societies, it lacks the ethical dark side it occasionally connotes in individuals. The dogma of Greek superior intelligence is the subtext that makes all the explicit or implicit attributions of *sophie* to foreign nations indices of similarity to the Greeks. At the only time when the narrator formulates the dogma directly, however, he encases it in a demonstration of Athenian foolishness (1.60.3). Conversely, the totalizing statement that evaluates the group of *ethnea* around the Pontos as “the most ignorant people” [ἔθνεα ἀμαθέστατα], occurs in the context of Herodotus’ praise of the Scythians for making the “cleverest discovery” [σοφώτατα ἐξεύρηται]—a mode of life that enables them to elude subjection.<sup>11</sup>

Several ethnographic evaluations of worth are marked by self-referential signs I have grouped in the broad category of “opinion.”<sup>12</sup> Some of them, however, express a more subjective and less reasoned inclination than a γνώμη. They place the individuality of the narrator in the foreground by emphasizing his entitlement to a subjective reaction to something foreign, and they appear to constitute one of his responses to the tension between a relativistic ideology and an evaluative impulse. Thus, concerning the Scythians, the narrator points out the paramount strategic value of nomadism, but aside from this, he adds, “nothing else pleases me” [τὰ μέντοι ἄλλα οὐκ ἄγαμαι] (4.46.2). While acknowledging the argument of those societies that allow intercourse in temples, he still proclaims his personal dislike of the practice: “I just do not like it” [ἔμοιγε οὐκ ἀρεστά].<sup>13</sup>

Couched in objective terms, in contrast, is the negative evaluation of the Babylonians’ “most shameful custom” (1.199.1). This includes not

9. 4.61.1–2. The narrator also praises Scythian and Thracian hemp (4.74), the Scythians’ lustral steam bath (4.75.1–2), their aromatic body pack for women (4.75.3), and the availability to them of essential resources (4.59.1). See Romm 1998, 111.

10. See, e.g., Herodotus’ representation of the Assyrians, discussed in my introduction.

11. 4.46.1–2. The importance Herodotus attributes throughout the *logos* to a nation’s ability to maintain its freedom motivates also evaluations concerning the population size and military strength of Thracians (5.3.1) and Ionians (1.143.2). See Evans 1976.

12. See chap. 1, “Self-Referential Glosses.”

13. 2.64.2. Cf. the subjective formulations of 2.3.2 and 2.46.2, discussed in chap. 2, “The Texture of *Nomos*.”

merely intercourse in a sacred place but the obligation for all local women to subject themselves to ritual prostitution in the temple of Aphrodite once in their lifetime. The narrative provides a neutral but eloquent account of the humiliation of the wealthiest among the women, each compelled to follow the first stranger who comes along and throws whatever amount of money he wishes at her feet.<sup>14</sup> The narrator underlines the uniqueness of the occasion with a direct challenge to the listener: after the woman has returned home, “you are not going to get her no matter how much money you give.” We also receive a vivid impression of the ordeal of the less attractive women, each of whom must sit in the temple even for three or four years until some man chooses her and allows her to fulfill the ritual (1.199.1–5).

This exceptional case of explicit negative moral evaluation in an ethnographic context begins to suggest a distinction between customs that are oppressive and customs that are welcome and helpful to the people who follow them. The exact counterpart of “the most shameful custom of the Babylonians” is one that Herodotus introduces as “their most intelligent custom, in my opinion” [σοφώτατος . . . κατὰ γνώμην τὴν ἡμετέραν] (1.196.1) and which he later calls “their most beautiful custom” [ὁ κάλλιστος νόμος] (1.196.5), thereby signaling moral approval as well. This practice also involves a mercantile exchange of women, with the attendant problem of an inequality between the more and less beautiful. This time, however, the institution consists in a yearly auction of brides for the achievement of stable marriages, carefully designed to compensate for preexisting disadvantages and to make everyone happy. In Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazosae*, a roughly comparable utopian arrangement is called a δημοτικὴ γνώμη (631). This “democratic” quality lies at the basis of the excellence of Herodotus’ Babylonian *nomos*, unfortunately superseded since the advent of hard times by the definitely “undemocratic” and exploitative practice of prostitution (1.196.5).

A similar criterion of evaluation also emerges from the Babylonian custom judged “second in sophie” (1.197), where the marketplace principle is applied to the field of health care. Since the Babylonians have no professional class of doctors, they bring all the sick people to the agora, where passersby proffer advice and prescriptions, each according to his personal or indirect experience of this or that ailment. In the case of the

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14. A form of ritual prostitution also existed in Greece, but not for citizen women. See Halperin 1990, 104–7, for sources.

market of brides, various prohibitions were in place to prevent one from eluding the system (196.3–4); so also in this case, no one is allowed to walk by a sick person without asking him why he is suffering. Both *nomoi* provide for the exchange of resources according to need, and both preclude individualistic violations.

The Babylonian custom of gathering the sick in the center of the city for the purpose of caring for them implicitly contrasts with the Persian practice of banishing from the city altogether whoever suffers from leprosy or the “white disease.”<sup>15</sup> To the explicit praise of the Babylonian custom, however, there corresponds no explicit negative evaluation of the Persian. What we find instead is a justification of the (implicitly “Bad”) Persian practice in terms of native knowledge: they banish the sick because “they say” that these particular diseases afflict those who have sinned against the Sun. The fact that explicit praise is more frequent than explicit blame points to a search for whatever “Good” features a certain culture has to offer from out of its own store of *nomoi*, institutions, or resources.<sup>16</sup> In the description of the highly hierarchical Persian society, where there is no trace of the *demotikon* that Herodotus is able to find among the Babylonians, Herodotus chooses two *nomoi* of an entirely different sort on which he dispenses personal praise through the performative verb αἰνέω, “**I approve**” (1.137.1). Both these customs aim at protecting the patriarchal head of the family and state from succumbing to excessive emotions—respectively, grief (ἄσκη) at the possible death of an infant son (1.136.1) and impulsive anger (θυμός) against servants and subjects (1.137.1).

As in the case of explicit comparisons, evaluations point to the ideological direction in which the text travels by implicit means. In the marketplace or other community space, people can observe what they like or need among different items, as in the wisest and second wisest Babylonian practices: this setting also serves as the metaphor for the activity of the ethnographer, who places “in the middle” a variety of different peoples and their *nomoi* for the benefit of his audience. Look-

15. 1.138. The antithetical character of the two customs is observed by Asheri (1988, 380).

16. See the praise of the Persian postal system (8.98.1). See also statements praising foreign natural resources (1.193.3, 4.198, 4.194, 3.106.1, 3.112, 3.113.1), the “correctness” of certain barbarian names (4.59.2, 6.98.3), and a people’s physical health (4.187.3, 2.77.3). No negative evaluations concerning health occur, as they do in the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places*.

ing on entails evaluation and possibly a negative judgment, since people like their own customs best (3.38.1). Herodotus recognizes this inevitable tendency through his own evaluations but also keeps it under control.<sup>17</sup> He models for his listeners an attitude of charitable observation; when he does not lead them to the realization of unexpected likeness, he promotes the discovery of understandable difference and creative solutions.<sup>18</sup> This attitude dissociates the notion of barbarian from that of the barbaric and replaces a generalized contempt for alien customs with a more self-conscious definition of what must necessarily be the furthest limits of one's tolerance.

### Strategies of Evaluation

#### *Revising Greek Traditions*

Herodotus' descriptions of foreign cultures frequently imply a context of Greek ignorance and prejudice and thereby signal the ethnographer's corrective aims. In the field of interpretation and evaluation, one of Herodotus' strategies consists in refuting or countering Greek stories that perpetuate damaging stereotypes of the *barbaroi*. In book 2, passages that criticize Greek traditions concerning Egypt or the Egyptians are a part of the polemic against different branches of Greek knowledge (chronology, geography, the gods), which Herodotus pursues while more broadly demonstrating the limited power of *historie* for all sides involved.<sup>19</sup> Programmatic in this respect is the initial set of two *logoi* (2.2.1–5). To the experiment of Psammetichus as a positive, though imperfect, barbarian instance of *historie* in the narrative, the metanarrative juxtaposes a negative Greek one: according to the Greek version of the story, for the purposes of his experiment, Psammetichus cut off the tongues of his servant women. This is one of the “many frivolous things [μάταια πολλά] that the Greeks say.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, at the end of his radical

17. Contrast the evaluative mode of the Hippocratic author of *Airs, Waters, Places* or of Strabo/Ephorus (see chap. 2, “Does Climate Determine Culture” and “The Sameness of the Scythians”).

18. For the concept of “charity,” see Asad 1986, especially 147 in reference to modern ethnographers' tendency to give a favorable account of native phenomena.

19. See Hunter 1982, 50–92, especially 61, 64–65, 67, 69–70.

20. On Psammetichus in this passage as a model *histor* and analogue of the *histor* Herodotus, see Christ 1994, 184–86, especially 185. On the limitations of both Psammetichus' interpretation of his experiment and the Greek version of the story, see, e.g., Benardete 1969, 33; Dewald 1998, 615.

revision of Greek traditions concerning Heracles in light of information acquired in Egypt (2.45.1–3), the narrator dubs the Greek story that the Egyptians attempted to sacrifice Heracles another typical foolishness (εὐήθης . . . μῦθος). Here the Greeks' inexperience (ἀπειροῦς) of Egyptian culture and nature (φύσις in the sense of “national character”) contrasts with Herodotus' experience of these things (see *διάπειρα*ν at 2.77.1); it leads them to believe in an occurrence that even contradicts nature (φύσις in the sense of “what is humanly possible”). As at other times in Herodotus, custom and nature, or disregard and ignorance thereof, are here closely related.<sup>21</sup>

While the Greek version of Psammetichus' experiment reveals a generalized Greek stereotype of barbarian cruelty, the tale of Heracles' sacrifice is based on a contemporary prejudice that is specifically tailored to Egypt. Confronted with Egyptian aloofness, the Greeks constructed a fantasy of Egyptian hostility toward guests, as is represented outside of Herodotus by the legend of how the Egyptian king Busiris habitually sacrificed travelers arriving to his land.<sup>22</sup> The Busiris model of xenophobia also lies behind the Egyptian version of a Greek story that Herodotus reports to provide an implicit reversal of the Busiris myth.

In this passage (2.112–20), both the historical knowledge and the national character of the Egyptians are vindicated through no less a topic than the archetypal Greek saga of the fall of Troy. Herodotus has learned from the priests of the sanctuary of Proteus in Memphis that Alexander and Helen landed in Egypt on their way from Sparta to Troy. The slaves of Alexander sought refuge in Egypt, as suppliants in a nearby temple of Heracles, and told the priests about their master's abduction of Helen. The warden of the mouth of the Nile, a fellow named Thonis, informed King Proteus. After confronting Alexander, Proteus banished the wrongdoer from his land but kept Helen, her treasure, and the suppliant slaves

21. Cf. the rhetorical questions “How does it accord with nature that Heracles, being only one and a man, should kill many tens of thousands?” (2.45.3) and “How could a dove speak with a human voice?” (2.57.2) in Herodotus' refutation of the Greek story of the foundation of the sanctuary of Dodona, another tradition born from the Greeks' inexperience of ethnic difference. Herodotus also indicts Greek “incorrect speaking” in his refutation of the story that the courtesan Rhodopis built the pyramid of Mycerinus (2.134.1–2.135.6).

22. On Busiris, see especially Froidefond 1971, 177–79; Lloyd 1976, 212. The earliest testimonies of the story date to the sixth century: see [Hesiod] frag. 378 MW; Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 17; Panyassis frag. 26K (= Athen. 4.172D); and the late sixth-century B.C. hydria from Caere in Vienna (3576).

under his protection until the time when Menelaus would come and claim them back (2.113–15). Alexander sailed back to Troy, where the Greek army was already gathered. The Greeks requested the return of Helen, but their embassies bore no results: the Trojans kept saying that Helen was in Egypt, but the Greeks did not believe them. The war went on until, finally, the city was captured; only at that point did the Greeks realize that Helen was not at Troy and send Menelaus to look for her in Egypt.<sup>23</sup>

Herodotus again calls what “the Greeks say” (which here means the canonical Homeric version) a μάταιος λόγος (2.118.1), and he corroborates this Egyptian story in three different ways. First, he reports his independent conjecture, based on autopsy, that the shrine in Memphis uniquely named after “Foreign Aphrodite” or “Aphrodite the Guest” must be a shrine of Helen (2.112.2). Second, he examines four epic passages for the purpose of demonstrating that Homer knew about the sojourn of Helen in Egypt, though he followed the incorrect version because it was “appropriate to epic poetry” [ἐς τὴν ἐποιοίην εὐπρεπής] (2.116.1). Finally, he refutes the Greek version, showing its logical flaws on the basis of the likely (2.120.1–4). The Egyptians prove again to be superior sources, even on a fundamental issue of ancient Greek history.<sup>24</sup>

The truthful Egyptian version has the advantage that it more clearly reveals a fundamental pattern of history, as I shall show when I discuss the most generalized level of Herodotus’ interpretation.<sup>25</sup> But from an ethnographic standpoint, which concerns me here, it counters “foolish” Greek prejudices with a correct representation of Egyptian *phusis* and *nomoi*. The theme of *xenie* (hospitality) links the myth of the Egyptians attempting to sacrifice Heracles (with its Busiris subtext) and the story of Helen in Egypt, as Plutarch noticed.<sup>26</sup> In the story of Helen, the stem ξεν- occurs a total of twelve times, and the stem δικ- (justice) occurs eight times. A great deal of character text discusses what is or is not a just and holy (ὄσιος) treatment of guests. Proteus reproaches Alexander in terms

23. 2.118.2–4. On this story, see Fehling 1989, 59–65; Hunter 1982, 52–61. Austin 1994, 118–36.

24. At 2.118.1 and 2.119.3, the text refers to Herodotus’ Egyptian sources with the same vocabulary of inquiry and knowledge that Herodotus elsewhere applies to himself: “to know through inquiry” [ἰστορήσει . . . ἐπίστασθαι], “knowing precisely” [ἀτρεκέως ἐπιστάμενοι], “they were not able to tell” [οὐκ εἶχον εἰπεῖν]. For the narrator’s evaluation of the Egyptians as λογιώτατοι (most learned), see 2.77.1; cf. 2.4.1. For the real Herodotus as a *logios*, see Nagy 1990, 221–24; Evans 1991, 94–98.

25. See 2.120.5 and “Divine Retribution” later in the present chapter.

26. Plut. *De Malign Herodot.* 12 = *Mor.* 857A–B. See also Froidefond 1971, 178–79.

that characterize this Egyptian king as a reversal of the guest-killer Busiris:

If I did not consider it of the greatest importance not to kill any of the guests who are driven by the winds to my land, I would seek from you retribution on behalf of that Greek, O most wicked of men, you who after receiving hospitality have perpetrated a most impious deed: you have come to the wife of your own guest . . . and this was not enough for you, for you come here after plundering the house of your guest. But now, since I consider it of the utmost importance not to kill guests, I will at least prevent you from taking away this woman and the treasure, and I will hold them in my keeping for the Greek stranger/guest [ξείνῳ] until he wants to come himself and take them back (2.115.4–6).

The presence of a temple with a special *nomos* protecting suppliants enhances the representation of Egyptian piety. The role of the warden Thonis ensures that Proteus' righteousness will be perceived as also typical of ordinary Egyptians.

The impeccable Egyptian hospitality contrasts with Alexander's "injustice" and "impious deed" (2.113.3; 2.114.2; 2.115.3, 4; 2.120.5). But the story gains a special polemical edge (again not lost on Plutarch) when the Greek guest in this story, Menelaus, "behaves unjustly" [ἐγένετο . . . ἄδικος] and "devises an impious action" [ἐπιτεχνᾶται πρῆγμα οὐκ ὀσιον] (119.2). After receiving Helen and her treasure back with hospitable gifts from Proteus (ξενίων . . . μεγάλων, 2.119.1), Menelaus sacrifices two local children to obtain favorable winds for his sailing. Adapted to the *xenie* theme of the narrative, this reenactment of the sacrifice of the Greeks at Aulis produces a host-sacrifice that reverses the alleged guest-sacrifices of the Egyptian Busiris.<sup>27</sup> Like the anti-imperialistic Amazons in the Sauromatian *logos*, the hospitable Egyptians of this story set the record straight with regard to the representation and evaluation of the other.

#### *Native Voices*

Through native *logoi*, the text revises the assumptions of the Greeks about barbarians. A strategy for "challenging evaluative preferences for Greek characteristics over barbarian," in comparison, consists in focaliz-

27. Fehling (1989, 62) notices the analogy between Menelaus' sacrifice of the Egyptian children and Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis.

ing Greek and foreign customs through the barbarians.<sup>28</sup> Appearing in the *logos* in the guises of characters, ethnographic subjects, or epichoric sources, “they” participate in the din of voices that resound on many different issues throughout the work. When these speakers talk at different narrative levels about the way in which they or others lead their lives, their utterances serve the purpose of ethnographic evaluation.

In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, anthropologist Renato Rosaldo explains, “If you ask an older Ilongot man of northern Luzon, Philippines, why he cuts off human heads, his answer is brief . . . : He says that rage, born of grief, impels him to kill his fellow human beings.” During his stay among the Ilongots in the late 1960s, Rosaldo was troubled to discover that head-hunting was still surreptitiously practiced and that “every man in the settlement had taken a head.” A few months later, when the ethnographer was drafted for Vietnam, his Ilongot friends surprisingly urged him not to go and offered to conceal him in their homes: “They told me that soldiers are men who sell their bodies. Pointedly they interrogated me, ‘How can a man do as soldiers do and command his brothers to move into the line of fire?’”<sup>29</sup>

Set in the context of Rosaldo’s self-conscious analysis of available forms of ethnographic discourse (not a type of analysis Herodotus does), these exchanges provide a not too distant parallel for the strategy of representation by which Herodotus bridges the gap or evens the score between foreign and Greek customs by opening the possibility for what Rosaldo calls “reciprocal critical perceptions,”<sup>30</sup> in which a native explains himself and/or criticizes aspects of the ethnographer’s culture. Ethnocentric remarks from the other at the very least communicate the idea that what one takes for granted as normal may also be perceived, with some justification, as undesirable and abnormal.<sup>31</sup>

When Herodotus’ foreigners evaluate Greek customs, they are almost always critical.<sup>32</sup> Though they often display ignorance, exaggeration, or a

28. See Pelling 1997. The two functions often overlap.

29. Rosaldo 1989, 1 and 63. See Rosaldo’s entire chapter “After Objectivism” (46–67).

30. Rosaldo 1989, 64.

31. In Herodotus, see, e.g., the Ethiopian king’s contempt for bread (3.22.3–4) and the Egyptians’ ethnocentric criticism of the Greeks’ dependence on rainfall, the last both corroborated and countered by the narrator (2.13.2–2.14.1).

32. Two exceptions (7.208.1–3 and 8.26.3) occur in the highly celebratory narrative of Thermopylae, where we also find the similarly exceptional case of an entirely misguided criticism of Greek culture by a foreigner (7.103.3).

quaint partiality of their own (as Rosaldo's Ilongots do when they define soldiers as "men who sell their bodies"), they also make valid points.<sup>33</sup> Among observers of Greek *nomoi* who combine misunderstanding with brilliance is Mardonius. His main point to Xerxes that the Greek method of fighting is ineffectual and uneconomical constitutes "foolish words" [μάταιοι λόγοι], "slanderous" against the Greeks, as Artabanus will retort.<sup>34</sup> But when he implies that it is the peculiar *nomos* of the Greeks to fight one another incessantly, this marks one of those great polemic moments that leave no doubt as to what the *Histories* are about, whom they address, and what solution they prescribe: "And yet, since they speak the same language, Mardonius says, they should settle disputes with heralds and messengers and in any other way except by fighting" (7.9β1–2). The reference to a common language, which Mardonius intends as a practical consideration, defines for the audience a conventional aspect of their Panhellenic cultural identity (8.144.2). The phrase "settle disputes with heralds and messengers and in any other way except by fighting" belongs to the political code of Herodotus' time. Thus, in Thucydides, Pericles maintains that the Spartans "prefer to settle disagreements by war rather than by words"; Thucydides cites the suspension of parleys through heralds on both sides as the first decisive sign that their disputes have finally determined the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Cognitive Statements and Polemical Negations*

Since negative statements serve to contradict the audience's expectations, they often enhance the representation of difference by underlining a culture's lack of features typical of "normal" civilized living.<sup>36</sup> At other times, however, negations reflect a people's ideology and its polemics against foreign customs. The ethnographic gloss explaining that the Per-

33. See, e.g., 4.79.3 (Scythians' polemic against Dionysus; see chap. 2, "Identification with the Other"; 4.142 (Scythian criticism of the Ionians as "slaves"), 2.160.2–4 (Egyptian criticism of the rules of Olympic Games).

34. 7.10η1. For μάταιος applied to ethnic prejudice, see discussion under "Revising Greek Traditions" earlier in this chapter. On the economical nature of Greek warfare, see Hanson 1989, 1–18.

35. Thuc. 1.140.2 (Pericles here echoes the exhortation of the ephor Sthenelaidas at 1.86.3), 1.146.

36. See Hartog 1988, 257. Among statements of true "lack," the limiting case occurs at 4.106. On the portrayal of deficiencies and primitivity through "empty negatives" in modern ethnography, see the critique of E. Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou* (1975) in Rosaldo 1986, 85.

sians “do not use marketplaces, and do not even have a marketplace to begin with” for example, is attached to Cyrus’ contemptuous definition of the Greek agora as “a designated place in the middle of the city where people gather and deceive one another under oath” (1.153.2). This cognitive use of negative statements underlines that foreign peoples are different in ways that are desirable to them. They do not have, do, or believe something that is normal for the Greeks, not because they are more limited in some sense, but because they do not consider that item useful, holy, just, or true.<sup>37</sup>

Negative statements, whether in the voice of characters, ethnographic subjects, sources, or the narrator, may also serve to preempt biased judgments in the listener (“It is not true, as you think, that . . .”). In book 4, Herodotus relates a remarkable system of commercial exchange that takes place between the Carthaginians (who are also the source for this information) and an unidentified Libyan people living beyond the Pillars of Heracles (4.196). After arriving to the shores of these men, the Carthaginians display their wares in orderly array along the beach, then return to their ships and make smoke signals. When the natives see the smoke, they go down to the beach, deposit the amount of gold they offer for the merchandise, and withdraw. The Carthaginians in turn disembark and look at the gold. If they judge it sufficient to pay for the merchandise, they take it and sail away; if not, they return to their ship and wait. The Libyan natives return and keep adding gold until the merchants are satisfied, and “there is no foul play on either side [ἀδίκηέν δὲ οὐδετέρου]: neither do the Carthaginians touch the gold before they judge that it has reached the price of the merchandise, nor do the others take the merchandise before the Carthaginians have taken the gold” (4.196.3). Despite peculiar circumstances and the stereotype about dishonest Phoenician merchants,<sup>38</sup> the system works well. The reassuring negative statement here serves as a positive evaluation that defies common assumptions.

There happens to be a thematic link among what Mardonius says

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37. The statements that a certain people will not borrow foreign *nomoi* belong to this category (2.79.1, 4.76.1). For negative prescriptions, see, e.g., 2.37.3, 4–5; 2.45.2; 2.46.1; 4.63. For negative belief implying criticism, see, e.g., 2.50.3. On the Greek side, cf. Sperthias and Boulis’ statement that it is not their custom to prostrate themselves in front of a human being (7.136.1).

38. Phoenician dishonesty, notorious in Homer, is, e.g., built into the tradition corroborated by Herodotus at 2.54, 56.

about the Greeks who speak the same language but prefer fighting to negotiations, Cyrus' perception about the Greeks' deceiving one another when they trade in the agora, and the Carthaginian account of their seashore transactions that overcome a language barrier and entail no wrongdoing. This thematic link is the issue of fair dealing within and between different societies. It demonstrates the web of meaning that runs through the *logos* and the consistency of Herodotus' ideology of mutual exchange and cooperation. The "most beautiful" Babylonian custom of the market of brides and their custom "second in wisdom," the exchange of medical advice in the marketplace (1.196–97), present the same structure. Their prostitution ritual is "most shameful," but the listener should not misunderstand its import and meaning: after a woman has fulfilled the requirement, "you are not going to get her no matter how much money you give" (1.199.4).

In the episode of the marketplace on the beach, Herodotus' epichoric sources report what they do. The boundary between informants and ethnographic subject is here ill defined, but the phrase "the Carthaginians say" counts as a gloss of source identifying the narrative as someone else's *logos*. In other cases, ethnographic subjects state their own cultural beliefs. In most cases, these cognitive statements, like native criticisms of Greek customs, contribute to portraying a culture's strong sense of itself. By presenting an alternative but legitimate way of thinking, they tend to convey positive evaluation.<sup>39</sup>

The most striking illustration of Herodotus' use of cognitive statements is represented by the Persian ethnography. Here we also find several other phenomena I have mentioned: negative statements of rejection, native criticism of Greek customs, explicit (positive) evaluations, mention of customs that elicit a "Good" impression as well as implicit similarity between the barbarian culture and the Greek. The passage is coherent and illuminating.<sup>40</sup> Since the Persians are the most prominent foreigners of the *Histories*, it deserves to be examined in detail.

39. See, e.g., 2.35.3, 4.65.2. See Redfield 1985, 99. Besides in cognitive statements with λέγουσι/λέγοντες, φασί or νομίζουσι/νομίζοντες, and so on, customs are focalized by their owners in sentences of the type "For them it is most beautiful [χάλλιστον] to gather at drinking parties in groups according to age and friendship, men, women, and children together" (1.172.1). See n. 44 in the present chapter. Unmarked implicitly "native" explanations also occur; see, e.g., 4.104: "They have their women in common so that they may all be brothers . . ."

40. Pace Gould 1989, 98–99. For a historical discussion of Herodotus' ethnographic representation of the Persians, see Briant 1988.

*Persian Ideology*

The Persian ethnography is a list of *nomoi*, pure and simple, just as the prospective introduction announces.<sup>41</sup> But such predicates as “they do X,” “they have learned to do Y,” and “they have X” alternate with “they assert/believe Y.” The narrator’s first-person glosses guarantee accuracy and testify to the ethnographer’s involvement with his subject.

As for the Persians, **I know** that they have the following customs, that they do not consider it in their custom [οὐκ ἐν νόμῳ ποιευμένους] to build statues, temples, and altars but even attribute foolishness [μωρίην ἐπιφέρουσι] to those who do, because, **it seems to me, they never believed** [οὐκ . . . ἐνόμισαν] the gods to be of the same nature as men, as the Greeks do. (1.131.1)

Here the Persians attack Greek beliefs on a weak point.<sup>42</sup> The negative statements that follow either connote Persian rejection of nonsensical accessories in sacrificial ritual (1.132.1: no altars, fire, libation, flute, fillets, barley grain) or enhance the polemic by pointing out a feature that the Persians, unlike the Greeks, would consider unthinkable to do without.

After the sacrificer has arranged the meat, a Magus stands by and chants a theogony; for they do not have the custom to make sacrifices without a Magus. (1.132.3)

Interdictive negations abound, displaying intransigent correctness.

The one who sacrifices is not allowed to pray for good things for himself privately but rather wishes for the prosperity of all Persians and of the king, for he himself is included among the Persians. (1.132.2)

They do not make water into rivers, spit in them, or wash their hands in them, nor will they allow another to do so, for they revere rivers most of all things. (1.138.2)

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41. There is no subordinate narrative of how institutions came into being, such as we find in the Lydian ethnography (1.92–94), no mention of particular rulers or historical events, and no description of monuments.

42. See Burkert 1988, 20–21. Cf. Xenophanes, DK 21 A14.

The Persians not only are different from the Greeks but also find the Greeks inadequate, with a negative of true lack.

They say that the Greeks stop eating when they are still hungry, because after the main meal, nothing else to speak of is served to them. (1.133.2)

Persian difference is “Good,” based on a sensible and rigorous value system.

To their sons, from the age of five to twenty, they teach only three things: to ride, to shoot arrows, and to tell the truth. Before he is five, a boy does not come in the presence of his father but lives with the women. (1.136.2)

Here the narrator intervenes to approve (*ἀνέω*) in the explicit evaluations we have seen.

The clipped rhythm of the list of Persian customs contributes to creating a brisk impression of strength. We may compare the Lydian ethnography, which differs from this passage in both the type of information it contains and the form of discourse it employs.<sup>43</sup> In relation to the market-oriented Lydian culture, Persian culture is masculine, characterized by rough physical activities, the value of *andragathie* (manly excellence, 136.1), anti-intellectualism, and the rearing of sons (on Lydian daughters, see 1.93.3–1.94.1). In their practice of prostitution, the invention of games, and the migration to Tyrrhenia, the Lydians appear to cope rather than act by choice. By contrast, the cognitive approach of the Persian ethnography makes Persian action stem not from historical contingencies but from collective ideology, likes and dislikes. The Persians do not simply prepare a particularly large dinner on their birthday; “they think it right” to do so (1.133.1). Sixteen predicates indicate what the Persians consider, believe, assert, honor, or deem right, while the Lydians acquire a voice only to speak of their long-lost resourceful past.<sup>44</sup> Correspond-

43. See chap. 2, “The Sameness of the Lydians.”

44. See also “this is [for them] a display of manliness” (136.1) and explanations of customs where the focalizer is not marked (1.132.2, 1.136.2). Herodotus’ attempt to capture Persian national ideology is emphasized by Wolff (1934, 158–62); see also Cobet 1971, 117–18. For the Lydians, three verbs of saying occur (at 1.94.2) in the narrative of their invention of games and migration to Tyrrhenia, which is all in indirect speech.

ingly, we find here a total of twenty-four negations, either in interdictions or in polemical representative statements. The Persians even appear ready to revise reality if it does not conform to their value system.

They say that no one yet has ever killed his father or mother, and each time something of the sort happens, they say that when the matter is investigated, of absolute necessity [πᾶσαν ἀνάγκη] it would be found that the children were adopted or bastards. For they say, it is not natural that a true parent may be killed by his own child. (1.137.2)

Aggressively dogmatic, the Persians consider themselves the best of all cultures. To their internal hierarchicalism corresponds a view of the inhabited world based on ethnic rank.

Most of all, after themselves, they honor those who live closest to them, secondly those who live second closest, and then the others in proportion to their distance.

Their literally geometric notion of ethnocentrism is reproduced by the ring structure of the ethnographer's discourse, which places "the Persians themselves" (ἑωυτούς) at the center and the decreasingly inferior "others" at the periphery on either side.

They hold in least esteem those who live the farthest from them, believing that they themselves are by far the best of men in everything, that other peoples live more or less far in proportion to their excellence [ἀρετή], and that those who inhabit the lands farthest from themselves are the basest.<sup>45</sup>

By association with this Persian mental map, a gloss of similarity recalls a feature of the old Median Empire.

During the rule of the Medes [ἐπὶ . . . Μέδων ἀρχόντων], the various peoples even ruled [ἤρχε] one another—the Medes over all and over those who lived closest to themselves, these in turn over their neighbors, and these over those near them. The Persians give

45. 1.134.2. Cf. the gradation of barbarism from a Greek point of view in Xen. *Anab.* 5.4.34.

respect according to the same criterion [κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον . . . τιμῶσι]. [Among the Medes] each people farther and father removed held rule and supervision [προέβαινε γὰρ δὴ τὸ ἔθνος ἄρχον τε καὶ ἐπιτροπεῦον].

This imprecise analogy between the Persian system of “graduated respect” and the Median system of “graduated rule”<sup>46</sup> connects ethnocentrism, the primary ethnographic feature of the Persians, to the notion of empire (ἀρχή), which turns out to be their primary feature in the history.

An imperialistic ideology also emerges from a different order of signs. The stark simplicity and prescriptiveness of some aspects of Persian culture combine with acquisitive tendencies. The Persians “believe that multitude is strength” [τὸ πολλὸν δ’ἡγέεται ἰσχυρὸν εἶναι] (1.136.1). This taste for to pollon manifests itself in their insistence on having many trimmings to their meals (1.133.2), many legitimate wives, and an even greater number of concubines (1.135). Every year, the one who displays the most children receives a prize from the king (1.136.1). In the historical narrative, royal Persians delight in possessing large armies and many subject nations.<sup>47</sup>

Though multitude signifies masculine strength and though acquisitiveness is part of the Persian desire for domination, acquisitiveness also represents the most indulgent and feminine side of Persian culture. Despite their contempt for foreigners, “the Persians like to appropriate foreign customs more than does any other people” (1.135). To their austere nature religion, they have added the cult of Aphrodite, learned from Assyrians and Arabs (1.131.3), and they import from other cultures luxuries and “pleasures of all sorts” [εὐπαθείας . . . παντοδαπάς]. They have adopted the Median national costume (“because they considered it more beautiful than their own”), Egyptian corselets, and the Greek practice of

46. This is the terminology of How and Wells (1928, 1:116), whose interpretation I have followed in my translation. The analogy misleadingly implies that just as the nation farthest from the Persians is lowest in their hierarchy of esteem, so the nation farthest from the Medes used to be lowest in the hierarchy of power.

47. Xerxes enjoys the sight of his army at 7.44 and counts it at 7.59–60. An army is a typical Persian gift (see 9.109.3). Konstan (1987) examines many instances of the fondness of Persian kings for quantity and numbers in connection with imperialism, but he strangely does not cite any part of the ethnography. Here also the judicial rule of “calculating whether the offenses are more in number than the services” (1.137.1) is consistent with the habit of counting and measuring goods.

making love with boys (1.135). The Persians are accumulators of consumption goods. In the historical narrative, Atossa desires accomplished Greek maids, and Mardonius praises the orchards of Europe in the context of imperialistic schemes.<sup>48</sup>

We should underline the extent to which the Persian ethnography avoids mentioning orientalist features, even some that regularly occur in the historical narrative. The description of Persian customs keeps the role of monarchical despotism to a minimum. In the Lydian ethnography, the Lydians en masse, in their triple socioeconomic subdivision, raise a monument to their king with the fruit of their labor (1.93). Here the Persians worship the gods (1.131–32), celebrate birthdays (1.133.1–2), engage in deliberations and social interaction (1.133.3–1.134); they pursue pleasure and war and raise large families (1.135–1.137.1). When they sacrifice, they include a prayer on behalf of the king (132.2). Honor to the king represents a portion of their busy lives, and monarchy itself is a part of a social structure, marked by a hierarchicalism that is stereotypically “oriental” but at least suggests a distribution of rights according to status (1.134.1). What the history represents as prerogatives of the Persian king (the prostration and the birthday banquet, elsewhere called *tukta*) are here cultural forms with broader applications.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, the king is subject to rules of fair dealing with his inferiors, according to criteria that also apply to ordinary Persians.<sup>50</sup> The equivalence between the relationship of master and servants, on the one hand, and that of king and subjects, on the other (1.137), implies the same metaphor of political enslavement that we find in the history. But the history tends to emphasize the overbearing and punitive actions of the king, his violation of established custom in various spheres,<sup>51</sup> his subjects’ service to him, and the powerlessness of the Persians in general, regardless of their

48. For Atossa, see 3.134.5; cf. 5.12–13 (Darius likes the prospect of skilled Paenonian servant-women). For Mardonius, see 7.5.3; cf. 7.8α2 (Xerxes), 9.122.2 (Artembares wishes for a land better than the Persian).

49. Cf. Egyptian salutations (see 2.80.2). For *proskunesis* to the Persian king, see 3.86.2, 7.136.1. On the *tukta*, see the ethnographic gloss at 9.110.2.

50. See Briant 1988, 85.

51. The Persian *nomos* not to inflict grave penalties at the first offense or before balancing offenses and benefactions is followed only once (7.194.2; see 3.127 for a reverse case) and broken several times by the king in the history. See Lateiner 1989, 153. See 3.35, 36; 4.84; 7.38–39; 8.118 (though this story is refuted on different grounds). For royal violations of the Persians’ traditional reverence for rivers (1.138.2, 1.131.1), see especially 1.189, 7.35. Xerxes’ mutilation of dead Leonidas is explicitly glossed as a violation of Persian custom (παρενόμησε, 7.238.2).

rank.<sup>52</sup> This description, by contrast, represents the assertiveness of the *ethnos* as a whole and places it firmly in control of its own *nomoi*.

As it downplays the monarchical code, the Persian ethnography also leaves out all references to *nomoi* that involve abusing the body.<sup>53</sup> Impaling and castration are not mentioned. Cutting off the ears and nose of a wrongdoer, flaying, and other punitive practices are adumbrated by the antiseptic euphemism ἀνήκεστον πάθος, “incurable harm,” in the section that describes the Persians’ judiciousness in disciplining their slaves or subjects.<sup>54</sup> In the history, suffering mutilation even appears as a sign of valor, from the actions of Zopyrus and Boges and from the Persian soldier’s fascination with the horrible wounds of the Aeginetan Pytheas.<sup>55</sup> In the ethnography, Persian *andragathie* simply means “fighting well” and producing many sons (1.136.1). Human sacrifice, attributed to the Persians on several occasions in the history, is out of the question.<sup>56</sup> The narrative even omits the moment of the victim’s slaughter in the context of animal sacrifice. We find instead a description of the sacrificer’s cutting of the meat in tiny pieces, which are fastidiously arranged on a soft bed of grass.<sup>57</sup> Among the vulgar stereotypes that are surprisingly transformed is the barbarian addiction to wine: Herodotus’ Persians put it to good use in deliberations.<sup>58</sup> To the

52. See especially the episode of the anonymous Persian at Attaginus’ banquet (9.16), which has also the function of dissociating the community of the Persians from the actions of the king, as Corcella (1984, 181) remarks.

53. In his Persian ethnography, largely based on Herodotus, Strabo finds it necessary to add the following item: “They are governed by hereditary kings; he who disobeys has his head and arms cut off, and his body is thrown off” (15.3.17). The funeral custom of the magi, which includes a ritual mutilation of the corpse (Hdt. 1.140), will be discussed later in the present chapter.

54. 1.137.1. In the *Histories*, mutilations are first and foremost terms of the monarchical code, not merely Persian or barbarian. See Hartog 1988, 332–34. Passages mentioning royal Persian mutilations include 3.69.5 (cutting off of ear); 5.25 (slaying and flaying); 7.35.3, 8.90.3 (decapitation); 7.39.3 (cutting in half); 7.194.1–2 (crucifixion, stayed); 7.238 (decapitation of corpse and impaling); 9.112 (mutilations by queen); 3.16, 3.27.3, 3.29, 3.30, 3.31.1, 3.32, 3.35 (mutilations by Cambyses). Mutilations are also attributed to other Persians, not necessarily acting on behalf of the kings (3.79.1, 3.118.2, 3.125.3, 6.30.1, 6.32).

55. For Zopyrus, see 3.154.2 (called a λώβη ἀνήκεστος). For Boges, see 7.107.2. For Pytheas, see 7.181.2–3. Cf. the *andreie* of the medizer Hegesistratus (9.37.2).

56. See 7.114, with an ethnographic gloss inferring that burying people alive is a Persian custom. See also 7.180, 1.86.2.

57. See 1.131.3. The omission is exceptional. See Gould 1994, 99.

58. See 1.133.3–4. In other texts, the stereotype of barbarian drunkenness applies especially to Thracians and Scythians (see Hall 1989, 133–34; chap. 2, n. 208 in the present book), but it fits in with the notion of barbarian intemperance. Cf. Cambyses at 3.34.1–3. The Persian custom in the ethnography recurs among Tacitus’ idealized Germans (*Germ.* 22). See How and Wells 1928, 1:114.

amazement of Plutarch, the notorious Eastern use of eunuchs is here replaced by pederasty in the Greek style.<sup>59</sup>

The near absence of expected indices of barbarity (torture, despotism, lack of restraint), the attribution to the Persians of a strong collective voice in defense of their *nomoi*, and the intrinsic righteousness of some of the *nomoi* contribute to create a “Good” impression of the culture as a whole. The negative side of the evaluation is then only conveyed through the symbols and signs of imperialism, acquisitiveness, and material abundance. Among these, the banquet represents a key event in Persian culture, and Herodotus’ description of Persian meals plays an important role in representing the Persians historically.<sup>60</sup> The Persians are, as the present tense of the ethnography describes them from the time of their conquest of Lydia. Previously they used to be, according to Croesus, *hubristai* (arrogant/violent) by nature, but poor (1.89.2). In the words of Sandanis (1.71.2–3), they used to dress in leather and had neither wine, nor figs, nor any other good thing (all negatives of true lack). The narrator’s ethnographic-historical gloss corroborates this speaker’s assessment: “before the conquest of Lydia, the Persians had nothing good and no luxury at all [οὔτε ἀγαθὸν οὔτε ἄβρὸν οὐδὲν]” (1.71.4). In the ethnography, which records their definitive cultural forms, the Persians are elegantly dressed (1.135). On their birthday, wealthy men serve a cow or a horse or a camel or an ass, cooked whole in the stove; a variety of side dishes; and a great deal of wine (1.133.3)

If in the positive sides of their culture, the Persians appear as good as or better than the Greeks, Herodotus’ representation of Persian wealth and acquisitiveness implicates the Greeks explicitly in two different contexts.

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59. See Hdt. 1.135. Plutarch writes (*De Malign. Herod.* 13 = *Mor.* 857C): “How can the Persians owe the learning of this intemperance [ἀκολασία] to the Greeks, when practically everyone recognizes that this people has practiced castration of young boys before even seeing the Greek sea?” See Hall 1989, 157, for this stereotype. In Herodotus, the existence of a market for eunuchs in Persian-dominated Asia Minor is acknowledged in the ethnographic gloss at 8.105.2, which does not, however, connect it with sexual practices. Another orientalist feature that Herodotus fails to attribute to the Persians is the (apparently historical) practice of consanguineous marriage (see *Dissoi Logoi*, DK 90 2.15), which in the *Histories* only appears as one of the monarchic perversions of Cambyses (see 3.31). See Mora 1985, 165–66.

60. In the historical narrative, banquets mark crucial moments at the beginning of Persian history (see 1.125–126); at the end of their imperialistic dream, with the defeat of Plataea (see 9.82); and in the disastrous aftermath at Xerxes’ court (see 9.110.2). For other instances, see 1.207.6–7 with 1.211, 3.79.3, 7.119, 7.135.1. In Thucydides (1.130.1), the orientalized Pausanias “keeps a Persian table.”

The Greek contribution of pederasty to the range of Persian pleasures appears in a list of importations from abroad that recalls the celebrated influx of foreign comforts to Athens after that city's rise to imperial status.<sup>61</sup> Though the Persian banquet is still an index of the discrepancy between Persian and Greek cultures, "the Persians say that the Greeks stop eating when they are still hungry, because after the main meal nothing else to speak of is served to them, and if it were served, they would not stop eating."<sup>62</sup> Just as the Persians, who now eat what they want, used to eat not what they wanted but what they had (1.71.3), so the Greeks of Herodotus' present either had first, now have, or still want the material pleasures the Persians have acquired. Positioned precariously between contrast and similarity, the Greeks partially share in the strength and the vulnerability Herodotus's ethnography attributes to the Persians from the time of their conquest of Asia to that of their defeat at Plataea.

*Dispassionate Narrative and the Limits of Relativism*

When the metanarrative does not intervene to express doubt or mention a source, ethnographic descriptions rely on a presumption of autopsy.<sup>63</sup> The position of Herodotus with respect to the ethnographic material he presents is analogous therefore to that of the author of a modern ethnographic report. The facts are external to the text, and the narrator is not responsible for them. The problem is, then, how things are said more than what is said. How does one produce a culturally unbiased—that is, nonsensational and nonjudgmental—description of a foreign culture whose customs are inherently bound to produce a "Bad" impression? One solution is to avoid mentioning such features, and I have argued that the Persian ethnography is somewhat selective precisely in this sense. But this is not a practice an ethnographer can resort to throughout a work.

The question of how things are said is raised by the argument of Hartog that the objective, dispassionate, nonevaluative style of discourse that Herodotus generally favors when describing foreign culture is in fact one of the many tricks of his trade, a part of his "rhetoric of otherness."<sup>64</sup> We should then consider other style options. In the context of a discus-

61. 1.135. Cf. Thuc. 2.38; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.7.

62. 1.133.2. Cf. 9.82 with Thuc. 1.130.1–2.

63. In ethnographic descriptions, hearsay plays only a very limited role. See, e.g., 1.183.1–3 (description of Babylon); 4.176, 4.178, 4.183.4, 4.184.3, and 4.187.3 (ethnography of Libya).

64. Hartog 1988, 256.

sion about the possibility of our understanding cultural forms that are alien to ourselves, Clifford Geertz quotes L.V. Helms' description of human sacrifice in Bali, which we may take as a modern term of comparison with Herodotean discourse.<sup>65</sup> It is a striking and elegant passage, but since my specific purpose is to make a point about biased and unbiased narrative, I regrettably quote only a few excerpts, with not much regard for the continuity of the action described or the integrity of the account.

1. While I was in Bali one of these shocking sacrifices took place. The Rajah of the neighboring State died on the 20th of December 1847; his body was burned with great pomp, three of his concubines sacrificing themselves in the flames. It was a great day for the Balinese. It was some years since they had had the chance of witnessing one of these awful spectacles, a spectacle that meant for them a holiday with an odour of sanctity about it. . . .
2. They looked little enough like savages, but rather like a kindly festive crowd bent upon some pleasant excursion. The whole surroundings bore an impress of plenty, peace, and happiness, and, in a measure, of civilization. It was hard to believe that within a few miles of such a scene, three women, guiltless of any crime, were, for their affection's sake, and in the name of religion, to suffer the most horrible of deaths, while thousands of their countrymen looked on. . . .
3. The victims of this cruel superstition showed no sign of fear at the terrible doom now so near. Dressed in white, their long black hair partly concealing them, with a mirror in one hand and a comb in the other, they appeared intent only upon adorning themselves as though for some gay festival. The courage which sustained them in a position so awful was indeed extraordinary, but it was born of the hope of happiness in a future world. From being bondswomen here, they believed they were to become the favourite wives and queens of their late master in another world. . . . Round the deluded women stood relatives and friends. Even these did not view the ghastly preparations with dismay, or try to save their unhappy daughters and sisters from the terrible death awaiting them. Their duty was not to

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65. Helms 1882, 59–66, quoted by Geertz (1983, 37–39).

save but to act as executioners; for they were entrusted with the last horrible preparations, and finally sent the victims to their doom. . . .

4. The women were carried in procession three times round the place, and then lifted on to the fatal bridge. There, in the pavilion which has been already mentioned, they waited until the flames had consumed the image and its contents. Still they showed no fear. . . . Meanwhile their attendant friends prepared for the horrible climax. . . . The supreme moment had arrived. With firm and measured steps the victims trod the fatal plank; three times they brought their hands together over their heads, on each of which a small dove was placed, and then, with body erect, they leaped into the flaming sea below, while the doves flew up, symbolizing the escaping spirits. . . . This terrible spectacle did not appear to produce any emotion upon the vast crowd, and the scene closed with barbaric music and the firing of guns.

This autobiographical narrative in the past tense describes a particular occurrence of a customary, if infrequent, event. The features that make Helms' narrative the very antithesis of the altogether neutral fashion that Hartog rightly attributes to Herodotus, however, could just as well characterize third-person descriptions in the iterative ethnographic present. Even when we see no grammatical first person, the narrator, Helms, is pervasively there to direct the reader's perception of it and to communicate his ideological stance.<sup>66</sup> Evaluative modifiers occur at every turn, from "shocking sacrifices" in excerpt 1 to "barbaric music" in excerpt 4. What pretends to be the report of the native attitude is actually the narrator's distanced interpretation of it. "A holiday with an odour of sanctity about it" (1) and "their duty was . . . to act as executioners" (3), for example, in no way reflect what "the Balinese say." Actual native

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66. In case there should be any doubt left, Helms' narrative ends with an advertisement of narratability followed by a gloss of interpretation and evaluation: "It was a sight never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it, and brought to one's heart a strange feeling of thankfulness that one belonged to a civilization which, with all its faults, is merciful, and tends more and more to emancipate women from deception and cruelty. To the British rule it is due that this foul plague of suttee is extirpated in India, and doubtless the Dutch have, ere now, done as much for Bali. Works like these are the credentials by which the Western civilization makes good its right to conquer and humanize barbarous races and to replace ancient civilizations."

beliefs concerning the meaning of the event are judged to be absurd in the same breath as they are reported (3: “cruel superstition,” “deluded women”). Negative sentences signal amazement, especially with regard to the discrepancy between civilized appearances and the abnormal savagery of the ritual (2, 3, 4).

Among the stylistic means that are available to Herodotus, the choice is between an evaluative and a neutral description.<sup>67</sup> Herodotus prefers the latter form, which reproduces the style generally employed by the Hippocratic in their account of symptoms, but which eluded one of these authors, who undertook to discuss foreign peoples. It is more important to verify the extent to which a neutral ethnographic description fails to be truly neutral and why it does so in particular cases than automatically to rank objectification among the various devices for enhancing otherness.

In Herodotus’ description of what the Scythians do with the skin of the enemies they kill in war (making napkins, cloaks, and the like), we find the following gloss.

δέρμα δὲ ἀνθρώπου καὶ παχὺ καὶ λαμπρὸν ἦν ἄρα, σχεδὸν  
δεομάτων πάντων λαμπρότατον λευκότητι.

[and, as a matter of fact, human skin turned out to be both thick  
and bright, almost the brightest in whiteness of all skins.] (4.64.3)

Two words here deserve attention. First, the particle ἄρα (as a matter of fact) expresses the sudden interest of an unexpected but revealing datum.<sup>68</sup> Second, the imperfect ἦν (was, turned out to be) interrupts the string of ethnographic presents. To what time does ἦν refer? Evidently it refers to the time of “fieldwork.” The construction ἦν ἄρα is a gloss of *historie* that places the narrator on the scene, inspecting the local crafts, as he brings his audience’s attention to the result of his observation. Somewhat analogous in tone to Herodotus’ implicit display of firsthand expertise with regard to garments made of hemp (4.74), this gloss is nevertheless bound to produce a different rhetorical effect, perhaps enhancing, rather than toning down, the sensational character of the description. It advertises the deliberately objective stance of an ethnographer who is

67. The type of discourse that puts this problematic on display, as in what Geertz (1988, 97) calls “author-saturated texts,” is of course not an option.

68. See especially Denniston 1934, 32–43; Corcella 1993, 286. Herodotus’ non-evaluative description is equivalent to “minimally narrated narrative.” See chap. 1, “What Is Metanarrative?”

determined to eschew cultural bias and to apprehend a foreign universe on its own terms; but in the face of this data, he is bound to appear too determined.

There are countless passages of this sort in Herodotus. In them, the absence of an ethical viewpoint in a detailed but compressed style of narration conveys an almost cheerful detachment of the narrator vis-à-vis his subject.<sup>69</sup> Because “no mode of composition is a neutral medium,” Herodotus’ professional disengagement, either voluntarily or involuntarily, sometimes produces both horror and humor.<sup>70</sup> In other cases, however, the discourse attaches the factual description of a practice to its proper ideological motivations by means of cognitive statements, native reported speech, or the direct portrayal of native attitudes. This type of description is also likely to communicate a specific criterion for judgment.

Exemplary in this respect is the account of a Thracian widow slaying (5.5), the ritual in Herodotus that most resembles the Balinese suttee described by Helms. Herodotus’ discourse builds up an animated momentum by sectioning the narrative by prospective sentences that increase expectation but withhold praise or blame.

1. And those above the Crestonaeans do this:  
Each one has many wives; when a man dies, there is a great competition among his wives, with intense pleading of friends and relatives on the following issue:  
which one of them was most loved by her husband.

The report of the results of the competition continues to emphasize the enthusiastic adherence of all involved.

2. And the one who is chosen and awarded this honor, after receiving the praises of both men and women, is slain over the grave by her closest male relative and, having been slain, is buried with her husband.

Finally, a cognitive statement reports the state of mind of the survivors.

69. See, e.g., the account of the Scythians’ human sacrifice to Ares (4.62.1–4), with the last chilling sentence, “and there’s the arm, lying where it has fallen, and, somewhere else, the body.”

70. Rosaldo 1989, 46–52, especially 49. For a genre of ethnographic writing that exploits humorous representation, see, e.g., Barley 1992, especially 74–75.

3. The other wives consider it a great calamity; for this is for them the greatest shame.

[αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι συμφορὴν μεγάλην ποιεῦνται· ὄνειδος γὰρ σφι τοῦτο μέγιστον γίνεται.]

The sequence of joyful actions in passages 1 and 2, suddenly landing on the chilling predicate “is slain” [σφάζεται], strikes a sensational note (cf. 1.45.3). But all three sections convey the natives’ lack of ambivalence, without the incredulity Helms demonstrates at the apparent acceptance of the victims and their relatives. Although lack of pathos and even a comic element are here once again the price of detachment, Herodotus’ narrative implements two serious principles of ethnographic writing. It focalizes the custom through their owners, and though, unlike Helms’ description, it does not explain the native perception in light of existential beliefs, neither does it undermine or contest it.

The case just examined communicates that a *nomos* that the ethnographer’s culture considers inhumane or unholy can be integrated into a relativistic view if it is internalized by all those whom it affects. Herodotus’ report about a custom of the Massagetae conveys the same message.

No other limit of human life is set for them. But when one becomes very old, all his relatives assemble and sacrifice him and other animals together with him, and after boiling the meat, they feast upon it [κατευωχέονται]. This is considered by them to be the most blessed thing [ταῦτα μὲν τὰ ὀλβιώτατά σφι νενόμισται], but if one dies of disease they **do not** feed upon him but rather bury him in the ground, considering it a misfortune [συμφορὴν ποιευμένοι] that he did not reach the age of being sacrificed. (1.216.2–3)

The initial negative statement has the corrective function of dispelling the audience’s possible confusion between the Massagetan custom and more radical practices of other peoples.<sup>71</sup> The combination of the code of sacrifice (θύουσι, τυθῆναι) with the secular term κατευωχέονται is jolting; but the statements about what this community regards as “most

71. It parallels the correction at 1.216.1. Asheri (1988, 386) cites the (explicitly evaluative) accounts by Strabo (11.11.3) and Aelian (*VH* 4.1) about cultures that fix the limit of human life at seventy or sixty years of age or kill the elderly or the sick in different ways (starving them, throwing them to the dogs, etc.).

blesSED” [ὀλβιώτατα] or a “misfortune” [συμφορὴν] overcome the ideological instability of the description by referring to a peculiar but deliberate and shared worldview of this society.<sup>72</sup>

The criterion of evaluation implicit in these passages is consistent with Herodotus’ explicit condemnation of ritual prostitution at Babylon (1.199.1) and with the implied disapproval of customs in which one portion of the society victimizes another. The Indian tribe of the Padaeans was particularly savage, according to ancient tradition, though predictably no statement to that effect appears in Herodotus.<sup>73</sup> He merely calls them “eaters of raw meat” (3.99.1) and applies to their particular brand of cannibalism the same form of discourse employed for the Thracian and Massagetan funeral customs—a neutral description from the native point of view.

When one of the townspeople gets sick, be it a man or a woman, if it is a man, the men who are his closest kin kill him, saying that as he wastes away with the disease, the flesh becomes spoiled for them. The other denies being sick; but hearing no reason, they kill him and feast upon him [ἀποκτείναντες κατευωχέονται]. And if a woman gets sick, the women who are closest to her do with her just as much as the men do with the men. For when one comes to old age, they sacrifice him and feast upon him [τὸν γὰρ δὲ ἐς γῆρας ἀπικόμενον θύσαντες κατευωχέονται]. But **not** many people reach this theoretical point, for before this, they kill anyone who falls sick. (3.99.1–2)

The final statement, with the narrator’s most intrusive evaluation, is the counterpart of the negative gloss introducing the Massagetan custom (1.216.1: “No other limit of human life is set for them”). In the immediately preceding sentence, the verbal correspondence establishes a parallel with the Massagetan ritual (cf. 1.216.2: ἐπεὶ . . . γέρον γένηται κάρτα, . . . θύουσί μιν, . . . κατευωχέονται); this renders the differences between the two practices all the more conspicuous. The Massagetae sacrifice and eat the very old but do not eat those who die of disease,

72. They recall how unconventional Solon’s use of these terms appeared to Croesus (see especially 1.32.2–9): see Flory 1987, 97. The phrase “to consider a misfortune” recurs at 5.5, quoted earlier, and at 4.79.5, in cognitive descriptions of native attitudes.

73. How and Wells (1928, 1:99) and Asheri (1990a, 326) suggest the derivation of the ethnic name from the Sanskrit *padja*, “bad,” and cite Tibullus 4.1.144–45, testifying to the negative reputation of this tribe.

while the Padaeans kill and eat a person as soon as he or she gets sick, which means that few Padaeans reach old age. The killing of the elderly, both among the Massagetae and the Padaeans, is called a “sacrifice” [θύειν], but the Padaeans’ killing of the sick is a “killing” [ἀποκτείνειν]; the secular verb κατευωχέισθαι occurs conjoined with both terms. Whereas for the Massagetae the dietary aspect of the custom is subordinate to its religious character, the reverse happens among the Padaeans. All the Massagetae agree that the sacrifice and the eating are a “blessed” thing, although as in the case of the Thracian widow slaying, we are not told on what grounds.<sup>74</sup> The utilitarian/dietary ideology of the Padaean practice, by contrast, produces in their society a split between those who are killers and those whose turn it is to be victims, between those who benefit from the sacrifice and those who perceive they do not. The native voice is divided, as the typical dialogue embedded in the description testifies: the healthy say that the sick must be killed in a hurry, and the sick protest in vain that they are not sick.

Herodotus’ cultural relativism is not ethical relativism in an extreme sense. Just as the moralistic historian objects to monarchical abuse, so the ethnographer signals disapproval of customs that oppress a society’s free members.<sup>75</sup> This ethical principle is, however, supracultural and capable of accommodating a wide range of diverse practices and perceptions. If difference is not always “Good,” Herodotus’ *logos* is more concerned in establishing that it is not automatically “Bad.”<sup>76</sup> This, the legitimacy of cultural difference as such, is his fundamental lesson as an ethnographer. One of the means through which he conveys it is his commitment to a nonevaluative mode of ethnographic description.

### Equal Knowledge: Cognitive Relativism

Herodotus’ acceptance of the validity of foreign *nomoi* and native attitudes is subject to certain judgmental reservations in particular cases. In

74. Contrast the explanation given by the *Dissoi Logoi* (DK 90 2.14). See Mora 1985, 164.

75. See the evaluation implicit in the juxtaposition of Scythian royal funerals (4.71–72) and ordinary Scythian funerals (4.73).

76. On Herodotus’ relativism, see Burkert 1988, 27–28 and later discussion in the present chapter. I will apply the term relativism somewhat loosely to fifth-century thought (see Guthrie 1971, 164–75; Kerferd 1981, 83–110). See however the objections put forward by Bett (1989). On the modern controversy between relativism and antirelativism, and on the difference among different relativistic positions, see Geertz 1984.

the sphere of religious beliefs and beyond ethics, however, his cognitive relativism is more radical, theorized a priori, and often conveyed through the deliberate suspension of his normal activities of inquiring and narrating.<sup>77</sup> As we have seen in the cases of the Thracian widow slaying and Massagetan cannibalism, Herodotus rarely describes the religious beliefs underlying customs. When he does, he is usually pursuing a polemic against the Greeks (e.g., at 1.131.1). His discussion of Salmoxis-Gebeleizis compensates for the ambivalence of his own description of the Getic ritual by exposing the more flagrant chauvinism of the Black Sea Greeks.<sup>78</sup> After rejecting their version, which reduces Getic religion to an inferior by-product of their own civilized culture, Herodotus quickly brings the section to a close: “Whether Salmoxis was a man or whether he is some local Getic divinity, farewell to him [χαιρέτω]” (4.96.2). Given the particular context, this rare form of programmatic conclusion recalls the formulaic hymnal farewell to the gods. The dismissal of the topic as such encodes a sort of agnostic acceptance of the religion.<sup>79</sup>

We have already seen how the first programmatic introduction of the Egyptian ethnography (2.3.2) connects Herodotus’ reticence to explain religious beliefs to his relativistic position.<sup>80</sup> Here, his profession of belief (νομίζων) that “all men know equivalently about these things” [πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἴσον περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπίστασθαι] goes beyond the evidence that components of the different religions of the world can often be translated from culture to culture.<sup>81</sup> Rather, it means that, even regardless of similarities or overlaps, the degree of accuracy possessed by the whole body of theological beliefs of one society is equal to the degree of accuracy possessed by the whole body of theological beliefs of another. When Herodotus attributes an equivalent value to the religious knowledge of different cultures, from the monotheistic Getae to the complicated Egyptians, this of course includes the idea that divine matters “cannot be objects of enquiry (ἵστορίη) by ὄψις, ἀκοή and γνώμη and, hence, can-

77. On cognitive relativism and related attitudes in modern thought, see Hanson 1979.

78. On Herodotus’ ambivalent evaluation of the Getae, see “Explicit Evaluation” earlier in this chapter.

79. Cf. *Hom. H.* 1.20, etc. The only other conclusion with χαιρέτω occurs at 2.117 (see Lateiner 1989, 63), but the dismissal that is closest in function to 4.96.2 is at 1.140.3, quoted later in this chapter. On programmatic conclusions, see chap. 1, “What Is Metanarrative?”

80. See chap. 2, “The Texture of *Nomos*.”

81. This evidence exists, e.g., in the case of major divinities, worshiped by different peoples with different names. See Hartog 1988, 107 and n. 162, quoting Veyne 1971, 141.

not be objects of certain knowledge.”<sup>82</sup> This is again too reductionist a statement, however, if by it one means that for Herodotus the real state of affairs is entirely out of reach. It is not Herodotus but Protagoras who denies the possibility of human knowledge concerning the gods. Consider the first sentence of Protagoras’ *Περὶ Θεῶν*.

About the gods, I am not able to know that they exist or do not exist or what shape they have [*περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὐθ’ ὡς εἰσὶν οὐθ’ ὡς οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐθ’ ὅποιοί τινες ἰδέαν*], because many are the factors that prevent one from knowing, such as their invisibility and the shortness of human life. (DK 80 B4)

The indirect questions in this passage bear resemblance to those Herodotus formulates in another interpretive gloss (2.53): here he asserts, on his own authority (*ἐγὼ λέγω*), that before the codification of knowledge recently effected by Homer and Hesiod, the Greeks “did not know whence each of the gods came into existence, whether they were forever, and what kind of shape they had” [*ὄθεν δὲ ἐγένοντο ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν, εἴτε αἰεὶ ἦσαν πάντες, ὅκοιοί τε τινες τὰ εἶδεα, οὐκ ἠπιστέατο*].<sup>83</sup> This statement is designed to cut Greek theological representations down to size rather than to proclaim their validity as real knowledge.<sup>84</sup> At 2.3.2, however, Herodotus generalizes in positive terms: all men know *ison* about divine things. They all “really know” something, and they all know an (indeterminably) equal amount.<sup>85</sup> As an inquirer of the past, Herodotus is able to identify actions that appear attributable to something other than human planning or random contingencies—*τὸ θεῖον, ὃ θεός*, the divine in purely theological terms—with no need or possibility to be more specific.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, however, he also verifies the existence of a line of communication between human beings of all nations and god (as an ontological principle transcending culture) that passes through cultural channels, such as prayer, sacrifices, and oracles. A space that is

82. Lloyd 1976, 17.

83. 2.53.1. Burkert (1988, 26) cites the fragment by Protagoras as a parallel to this passage; Lloyd (1976, 17) cites it as part of the intellectual background of 2.3.2. Both times, Herodotus’ *ἐπίστασθαι*, in lieu of Protagoras’ *εἰδέναι*, places less emphasis on the sensible origin of the knowledge. See Untersteiner 1967, 1:67 n. 37.

84. Cf. 7.129.4. See Burkert 1988, 20–22.

85. In positive terms, they know not “equally little” (Stein 1883, I.2.6) but “equally much” (see, e.g., Grene 1987, 666). For a different rendering, see Mora 1985, 136–39.

86. See Linforth 1928.

sacred by *nomos* is sacred in absolute terms; the god whom “they” worship in the shape of a bull is objectively divine.<sup>87</sup>

The objectivist component of Herodotus’ theological relativism is a paradox that preserves traditional Greek polytheism, reinterprets its open-endedness, and places foreign religions on a par with it. It also determines the narrator’s reluctance to take on τὰ θεῖα as a part of his ethnographic subject. To inquire and explain is to question and therefore, potentially, to negate. The limiting case of perverted theological inquiry is Cambyses’ brutal practical test of the divinity of the Apis bull (3.27–29). In matters of religion, however, even verbal inquiry, which goes hand in hand with a sort of arbitration, is at least dangerous. When the narrator displays his own *historie* in the secular sphere, contradictory *logoi* that are pitted against each other result, implicitly or explicitly, undermined; indeed, in such cases, to expose their subjectivity and the instability of truth is for Herodotus an important goal. In a somewhat parallel fashion, to discuss the *hieroi logoi* (sacred history) of different peoples will raise questions concerning their correctness, absurdity, or impropriety, as well as the intellectual and cognitive skills of the people who hold them as true. Though at very different levels, both the vulgar account of the Black Sea Greeks concerning Salmoxis and the philosophical polemic of a Xenophanes of Colophon are deconstructive criticisms of culturally determined religious beliefs. Perhaps the Περὶ θεῶν of Protagoras had put accounts of different theologies to a similar use.<sup>88</sup> As the promoter of the validity of difference, Herodotus sometimes needs to shake his audience’s self-assurance in their own religious traditions or justify those of others; precisely these motivations, more often than not, provide the “overwhelming compulsion” (see ἐξαναγκάζομενος in 2.3.2) to discuss sacred knowledge.<sup>89</sup> But to subject foreign *hieroi logoi* to that kind of scrutiny, to expose them to ethnocentric debate, sophistic skepticism, and perhaps ridicule—this, as a rule, he is “not eager” [οὐκ . . . πρόθυμος] to do (2.3.2).

87. For sanctuaries, see, e.g., 9.65.2, with a cautionary gloss of opinion. A gloss of comparison (at 3.64.3) implicitly presents Cambyses’ death as evidence of the divinity of Apis.

88. Philostratus (DK 80 A2) makes Protagoras’ statement derive from a conversation with the Persian Magi; see Untersteiner 1967, 1:56. For a denial of the possibility of knowledge about the gods, cf. Xenophanes, DK 21 A34.

89. See 1.131.1, 2.43–44 (concluded with an apology to gods and heroes at 2.45.3), 2.143–46. For the different case of 2.156.4–5, on the myth of Leto, see chap. 4, “Herodotus and the Conventional Code.” For the myth at 2.42.3–4, see chap. 2, “The Texture of *Nomos*.”

Funeral Customs and Other *Nomoi*: Cultural Relativism

The only mutilation tentatively attributed to the Persians in the ethnography is the practice of exposing the dead to be torn by a bird or a dog. After this treatment, which recalls the Homeric indignity against the bodies of one's enemy, the Persians cover the body in wax and bury it.<sup>90</sup> Clearly marked off by a retrospective/prospective system (1.140.1), this custom is deliberately not integrated into the rest of the description, and it is not allowed to contribute to an understanding of Persian ideology or beliefs. The ritual simply exists, either among the Magi or among both Persians and Magi, and it is different, just as the Magi are unaccountably different from the rest of mankind also in other respects (1.140.2). One sign of the custom's unfathomable arbitrariness is that the narrator, somewhat as he does for Salmoxis, bids it farewell: "let it be [ἐχέτω], just as it has been established as a custom to begin with" (1.140.3).

This ritual appears as the first of the funeral customs in the *Histories*; it constitutes the limiting and representative case of them all—opaque, arbitrary, of unknown origin, and a symbol of difference, yet not entirely unique. Only one other *ethnos* in the *Histories* abandons the dead to corruption (3.100), but many embalm and bury. Similarly, only one *ethnos* celebrates joyfully when someone dies (5.4), and only one (5.8) holds athletic contests, though that is the old heroic manner. Several eat or cremate the dead or make their skulls into objects; several sing dirges, sacrifice, or mark tombs.<sup>91</sup> Individual features recur again and again in different combinations, revealing both people's mysterious opportunity for difference and the limit of that difference. And since each *ethnos* is bound to do something—which is always the same ritually prescribed

90. Mutilation of corpses by "dogs and all the birds" in Homer (*Il.* 4–5; cf. *Il.* 2.393, 4.237) is not value-free. See Segal 1971, 9–17. Cf. Soph. *Antig.* 204–6, 258–59. Boedeker (forthcoming) contrasts Hdt. 1.140 with Artabanus' "Homeric" threat to Mardonius at Hdt. 7.1003. In this case, the discrepancy between Herodotus' Persian ethnography and history (see discussion earlier in the present chapter) follows an inverted pattern.

91. Embalming (with different techniques) is performed by the Babylonians (1.198), the Egyptians, the Ethiopians (3.24), and the Magi. Burial is practiced by the Magi, the Persians, and the Massagetae (1.216.2), the Libyan nomads, the Nasamones (in a sitting position, 4.190), and the Trausians (5.4). Eating the dead occurs among the Massagetae (1.216.2), the Callatians (3.38.4), the Padaeans (3.99), and the Issedones (4.26.1). Cremation occurs among the Greeks and the Lydians. Skulls are made into objects by the Issedones (skulls of loved ones, 4.26.2) and the Scythians (skulls of enemies, 4.65.2). Dirges are sung by the Babylonians, the Egyptians (1.198), and the Thracians (5.8). Tombs are used by the Greeks and the Nasamones (4.176).

act—with their dead, funeral customs are inevitable signs of culture. They belong to every society's body of most compulsive norms—the ἰσά τε καὶ νόμοια—and mediate between what is sacred (ἱερόν) in the proper sense, connected with the cult of the gods, and what we would more loosely call "sacred."<sup>92</sup>

A society's ritual disposal of dead bodies has no bearing on relations with others, and it does not involve issues of justice or injustice toward its own members in the same way as do customs that have to do with the treatment of the living. In Herodotus, therefore, funerals are an important cultural symbol. They illustrate the sense of alienation that foreign cultures inspire simply as they go about their business of being different from ourselves; consequently, they allow the ethnographer to theorize on cultural relativism in the broadest possible terms.

This happens in a far-ranging interpretive gloss that, standing at the intersection of ethnography and history, generalizes on the basis of the narrative about Cambyses' behavior toward custom (3.38). Cambyses is the extreme representative of Herodotus' negative paradigm for historical and ethical action, the monarchical model. He is also a scientist of sorts, a researcher of *nomoi*, and in this capacity the foil of the *histor* of the *Histories*.<sup>93</sup> Their shared field of observation is principally Egypt, a fundamental source of theoretical and anthropological learning for Herodotus, and a land Cambyses oppresses as well as observes. Through his brutal testing in the sphere of custom—from religion, to funeral procedures, to marriage laws (3.16, 31, 35.5)—Cambyses attempts to find out whether practices, cultural beliefs, statutes, public opinion, and common morality will hold out under skeptical critique, objective scrutiny, and external force. Herodotus' own respectful inquiry on the value of *nomos* here takes advantage of the historical case of Cambyses himself.

To Herodotus, Cambyses represents especially useful evidence for two reasons. First, his violations of the *nomoi* of others are strictly connected with his destruction and deconstruction of less culture-specific ethical rules and of the laws of his own society. In symbolic terms, the fulfillment of his early promise of putting everything upside down in Egypt corresponds to the unprecedented upside-down burial of his own Persian sub-

92. Heinimann (1945, 79) gives *nomos* as applied to these practices the meaning of *fas*. In the taxonomy of ethnographic descriptions, funeral customs are sometimes adjacent to religion, other times not.

93. See Munson 1991, 59–60; Christ 1994, 186–87.

jects.<sup>94</sup> Second, Cambyses' madness is not a hyperbole for criminal behavior but a clinical (i.e., physical) illness.<sup>95</sup> This means that Cambyses' dysfunction with respect to all sorts of customs—foreign and native, religious and secular—coincides with an impairment of the mind that clearly belongs in the sphere of *phusis* (nature). By Herodotus' time, *phusis*, *nomos*, and the divine, once blurred in archaic Greek thought, have grown increasingly distinct.<sup>96</sup> As far as Herodotus is concerned, however, Cambyses' triple abnormality demonstrates *e contrario* the existence of a close connection between divine will, nature, and culture as a universal phenomenon.<sup>97</sup>

Herodotus' conclusion at 3.38.1 begins by interpreting Cambyses' derision of religion and serious customs (ἱερά τε καὶ νόμια [things sacred and pertaining to custom]) as evidence that confirms his madness (ἐμάνη). But “derision” (καταγελάων) is here an understatement that invites vertical analogy between the crimes of Cambyses (accompanied by laughter: 3.29.1–2, 3.35.3, 3.37.2) and more commonplace manifestations of contempt. In fact, the case of Cambyses will be paradigmatic for narrator and audience: any one who makes fun (γέλωτα . . . τίθεσθαι) of such things is mad (3.38.2). The positive counterpart of this insane individual is normal people in general, who simply scrutinize all sorts of customs (διασκεψάμενοι) and are attached to their own.

Protagoras may ultimately be the source for the interpretive hypothesis at 3.38.1 that if “all men” were able to choose from a display of *nomoi*, they would choose their own, believing them to be the most beautiful/honorable (τοὺς καλλίστους). In a very similar passage of the sophistic *Dissoi Logoi*, the idea has been put to the service of a “different strokes for different folks” brand of relativism that denies the absolute validity of the ethical concepts of the honorable (τὸ καλόν) and the shameful (τὸ

94. 3.3.3, 3.35.5. See also the mutilation of the body of Amasis, by which Cambyses violates both Persian and Egyptian customs (3.16).

95. Explicit references to Cambyses' medical madness occur at 3.30.1, 3.33, 3.34.1, 3.37.1, and 3.38.1. Only Cleomenes shares this distinction. See chap. 2, n. 71 and corresponding text.

96. See especially Heinimann 1945, 110–62; Guthrie 1971, 55–147. Cf. chap. 2, “The Texture of *Nomos*.”

97. Individual *nomoi* have of course human origin in Herodotus. See Evans 1965, 145–46. However, the idea of *Nomos* as an overriding impulse to culture recalls Heraclitus DK 22 B114 (“all human laws are nourished by a single law, which is divine; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over”). See Heinimann 1945, 65–66.

αἰσχρόν).<sup>98</sup> Herodotus, however, is already traveling in a different direction: the lack of objective validity in people's perception that their own *nomoi* are *καλοί* only goes to show that all *nomoi* are equally *καλοί*. To deride them is therefore madness.

The subjectivity of all men, illustrated by the hypothetical scenario of the display of *nomoi*, is next confirmed by the evidence (τηζμήριον) of the actual experiment of another royal *histor* (3.38.2). Darius once proposed to the Greeks that they eat their dead parents and to the Callatian Indians, who customarily eat their parents, that they burn them instead; both groups refused to practice the other's *nomos* (3.38.3–4). Other than showing again that each likes his own customs best, the exchange also dramatizes the repulsion that the harmless other is likely to inspire. The subjectivity of each party's reaction is enhanced by the fact that the competing *nomoi* are here no longer the unidentified assortment of the hypothetical scenario envisioned earlier. They are specifically funeral customs, the most suitable for conveying the principle that diverging cultural norms are not αἰσχροί and, since they are all equally compelling, are inherently *καλοί*.

Here the implied equivalence of all men's *nomoi* from the point of view of their moral goodness corresponds to the equivalence of all men's religious beliefs from the point of view of their truth-value at 2.3.3. On the basis of this equivalence, Herodotus' next generalized statement no longer follows the distributive pattern of 3.38.1—"all men would each [ἕκαστοι] believe that their own customs [τοὺς ἑωυτῶν νόμους] are the most beautiful." The unified formulation borrowed from Pindar, rather, posits a single human community and, over it, a single rule.<sup>99</sup>

Thus are these things determined by *nomos*, and it seems to me that Pindar was right when he said in poetry that *nomos is king of all*. [οὕτω μὲν νυν ταῦτα νενόμισται, καὶ ὀρθῶς μοι δοκεῖ Πίνδαρος ποιῆσαι νόμον πάντων βασιλέα φήσας εἶναι.] (3.38.4)

In this definitive maxim, *nomos* comes to mean custom/law/culture as something abstracted from this or that *nomos* or set of *nomoi*. It encompasses all humankind (Androphagoi excepted: 4.106). It represents the

98. DK 90 2.18 (cf. 2.26). On the connection between the *Dissoi Logoi* and Protagoras, see Lasserre 1976, 73–74; Robinson 1979, 51–59.

99. For the meaning of Pindar frag. 169 SM in its original context, see especially Gigante 1956, 72–102; Schroeder 1917; Stier 1928; Ostwald 1965; Humphreys 1987. Another intriguing fragment of Pindar (215 Bergk) expresses the idea of cultural differentiation.

universal fact of having *nomoi*, whatever these may be, and of behaving according to them, in culturally determined ways.

At 3.38, Herodotus takes the opportunity offered by Cambyses to supplement in a crucial way the message that the ethnographies communicate to the audience. The inquiry into the customs of foreign peoples and the presentation of such inquiry to an audience navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of ethnocentric absolutism and ethical relativism, respectively. Our ethnological observation may reinforce the sense of our monopoly over τὸ καλόν in comparison with worse communities who do things differently than “we” do. As we have seen, the *Histories* include more or less automatic negative evaluations (“they couple like animals”) as well as ultimately presupposing an absolutist—and deliberate—view of what is *kalon* (beautiful/moral) or *aischron* (shameful/immoral). But though certain particular customs may indeed be *aischroi* (see 1.199.1), the ethnographic discourse of Herodotus attempts to steer the audience clear of unilateral chauvinism toward barbarian customs as such.

A relativism according to which different *nomoi* are on principle equivalent in function and worth is fundamental to this lesson. For someone like Cambyses, however, the realization that different peoples have different *nomoi* with roughly the same validity leads to denying the validity of them all. This is the Charybdis, the second danger that Herodotus addresses in this gloss. The monarchical position of Cambyses, who obeys his own personal law and “does what he wants” (3.31.4), is in fact similar to the ethical monarchism and extreme relativism of a theoretician of the ilk of Plato’s Callicles.<sup>100</sup> To Cambyses/Callicles, nothing is “sacred,” while Herodotus’ brand of relativism teaches that everything is. Callicles attributes the saying νόμος πάντων βασιλεύς [Custom/Law king of all] to the law of nature that lets the stronger prevail, which is, according to him, the only law that counts (Plato *Gorg.* 483B). We should not doubt that the phrase served to validate sophistic thought long before the time of the Platonic dialogue. Herodotus, at any rate, uses the same phrase to support a position that is the opposite of that of Callicles and to replace Cambyses as the king- *despotes* (and

100. Plato *Gorg.* 482E–484D. The parallelism between Herodotus’ Cambyses and Plato’s Callicles is enhanced by the continuous intrusions of the monarchical code in Callicles’ speech. Callicles’ models are the Persian kings Xerxes and Darius (483E); he speaks of strong men coming of age as “lions” (483E) and as kings’ sons (492B); he claims (491E) that they should give free rein to their desires (ἐπιθυμία, a monarchic word in Herodotus: see chap. 2, n. 232) and that they should not impose on themselves conventional *nomos* as a *despotes* (492B).

researcher and destroyer of custom) with the kingship of custom and conventional law.

The exchanges Herodotus describes throughout his work show to what extent both Greeks and non-Greeks—“all men,” in other words—are assiduous observers and critics of each other’s *nomoi*. For each *ethnos* of *histores*, the sense of allegiance to their own *nomoi* cannot prescind from the realization of the allegiance of others to theirs. Couched in these terms, Herodotus’ ongoing polemic against cultural chauvinism, cultural imperialism, and racism—all of which allegedly preserve a person’s attachment and obedience to his own *nomoi* while allowing for his contempt toward others and theirs—takes the remarkable form of an ideology that squeezes this double standard out of existence. As in the case of Cambyses, imperialistic contempt for others is madness that overrides all laws. Ethnocentrism is universal because, to paraphrase Herodotus with the words of Geertz, we “cannot escape preferring our own preferences.”<sup>101</sup> But for the ethnographer of the *Histories*, morality, sanity, and piety at home as well as abroad are contingent on the acceptance of the universal and absolute rule of culture. This entails respect for the subjectivity of others on a par with ours and the belief, from an objective point of view, in the essential moral equivalence between burning and eating the dead. Thus, the notion of the abnormality of foreigners is replaced with the idea that abnormal is the one who derides their *nomoi*.

### Interpretation in the History

This section focuses on those metanarrative passages where the narrator directly intervenes to explain in his own voice what an event of the past “means.” The meaning of a specific historical action or event is in most cases connected to its motives, causes, and results; an interpretation of these factors may in turn indicate the action’s worth.<sup>102</sup> I begin by examining two fundamental glosses, both the narrative of Xerxes’ invasion, where the interpretive and evaluative functions are strictly combined. One is the famous judgment about the consequences of Athenian policy of naval resistance (7.139); the other is the explanation of Leonidas’ decision to remain at Thermopylae (7.220). These two interpretations are almost symmetrical, one about Athens and the other about Sparta, each

101. Geertz 1986, 261; cf. 257.

102. So Plutarch (*De Malign. Herod.*) understands Herodotus in terms of praise or blame.

vis-à-vis Persia and in contrast to other Greeks. Both statements are clearly marked by self-referential signs of opinion as interventions in the voice of the narrator.

Specific Glosses of Interpretation: Sparta and Athens

The first passage anticipates at long range the Salamis narrative and introduces at short range the account of Athenian deliberations before Xerxes' invasion (7.140–43). It is in turn programmatically introduced as a *gnome*, or opinion, that will cause resentment.

**At this point, I am compelled by necessity publicly to display an odious interpretation [γνώμην ἐπίφθονον] for most people, but still, since it appears to me to be something true (ἀληθές), I shall not refrain. (7.139.1)**

The interpretive gloss itself rushes on in a rhetorical fugue of contrary-to-fact past conditions sketching the scenario of what would have happened if the Athenians had not opposed Xerxes on the sea. It ends by explaining the meaning of the Athenians' initiative in terms of both motives ("since they chose [ἐλόμενοι] that Greece remain free") and results ("one saying that the Athenians were the saviors of Greece would not miss the mark of the truth [τᾰληθές]").<sup>103</sup>

In his study of the concept of *aletheia* (truth) in Greek literary discourse, Detienne has traced the early use of the word to connote the uncontested truth that emanates from the gods and finds expression in prophecy and poetry. In the context of the polis, *aletheia* enters in competition with *doxa* (opinion), which informs the secular and more provisional discourse of public debates among peers.<sup>104</sup> Herodotus rarely invokes *aletheia* as the foundation of his *logos* or as a realistic goal of his inquiry.<sup>105</sup> Though accompanied by the narrator's more normal vocabulary of opinion and evidence, this is the *Histories*' most unambiguous proclamation of "truth" in the sphere of human knowledge. It emphasizes not only the maximum certainty of the *gnome* in terms of evidence (φαίνεται) but also its general validity, its nonlocal and nonrelative status. We can perhaps transfer to historical reports the connotation,

103. 7.139.1–5. See Demand 1987 for the rhetorical aspects of this passage.

104. See Detienne 1973, 25–47, 81–110.

105. On the predominance of opinion over truth in Herodotus, see Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 164–89, especially 165–67.

which Nagy applies to the realm of poetic traditions, of *aletheia* as the feature that characterizes the canonical version and excludes all other local variants.<sup>106</sup> The phrase “one saying that the Athenians were the saviors of Greece would not miss the mark of the ἀληθές” (7.139.5) canonizes what happens to coincide, on the whole, with the Athenian version of the war.<sup>107</sup> It validates it as the Panhellenic version, since *one* (τις) can refer to any member of the audience, whether Theban, Corinthian, or Argive, or any Greek, including the floating *histor*. Herodotus here publicly performs a *gnome* that alone must be and must remain accepted by all Hellenes. It is, as he says, compulsory.

The true *gnome* is compulsory but unpleasant. It is ἐπίφθορος, likely to make those who express it the objects of *phthonos* (envy) for most men, because so is Athens, the tyrant city whose self-glorifying claims it confirms.<sup>108</sup> A contemporary argument, surely a commonplace response to those Athenian claims in the 430s, was to point out that the Athenians perhaps behaved well in the war against the Persians but now were behaving badly toward the Greeks.<sup>109</sup> Herodotus here reverses the terms and places the Panhellenic *gnome* about the past in the foreground while alluding to the accusations concerning the present: if Athens is ἐπίφθορος to the Greeks now, it has been, at the time of Xerxes’ invasion, their savior. This clear-cut judgment frees Herodotus in the subsequent narrative of Salamis and beyond to continue indicating to his audience the signs of trouble to come within the available record of past events.<sup>110</sup> Herodotus’ sense of

106. Nagy 1990, 59–68.

107. See Loraux 1986, 58. See the Athenian speakers in Thuc. 1.73.4–74.4, especially the contrary-to-fact condition at 1.74.4; cf. Lysias 2.45. The Peloponnesian version would have maintained the primacy of the battle of Plataea (see Immerwahr 1966, 240 n. 8) and minimized the merit of the Athenians by emphasizing the strategical errors of the Persians (see the Corinthians in Thuc. 1.69.5).

108. See Thuc. 2.8.5, and 2.64.5 (τὸ ἐπίφθορον). A typical recipient of φθόνος is the tyrant: see Hdt. 3.52.4–5, 7.236.1. See McGlew 1993, 31–33. For the notion of the tyrant city, see chap. 2 n. 49 and corresponding text.

109. See Sthenelaidas in Thuc. 1.86.1. Whatever one thinks about the historicity of Thucydides’ speeches (see Hornblower 1987, 45–72, for a discussion), τὰ δέοντα (1.22.1) guarantees the historicity of the political code—types of arguments, word combinations, and so on.

110. On the qualified nature of Herodotus’ praise of Athens at 7.139, see Payen 1997, 189–93. I have examined this aspect of Herodotus’ account of the battle of Salamis in Munson 1988, and see further “Disputes, Arbitration, and the Subjectivity of Opinions” later in the present chapter and chap. 4, “Vertical Analogy.” The evidence throughout the *Histories* does not support Evans’ view (1979, 117) that 7.139 demonstrates Herodotus’ acceptance of the moral justification of Athenian imperialism.

continuity between past and present often produces a representation that is nonidealized or, as Plutarch qualifies it, “malicious,” because it interprets the past in light of the present.<sup>111</sup> This form of revisionism is nevertheless conjoined with the determination to keep the record straight and not to revise history in a way that detracts from past achievements. The result is a discourse that tends to swing back and forth between explicit praise and more covert blame.

The hypothetical history of the war minus the Athenians, which supports the interpretation at 7.139 that “the Athenians were the saviors of Greece,” involves an ambivalent portrayal of the efforts of everyone else—the strategic futility of the wall across the Isthmus, the role of the nonmedizing Greeks as mere followers, and the practical uselessness of the isolated valor of the Spartans. With the realistic hypothesis that even the Spartans, when all hope would be lost, might have come to terms with the Persians, Herodotus slightly corrects the impression just conveyed by the narrative about the intransigent courage of Sperthias and Boulis.<sup>112</sup> This instability of evaluation is typical of Herodotus’ interpretive technique in his account of Greek city-states in the Persian Wars. Thus, with the narrative of Thermopylae, we are back to the full recognition of Spartan achievements.

Precisely in the narrative of Thermopylae, we find the Spartan counterpart of the praise of Athens just considered. It similarly highlights a moment of choice in the face of the invader and is again squeezed in between a Greek council and an oracle. The Greeks at Thermopylae learn that the Persians are surrounding them; from sacrifices, they receive omens that death is about to overtake them together with the dawn. They meet to decide what to do, and their opinions are divided. Finally, part of the army leaves the pass, scattering “each to his own city” (7.219.2, index of divisiveness). At this point, the narrator steps in to interpret the action in terms of both motive and results. He corroborates a received *logos* (certainly Spartan) and expands on it. His praise of one party, somewhat as in the Athenian gloss, goes hand in hand with a certain ambivalence toward the others (7.220.1–2).

111. See Fornara 1981, 155.

112. 7.134–36. The hypothesis is a recognition of Spartan pragmatism (see Loraux 1977, 113), but it contradicts the Spartan “image” (cf. Thuc. 4.40.1, 4.36.3). Plutarch (*De Malign. Herod.* 29 = *Mor.* 864A–B) comments that at 7.139.3, Herodotus “obviously praises the Athenians not to praise the Athenians but to speak ill of everyone else.”

They say that it was Leonidas himself who dismissed them, concerned that they should not die; as for himself and the Spartans who were with him, [he thought] it would not have been seemly for them to leave the post they had come to guard to begin with. **I also am very much of this opinion** [γνώμην], that Leonidas, after realizing that the allies lacked eagerness and did not want to share the danger, ordered them to depart, whereas for him it was not honorable to leave. By remaining there, he in fact left behind great glory, and the good fortune of Sparta was not obliterated [κλέος μέγα ἐλείπετο καὶ ἡ Σπάρτης εὐδαιμονίη οὐκ ἐξηλείφετο]. (7.220.1–2)

Herodotus then explains why he attributes to Leonidas the role of saving Sparta, by reporting an oracle that earlier on had predicted either the destruction of the city by the Persians or the death of one of its kings (7.220.3–4). The interpretation then resumes in similar terms as before.

And [I am of the opinion that] it was because he considered this and wished to establish glory [κλέος] for the Spartiates alone that Leonidas dismissed the allies, rather than them leaving in disorderly fashion because their opinion differed. (7.220.4)

Just as the Athenians “became the saviors of Greece,” so Leonidas “left behind great glory, and the good fortune of Sparta was not obliterated”: this result encapsulates the ultimate significance of Leonidas’ choice in the perception of the narrator. In the poetic tradition, κλέος (glory) is almost a technical term for the glory of heroes, especially in death. With a connection that is again traditional in epic, the two occurrences of *kleos* in this gloss frame the mention of *penthos* in the oracle’s prophecy that the city will mourn (πενθήσει) the death of its king descended from Heracles.<sup>113</sup> Herodotus, in other words, directs the audience to interpret Thermopylae in terms of the epic code of heroic achievement and commemoration, thereby reinforcing elements of that code that are scattered throughout the narrative.<sup>114</sup> Previously Herodotus had

113. 7.220.4, lines 3–4. On κλέος compensating πένθος in several passages of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Theogony*, see Nagy 1979, 94–117.

114. In this narrative, what starts out as a hoplitic battle becomes a heroic battle (7.223–25); see Loraux 1977, 116; Dillery 1996, 235–42, 245–49. The notice of the fight over Leonidas’ body (7.225.1) evokes the Homeric fight over the body of Patroclus (*Il.*

stepped in with a true *gnome* (opinion/interpretation) to mark the essence of Athenian merit vis-à-vis the rest of Greece. Here, again on the authority of his *gnome*, he marks the moment at which Sparta, through Leonidas, fulfills its potential as a Greek city-state in the Panhellenic tradition of heroic valor.

The uniqueness of this *gnome* is confirmed by the use of κλέος and derivatives in the rest of the *Histories*. The stem κλε- appears in the narrator's code of celebration within the program of the first sentence, where he promises not to let human achievement become ἀκλεᾶ (inglorious). Other terms we find there (the verbs ἱστορέω and ἀποδείκνυμαι, the nouns ἔργον and θῶμα) recur repeatedly in the work, both in metanarrative and in the narrative. Words of the κλε- family, by contrast, appear only three other times besides in the Leonidas gloss, exclusively in connection with Spartans, as if the notion of heroic glory represented a standard of measure appropriate only to them. The adverb ἀκλεῶς, "ingloriously," evaluates the abortive expedition of Cleomenes to Attica (5.77.1). At Plataea, the Persians complain, with some justification, that the Spartans are not living up to their renown for valor (κατὰ κλέος, 9.48.3). After the battle, the Aeginetan Lampon utters what the narrator evaluates as "the most impious speech," when he praises Pausanias for having achieved κλέος and encourages him to finish the work by impaling the corpse of Mardonius (9.78.1–3). These are all tainted uses, leaving the battle of Thermopylae to shine forth not only as the superior achievement with respect to the "fairest victory" of Plataea (9.64.1) but also as the only perfect fulfillment the *Histories* have to offer of their author's promise in the proem to celebrate heroic glory.

Leonidas leaves behind a great *kleos* and causes the *eudaimonie* (happiness/good fortune) of Sparta not to be blotted out (οὐκ ἐξηλείφεται). His achievement is obviously complementary to Herodotus' task not to let the events of men become faded with time (ἐξίτηλα) and not to let the great and wonderful deeds of Greeks and barbarians become *aklea*. Just as Leonidas acquires *kleos* and preserves the *eudaimonie* of the city, so Herodotus preserves the *kleos* of Leonidas.<sup>115</sup> The long gloss of identification that introduces Leonidas at the beginning of the Thermopylae narrative

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17.274–87). See How and Wells 1928, 2.230. The heroic ancestry of Leonidas is noted three times, first with full genealogy (7.204, 7.208.1, 7.220.4). See also the Homeric way of indicating time at 7.215 and 7.223.1 (cf. *Il.* 11.86 and *Od.* 12.439, on which see Lloyd 1966, 186).

115. See Nagy 1990, 221–27.

already marks him as a prime target for Herodotus' commemoration: he is a descendent of Heracles and at the same time a private citizen who has become king (7.204–205.1). He is ὁ θαυμαζόμενος μάλιστα, the highest object of wonder (7.204.1), and consequently belongs to the category of θαυμαστά that the narrator has singled out for attention in the first sentence. As Leonidas, therefore, realizes his full potential at Thermopylae as citizen-hero and king—not king, so Herodotus fulfills the potential of his Homeric role as celebrator of deeds through the narration of Leonidas. The praise of Athens I have considered earlier stresses the collective body of Athenian citizens, while the latter magnifies Sparta through its first citizen. The two passages are, however, parallel in other respects, not least because also in the Athenian gloss, the narrator represents himself as personally achieving something exceptional and hard to do, as we have seen: there he performs a *gnome* that is *alethes*, absolutely true, both in the epistemic and in the Panhellenic sense.

#### Generalized Glosses of Interpretation

Though important and far-ranging, the two glosses I have just examined are among those that confine themselves to discussing events within a specific historical context. In a smaller number of cases, by contrast, the interpretation makes a shift from the past tense of historical narrative to the timeless present and interprets the particular by predicating what is valid in general for all, regardless of time and space. These sentences are our most precious indicators of what Herodotus' speech act ultimately "means."

Aristotle calls a generalization of this sort a *gnome* and defines it as "an assertion—not, however, about particulars, such as what kind of person Iphicrates is, but of a general sort, and not about everything (for example, not that the straight is the opposite of the crooked), but about things that involve actions and are to be chosen or avoided with regard to actions."<sup>116</sup> A statement "such as what kind of person Iphicrates is," to use Aristotle's example, represents in the terminology of this book a specific gloss of interpretation (or evaluation) like the two I have just discussed. Since all sorts of interpretive statements, specific and general,

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116. Arist. *Rhet.* 2.21.2 (1394a), in the translation by Kennedy (1991). For an analysis of Aristotle's treatment of the subject, see Lardinois 1995, 7–13. Generalizations in Homer are also discussed by Richardson (1990, 144–45).

are identified by Herodotus as his *gnomai*, or opinions, this is the way I will here use the word *gnome*; I will call Aristotle's *gnomai* "gnomic sayings," "gnomic glosses," "maxims," or simply "generalizations." These are not necessarily equivalent to our proverbs, ready-made, anonymous, and handed down by tradition. Like "the wise words of the Western Apache," they can be "the property of a particular speaker and created on the spot."<sup>117</sup> Aristotle calls them *gnomai* because they represent, or purport to represent, the speaker's opinion. The generalizations that I will consider directly communicate the opinion of the *histor* Herodotus. Whether or not they reproduce traditional modes of thinking, they are always based on his interpretation of specific events or on a synthesis of his historical experience.

Aristotle does not consider all possible generalizations as gnomic. By excluding such a statement as "the straight is the opposite of the crooked," he attempts to draw the line between moralistic and scientific discourse. Herodotus' generalizations are "scientific" in the sense that they are always worded as statements of fact, never as instructions on what would be best or what one should do.<sup>118</sup> In terms of speech-act theory, they are "representatives," that is, sentences that make the words fit the world, not the other way around.<sup>119</sup> But if we compare, for example, the statement "Diseases among men derive from changes of seasons" (2.77.3) with the statement "Good fortune never stays in the same place" (1.5.4), we see that only the first is purely a description. The second pointedly makes the historical experience of its primary referent, the cities that have risen and fallen in the past, relevant to "us all." Its gnomic character has to do with the implicit prescription to the listeners not to disregard the "law" or "rule" that the generalization formulates but rather to regulate their behavior according to it. Most generalizations in Herodotus are of this type, statements of fact with the indirect force of advice or warnings. As they provide a reading of the evidence, they also, as Aristotle says, convey a message "about things that involve actions and are to be *chosen and avoided* with regard to actions."

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117. Lardinois 1995, 5, quoting Basso 1976, 98. For the "coined" character of archaic Greek *gnomai* (in the Aristotelian sense), in which traditional recurrent themes are constantly reworded and reshaped, see Lardinois 1995, 22–26.

118. The same is true for some of Aristotle's own examples of gnomic sayings, as Lardinois observes (1995, 11). See *Rhet.* 2.21.2 (1394a–1395b).

119. At least, this is their primary "illocutionary point." I am relying on the taxonomy of Searle (1976). See, in the present book, my introduction, n. 41 and corresponding text.

Through these interventions, more conspicuously than through narrative alone, the scientific researcher appropriates in relation to his audience the stance of the sage of archaic tradition vis-à-vis the citizens of the polis. In particular, the narrator comes to resemble somewhat the wise advisers who populate his narratives. But wise or not, most speakers in the *Histories* generalize relentlessly, on all sorts of topics.<sup>120</sup> Whether their gnomic sayings corroborate or contradict those of the narrator, they inevitably—as far as the general message of the work is concerned—tend to complicate the issues: alongside with events narrated, they are all parts of the factual evidence the *Histories* presents. At the same time, the utterances of speakers are never automatically reflections of Herodotus' interpretation of that evidence's meaning.

The overt deliberative rhetoric in which Herodotus' speakers mostly engage affects the form of their maxims. Occasionally characters generalize in a string of gnomic sayings, use maxims in the mode of “should,” posit general truths as the basic assumption or as supporting evidence for their argument, phrase them in the grammatical second person (7.50.1), or deliver them in hortatory form to their listener (μάθε ὧς . . . , 1.207.2, 7.49.3). The narrator, for whom the deliberative aim is hidden behind the judicial and scientific/representative modes, never does any of these things. He tends to be a brief, spare, and cautious generalizer of what certain particulars reveal to be the case.

The abundance of maxims in the reported speeches of the *Histories* has caused some confusion between what the narrator says and what his characters say. Moreover, generalizations tend to be strictly connected to their respective narrative contexts. These factors have led some critics to devalue Herodotus' generalizations as merely the self-contradictory and strictly occasional by-product of the storyteller's impulse to narrate.<sup>121</sup> The impulse to narrate, however, is for Herodotus the impulse to accumulate evidence. A narrative may already function as the paradigmatic account of a particular action that implicitly conveys certain truths applicable to the recipient of the narrative.<sup>122</sup> But if the proliferation of narratives and utterances creates a picture that is crowded, nuanced, diverse,

120. The seventy-five maxims of the list compiled by Lang (1984, 58–66 and notes) occur mostly in speeches. See also Shapiro 2000.

121. See, e.g., Gould 1989, 81.

122. See Lardinois 1995, 110–16, on the functional equivalence between gnomic sayings and paradigmatic narrative (*aimoi*) in the utterances of Homeric characters.

hard to know on the factual level, and unstable from the point of view of how and why things happen, the narrator's generalizations highlight certain moments when the meaning of particulars appears especially clear to him. Herodotus does not pretend with his audience that the evidence always goes his way or only one way; this is an important aspect of his persona as inquirer and of the interrogative nature of the text. But from the multiplicity of experience, a moral can be derived, and occasionally the narrator is so bold as to express it. The moral is then in turn both a tool for capturing the diachronic and synchronic patterns of human experience and a guide to human action.

Few in number and remarkably consistent, Herodotus' maxims identify some of the major ethical concerns of the *historie*. Because they are fundamental reference points for understanding his message, we have already encountered some of them in preceding discussions. I will now survey them as a group, subdividing them primarily according to what they generalize about, and I will use them as a guide for examining some specific glosses of interpretation that are thematically related. We can isolate a category of generalizations of a rather philosophical and metaphysical sort, concerning three major issues: the instability of human fortune; the nature of divine action in the visible world, especially divine retribution; and the phenomenon of divine communication. Within another, political category, we first of all find a subgroup that wants to be considered from the point of view of the topic to which the statements are attached, because here the primary referent and the representative/evaluative character of the maxims overshadow other aspects. This subgroup consists of two generalizations on government that are inspired by the historical case of Athens. A second subgroup of political generalization concerns war. A third perhaps holds the ideological key to the paucity of generalizations in Herodotus: it has to do with the subjectivity and relativity of opinions.

#### The Instability of Happiness

The first maxim in the work is a preliminary generalization that does not stem from the narrative but rather motivates the narrator's program with regard to the contents and structure of his *logos*. It appears here underlined, quoted in its context. The self-referential metanarrative appears in bold face.

. . . after placing in relief the one I myself know to have been the first to initiate the wrongdoing against the Greeks, I will proceed with my logos, going through the cities of men, small and great alike. For those that were once great have for the most part become small, and those that were great in my time were previously small. Therefore, since I know [ἐπιστάμενος] that human good fortune never stays in the same place [τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην . . . εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ μένουσαν], I shall mention them both alike. (1.5.3–4)

The first part of the program establishes that the first narrative of the *logos* will be about Croesus, whom the highly interpretive gloss identifies as “the first . . . to initiate the wrongdoing against the Greeks.” He is, in other words, that original *aitios* (guilty one) for the East-West conflict about whom the *historie* had started out to inquire (αἰτίην, first sentence; αἰτίους, 1.1). The second programmatic movement (“I will proceed . . .”) identifies the *logos* as a whole, describing it as a sort of odyssey (cf. *Od.* 1.3) in which the wanderer-narrator can choose where he wants to go: he will narratively visit all sorts of *astea* because most of them have an interesting history of becoming large or becoming small.<sup>123</sup> So there are two competing topics in the *logos*. One centers around aggressions against the Greeks; the other is represented by the histories of “cities,” how they have grown and how they have declined. Implicitly, Croesus is part of both: he is the first aggressor of the Greeks, and the narrative about him as it turns out, relates his becoming great and becoming small.

The gnomic saying itself is formulated by the narrator on his own authority (ἐπιστάμενος), as is typical of the generalizing element in the metanarrative of the *Histories*.<sup>124</sup> The self-referential signs marking Herodotus’ *gnomai* contribute to displaying the researcher who does not take traditional wisdom for granted but derives a teaching from a careful evaluation of the evidence he has obtained. Here the maxim “Human good fortune never stays in the same place,” though already a result of Herodotus’ *historie* (research) is preliminary to the *apodexis* (presentation). Its purpose is to broaden the scope of the historical synthesis about

123. On the metaphor of the *logos* as a journey, see chap. 1, “Self-Referential Glosses.”

124. This is infrequent in other authors (see Lardinois 1995, 157–61, 61–63, 195–225, 231–72) and in Herodotus’ reported speeches; exceptions occur, for example, at 1.32.1 (see n. 127 in the present chapter), 3.40.2, and 7.18.2.

what has happened to cities, projecting it beyond the boundaries of the historical past. Large cities have become small, and small cities have become great; history has been so consistent in this respect that Herodotus can surmise that this sort of thing will continue to happen, not only to cities, but to nations and states as well as individuals.<sup>125</sup> The transition to the present tense signals that the *logos* of Herodotus, although it will narrate things about the past, is relevant to listeners at the moment of the narration and that it communicates a universal historical norm about their future. Croesus will call this norm of instability the “cycle of human things” (1.207.2), but the narrator’s formulation bears no suggestion of cyclic regularity, no determination of time, and no declaration of historical necessity. Under which circumstances, then, and for which causes does *eudaimonie* migrate from one place to another?

#### Divine Retribution

In the course of the *logos*, the narrator eventually offers two generalized interpretations that answer this question (2.120.5, 4.205). Both passages connect the decline of cities and loss of *eudaimonie* mentioned at 1.5.3 with human injustice punished by the divine. The discontinuity between the immediate and long-range topics in the global program I have just considered are thereby to some extent filled in and resolved. Herodotus’ *historie* inquires about guilt (starting with Croesus) and about rise and fall (also starting with Croesus) because it inquires about the extent to which a rise in power entails guilt and a fall is caused by divine punishment.<sup>126</sup> Before examining the crucial statements in which the narrator generalizes on this causality, I will briefly examine how he interacts with interpretations of other speakers on the role of the divine in the instability of human fortune.

In the narrative about Croesus, the text engages with the evidence through a process of verification that betrays its own uncertainties. Two oracular utterances connect the demise of Croesus with the *tisis* (vengeance) for Gyges’ overthrow of the Heraclids and attribute to Croesus his

125. *Eudaimonie* is a political term (see, e.g., 7.220.2), but it also denotes personal happiness. In this case, as usual, the historical/political and the biographical/personal codes are strictly conjoined.

126. On the guiltiness and loss of *eudaimonie* of Croesus, see Croesus’ self-exculpation at 1.87.3, contradicted at 1.91.4. See Nagy 1990, 240–42. On the principle of divine retribution in Herodotus see Fornara 1990 and, most recently, Harrison 2000, 102–21.

own share of guilt (1.13.2, 1.91). These constitute a privileged sort of evidence. The narrator, for his part, especially seeks signs of Croesus' personal culpability. We see it in the introduction to the narrative of Croesus' misfortunes in the descending phase of his reign, where the verb εἰκάζω is a mark of the most speculative degree of opinion: "After Solon left, great anger from the god overtook Croesus because, **one imagines** [ὥς εἰκάζουσι], he believed himself to be most blessed among men" (1.34.1).

The interpretive gloss just quoted adapts the description of human experience just provided by Solon to the story of Croesus' downfall in a moralistic way. This might seem strange. Though the Athenian sage has confirmed the narrator's generalization on the instability of good fortune, his maxims appear to emphasize either the random aspect of the process of reversal or the amorality of divine envy, which targets not wrongdoers but especially those who have everything.<sup>127</sup> But Solon's words are cryptic and deliver a mixed message. In his opposition between the rich man, who is likely to experience disaster, and the fortunate man, who is not (1.32.6), the disaster is called *ate*, a term that traditionally denotes both the misfortune and the moral folly of one who has brought the misfortune on oneself as a result of surfeit and transgression.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, ἐπιθυμία refers to the desire that the rich man is in a better position than others to fulfill (and from which the merely fortunate man is exempt): the word suggests an irrational impulse leading to self-detrimental action, which in the *Histories* is typical of monarchical rulers.<sup>129</sup> An allusion to the personal guilt connected with the opportunities that power affords therefore intrudes surreptitiously in Solon's interpretation of the instability of fortune.

The narrator's interpretation at 1.34.1 takes the evidence of Solon's speech into account by attributing the cause of Croesus' loss of *eudaimonie* to a superior force: ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις [anger *from god*]. The word *nemesis* (rightful indignation) is both emotional and moralistic, thereby striking a compromise between Solon's ethically problematic *phthonos* (envy) and the judicial terms *timorie* and *tisis*, which Herodotus uses

127. See the words of Solon at 1.32.1: ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἔον φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες ["since I know that the divine is utterly invidious and troublesome"]. Plutarch (*De Malign. Herod.* 15 = *Mor.* 857F–858A) finds this statement insulting to the gods. Cf. 1.32.4: πᾶν ἔστι ἄνθρωπος συμφορῆ ["man is entirely a thing of chance"] and the reference to τύχη [chance] at 1.32.5.

128. Cf. discussion of 8.77 under "Divine Communication" later in this chapter.

129. See chap. 2, n. 232 and corresponding text.

elsewhere to denote retribution.<sup>130</sup> Thus, Croesus, in Herodotus' interpretation, is neither the embodiment of mysterious human chance (Solon's συμφορή at 1.32.4) nor the victim of a divine power that prevents men from having too many good things. In the world of nature, the divinity that prunes excessive growth is a rational principle of balance: "divine providence is, as one would expect, wise."<sup>131</sup> But in the sphere of human history, Herodotus looks for evidence of a divine participation that makes sense also in ethical terms.

Solon and other characters who are speaking to kings or are themselves kings establish a connection between calamity and greatness rather than between calamity and wrongdoing.<sup>132</sup> The last speaker who refers to divine envy, however, will place it in an ethical context. The Greek victory against the Persians, Themistocles says, was the work of "the gods and heroes, who begrudged [literally "envied," ἐφθόνησαν] that one man reign over both Asia and Europe, a man who was impious and unbearably reckless, who treated in the same way temples and private buildings, burning and overthrowing the statues of the gods; a man who even flogged the sea and lay fetters on it" (8.109.3). With respect to the historical case of Xerxes, at any rate, the divinity emerges as an ethical and rational force. Divine "envy" turns out to be the response of the divine to culpable human attempts to rival, antagonize, and replace it.

Herodotus first formulates a general rule concerning divine justice in relation to the loss of human *eudaimonie* in his interpretation of what Greek tradition regards as the paradigm of all fallen cities. In Egypt, where issues concerning the history of humankind and the most remote past of the Greeks themselves attain special clarity, Herodotus has also learned the real meaning of the destruction of Troy. By disclosing that Helen spent the entire duration of the Trojan War in Egypt, the Egyptian priests in Memphis have suddenly provided for the fall of Troy an explanation that makes sense in both historical and ethico-theological terms (2.113–20). The interpretive gloss by which the narrator corroborates the *logos* argues that if Helen had reached Troy together with Alexander,

130. See Macan 1895, 1: cxiv. *Contra* Chiasson 1986. On the root *nemes-* used to denote a reaction to a wrongdoing, see especially *Il.* 24.53 and the survey in Giraudeau 1984, 67–73.

131. 3.108.2: τοῦ θείου ἢ προνοίῃ, ὅσπερ καὶ οἰκός ἐστι, ἐοῦσα σοφῆ. See especially Immerwahr 1966, 312–13.

132. Amasis does so at 3.40.2 (cf. 3.43.1), Artabanus at 7.46.3 and 7.10ε. So does the epinician poet in his praise of prominent individuals and tyrants. See McGlew 1993, 41; Nagy 1990, 274–313. But Artabanus reveals his moralism at 7.18.2.

as Homer says she did, the Trojans would have ended up returning her to the Greeks, and Troy would not have been destroyed (2.120). Thus, if the chance arrival of Helen in Egypt was the single factor that deprived the Trojans of the means of reparation and therefore survival, it was not a chance arrival at all. The simplicity of this discovery is so compelling that it proves to the narrator that

for great injustices, great are also the punishments from the gods  
[τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλαί εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ  
τῶν θεῶν]. (2.120.5)

We should note, as in the case of the maxim on the instability of human happiness, all the subsidiary issues that this generalization still leaves up in the air. If the divine always punishes human injustice, is the loss of human *eudaimonie* always the manifestation of divine punishment? Do cities always “become small” *because* of human injustice? Herodotus’ evidence in the narrative does not support the notion that divine action can be intelligible to men in every case.<sup>133</sup> The narrator even acknowledges the often unexplained mixture of fortune and misfortune that is inherent to the human state.<sup>134</sup> But the general rule that grave offenses will meet with great punishments represents Herodotus’ minimal interpretation of what the gods’ action at Troy intended to make manifest (*καταφανές*) to men, an interpretation that Herodotus, in his turn, undertakes **to make manifest** to his audience (ἐγὼ γνώμην ἀποφαίνομαι).

An especially important problem remains unresolved on the paradigmatic battlefield of Troy: the ethical status of the human avenger. Because the war the Greeks waged against Troy represented an instrument of divine retribution against Trojan wrongdoings, was it a just action? Menelaus’ “impious” deed in Egypt, clearly evoking the human sacrifice at Aulis in one of the Greek traditions, gives a hint that not all may be morally right with the aggressor against Troy.<sup>135</sup> Herodotus’ second gener-

133. See especially the *logos* of Mycerinus (2.129, 133).

134. See Harrison 2000, 112–13. Thus, though the ultimate end of Cambyses does verify the rule of divine retribution (see 3.64.3), the cause of his madness is uncertain. See 3.33 (analyzed in Munson 1991, 51–53), where the generalization “many are the evils that are wont to happen to men” stands to the causes of misfortune, as the generalization at 5.9.3, “in the vast length of time, everything is possible,” stands to the vicissitudes of history.

135. See 2.119.2–3 and discussion under “Revising Greek Traditions” earlier in this chapter. On Greek responsibility for the war against Troy, see also 1.4.1. Outside of Herodotus, see especially Aesch. *Agam.* 40–72, 104–39, 183–226. See also the discussions in Nussbaum 1986 (32–38) and Williams 1993 (132–36).

alization about divine retribution precisely evaluates the justice of human revenge in the eyes of the god. This generalization occurs in the narrative about the antecedents of the Persian expedition against Cyrene during the reign of Darius. The sixth king of Cyrene, Arcesilaus, is killed in Barca. His mother, Pheretime, eager to make war against the city, obtains the help of the Persians, who use this revenge as a false pretext for the conquering of Libya (4.165–67). Once they capture Barca, they enslave most of the citizens. Pheretime impales around the bastions of the city those most responsible for her son’s death and cuts off the breasts of their women, planting them all around the walls (4.202–203.1). Like the excess of her revenge, the horror of Pheretime’s subsequent end gives her story the clarity of limiting cases.

But Pheretime **did not** end her life well either. For as soon as, having obtained her revenge from the Barcaeans, she returned to Egypt from Libya, she died a bad death: still alive, she started breeding worms out of herself, because, **truly then** [ἄρα], vengeful acts that are excessively violent are for the gods a cause of resentment/envy against men [ἀνθρώποισι αἱ λίην ἰσχυραὶ τιμωρίαι πρὸς θεῶν ἐπίφθονοι γίνονται]. Of such a kind and so great indeed was the revenge of Pheretime, the daughter of Battus, against the Barcaeans. (4.205)

The particle ἄρα marks the maxim as an inference based on the events narrated. As in the Trojan *logos*, these involve the “becoming small” of a city—in fact, its fall as a result of a siege in turn motivated by revenge. Here, however, the narrator’s interpretation focuses on the culpability of the avenger. In each case, the generalization drawn from a specific historical event involves a shift to the grammatical plural. Just as great *adikiai* (injustices) attract great *timoriai* (vengeful actions) from the gods—and these divine *timoriai* may be carried out by human agents—so when the human *timoriai* are excessive they become injustices, which will in turn deserve divine punishment because they are ἐπίφθονοι (cause for resentment/envy) to the gods. Only in this passage does the narrator participate in the theological code of his speakers by using the *phthon*-stem in connection with the calamities that god sends to man. Like Themistocles in the speech we have already seen (8.109.3), he here joins the Solonian notion of divine envy of human power to that of divine anger against wrongdoing. While the *timoriai* of the gods are never “excessively violent” (as devastating as they may seem), the

excessively violent *timoriai* of men, here represented by Pheretime's mutilations, constitute "monarchic" usurpations of a divine prerogative—hence invoking the *phthonos* of the gods.<sup>136</sup>

Punishment from the gods is a fundamental historical cause of human reversal in the *Histories* and is the only historical cause at any level that the narrator proclaims in general terms. This goes a long way toward explaining why Herodotus' inquiry into human causes is largely concerned with assessing the *aitiai* (guilts or accusations that become causes of actions for the accuser) and who is *aitios* (responsible, guilty).<sup>137</sup> From beginning to end, the *logos* provides evidence for the recurring role of human vengeance as the only possible motive that has a theoretical claim of legitimizing a range of aggressive actions (dispossessing, murdering, making war on others) that are otherwise *adika*, "unjust."<sup>138</sup> The narrative of the destruction of Barca, where vengeance is a pretext for the Persians (4.167.3) and a criminal impulse for Pheretime, encapsulates the criteria by which Herodotus' *logos* undermines such a claim. Many *timoriai* of the *Histories*, with or without ulterior motives, are equivalent to *adikiai*, and as such they are vulnerable to divine punishment.

From ancient history and foreign settings, Herodotus' investigation of the workings of divine vengeance eventually reaches the context of the struggles between and within the cities of Greece. In an astounding compositional move, Herodotus gives the Spartan king Leotychides, himself a paradigm of crime and punishment, the role of asserting the ineluctability of divine retribution through his own narrative: this is the story of Glaucus, a man who presumed to obtain Delphic permission to commit perjury and whose house was subsequently obliterated.<sup>139</sup> Much as do Herodotus' own narratives, Leotichides' story functions at once as an *ainos* and as the presentation of a piece of historical evidence. It is ad-

136. The monarchic connotation of ἐπιφθονος suits the present context also because Herodotus' history of Cyrene illustrates the way in which a royal dynasty of founders becomes transformed into a tyrannical dynasty (see especially 4.161.3–4.164). See McGlew 1993, 172–73.

137. The fundamental study of the various aspects of causality in Herodotus is still Immerwahr 1956. See also Pagel 1927; de Romilly 1971; Lateiner 1989, 189–210.

138. Cf., e.g., Croesus' *aitiai* against cities of Ionia (1.26.3); the role of revenge in Croesus' decision to attack Cyrus (1.46.1, 1.71.1, 1.73, 1.75.1), in Darius' Scythian expedition (4.1.1; cf. 4.118.3–5, 4.119.2–4), and in Xerxes' Greek expedition (7.5–9, 7.11.2–4). See Immerwahr 1956, 253, 254–64.

139. See 6.86a–δ. On Leotychides himself as victim of divine *tisis*, see 6.72.1 (where the negation reproduces the pattern of the gloss about Pheretime at 4.205).

dressed to the Athenians who, just as Glaucus tried to keep a deposit of money, now refuse to return certain Aeginetan hostages. Its context is the account of the hostilities between Aegina and Athens, which Herodotus pursues piecemeal, starting from the time when the Aeginetans, exalted by their prosperity and mindful of their “ancient enmity” against Athens, help the Thebans to avenge themselves against the Athenians (see 5.79.1: *τείσασθαι, τίσις*) by initiating a “heraldless war.” The Athenians then prepare their *timorie* against Aegina despite an oracle that advised them to wait for thirty years to attack; at that moment, however, the threatened Spartan invasion of Attica intervenes to suspend their plan (5.89.2–90.1). As a result of this conflict with Athens, Aegina medizes, which induces the Spartans to seize Aeginetan hostages and confine them in Athens (6.49–50, 6.73.1–2).

Leotychides’ parable about Glaucus has no effect: the Athenians keep the hostages, with the excuse (*προφάσιας*) that they do not “consider just” [*δικαιοῦν*] to return to only one Spartan king what has been entrusted to them by two (6.86). The Aeginetans feel injured by the Athenian refusal, even though, for their part, they still have not “paid the penalty” [*δοῦναι δίκας*] for their own previous injustices (*ἀδικημάτων*) against the Athenians when they “acted with *hubris*” to please the Thebans (6.87: the reference is to the heraldless war). So the Aeginetans retaliate by capturing an Athenian theoric ship during a festival at Sounion (6.87); the Athenians in turn respond by conspiring with a certain Nicodromus, an Aeginetan who had a grudge (*μεμφόμενος*) against his fellow citizens and who now agrees to betray the city to the Athenians. The plan does not succeed, but the Athenians eventually inflict a major defeat by sea on the Aeginetans (6.88–90, 6.92.1).

In the whole intermittent narrative that centers around the hostility between Aegina and Athens (including a flashback at 5.82–88 about the beginning of their “ancient enmity,” a unified code emphasizes a tangle of abuses and retaliations. The objective ethical status of all these *timoriai* and *tiseis*, which in turn elicit retaliation, remains remarkably ambivalent.<sup>140</sup> Mutual conflicts pitting city against city and citizen against citizen

140. This is confirmed by the insight of Lateiner (1980) that the phrase *δοῦναι δίκας* (which appears at 6.87 in reference to the Aeginetan failure to pay the penalty to the Athenians) always reflects the claims of various parties, not the position of the narrator. For *timoria* words emphasizing “the key motive for heroic action” in fifth-century Athenian political discourse, see Rose 1995, 77–79, on the *Ajax* and on Pericles’ statements in Thuc. 2.42.

leave no one free of *adikemata* and impiety, even though everyone acts on the basis of alleged criteria of justice, justified vengeance, procedural issues, and the like.<sup>141</sup> In the midst of all this, the parable of Glaucus reintroduces the notion that in contrast with men, the divine operates with surefooted simplicity and unerring autonomy, cuts across legalistic pretenses, identifies each wrongful action, and correctly assesses intentions. Nothing is said about the consequences of the Athenians' violation of a binding agreement parallel to that of Glaucus (i.e., their failure to return the hostages). But given the context, that omission does not necessarily imply that they have avoided divine punishment, nor does having the message on divine justice conveyed by an individual who will himself be a historical exemplum for it impugn its validity.

In the same narrative, in fact, Herodotus identifies direct evidence for divine retribution. In Aegina, the wealthy faction executed the democrats led by Nicodromus; they even cut off the hands of one of them who was hanging on to the temple of Demeter Lawgiver. Herodotus interprets, "From this action, even a curse [ἄγος] resulted for them, from which they were not able to free themselves by means of sacrifices, although they kept trying, but rather they were banished from the island before the goddess would become appeased toward them" (6.91.1). Through the connection this gloss imposes on mutually distant and causally unrelated events, Aegina is the most recent instance presented in the *Histories* in which a city's loss of *eudaimonie* is a historical process related to guilt. Precisely the word *eudaimonie* is used to denote the prosperity that led the people of Aegina to initiate their heraldless war (5.81.2; the war is called an act of hubris at 6.87). The Aeginetans' history of violations, which begins with their theft of the statues of Damias and Auxesias from Epidaurus (5.83.2), culminates in their execution of the suppliant and ends, well within the recent memory of Herodotus' audience, when Aegina ceases to exist as a polis.<sup>142</sup> Divine justice has been as radical in this case as for Glaucus and Troy.<sup>143</sup>

Herodotus' interpretation of the fall of Aegina as the result of divine

141. See Immerwahr 1966, 211–15; Lachenaud 1978, 51–55.

142. 431 B.C. See Thuc. 2.27.1, where the statement that "the Athenians expelled from the island men, women, and children, reproaching them for being not the least responsible [αἰτίους] toward themselves for the outbreak of the war" shows that claims of justified vengeance have not gone out of style.

143. Herodotus' unmarked narrative, through the oracle at 5.89.2, also connects the Aeginetans' "injustice," represented by the heraldless war, to their loss of independence in 457 B.C. (see Thuc. 1.108.4).

punishment for its guilt against the gods may well stem from contemporary Athenian propaganda. Even if this is the case, those scholars who have maintained that therefore Herodotus justifies the Athenian action against the island are far off the mark.<sup>144</sup> The ethical status of those who serve as instruments of divine *tisis* is for Herodotus a separate issue that he tends not to explore when he presents evidence for the *tisis*. The gloss at 6.91.1 does not even mention the Athenians as the agents of the destruction of Aegina. But the entire narrative of the hostility between Athens and Aegina in the *Histories* accumulates instances of Athenian culpability in other respects and attributes to both parties largely symmetrical guilts.<sup>145</sup> Herodotus' Aegina is both the double of Athens in the same narrative and the antecedent of the Athens of later times.<sup>146</sup> The city whose cycle of rise and fall has just been completed by the time of narration does not provide a comforting analogue for one that seems bound on a similar course.

With the parable of Glaucus, explicitly introduced to underline the Athenians' bad-faith refusal to return the hostages, the issue of Athenian vulnerability in the face of the divine first comes to the surface of the text. Both Athens and Aegina survive to contribute to the subsequent resistance against Persia; by some mysterious compensation, their mutual hostility will produce the fleet that will save all the Greeks (7.144.2). But further on in the *logos*, Herodotus alludes to the possible consequences of Athenian injustice when he wonders what happened to Athens in retribution for throwing into the well the heralds whom Darius had sent to demand submission.

What undesirable thing happened to the Athenians as a result of this action, I cannot tell, except that their land and city were

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144. See How and Wells 1928, 2:100.

145. For signs of Athenian culpability in the religious sphere as well as in the secular sphere in the account of early hostilities with Aegina, see 5.85–86, 5.87.1–2, 5.89.3, 5.86.1, 5.87.

146. See the allusions to contemporary circumstances within the narrative of their early hostilities (5.82–88), discussed by Figuera (1985, 66). At 5.83.1–2, the Aeginetans are described as *θαλασσακράτορες* (masters of the sea), a term that normally refers to fifth-century Athenian sea power ([Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 2.2.1, 14; see Figuera 1985, 91–92 and nn. 28–30). The analogy between Athens and Aegina is reinforced by the way in which each of them mistakenly relies on the support of the Aeacidae, who stand for divine protection for the purposes of defense (8.83.2), not of waging or helping others to wage aggressive wars (5.79–81; cf. 5.89).

devastated, but **I do not think** that this happened for this cause/guilt [αἰτίη]. (7.133.2)

The question is particularly cogent because the narrator asks it while again in the process of verifying the rule of divine *tisis*. To the guilt of the Athenians corresponds an analogous guilt of the Spartans, who threw Darius' heralds into a pit (7.131, 133.1). But while the punishment of the Athenians remains undetermined, that which befell the Spartans on account of the anger of Talthybius, the heroic patron of heralds, is a matter of record. Just as the Spartans, through Sperthias and Boulis, offered compensation to the Persian king, whose heralds were sacrilegiously killed, so the gloss just quoted tentatively mentions the Persian king's devastation of Athens as a punishment for the Athenian crime. Herodotus immediately discards the interpretation as unsatisfactory, however, just as he shows how the artificial reparation of the Spartans succeeded only in part. The divine works at its own pace, and in both cases, it postpones *tisis* to a later time.

When Sperthias and Boulis offered their lives to Xerxes, the king declined to break in his turn the "laws of all men" and to free the Spartans from the *aitie* (guilt) by making himself *aitios* (guilty) through vengeance (7.136.2). Divine anger, however, "flared up again much later during the war between Athenians and Peloponnesians, **as the Spartans say.**" The Spartans make the causal connection between the wrath of Talthybius and the later occurrence (7.137.1); but as he introduces the proleptic report, Herodotus corroborates their interpretation in his own voice.

Under the circumstances especially, this event **appears to me** very much the work of the divine [μοι . . . θεϊότατον φαίνεται]. The fact that the anger of Talthybius was discharged against heralds and did not abate before it found its expression—it was justice that brought this about [τὸ δίκαιον οὕτω ἔφερε]; but the fact that it should fall on the children of these men who had gone to the king on account of [Talthybius'] anger, Nicolas the son of Sperthias and Aneristus the son of Boulis . . . **well, it is evident to me** that this was the work of the divine [δῆλον ὧν μοι ὅτι θεῖον ἐγένετο τὸ πρῆγμα]. (7.137.1–2)

This gloss, which brings about the latest datable reference in the *Histories*, also constitutes the most spectacular confirmation of the maxim

attached to the Egyptian *logos* about Troy that the gods punish human injustices (2.120.5). Opinion in that passage (γνώμη) is here replaced by glosses of evidence (“this event appears to me,” “it is evident to me”). Herodotus’ inquiry on the morality of the divine has found another landmark that precludes randomness (“it was justice that brought this about”). As in the case of Helen’s stay in Egypt, the lack of factual connection between human planning and the achievement of ethically intelligible results proves the effect of a higher causality that cooperates with and exploits, for autonomous ends, the political motives of men and the natural course of events.

These events are finally recounted: “many years after the expedition of the king,” Peloponnesian ambassadors bound “for Asia,” including the son of Sperthias and the son of Boulis, were captured at the Hellespont and put to death in Athens (7.137.3–138.1). According to Thucydides (2.67), this happened in the second year of the Peloponnesian War, and the ambassadors in question were on their way to seek money and military cooperation from the Persian king. The narrative of Herodotus avoids emphasizing the painful discrepancy between the mission of Sperthias and Boulis to Persia and that of their sons fifty years later. Yet the bare mention of this second set of Spartan envoys to Persia would have been enough to bring to the consciousness of the listeners the changed circumstances of their own time.<sup>147</sup> More striking is the uncomfortable asymmetry the narrative creates between Sparta and Athens in respect to their parallel crimes. Not only does the Athenian killing of the Persian heralds remain unrequited in the presence of the Spartan evidence for the inevitability of divine retribution, but the very same action that frees the Spartans from their debt serves also to compound the guilt of Athens.<sup>148</sup>

The depopulation of Aegina in 431 B.C. and the killing of the Peloponnesian heralds in 430 owe their place in Herodotus’ history to their value as the most recent demonstrations of the rule of divine *tisis*.<sup>149</sup> In both cases, the human agents of *tisis* are the Athenians; but in the second case, the Athenians also figure as the perpetrators of an action that is analogous to the crime for which the gods hold the Spartans accountable. By

147. Would they have known that the Athenians threw the Peloponnesian envoys into a pit [ἐς φάραγγα] and that their motive was revenge (see Thuc. 2.67.4)?

148. This point is made by Georges (1994, 161–63).

149. See also 7.233, which again suggests the idea of punishment and further guilt, this time of the Thebans. See Cobet 1971, 71.

430 a series of setbacks, some entirely unforeseeable, made the future of Athens more uncertain than ever before.<sup>150</sup> Herodotus' silence on the topics of the Peloponnesian invasions of Attica and of the outbreak of the plague is in keeping with his usual reticence. But his accumulation of historical evidence for the moral action of the gods leads him to identify Athens as an anticipated, not yet consummated paradigm at the end of a series of complete and closed cases starting with Troy. What will happen to Athens—what has perhaps already started to happen—for her past and more recent *aitiai*, symbolized by the old and the new heralds? This question remains implicit and suspended. At the inception of the account of Xerxes' invasion that immediately follows, moreover, Herodotus deliberately sets it aside and counterbalances his reference to the guilt of Athens with his famous “true opinion,” a forceful assessment of Athens' merit in the Persian War (7.139).

#### Divine Communication

The participation of the divine is constant. Only exceptionally, however, does it fail to coincide with the natural course of things, and only exceptionally can men detect it. In the affair of the heralds, the particular coincidence of events was “evidently divine” (7.137.2). In the moments before the battle of Mycale, the combination of the epiphany of a heralds' staff on the beach and a rumor in the Greek camp about successful fighting at Plataea is for the narrator evidence of the divine nature of things in general.<sup>151</sup>

Evident from many signs is the divinity of events [δῆλα δὲ πολλοῖσι τεκμηρίοισι ἐστὶ τὰ θεῖα τῶν πραγμάτων], if also on that occasion it happened that . . . (9.100.2)

The miracle of Mycale stands at the intersection between divine communication and divine interference. By affecting human events, the gods,

150. See Thuc. 7.28.3 and, for the strangeness of the plague, especially Thuc. 2.50, 2.51.1.

151. See 9.101.2. Another coincidence is that the battles of Plataea and Mycale were both fought in the neighborhood of a precinct of Eleusinian Demeter (see 9.101.1). On other occasions, even one coincidence occurring by itself is noted (see 7.166, 8.15.1; cf. 6.116). See Immerwahr 1966, 254 and n. 52, 258. On divine communication, see Harrison 2000, 122–57.

as in the destruction of Troy, make their criteria of regulation manifest to humankind in general (*καταφανές*, 2.120.5). Here they affect an event through communication, because their revealing the success at Plataea increases the energy of the Greek army at Mycale (9.100.2). In most cases, however, divine communication does not entail effective action. Herodotus' exemplary case of divine communication tout court is what happened to the Chians at the end of the Ionian revolt. In the battle of Lade, where they performed splendid deeds of valor, the Chians suffered the greatest number of losses (6.15–16), and in the aftermath, they became the victims of a seemingly gratuitous attack by Histiaeus (6.26). Factually unrelated but symbolically analogous natural disasters preceded this series of political and military misfortunes that “brought the city to its knees.”<sup>152</sup> To Herodotus, this is proof of a mysterious link (*κως* [somehow], 6.27.1; cf. 3.106.1, 3.108.2) and of a general rule of divine communication.

There are wont to be signs **somehow**, when great evils are about to happen to a city or to a people [*φιλέει δέ κως προσημαίνειν, εὖτ' ἂν μέλλῃ μεγάλα κακὰ ἢ πόλι ἢ ἔθνει ἔσεσθαι*]; for before these events, great signs [*σημήματα μεγάλα*] came **also** to the Chians. (6.27.1)

It becomes evident that the gods send great *semeia* (signs) in the imminence of great *kaka* (misfortunes), just as they punish great *adikiai* (injustices) by means of great *timoriai* (punishments). Between these two areas of divine intervention—retribution or any type of effective action, on the one hand, and prediction, on the other—it is not possible to establish a necessary or clear correlation. The text does not direct us to interpret Chian misfortunes as divine punishments. Their higher causes are perhaps imbricated with other guilts from other agents of the Ionian revolt, but they remain, and Herodotus allows them to remain, unknown.<sup>153</sup> Here, empirical historical facts only allow him to perceive the divine as the sender of signs.

To the broader sphere of prophecies, Herodotus seems intent on

152. See 6.27.2 for two separate incidents that cause the death of Chian children. The analogical link between these event signifiers and the event signifieds is that the victims here represent the future of the city, which will be more seriously compromised as a result of the war. See Immerwahr 1954, 16–17.

153. See the oracle quoted at 6.19.2 with an unexplained reference to “evil deeds” of Miletus [*Μίλητε, κακῶν ἐπιμήχανε ἔργων*].

applying the method he attributes to the Egyptians, who write down each *teras* (prodigy) and what it turns out to have predicted; in this way, if a similar sign occurs, they will know what it means (2.82.2). Capable of performing a great variety of speech acts, sometimes within the same utterance, dreams and oracles are more likely than are event signifiers to indicate not only that something will happen but also, retrospectively at least, why, in terms of divine criteria of regulation, something was going to happen.<sup>154</sup> Thus, a dream vision, not a human speaker, formulates the only clear-cut maxim concerning divine punishment in a voice other than that of the narrator. This provides some of Herodotus' best evidence that divine verbal communication with men can be especially useful for the interpretation of history.

On the eve of his murder at the hands of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Hipparchus saw in his sleep a man of imposing and splendid appearance who "uttered the following riddling lines" [αἰνίσσεται τάδε τὰ ἔπεα]: "Bear, o lion, unbearable things, suffering with forbearing heart. / No one among men who commits injustice will avoid vengeance [οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῶν τίσιν οὐκ ἀποτίσει]" (5.56.1). These words exemplify both the value of verbal signs from the gods and the problems they create for the inquirer. An exhortation in the first line implies a prediction or warning, reinforced by a gnomic saying. What subsequently happens to Hipparchus renders the prediction, at least, entirely clear, ἐναγοεστάτην (5.55), turning the vision into yet another item of proof of the reliability of divine communication. But aspects of the dream utterance, first and foremost the specific applicability of the maxim, remain in the realm of riddle. What was the guilt that called for *tisis* (retribution)? Does the address "lion" point to Hipparchus' monarchical status, to tyranny as a field of *adikie* (injustice), or just to the fortitude of one who must prepare for death?<sup>155</sup> Words and facts combined do not always lend themselves to reconstructing a clear overall picture. The interjection of a great number of oracles in the *logos* contributes to its meaning but also turns it into a series of riddles.

154. Crahay (1956, 40) counts ninety-six oracles in Herodotus. Their function in the narrative is examined by Kirchberg (1965); see also Lachenaud 1978, 244–305. Dreams in Herodotus are examined by Frisch (1968). See also Harrison 2000, 122–57. On non-Greek mantic prophecy, see Klees 1965; Lachenaud 1978, 229–44.

155. For the lion as a term of both the monarchic and the heroic codes, see chap. 4, "Wondering Why."

Herodotus' collection includes oracles impossible to decode except retrospectively (3.57.4) and "double" or ambiguous predictions that are bound to come true—in some sense—either way. There are dreams that are perhaps not divine (7.12–18), responses obtained through corrupt means or falsified by dishonest professionals (6.66, 7.6.3–5), oracles that have allegedly failed a test of veracity (1.46–49), and prophecies that are part of self-serving traditions in the discourse of international disputes (7.148.3). Among the most problematic are the two oracles the Athenians receive from Delphi before the arrival of Xerxes to Greece. Both appear to discourage resistance against the Persians.<sup>156</sup> The narrative emphasizes the stubborn determination of the Athenians and their refusal to accept the first oracle. Their ingenuity in making the second mean what they want it to mean might in other circumstances appear an exercise in false hope (7.142–43; cf. 1.53.3). At Mycale, an omen of victory helps the Greeks defeat the enemy by offering encouragement; here, the Delphic responses are terrifying (7.139.6) and therefore potentially self-fulfilling in a negative way. If the Athenians became the "saviors of Greece," it is because they chose to fight at Salamis despite the oracles.

Against the background of this *aporia*-generating complex of evidence, the narrator steps out to proclaim the principle of the veracity of divine predictions. The defensive quality of the discourse has here impaired the normal form of what I have so far been able to call a "maxim." Nevertheless, a generalization it is, firmly attached, according to the usual procedure, to the display of a particular exhibit.

1. **As for oracles, I cannot contradict/object** [ἀντιλέγειν] **that they are not truthful** [ἀληθέες], **not wishing to attempt to devalue them when they speak clearly** [ἐναργέως], **looking at facts like these:**

When they bridge with their ships the sacred shore  
of golden-sword Artemis and marine Cynosoura,  
having sacked lovely Athens in their mad hope [ἐλπίδι  
μαινομένη],

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<sup>156</sup>. See 7.140–41. For what both of these oracles "really" mean, see Elayi 1979, 227–30.

divine Dike shall quench strong Koros, son of Hubris,  
dreadfully furious, who thinks he rules all things.<sup>157</sup>

2. For bronze shall clash with bronze, and Ares will redden  
the sea with blood. Then the all-seeing son of Cronos  
and the lady Victory will bring over the day of liberty for Hellas.

In the face of such things and against Bacis speaking so clearly  
[ἐναργέως], neither do I dare myself to utter contradictions  
[ἀντιλογία] about oracles, nor will I accept them from others.  
(8.77.1–2)

Through the self-referential and double negative form of the statements framing the quotation of the oracle, like the reference to the “opinion that will cause resentment” at 7.139.1, the text encodes an unreceptive attitude among the audience.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, just as at 7.139.1 the narrator represents himself as overcoming also his own resistance and compelled publicly to display what “appears [to him] to be a true thing” [τῇ γέ μοι φαίνεται εἶναι ἀληθές], so here he comes across as an objective investigator who must yield to the evidence of truthfulness (εἰσὶ ἀληθείας, 1). This time, the results of *historie* reassign *aletheia* (truth) where it properly belongs—the sphere of divine utterances.

Herodotus’ statement “Looking at facts like these, I cannot utter contradictions” implies a readiness to contradict, if the empirical evidence so required. Herodotus’ position with respect to divine matters is, as we have seen, in certain respects related to the agnosticism of the Sophists. What distances Herodotus from the Sophists is the recurring message that his research keeps confirming the relevancy of the divine in both history

157. I am preserving the reading of the manuscripts, though How and Wells (1928, 2:262) say it is meaningless, and though several emendations have been proposed. All of them, at any rate, refer to the relentless will to power of Koros.

158. Skepticism in the late fifth century with regard to oracles is exemplified by the attitude of Thucydides (at, e.g., 2.17.2, 2.54.2–3, 3.96.1, 5.26.3; see Gomme 1956, 160–61). Even in Athens, the general public would have held more traditional views (see, e.g., Thuc. 2.52–54, 2.8.2–3), but modern ideas, the war, the alleged Delphic oracle favorable to Sparta (see Thuc. 1.118.3; cf. 2.54.4), and the plague contributed to the erosion of religious beliefs. Jordan 1986; Forrest 1984, 7. Ideologically, Herodotus’ assertion of the veracity of oracles is the counterpart of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, produced in a similar climate. See Dodds 1966, 47; see especially Knox 1971, 159–84.

and culture.<sup>159</sup> Here, therefore, his profession of belief takes the form of an emphatic refusal to counter with sophistic speech the speech of god. He cannot *antilegein* (both “utter a rebuttal” and “make antilogies,” the last a technical term of sophistic argumentation), and he will not accept *antilogiai* from others.<sup>160</sup> Daring to do so would risk offending the gods (cf. 2.45.3). But Herodotus most especially wants to protect his over-secularized audience from another danger: a disregard of divine speech that is bound to entail the misunderstanding of history.

Herodotus’ generalization on the veracity of oracles is in fact attached to a special item of proof, a response that both predicts intelligibly and interprets accurately. This prophecy of Bacis corresponds point by point to the historical action of the battle of Salamis, whose narrative, as if in a movement of spontaneous recognition from the part of the narrator, it suddenly interrupts. Unlike the Delphic oracles to the Athenians concerning the same event, an oracle that speaks with unmistakable and vivid clarity corroborates a view of the divine that rehabilitates all its utterances. This oracle comes from a relatively minor source rather than from the politically involved Delphic shrine, and it is found in an ancient collection rather than being solicited for the occasion. On the strength of the evidence it provides, the ambiguous and the obscure also find their place in the scheme of things.

This last point leads us to the interpretive aspect of the oracle as a part of that *enargeie* (clarity: 8.77.1–2) that makes Herodotus identify it as decisive proof of the *aletheie* (truthfulness) of the divine word. In the case of numerous prophecies recorded in the *logos*, the historical context does not call for a moral judgment; if it does, the god may express it unclearly or even appear to go out of his way to avoid providing moral guidance. When people inquire about what they should do, the god likes to put the ball back in their court, leaving them to decide on the basis of their judgment of circumstances, their values, and their moral sense.<sup>161</sup> By contrast with these cases, the oracle of Bacis concerning Salamis clearly formulates divine criteria of justice and even amounts to a direction for reading history in ethical terms. The Persian invader here becomes the embodiment of *koros* (surfeit/insatiability/excess), the son of hubris (violence/arrogance/transgression), which δῖα Δίκη, “divine justice” or

159. See “Equal Knowledge” earlier in this chapter.

160. On the sophistic uses of the term *antilegein*, see Kerferd 1981, 60–67, 84–107.

161. Consider, e.g., the oracles to the Cymaeans (1.158–59); to the Thebans and the Athenians concerning Aegina (5.79.1, 5.89.2), and about the fall of Miletus (6.19.2).

the justice of Zeus, finally suppresses.<sup>162</sup> In the archaic poetic tradition, the word κόρος, strictly associated with ὕβρις, as here, or with ἄτη (Pind. *Ol.* 1.55–57), denotes the negative repercussion of *olbos* in the sense of “material prosperity.” *Koros* is an undesirable excess of good things (food, wealth, power), the state of being gluttoned with them. It causes blind action and its disastrous consequences.<sup>163</sup> The tyrant in Otanes’ formulation of the monarchical model is ὕβρι κεκορημένος [gluttoned with arrogance] (3.80.4). The word ὕβρις is applied twice more to the typical monarch in the Constitutional Debate, and the same stem recurs to describe either the criminal acts of kings or individuals with monarchical leanings or a people’s military aggressions.<sup>164</sup> In the expression ἐλπίδι μαινομένη (8.77.1, line 3), *elpis* denotes the unfounded expectation of a king in Herodotus’ *logos*, (1.80.5), and its metaphorical qualifier *mainomene* (crazed) recalls Herodotus’ attribution of literal madness to the most extreme of his monarchical paradigms.<sup>165</sup>

The oracle of Bacis interprets the Persian defeat of Salamis in a way that agrees with the generalization of divine retribution formulated by the narrator (2.120.5) and by the dream of Hipparchus (5.56.1). The transgressor is here the monarch in a literal and metaphorical sense, and the transgression is an imperialistic attack. Within the limited geography of Salamis, the oracle represents the battle in the same terms by which Herodotus himself throughout the *logos* visualizes the whole idea of transgression. The phrase “When they bridge with their ships the sacred shore of golden-sword Artemis and marine Cynosoura” (8.77.1, lines 1–2) represents an image equivalent to the bridging of the Hellespont by Xerxes and all the other violations of physical boundaries, not as real geographical subdividers, but as the symbols of ethical laws. When the Persians bridge the strait of Salamis with the encircling maneuver, this constitutes, in the words of the oracle, an act of hubris that has as its goal

162. 8.77.1, line 4. For an early testimony of retributive justice, connected with Zeus, see *Il.* 16.384–92. The formulation of the concept is discussed by Lloyd-Jones (1971). In Herodotus, cf. Hermodotimus’ mention of the νόμος δίκαιος [law of justice] of the gods at 8.106.3.

163. The intimate association of *koros* and hubris is confirmed by Solon frag. 5 Diehl<sup>3</sup>, 9, and Theog. 153–54, where the second is the offspring of the first rather than, as in Herodotus’ oracle and in Pind. *Ol.* 13.10, the other way around. Cf. Aesch. *Agam.* 766. See Nagy 1990, 131, 281–82, 291–92; for the Bacis oracle in Herodotus, see 327.

164. See 3.80.2, 3.81.1, 1.114.5, 3.118.1, 3.126.2, 3.127.3, 6.127.3, 8.3.2, 9.27.2, 9.73.2, 5.77.4, 6.87, 7.16α2. Cf. Soph. *O.T.* 872: ὕβρις φυτεύει τύραννον (see end of n. 158 in the present chapter).

165. See chap. 2, “The Monarchical Model in Sparta,” text and n. 71.

to enslave the Greeks. The Persian defeat by Dike on that occasion, therefore, brings “the day of freedom” as a gift to the Greeks (8.77.2, line 8). This corresponds to Herodotus’ own account of the naval battle of Salamis as the crucial event that, as he says, allowed Greece to “survive in freedom” [περιεῖναι ἐλευθέριον] (7.139.5). It also corresponds to the idea advocated in the *Histories* that the ultimate act of hubris is the attempt to expand one’s rule by enslaving others. The oracle of Bacis, then, not only proves the veracity of divine utterances in view of the precision with which it predicts the subsequent factual course of events—what happened, when and where, and for whom. It also agrees point by point with Herodotus’ own understanding of the events’ meaning and encapsulates in a short utterance all the most important principles of his historical *logos* and of the message it wants to convey. From the point of view of the *apodexis* (performance), this oracle serves to validate Herodotus’ interpretation, just as from the point of view of the *historie* (inquiry), it may well constitute its source.<sup>166</sup>

Herodotus’ understanding of history and his interpretation of divine signs affect one another in the case of one natural phenomenon, less eloquent than an oracle, but unique and specially timed: the earthquake of Delos. Thucydides must reflect a widespread contemporary belief in mainland Greece when he says that the event, unprecedented in the history of the Hellenes, occurred “shortly before” the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and was interpreted as a *semeion* (sign) of that imminent trouble.<sup>167</sup> But Herodotus, perhaps correcting this notion, cites the authority of the Delians to assign the earthquake to 490 B.C., exactly when the Persian general Datis and his force, on their way against Greece, pass the island at the middle point in the Aegean and thereby cross the ideal boundary between Asia and Europe.<sup>168</sup> On that occasion, he specifies, “Delos shook . . . for the first time and the last down to my day” (6.98.1).

Herodotus does not contradict the public perception that the prodigy predicted the Peloponnesian War, but he rather uses it to broaden the significance that it would be more natural to attribute to the earthquake if it occurred when the Delians say it did. He interprets it, in other words,

166. For the view that the story of the Persians’ encircling maneuver at Salamis derives from the oracle, see Immerwahr 1966, 278–79.

167. Thuc. 2.8.3. For discussion of the discrepancy between Herodotus and Thucydides, see How and Wells 1928, 2:104; French 1972, 21; Stadter 1992, 788–99.

168. 6.98.1. See Stadter 1992, 785–95, especially 787.

as a sign not merely of the misfortunes of the Persian Wars but also of the subsequent turmoil from the wars of Greeks against Greeks down to the moment of narration. The earthquake of Delos indicates that the campaign of Datis and Artaphrenes in 490 B.C. was opening for Greece a new epoch of about one hundred years, scanned by three generations of Persian kings.

1. And **no doubt** [μέν κου] this was a prodigy [τέραξ] that the god manifested to men for the evils [κακῶν] that were about to happen.
2. For in the time of Darius, the son of Hystaspes, Xerxes, the son of Darius, and Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, during these three consecutive generations, more evils happened to Greece than during the twenty other generations that came before, some [of these evils] deriving to Greece from the Persians, and some from the leaders themselves fighting over the rule/empire/hegemony [ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν κορυφαίων περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς πολεμιόντων].
3. So, **it was not at all out of order** [οὐδὲν . . . ἀεικῆς] that Delos be shaken, having previously been unshaken. (6.98.1–3)

The gloss verifies the maxim I considered earlier that the gods send “great signs” in anticipation of “great evils” (6.27.1). Such an extraordinary phenomenon is justified, according to the narrator, by the unprecedented dose of *kaka* (evils) that followed, brought about first by external and then by internal war. As we have seen happen in the course of Herodotus’ verification of cases of retribution, so also here the chronological progress of the events in the *logos*, coupled with the special timing of the divine, causes the narrative to rejoin the time of the narration, thereby establishing both analogy and continuity between the past and present.

Several fifth-century sources look at the Persian Wars and the subsequent wars among Greeks as parallel entities with respect to size, strategy, and the ethical status of the participants. According to the official Athenian position, the achievements of Athens after the Persian Wars reproduce Athens’ achievements against the barbarians.<sup>169</sup> On the other side of

169. Pericles compared Agamemnon’s Trojan War, as the archetypal war against barbarians, and his own Samian War (Plut. *Per.* 28.7, quoting Ion). The paintings of the Stoa Poikile may have set battles of the Greeks against Amazons, Trojans, and Persians side by side with one between Athenians and Spartans (Paus. 1.15). See Hölscher 1998, 173–76.

the ideological struggle, the “tyrant city” tradition of political discourse casts Athens, the onetime liberator of the Greeks, in the role that had formerly been played by Persia.<sup>170</sup> For Herodotus in the passage I am considering, the analogy between the two sets of wars is based on the *kaka* that they both have brought to Greece. Just as the Persians bring evils on Greece for the sake of increasing their *arche* (empire) or of turning Greece itself into their *arche* (satrapy), so the leading Greek states bring evils on Greece by fighting with one another for the sake of the *arche*.<sup>171</sup> Athens is not here the keystone of the analogy, except insofar as it was the only city of Greece that, after the Persian Wars, had fought for and acquired what was in fact called an *arche* (empire). Many inter-Greek wars, including the Peloponnesian War, had started as fights over Athens’ *arche*.

Herodotus’ special understanding of the divine sign establishes continuity between the two sets of *kaka* by bracketing off as a unit the one-hundred-year period of the reigns of the three kings Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes in contrast with the previous twenty generations.<sup>172</sup> As additional proof that this time constitutes a unity and is all therefore covered by the omen, he ends by pointing out the ominous significance of the kings’ names (6.98.3). The epoch of *kaka* begins with the earthquake of Delos at the time of the Marathon campaign (490 B.C.) and, implicitly, with the advent to the throne of Darius, the first of the three kings (521 B.C.). In

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For the continuity of Athenian achievements in the tradition of the *epitaphios*, see Loraux 1986, 132–71.

170. See Elpinice’s reproach to Pericles in Plut. *Per.* 28 and the parallel made by the Corinthians in Thuc. 1.69.5. Implicit comparison between the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War is pervasive in Thucydides. See especially Connor 1984, 155–57, 175–76, 198–200. Herodotus’ narrative describes Persian actions against the Greeks that suggest future Athenian actions: the plan to occupy Cythera, an item of Athenian strategy from 454 (implemented in 424), is discussed by the Persians (7.235); Persian imperialistic speeches contain terms of a code that at the time of narration were applied to Athens (7.5–9, 7.45–53); the report of the Persians’ establishing democracies in Ionia after the Ionian revolt (6.43.3) may allude to the Athenian practice to establish democratic governments in the states of its league. See Raaflaub 1987, 227–28.

171. See Nagy 1990, 308, on this passage.

172. Going back twenty generations before Darius brings us to the time of the Dorian settlement in the Peloponnese, which marks the beginning of the Spartan king list. For a general scheme of Herodotus’ chronology, see Lloyd 1975, 171–94, especially 177–82. It would be attractive to be able to interpret the twenty-generation period as starting right after the archetypal event of the fall of Troy; but since the three subsequent generations here mentioned cannot amount to more than about one hundred years, we cannot make twenty generations reach back to ca. 1330–1250 B.C., the approximate time of the Trojan War according to Herodotus’ chronology.

between these two events, the narrator elsewhere identifies another beginning, the Athenian expedition in support of the Ionian revolt (499 B.C.): Herodotus calls the Athenians' twenty ships with a pointed allusion to the paradigm of all wars, the "beginning of evils [ἀρχὴ κακῶν] for both Greeks and barbarians."<sup>173</sup> The three-king "century" includes the wars against Persia, the fighting that went on during the Pentecontaetia, and the Peloponnesian War down to the time of performance. The events of the Pentecontaetia are telescoped together with those of the Peloponnesian War. Under the heading of *kaka* deriving from the leaders of the Greeks fighting for the *arche*, both are presented as a natural continuation and extension of the *kaka* imported by the Persians.<sup>174</sup>

To Herodotus, in other words, the wars of the past, the Persian Wars, have perpetuated themselves. And in fact, according to his narrative, the ships built for the war against Aegina, ships that "saved Greece" (7.144.2) and allowed the Athenians to be "saviors of Greece" (7.139.5), become available again very soon for use against other Greeks. Herodotus puts no interval between the battle of Salamis and Themistocles' attack on the islanders from whom he exacts monetary contribution by force.<sup>175</sup> The defensive war of the Greeks against the Persians is still going on, and the tables have already turned. Immediately after Salamis, the Greeks also raise the issue about their pursuing the war against Persia offensively, turning it into a war "about the king's own country," as the expression goes (8.108–9, especially 8.108.4: τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ περὶ τῆς ἐκείνου ἥδε ποιέεσθαι τὸν ἀγῶνα; cf. 8.3.2). Similarly, after the god-given victory of Mycale, the Greeks reject the option to move the Ionians out of Asia, the Athenians choose to preserve the "Ionian *arche*," a league is founded with the Athenians in charge, and the Greek fleet departs for the Hellespont.<sup>176</sup> These clear elements of continuity with the future,

173. 5.97.3 (see also 5.28.1, 5.30.1). Cf. *Il.* 5.62–63. See Cobet 1971, 63.

174. For the Pentecontaetia as an intermediate period and a fighting prelude to the Peloponnesian War, see Thuc. 1.89–117. Herodotus mentions the Peloponnesian War as a separate entity only at 9.73.3.

175. See 8.111–12, a passage affected by contemporary rhetoric and referring to fifth-century oppressive Athenian diplomacy toward smaller states. The resemblance to Thucydides' Melian Dialogue has been noted by many (see, e.g., Aly 1929, 99; Strasburger 1955, 21; Gigante 1956, 136 and n. 1). See Stadter 1992, 795–98. The idea that, historically, Athenian policy became very aggressive soon after 478 is argued by Fornara and Samons (1991, 76–113). Herodotus makes the change start even earlier.

176. See 9.106.2–4. The divine signs at Mycale (which I discuss earlier in this section) prevent interpreting the Greek crossing of the Aegean beyond Delos to liberate Ionia as a violation, as Stadter does (1992, 892–94; see rather Immerwahr 1966, 288); on the other

especially the smooth transition to the offensive stage of the war and to the already ambivalent leadership of Athens, rob the *Histories* of a clear-cut triumphant closure: the narrative simply stops shortly afterward, precariously balanced at the Hellespont and full of negative signals.<sup>177</sup> The open-endedness of Herodotus' *logos*, the suggestion that the outcome of the second rebellion of Ionia is only preliminary to further fighting, and the proleptic references to the later wars of Greeks against Greeks scattered through the last part of the history of the war against Persia<sup>178</sup> agree with the gloss interpreting the earthquake of Delos as the announcement of a continuous chain of evils, with no relief or divide between the war he is narrating and subsequent internal struggles.

The "beginning" of the three-king period is staggered over a number of years and marked by several events (the advent of Darius, the Ionian revolt, the expedition of Datis with earthquake). Its completion must be similar. The narrator positions himself still within that period, though at a point when the trend of events in Artaxerxes' reign could already be evaluated. By then, the outbreak of the Archidamian War and all the accompanying catastrophes we learn about from Thucydides must have appeared to contemporaries to signal the beginning of the end of something.<sup>179</sup> If we accept this as the extratextual context of Herodotus' performance, his interpretation of the earthquake of Delos has a prophetic side: it contains an implicit prediction that a change is imminent and that a new epoch is about to begin in the next generation of Persian kings. What this change will be, what the wars of the *koruphaioi* of the Greeks will finally produce, remains unknown. In search for guidance for reading the future, Herodotus has canvassed the past. From the mass of sometimes uncertain evidence, he is able to derive three maxims: that

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hand, the aggressive operations against Andros, Paros, and Carystus, on this side of Delos, are obviously represented as unjust acts. This is another demonstration that continental boundaries as such should be taken not too rigidly but merely as symbols of ethical boundaries in specific transgressive situations. The Greek actions after Mycale are, however, presented as worrisome; the very existence of Greek cities in Asia emerges as problematic. Compare 9.106.2 with 1.164–68 and 1.170: at 1.170, if they had followed the advice of Bias the Ionians, according to a gloss of the narrator, "could have been most prosperous among the Greeks."

177. See chap. 2, "The Monarchical Model of Athens."

178. See 9.35.2, 9.73, 9.75, 9.105 (Athenian siege of Carystus; cf. Thuc. 1.98.3); Schmid and Stählin 1934, 1/2.590 n. 9; Cobet 1971, 59–82.

179. Fornara (1971b, 32–33; 1981, 150) argues that this passage was composed after the death of Artaxerxes (424 B.C.) and even after the end of the Archidamian war. But see Cobet 1977, 5.

human *eudaimonie* is unstable, that the gods punish wrongdoings, and that divine messages are true. Of only five explicit references to what we may broadly regard as the narrative now of the *logos* (i.e., the time after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War), at least three are brought in for the purpose of proving with facts the validity of these general rules.<sup>180</sup>

#### Athenian Antilogies

The *Histories* are a collection of worldwide historical evidence that ultimately seeks and offers guidelines for an objective assessment of the contemporary *kaka* of the Greek city-states at the time of performance and their future prospects. The *histor* takes an outsider's position, and the work is directed not against any particular polis but to all the Greeks. The interpretations I have examined make clear, however, that the image of Athens as an unfinished paradigm of rise and fall and the issues of Athens' power, merit, and guilt loom large in the second part of Herodotus' *logos*. The sure sign of Athens' prominence first occurs at the point in the narrative when that city acquires freedom from tyranny. By virtue of its new internal order, Athens "becomes great" and is the only state in the *Histories* that prompts the narrator to generalize in his own voice on the issue of government. While the metaphysical maxims attempt to derive absolute cosmic, ethical, and divine laws from the data provided by the visible world, when the narrator observes political realities, he acknowledges them to be inherently mixed. His two maxims on democracy occur twenty chapters apart and in the same narrative framework. They are structurally parallel and antithetical in substance.

1. **And it is clear** [δηλοῖ], **not only in one single respect but in general, that equal right to address the assembly is a serious asset** [ἡ ἰσηγορία . . . ἐστὶ χρῆμα σπουδαῖον], **if also** the Athenians while they were being ruled by a tyrant were no better in war than any of their neighbors, but once they were rid of the tyrants they became by far the first. **This then demonstrates** that when they were being held down, they fought badly on purpose as working for a master, but once they became free, each man was eager to achieve for his own sake [αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἐαυτῷ προεθυμέτο κατεργάζεσθαι]. (5.78)

180. See 6.91.1, 7.137, 6.98.2–3 (discussed earlier). For 7.233.1, see n. 149 in the present chapter. The last occurs at 9.73.

2. **It seems that it is easier to deceive many men than one** [πολλοὺς γὰρ οἶκε εἶναι εὐπετέστερον διαβάλλειν ἢ ἓνα], if Aristagoras could not deceive Cleomenes of Lacedaemon, who was alone, but managed to do so with thirty thousand Athenians. (5.97.2)

This antilogical set is related to the contrasting arguments of the Constitutional Debate, in which three characters analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the three basic forms of government: democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy (3.80–83). There, each speaker holds a fixed subjective position in favor of one form of government and opposes one or two of the remaining ones. In the overall picture from the point of view of the text, however, none of the three forms appears immune from dangers for the commonwealth. The derivation of the debate from a relativistic discourse of Protagorean stamp is evident.<sup>181</sup> The most conspicuous part of the contest is played out between monarchy and democracy, which appear mutually antithetical and parallel at the same time. In a monarchical regime, one man is permanently in charge and does what he wants without being accountable (3.80.3), while democracy is characterized by accountability, the rotation of offices, and common deliberations (3.80.6).<sup>182</sup> Both the monarch and the demos, however, are susceptible to hubris (3.80.3; cf. 3.81.1–2) and wrongdoing (κακότης, 3.82.4; cf. 3.82.4).

As the narrator takes stock of the contradictory character of the historical evidence, the phenomenon of the Athenian democracy prompts him to transfer to himself the antilogic functions that the Constitutional Debate distributes among different characters. The duality of Athens that emerges from other late-fifth-century texts (pure and impure, innocent and guilty, liberator and enslaver) is a central feature of that city's portrayal in the *Histories*.<sup>183</sup> Because Athens is double, it can only be described, as here, antilogically, in a form of discourse that is particularly

181. Lasserre (1976, especially 81) argues that Protagoras was the author of a constitutional debate also in a Persian setting. On the partial affinity of Herodotus' thought with that of the Sophists, see discussions in earlier sections of this chapter.

182. The democracy of the debate (called *isonomie* at 3.80.6 and 3.83.1, *democratie* at 6.43.3) is described in terms suitable to Cleisthenes' democracy (called *democratie* at 6.131.1 and 5.78). See Ostwald 1969, 96–160; Fornara and Samons 1991, 41–56.

183. E.g., the Spartan ambassadors at 8.142.3 contrast Athenian responsibility for the enslavement of the Greeks (αἰτίους δουλοσύνης τοῖσι Ἑλλησι) and their role as liberators (πολλοὺς ἐλευθερώσαντες ἀνθρώπων). Herodotus offers contradictory evaluations of Pisistratus' reign (1.59.1, 6.). See Strasburger 1955, 10–15. For Themistocles as the embodiment of Athens, see his antilogic arguments at 8.108–9; see also Munson 1988, 103–4.

congenial to that city and its perception of things. These glosses point in fact to another Athenian trend. Unlike most of the narrator's generalizations we have seen so far, and unlike the discourses on government in the Constitutional Debate, they employ the vocabulary of strategy and the useful (χρῆμα σπουδαῖον, εὐπετέστερον διαβάλλειν), in preference to the ethical code used to evaluate something being good or bad.<sup>184</sup>

Both generalizations assess the advantage of the opportunities for deliberation enjoyed by the Athenian demos in the assembly, both evaluate this advantage by its results in the field of war, and both contrast it with the concentration of power in the hands of one man. In the first generalization (5.78), the term *isegorie* (equal speech) underlines the psychological effect on the ordinary citizen of his being able to stand in the midst of his peers and participate in the debate about policies. This effect extends beyond the field of deliberation (“not in one thing only, but in a general way”) and is here measured by performance on the battlefield. In the case of the Spartans also, Herodotus' narrative conveys the notion that freedom makes men more eager to fight than does subjection to a ruler (7.135.3, 7.101–4). But whereas Spartan *arete*, according to Demaratus, partially derives from an unquestioning obedience to the city's *nomos-despotes*, stronger than any human despot (7.104.4–5), the Athenian brand of freedom replaces the human *despotes* not with “the law” but with the individual citizen (ἑωυτῶ . . . κατεργάζεσθαι vs. δεσπότη ἐργαζόμενοι). Since the Athenian citizen fights in wars that he has personally deliberated on through his right to speak in the assembly (*isegorie*), or, in other words, since he makes the laws, he “works” in his own interest, “each one for himself” [αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἑωυτῶ]. Individual self-interest is the ideological foundation of popular sovereignty in the democratic state.<sup>185</sup>

The positive evaluation of *isegorie* is based on the specific evidence of a success in battle: the Athenian defeat of an aggressive attack by Boeotians and Chalcidians (5.77; cf. 5.74.2). The narrative that illustrates the

184. The predominance of the useful over the just in political deliberations is often mentioned by Athenian speakers in Thucydides (see, e.g., Thuc. 1.75). The theme of self-interest recurs obsessively in the evaluation of the Athenian democracy by the “Old Oligarch” ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.6–9, 2.20, and passim). In Herodotus, the Athenians make the transition from an ethical to a utilitarian discourse in their speeches at 8.143–44 and 9.7, 11; see particularly 9.7α1–2.

185. See Munson 1988. The term ἕκαστος (each) is an index here of individualism, elsewhere of the particularism of states (1.169.1, 7.219.2, 8.57.2). The distributive form distinguishes Herodotus' description of democracy from that of the Hippocratic author of *Airs, Waters, Places*: τοῦς . . . κινδύνους ἑωυτῶν πέρι κινδυνεύουσι (16; cf. 23).

successful implementation of *isegorie* itself is rather the report of the assembly deliberations on military policy after the oracle of the wooden wall (7.142–43): here, the self-interest of the Athenians, empowered by freedom from tyranny and right of speech, leads to the “Good” decision to resist the Persians. The system proves again to be a “serious asset” for the commonwealth as a whole.<sup>186</sup> The antithetical counterpart of this assembly scene is another assembly scene, which leads to a “Bad” war decision and provides the textual context and the historical evidence for Herodotus’ second, and negative, generalization on the democratic state, at 5.97.2. This evaluation occurs in the narrative of Aristagoras’ journey to mainland Greece for the purpose of obtaining support for the Ionian revolt. The narrative itself in turn provides the frame for the analeptic sequence on Athens’ liberation from tyranny and first successes, concluded by the narrator’s praise of *isegorie*. Thus, the coming of Aristagoras looms on the horizon, both historically and narratively, during the decisive moment of Athens’ democratic beginning and consequent rise to prominence. When he arrives holding out hopes of plunder, Athens is powerful (ἐδυνάστευεν μέγιστον) and ready for an imperialistic war.<sup>187</sup>

In Herodotus’ narrative of Aristagoras’ visit, however, the representation of the Athenians’ new democratic energy, restlessness, and self-interest remains subsidiary to a less grandiose portrayal. In Athens, Aristagoras repeats the tendentious ethnographic information he has given at Sparta (5.49.3–8), with the aid of a map such as the *histor* Herodotus has elsewhere judged oversimplified and inadequate.<sup>188</sup> He adds the idealistic argument that the Milesians, as colonists of the Athenians, should be able to count on their help.<sup>189</sup> Whereas he has failed with Cleomenes at Sparta, Aristagoras persuades the Athenians by talking of the wealth of Asia and the Persian method of warfare, in which “they use neither shield nor spear so as to be easy to defeat [εὐπετέες . . . χειρωθῆναι].”<sup>190</sup> In Herodotus’

186. Similarly, the report that follows, on the earlier deliberation concerning the building of a fleet, shows that the Athenians are able to understand when private and public interests coincide (see 7.144).

187. See 5.97.1. For the connotations of *dunasteia*, see chap. 2, n. 32 and corresponding text.

188. See 5.49.1. Cf. 4.36.2 (see chap. 2, “The Texture of the Earth”).

189. 5.97.2. This replaces the argument of Aristagoras in Sparta on the “shame and grief” that the enslavement of the Ionians brings on the Spartans as the leaders of Greece (5.49.2–3). That he makes this point before the representation of Eastern wealth reflects his assessment of what would be persuasive to each audience.

190. 5.97.1. Cf. 5.49.3 (εὐπετέως), 4 (εὐπετέες χειρωθῆναι).

explicit interpretation at 5.97.2 (passage 2 quoted earlier), the people's decision to support the revolt in Ionia—in turn interpreted with the famous “beginning of evils” gloss (5.97.3)—is first and foremost a demonstration of the people's collective ignorance. As one of the speakers in the Constitutional Debate observes in stronger terms (3.81.2), this is bound to put a democratic state at a disadvantage.

Throughout the *Histories*, Herodotus thematizes together with Athenian *sophie* (cleverness) the paradox of Athenian *euethie* (simplemindedness). After Aristagoras, Miltiades deceives the Athenians (ἀπάτης, 6.136.1), and then Themistocles does too (διέβαλλε, 8.110.1). In their earlier history, the Athenians are deceived twice into putting a tyrant in place (μηχανή, ἔξαπατηθεῖς, 1.59.5–6; μηχανῶνται . . . πρῆγμα εὐηθεστάτον, 1.60.3). They take a local maiden for a goddess (1.60.3), are blind to tyrannical schemes, and do not know the world. They are persuaded that grandiose enterprises will be easy (εὐπετέως, 6.132; cf. εὐπετέες χειρωθῆναι 5.97.1), because they are themselves, like all multitudes, easy to deceive (εὐπετέστερον διαβάλλειν, 5.97.2).

To the ambivalence of Athens in the ethical sphere corresponds a contradiction at the level of knowledge and intelligence. This factor cuts the image of Athens down to size. We are reminded of the besotted Demos in Aristophanes' *Knights* or, more strikingly, of the assembly that in Thucydides deliberates on the Sicilian expedition—sovereign, vociferous, and ready to go, but not competent or truly in charge.<sup>191</sup> At the same time, Herodotus' general evaluations serve a broader purpose than describing their primary referents. Just as he proclaims that freedom from tyranny and the citizens' right to make policies through speech is a great advantage for all, so he notes that vulnerability to speech makes democracies blunder. This is due less to monarchical hubris than to the simplemindedness of the ordinary Greeks who run the state. When it comes to *euethie*, the people of Athens in the *logos* has much in common with the audiences Herodotus' *logos* addresses, both Athenian and not (cf. 2.45.1). Other than communicating a more abstract moral message, the *histor* takes it on himself to display and to cure through his own, non-Aristagorean brand of speech this shared naïveté about the reality of foreign peoples and lands, the shape of the world, the motives of leaders,

191. See Thuc. 6.8–26. Athenian ignorance of the realities of Sicily (see Thuc. 6.1.1) prompts an exceptionally lengthy ethnographic and geographical passage in Thucydides (6.2–6.5.3). See also Eur. *Suppl.* 410–25, with its positive counterpart in the praise of *isegoria* at 432–41.

and the correct and falsified signs of divine support. Ignorance in these matters affects public decisions and brings about the “evil” of unnecessary wars.

### The Evils of War

The two interpretive glosses I have just considered assess the repercussions of a political regime on war performance and war deliberation, respectively, in a way that is consistent with Herodotus’ overarching message about these topics. Among the “achievements great and wonderful” that the *apodexis histories* promises to save from oblivion, acts of courage and prowess are, as in Homeric poetry, among the most conspicuous objects of the narrator’s praise.<sup>192</sup> In the experience of the narrator, those qualities that ensure a high level of performance in battle are tied to the accomplishment of important actions that affect whole communities and represent the morally neutral “great deeds” of history.<sup>193</sup> Equally conspicuous, however, is the idea of the intrinsic moral value of *arete* (excellence) in war, as the performance of a public duty and as a display of personal and national merit. A people’s struggle in war on behalf of freedom is especially “worthy of description” (see, e.g., 1.177, 2.157). But armies, contingents, and individuals, be they Greek or barbarian and whatever their cause, are regularly evaluated for the extent to which they rise to the occasion in the moment of battle.

If *arete* is an absolute moral value, however, war is just as absolutely an evil, as the glosses on the three generations of *kaka* and on the beginning of *kaka* indicate (6.98.2, 5.97.3). This is again a Homeric idea, as is the attribution of *kleos* to war deeds. In Herodotus, however, the evaluation of *arete* competes with the assessment of responsibility and *dike* (justice), so that since war is an evil, making war is a culpable action, not at the level of fighting, but at the level of deliberation. Thus, Croesus, the only character in the *Histories* to utter a gnomic saying on the evils of war, also raises the question of who is responsible for bringing it about: “It was the god of the Greeks who, having incited me to make the expedition, was responsible [αἴτιος] for these things. For no one is so out of his mind as to

192. See “Specific Glosses of Interpretation” in this chapter; chap. 1, “Referential Glosses.” See also Immerwahr 1966, 262–65, 308–9; Saïd 1980. Dillery (1996) examines the pattern of the duel as a contest of worth.

193. See the generalization at 7.153.4. The case that contradicts it suggests divine intervention.

choose war over peace. For in peace, children bury their fathers, and in war, fathers bury their children” (1.87.3–4). Of course, Croesus is wrong on two counts. Many rulers choose war over peace in the *Histories*, and like the rest of them, Croesus is *aitios* for the wars he initiates (ὑπάρξαντα ἀδίκων ἔργων, 1.5.3; cf. the Delphic oracle at 1.91).

In the distinction between providing for national security and waging a war of aggression, Herodotus’ didactic message makes one of its main points by countering the contemporary tendency to view aggression as a function of defense.<sup>194</sup> Embedded in the evaluation of the special strategy that makes the Scythians immune from external enemies is the generalized statement that to possess means of defense is essential for any nation: “The single most important of all human things [ἐν μὲν τὸ μέγιστον τῶν ἀνθρωπείων προηγημάτων] has been devised by the Scythian nation in the most intelligent way we know about” (4.46.2). By the same token, Herodotus’ narrative indirectly criticizes the Ionians because, for one reason or another (lack of unity, organization, discipline, or mobility), they are unable to provide for themselves and safeguard their freedom (see, e.g., 1.169.1, 6.11–12, 1.170).

The symbolic significance of the Scythians in the *Histories* is to a great extent connected with their exemplary ideology of war. Though warlike by custom and unconquerable, the Scythians manage to make war as little as possible. In the episode of the Scythians and Amazons, the crossing of the Tanais signifies, as we have seen, a renunciation of aggression.<sup>195</sup> The Scythians’ imperialistic exploit, in which they “started a war” and “began the injustice,” and for which they have received divine retribution, lies far in their past.<sup>196</sup> They are henceforth firmly autarchic, with no impulse to expand, and are even able to avoid battle if their land is attacked. If reduced to an extreme position of defense, they are ready to fight (4.127.3).

Among the Greeks of the *Histories*, a similar attitude toward war is attributed to the Spartans, whose imperialism has also mostly spent itself at an earlier stage of their history.<sup>197</sup> For the benefit of Xerxes, who has

194. See the Athenians in Thuc. 1.75 and the Spartans in Thuc. 1.23.6, as well as the preemptive aggressions of Croesus and Xerxes in Herodotus (1.46, 7.11.2). See Payen 1997, especially 79–93, 247–319.

195. See chap. 2, “The Other Is Same.”

196. Cf. the words of the Scythians’ neighbors: πρότερον ἀδικήσαντες Πέρσας καὶ ἄρξαντες πόλεμον, etc. (4.119.2–4). On the Scythian invasion of Asia, see 1.103.3–106.1, 4.1.1–2.

197. See 1.66–68, especially 68.6; Immerwahr 1966, 200–206.

challenged the Spartan claim to superior *arete*, Demaratus differentiates between readiness and initiative in warfare: “I do not promise to be able to fight against ten men at once or against two; if it were a matter of choice [ἐκὼν τε εἶναι], I would not even fight against one. But if there were necessity [ἀναγκάϊη] and if some great trial urged me on, I would like nothing better than to fight against one of those men who say that they are each a match for three Greeks” (7.104.3). The *anankaie* Demaratus is here talking about compels men to defend their freedom with spears and even with axes and drives the Spartans at Thermopylae to fight with their hands and teeth when they lose their swords (7.135.3, 7.225.3). If a war imposes *anankaie* on others, by contrast, though it may be undertaken for a variety of more or less subjectively valid motives, it lies outside of the realm of necessity. In objective ethical terms, it is an unjust war, and in utilitarian terms, it is unwise because, as Artabanus says to Xerxes, it exposes one to danger “without necessity” [μηδεμιῆς ἀνάγκης ἐξούσης].<sup>198</sup>

Sparta’s reluctance to make expeditions almost leads that city to underestimate the Persian danger. At least twice in the sixth century, Sparta plans or undertakes hostile invasions of Attica but does not carry them out in the end.<sup>199</sup> Herodotus’ portrayal would have reminded his audience of the striking change in policy that determined the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Previously, says Thucydides, the Spartans would avoid getting into wars unless compelled by necessity (ἦν μὴ ἀναγκάζωνται, Thuc. 1.118.2). But in 431, everyone was eager to fight. With a much lower threshold than Herodotus for invoking ἀνάγκη, Thucydides attributes compulsion to both sides.<sup>200</sup>

For Herodotus’ Athenians, perceiving the difference between defense and aggression has been difficult since the beginning of democracy. Their newly acquired excellence is described in terms that suggest an agonistic effort vis-à-vis their fellow Greeks.<sup>201</sup> “Extinguishing the hubris” of

198. 7.10δ1. Artabanus reiterates the thought in positive terms at 7.18.3. On Herodotus’ notion of a necessary war as a defensive war, see Munson forthcoming.

199. These Spartan missions include the abortive invasion of Cleomenes, both “unjust” (5.75.1) and “inglorious” (5.77.1); and the projected reestablishment of Hippias (see 5.91–93, especially 5.93.1, with allusions to later events). The list of 5.76 recalls three other interventions, one mythical and two beneficial. For Spartan reluctance to go out against the Persians, see 1.82–83, 152; 5.50; 6.106; 9.6–8.

200. Thuc. 2.8.1; cf. 1.80.1 with 1.23.6, and see Ostwald 1988, especially 1–5.

201. Herodotus says at 5.78, “they became by far the first.” Cf. Miltiades’ words at 6.109.3. See Stadter 1992, 801.

Boeotians and Chalcidians, who had attacked them first, entails “crossing over” [διάβαντες] to Euboea and establishing a cleruchy in Chalcis, an expansionistic move.<sup>202</sup> The subsequent expedition of the Athenians in support of their Ionian kin, who in turn were fighting for their own freedom (5.97), blurs the distinction between defense and offense; according to the previously examined gloss on the three generations of *kaka* (6.98), it also leads from war against Persia to war among the Greeks.

Herodotus’ generalized statement that war is an evil occurs precisely in a gloss that refers proleptically to the transition from the defensive to the offensive stage of the Persian Wars, after 479. The passage also represents the Athenians as causing a concomitant transition from war against a foreign enemy (*polemos*) to struggle within Greece (*stasis*).

- A. For there had been a discussion at the beginning, even before sending the embassy to Sicily concerning the alliance, that the Athenians should be in charge of the naval force. But when the allies objected, the Athenians yielded [εἶχον], because they were extremely concerned that Greece should survive and knew that if they quarreled about the command [εἰ στασιάσουσι περὶ τὴν ἡγεμονίης], Greece would perish, **and right they were** [ὀρθὰ νοεῦντες]:
- A<sub>1</sub>. for internal struggle is a greater evil than a war fought in agreement by as much as war is a greater evil than peace [στάσις γὰρ ἔμφυλος πολέμου ὁμοφρονέοντος τοσοῦτω κάκιόν ἐστι ὅσῳ πόλεμος εἰρήνης].  
Being aware precisely of this fact, they did not make opposition, but yielded [εἶχον],
- B. so long as they very much needed the others, as they [subsequently] showed [μέχρι ὅσου κάττα ἐδέοντο αὐτῶν, ὡς διέδεξαν]: for when, having repelled the Persian, they began to fight for his territory, putting forward as a pretext [πρόφασιν] the hubris of Pausanias, they snatched away the leadership [ἀπέιλοντο τὴν ἡγεμονίην] from the Lacedaemonians.  
But this happened later. (8.3.1–2)

202. 5.77.1–4. On the verb διαβαίνω, see chap. 2, n. 257. The term κληρούχους may be an anachronism (see French 1972, 18), but it evokes contemporary Athenian imperial policy.

Herodotus' discourse here appropriates and modifies the contemporary anti-Athenian topos, such as we find in the speech of the Thucydidean Sthenelaidas, comparing the "good Athenians before" the Greek victory against the Persians and the "bad Athenians after."<sup>203</sup> Section A complements the praise at 7.139.5, where the Athenians "decided that Greece should survive and be free," with the added element of Athenian compliance for the purpose of avoiding *stasis* (εἶλον, repeated in section A<sub>1</sub>). The transition between "good" and "bad" Athenians begins in section B, where μέγχι ὅσου κάρτα ἐδέοντο αὐτῶν [so long as they very much needed them] isolates within the altruistic motive just attributed to the Athenians (the safety of Greece) the motive of self-interest (the safety of Greece and therefore their own). ὡς διέδεξαν, [as they showed], is a gloss of evidence marking the retrospective interpretation that the Athenians' Panhellenism at the time was strategic and that their behavior after the Persian danger had passed proves their loss of concern in avoiding *stasis*. This behavior is connoted as a high-handed usurpation of the command ("snatched away" [ἀπείλοντο]; cf. 1.14.1), achieved by exploiting a situation that provided the Athenians with a legitimate official claim (πρόφασιν).

But the passage is less clear-cut than this exegesis makes it sound. First, "the hubris of Pausanias," though mainly focalized by the Athenians through their insincere claim, is presented as an uncontested fact. It brings the ethical code to bear to the detriment of the Spartans. Second, the fuzziness of the text is evident in the controversies of modern critics, who (not unlike Herodotus' listeners, one presumes) have not all been equally inclined to read anti-Athenian sentiments into this passage. Thus, Pohlenz and Immerwahr translate μέγχι ὅσου at the beginning of section B not with "for so long as" but with "until"; they argue that the subject of ἐδέοντο and all the other verbs that follow must be "the allies" (implied from "the allies" in section A); and they regard αὐτῶν, the object of ἐδέοντο, as referring, not to the allies in 480, but to the Athenians. In this rendering, it is the allies (i.e., the members of the alliance later on, even though evidently not the same states as the allies in section A) who at one point "very much needed" the Athenians because the behavior of Pausanias had caused a crisis in the leadership. The allies therefore publicly

203. Thuc. 1.86.1. Because of its comparative element, this topos is an important subtext in Herodotus. See, in the present chapter, n. 109 and corresponding text, as well as discussion under "Disputes, Arbitration, and the Subjectivity of Opinions."

cited the hubris of Pausanias (πρόφασιν, then, would merely point to the public nature of the protest); they took the leadership away from the Spartans and gave it to the Athenians instead.<sup>204</sup>

This is not the most natural interpretation of the passage.<sup>205</sup> One would be almost certain that a contemporary audience would have understood it in the other way, if it were not for the words Thucydides uses when he reports how the Athenians justified the origin of their imperial rule on the basis of this change of leadership in the war against Persia. In a passage cited by Pohlenz in support of his interpretation of Herodotus' gloss, the Athenians in Thucydides say that they obtained their empire (*arche*) not by force but because "the allies came to us and asked us themselves [αὐτῶν δεηθέντων] to become the leaders [ἡγεμόνας].<sup>206</sup> In light of a familiar contemporary pro-Athenian argument that the Ionians had asked/needed/wanted (verb δέομαι) the Athenians to replace the Spartans in the leadership, Herodotus' κάττα ἐδέοντο, with implied subject and object, does not express all that clearly who needed whom, and the obscurity tempers the directness of the anti-Athenian tone of the passage.<sup>207</sup>

The ambiguity is very much in keeping with the discourse of Herodotus, who, when it comes to certain issues and cities, tends to praise openly (as he here praises the Athenians for yielding the command of the fleet in the war of resistance) and to blame allusively. This gloss, at any rate, stresses not so much the issue of subsequent Athenian wrongdoing as the generalization on war and *stasis*, the value of which the Athenians might have continued to recognize but evidently did not. The narrator proffers it in his own voice to establish a bridge between the past of the narrative and the present of the narration, between past war and present *stasis*. The generalized statement is not here based on specific evidence presented in the *Histories*, as in other cases; rather, it derives from the current ex-

204. See Pohlenz 1937, 170–72; Immerwahr 1966, 220–21 and n. 87.

205. See especially Strasburger 1955, 20 and n. 4.

206. Thuc. 1.75.1. Here the story of the hubris of Pausanias is a subtext; cf. 1.77.6 in the same speech. Badian (1993, 130) calls this "the foundation myth of the Athenian empire." Fornara and Samons (1991, 84) follow the regular translation of Hdt. 8.3.3 and remark on its points of contact with Thucydides' account of the foundation of the Delian League (1.96.1).

207. Immerwahr (1966, 220–21 and n. 87) maintains that κάττα ἐδέοντο in Herodotus means "[the allies] needed very much" and not "[the allies] asked eagerly," but I do not think that the shift in meaning between Herodotus and Thucydides is crucial here. The point is that, according to Immerwahr's interpretation, Hdt. 8.3.2, like Thuc. 1.75.1, suggests that the idea of Athenian leadership came from the allies, not the Athenians, and that the Athenians did the allies a favor at the time.

tratextual experience of narrator and audience. In “if they quarreled about the leadership, Greece would perish” in section A, the verb *στασιάσουσι* refers to the quarrel that would cause the allies to withdraw from the resistance, as they had threatened to do (8.2.2); the *ἡγεμονία* (leadership) that causes the quarrel is the military command in the war against Persia. The ruin of Greece will come at the hands of the Persians if the Greeks do not keep a united front. In the generalization, however, *στάσις* (quarrel) heightens its impact because the comparison places it within the semantic field of *πόλεμος* (war): *stasis emphulos* is worse than *polemos* by as much as *polemos* is worse than peace. The ruin of Greece that derives from *stasis* is therefore brought about not by the Persians on account of Greek divisiveness but by the Greeks themselves fighting with one another and fighting not simply with words and withdrawals. The term *ἡγεμονία* similarly assumes a larger meaning: the divisiveness over a military command stands for an internal war for *arche* or supreme power.

The transition from the defensive war of the Greeks “of one mind” against Persia in the past to the war of the Greeks against each other in the present passes through the offensive stage of the war against Persia, when the Greeks [turned the conflict into one about [the king’s] territory” [*περὶ τῆς ἐκείνου ἤδη τὸν ἀγῶνα ἐποιεῦντο*] (8.3.2, in B). This transition is characterized by an escalating degree of *kakon* (evil) as well as by a decreasing degree of necessity in the Herodotean (or “Spartan”) sense of the term. As at 6.98.2, the *kaka* deriving from the Persians lead to the *kaka* caused by the Greek leading states fighting for primacy.

#### Disputes, Arbitration, and the Subjectivity of Opinions

The gloss on the evil of war and internal struggle shows that the notion of *stasis* encompasses verbal and diplomatic infighting as well as armed internecine conflict. Herodotus’ text rarely mentions the contemporary ideological or violent struggles of the Greeks at the time of performance, but it either symbolically represents or literally echoes them by reporting, at different narrative levels, a number of verbal controversies. A final group of gnomic statements in the *Histories* requires that we examine the way in which the narrator positions himself in the midst of different claims and how he is able to apply his experience as *histor*/researcher to a role of *histor*/arbitrator and composer of quarrels.<sup>208</sup>

208. Herodotus’ stance as judicial arbitrator has been examined especially by Nagy (1990, 250–73, 314–22).

Instances of *stasis* in the *Histories* fall into two main categories, narrative and metanarrative. The first include, besides war among or within Greek city-states (e.g., that between Athens and Aegina), several episodes of Greek divisiveness and disputation. These primarily occurred during the Persian Wars and concerned four related topics: Medism, strategy, behavior in battle, and command or other privileges.<sup>209</sup> The various areas of friction overlap. Moreover, since in some cases, nonbelligerent *stasis* in the past either results in military conflict or raises the specter of future armed conflicts, it serves as the overarching symbol of *stasis* in the belligerent sense at the time of narration.<sup>210</sup> A second category of *stasis* is represented by the conflicting traditions at the time of narration concerning actions of the time of the narrated. These metanarrative quarrels connect past and present in a literal way, because they constitute the verbal backdrop of active contemporary struggles. As invisible narrator of the past, Herodotus often paints an uncomfortable picture of the high-handedness, self-interest, and agonism of the Greeks and even implicitly dispenses blame. But when he appears in the text as researcher of current traditions or as judge of past actions, he records the quarrels, presides over them, absolves the actors involved, and dispenses praise.

The passage I last considered establishes the continuity between diplomatic *stasis* of the Greek states at the time of the wars against Persia and belligerent *stasis* in the subsequent period; it also makes an implicit reference back to the episode of the Greek attempt to enlist Gelon of Syracuse in the cause of Greek freedom (see 8.3.1, section A: “even before sending the embassy to Sicily”). Among the narratives of quarrels, this one contains the most striking signal that in the symbolic code of the *logos*, the divisiveness of the Greeks in the world of the narrated stands for their subsequent state of war against one another. When the Spartan and Athenian envoys both refuse to give Gelon a share of the command of the Greek forces, he declines to participate in the resistance altogether. Just as Spartans and Athenians have argued their respective rights to leadership going back to the heroic age on the basis of ancient texts,<sup>211</sup>

209. On the theme of divisiveness among the Greeks, see Immerwahr 1966, 225–35.

210. When the Athenians prospect an alliance with Xerxes, they allude to attacks on the other Greeks (see 9.11.2). The pact of the confederate Greeks included the imposition on the Medizing states of a tithe for Delphic Apollo to be collected after the war (see 7.132.2). Collections of war indemnities tend to lead to military aggression (see, e.g., 8.111–12).

211. See 7.159 (reproducing *Il.* 7.125; see How and Wells 1928, 2:197), 7.161.3 (cf. *Il.* 2.552).

so Gelon replies with an unself-conscious quotation to a (for him) future text. Apparently the Greeks have only people who want to be commanders/rulers (ἄρχοντες) and no one who will be ruled (ἄρξομένους), he says; very well, then, the envoys should go back and report to Greece that “the spring has been taken out of the year” (7.162). The narrator interprets “the spring” as referring to Gelon’s army, which the Greeks have forfeited by their inflexibility, but his gloss merely draws attention to the oddity of the metaphor in this context (7.162.2). More appropriately, Pericles used the phrase, according to Aristotle, to eulogize the young men of Athens fallen in war and snatched from the city like the spring from the year.<sup>212</sup> We do not know what was the occasion of this funeral oration—the Samian War of 440 has been suggested as a possibility. By appropriating the metaphor, at any rate, Herodotus guides the listener to establish vertical analogy with an extratextual context, where Gelon, who is here at the center of the dispute and plays his thematic role within the monarchical model, is no longer relevant. The point of the narrative, at the level of meaning I am talking about, is that the mythical and rhetorical themes of hegemonic propaganda, here mobilized by the various contendants to establish their primacy over the others, are an ominous symptom of discord; that they will recur in the political discourse, fueling later inter-Greek conflicts; and that these conflicts, in a much more serious sense than political speeches can express, will “take the spring out of the year” for Greece.<sup>213</sup>

Herodotus’ unmarked allusions to the public discourse of his time are likely to be more extensive than we are able to realize, given the incompleteness of our evidence. Thucydides’ narrative and speeches represent, nevertheless, a valuable source for capturing the cultural codes shared by the narrator of Herodotus’ history and his audience. Thus, for example, in one of the metanarrative disputes, the way in which the Athenians tell the story of their expulsion of the Pelasgians from Attica seems to reproduce their self-justifying argument that their empire deserves praise for not being as oppressive as it could be.<sup>214</sup> In another narrative, a “great

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212. Arist. *Rhet.* 3.10.7 (1411a) and 1.7.34 (1365a). How and Wells (1928, 2:198), following Wesslerling, consider the gloss an interpolation on the grounds of its inappropriateness to the Herodotean context.

213. See Fornara 1971a, 84.

214. See 6.137.4; cf. the Athenians in Thuc. 1.76.3–4, applicable to specific cases of the type of Thuc. 2.70.3 or 3.50.

wrangle of words”<sup>215</sup> breaks out at Plataea concerning whose contingent has the right to occupy the left wing of the army, Athenians or Tegeans. The two contendants enumerate “deeds old and new” (9.26.1; cf. 9.27.1) that make them worthy of being deemed the best. The Athenian speech mentions past services to Greece as a whole and actions taken in defense of particular groups of Greeks against the alleged hubris of other Greeks. The list conforms to the manner of fifth-century hegemonic rhetoric.<sup>216</sup> Also, the rhetorical *topoi* of this speech reproduce current conventions. The Athenians begin (I am paraphrasing), “We are gathered here to fight, not to make speeches, but since the Tegeans have challenged our primacy, we must answer” (9.27.1). Similarly, on the eve of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian ambassadors at Sparta say, according to Thucydides: “We are not here to argue with your allies but on other business. However, since they have raised an outcry, we wish to show that we have a right to our possessions” (Thuc. 1.73.1). The dismissal of remote deeds as secondary to recent merits in the Persian Wars is also typical (cf. the Athenians at 9.27.5 and at Thuc. 1.73.2). In the speech of Herodotus’ Athenians, moreover, the transition between the mythical and the historical exploits ironically suggests the possibility of an ethical change: “But it does no good to recall these things [i.e., the defeat of the Amazons and so on]: for men who were excellent [*χρηστοί*] then could be no good [*φλαυρότεροι*] now, and men who were no good then could be better now” (9.27.4). These words parallel those of the Thucydidean Sthenelaidas that, as I have already conjectured, seem to be based on a current anti-Athenian argument: “Yet, if they were good/courageous [*ἀγαθοί*] then against the Medes and are bad [*κακοί*] toward us now, they deserve double punishment because from good they have become bad” (Thuc. 1.86.1). By combining different themes of later political rhetoric in his representation of hegemonic quarrels among Greeks during the battle of Plataea, Herodotus’ *logos* makes reference both to the continuity and to the reversal of circumstances in the historical transition from the *polemos* of the narrative to the contemporary *stasis*.

In other cases, the evocation of later events emerges from the way in which the narrative describes the actions of the specific protagonists. On

215. 9.26.1. The word *ὄθισμός* is also applied to the verbal quarrels of the Greeks at 8.78, but it denotes the melee of combatants in a physical battle at 7.225.1 and 9.62. See Immerwahr 1966, 274.

216. See 9.27.2–5; Loraux 1986, 67–75. One of the deeds is the Athenians’ defeat of the Amazons, on which see chap. 2, “The Other Is Same.”

the eve of Xerxes' invasion, the Corcyreans contrive to remain neutral even though, as they themselves claim, they possess "a not inconsiderable number of ships, in fact the greatest number after the Athenians" (7.168.3). The emphasis on Corcyra's selfish neutrality and its sea power here recalls how, according to Thucydides, Corcyra became a cause of discord in Greece later on: when the city saw fit to abandon its traditional policy of isolation, the size of its fleet gave it the bargaining power for obtaining an Athenian alliance.<sup>217</sup> The point of Herodotus' narrative, in other words, is that Corcyra's fleet, which recently did so much to exacerbate the internal conflicts in Greece, could have helped the Greeks at the time of their defensive war against Persia but deliberately failed to do so, just as the city that had been fence-sitting in the hour of need for Greece later came out of its famous neutrality only to contribute to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

In the *stasis* narratives I have examined, the invisible narrator links instances of past controversies among the Greeks with the extratextual developments close to the time of narration.<sup>218</sup> In a "metanarrative *stasis*," by contrast, the dispute that historically and symbolically corresponds to other manifestations of enmity does not or does not only belong to the world of the narrated but has already spilled over into the world of the performance. These cases are brought to the surface of the text as the *histor*/researcher visibly attempts to find out and report what happened: "From this point on [in the narrative], I cannot exactly describe [present tense] which of the Ionians were [past tense] cowardly or brave men in this naval battle; for they accuse one another [present tense: ἀλλήλους γὰρ κατατιῶνται]" (6.14.1). The narrator's lack of knowledge with respect to distant events reveals the interconnectedness between the characters of the *logos* and its sources, both apparently the subject of κατατιῶνται, "they accuse." The disunity of the Ionians at Lade continues in the mutual accusations of their descendants.

The display of *historie* (inquiry) throughout Herodotus' text communicates the important teaching that a variety of subjective factors motivates

217. For the Corcyrean affair, see Thuc. 1.24–55, especially 1.32.4 (policy of isolation); 1.33.2, 1.36.3, 1.44.2 (Corcyrean fleet).

218. See also 8.56–64, 75 (Themistocles vs. the Greeks: see Munson 1988, 101); 8.11–12 (see n. 175 in the present chapter); 8.141–9.11 (Athenians and Spartans: see Fornara 1971a, 84–86; Raaflaub 1987, 240). Also, 6.108 should be read against the background provided by Thucydides' Plataea narrative (Thuc. 2.71–78, 3.20–24, and especially 3.52–68).

people's *logoi*. Characteristic of the last tract of history treated by Herodotus, however, is the fact that the controversies are internal to Greece, and the problem of uncertain or contradictory reports is connected with the contemporary ideological struggle that accompanies the military struggle of the Greek city-states. Herodotus' role as investigator and recorder of the past coincides more than ever, therefore, with a role of political arbitrator and judge. His choice between competing versions is almost bound to be equivalent to a verdict on what are the *aitiai* (causes/accusations/guilts) and who is *aitios* (responsible) in a judicial and moral sense. The defendants in these cases are not paradigmatic figures of the past, like Croesus, but Herodotus' fellow Greeks at the time of performance.<sup>219</sup>

This perhaps explains why a negative verdict so rarely occurs. When Herodotus displays to his audience which *logoi* are available concerning events of contemporary political significance, he does one of two things: either he reports discrepant versions with glosses of sources and lets them stand or fall on their own merit, or he rejects or avoids corroborating those *logoi* that amount to indictments.<sup>220</sup> Acquit, praise, or suspend judgment, but never convict: we may call his explicit and official judicial practice.

The categorical conviction of Ephialtes at Thermopylae is the exception that proves the "no explicit conviction" rule and helps to illuminate its meaning. The judicial character of the indictment illustrates the distinction between utterances that "make the words match the world" by representing what is the case and those that "make the world match the words": "It was Ephialtes who led the Persians around the mountain by the path, and this man I write as the guilty one [τοῦτον αἴτιον γράφω]" (7.214.3). Herodotus' interpretation of culpability does not represent facts as much as it establishes the record, whose concreteness and permanence he conveys by the performative verb γράφω.<sup>221</sup> As Herodotus' own report of a variant version reveals (7.214.1), and as we can infer from the historical situation at Thermopylae, the identification of Ephialtes as the

219. Nagy (1990, 250–73, 314–21) examines ancient evidence concerning interpolis arbitrations and shows the juridical vocabulary and correspondence with Herodotus' vocabulary of *historie*.

220. See, e.g., 5.85–86 (*logoi* of Athenians and Aeginetans about their early hostilities); 6.137 (*logoi* of Hecataeus and Athenians about expulsion of the Pelasgians from Attica); 6.121–31, especially 6.121.1 and 6.123.1 (accusation against the Alcmaeonids rejected: see chap. 4, "Wonder and Disbelief," in the present book). See also 5.44–45, especially 5.45.2. On 1.70.2–3, see Lateiner 1989, 80; Cooper 1975.

221. See Searle 1982, 3–4. Cf. the judicial meaning of γράφή.

traitor would have been far from definitive.<sup>222</sup> But the narrator singles out in the *logos* an ordinary individual whom an impartial judicial body representing different cities of Greece had already officially convicted (7.213.2); he had subsequently fled under the weight of the *aitie* and died. His death, though unrelated on the human level, had suitably struck him after his crime, with the sort of timeliness Herodotus elsewhere regards as divine.<sup>223</sup> By excluding all other possibilities, Herodotus contains the damage, resolves the controversy, and closes the case. His indictment of Ephialtes stems from the same stance as a reconciler that he outwardly assumes when his *historie* calls on him to arbitrate quarrels among the Greek city-states.

Yet the text of the *Histories* encodes two different and competing messages: it implicitly exhorts all Greeks to put aside their mutual *aitiai* (accusations) at the same time as it forces them to face up to the various *aitiai* (guilts) attributed to them. Herodotus' task of reconciling quarrels goes hand in hand with his role as their inexorable reporter in a discourse that entails pitting the Greeks against each other. The Salamis narrative includes a remarkable Athenian rumor according to which the Corinthians fled at the beginning of the battle and were only persuaded to return by a divine apparition after having remained absent for the entire time of the action (8.94). The narrative is in indirect speech with intrusive oblique infinitive<sup>224</sup> and is followed by the tradition on the Corinthian performance from two other sources. The Corinthians themselves, first of all, do not agree with the Athenians and believe they have been "among the first" in the naval battle; the rest of Greece, moreover, bears witness to the Corinthians' claim (μαρτυροῦει, 8.94.4). The interrogation of witnesses, in other words, discredits the Athenian story and acquits the Corinthians of cowardice.

But what is the function of this type of inclusion in the *Histories*? We have seen contexts when Herodotus reports *logoi* he vigorously refutes to expose the ignorance or bias of his sources.<sup>225</sup> Here, however, in light of Adeimantus' bitter opposition against fighting at Salamis (8.59–61), and in the absence of more detailed evidence of Corinthian prowess in

222. See How and Wells 1928, 2:215; Burn [1962] 1984, 413.

223. See "Divine Retribution" earlier in this chapter.

224. This is a syntactical device by which the narrator distances himself from the received *logos*. See Cooper 1974.

225. See, e.g., Herodotus' refutations of Greek traditions concerning the Egyptians (discussed under "Strategies of Evaluation" earlier in this chapter).

Herodotus' narrative of the battle, the Athenian story does damage the memory of their performance.<sup>226</sup> At the same time, the story implicitly convicts the Athenians of slander and alludes to their current enmity with Corinth. The entire Salamis narrative bristles with episodes of disunity that establish a continuum between past and present discord.<sup>227</sup> Though no one is explicitly accused or blamed in the voice of the narrator, the *logos* implicitly underlines the shortcomings of all the Greeks.

With the story about the alleged Corinthian cowardice in mind, we should revisit the episode of Corcyrean Medism.<sup>228</sup> The Corcyreans promise help to the Greeks with a “fair-faced” speech, but they have “other plans” (7.168.2). Though they send sixty ships, they hold them off the coasts of the Peloponnese, watching to see how the war will turn out. Vis-à-vis the Greeks, they plan to claim that the Etesian winds prevented their fleet from rounding off Malea (7.168.4). This mind-reading narrative is enriched by a speech introduced by a purpose clause and is never in fact uttered, but reported in direct discourse (an unparalleled device), with which the Corcyreans intended to court Xerxes' favor if he had been victorious (7.168.3).

What makes the Corcyrean episode especially instructive is the deliberate way in which it excludes the form of discourse that puts *historie* on display. The sequence on the Corinthians at Salamis explicitly mentions two versions and three sources: a protagonist source, a minority source (the Athenians), and “the Greeks.” Similarly, the Corcyrean narrative embeds three sources and two different versions of what happened: (1) the Corcyreans say that they tried to reach the rest of the Greeks but were frustrated by the Etesian winds (called an “excuse” at 7.168.4); (2) the Greeks accepted the Corcyrean version of events (the Corcyreans “misled the Greeks”; see 7.168.4); (3) a nameless source (or Herodotus himself) still considers the Corcyreans *aitioi* (cf. ἀπιτωμένων, 7.168.4) and tells a different story (corresponding to the direction of the whole at 7.168.1–4). Because in this form of discourse the unequivocal condemnation of the Corcyreans would have depended on the *histor*'s endorsement of

226. Plutarch (*De Malign. Herod.* 39 = *Mor.* 870B–871B) quotes several inscriptions that celebrate Corinthian valor at Salamis and says that Herodotus' practice of telling damaging stories only to discredit them is in fact a device for slander. See, e.g., 3.56; cf. *De Malign. Herod.* 27 = *Mor.* 863A.

227. See 8.59–62 (quarrel over strategy); 8.84.1–2 (metanarrative controversy on who started the battle); 8.85 (Ionians vs. mainland Greeks); 8.92 (Themistocles vs. Polycritus).

228. See 7.168, discussed earlier in this section.

version 3, he withdraws from this capacity and is replaced by a semi-invisible narrator who reports motives and intentions as facts. Throughout the last four books of the *Histories*, the fluctuation of the discourse between a minimally narrated narrative and the form of *historiē*/dispute allows the text to show Greek failings while preserving the visible narrator as benevolent arbitrator, refuter of vicious gossip, praiser of good deeds, and reconciler of the Greeks.

This *histor* is present and conspicuous in a group of narratives concerning the Greek embassy to Argos for the purpose of requesting support against the Persians (7.148–52). Here the story includes several elements that are also present in the reports of similar unsuccessful Greek missions to Gelon (7.153–67), Corcyra (7.168), and Crete (7.169–71). The past divisiveness described by the narrative is moreover concomitant with a current controversy, which emerges metanarratively from the report of four variant versions. A small sampler of Herodotus' methods for handling sources, this is also the fullest instance of judicial arbitration in the *Histories*.<sup>229</sup> It leads to the formulation of a general principle on the subjectivity of controversial positions.

Version A is the protagonist version, which “the Argives say about themselves” (7.148.2). Despite a discouraging oracle, the Argives promised to participate in the Greek resistance on the conditions that they obtain a thirty-year peace with Sparta and at least half of the command of the armed forces (7.148.2–4). The peace was especially important to them, because their city had lost many men during Cleomenes' attack and needed time for its children to grow to adulthood; they feared that if another disaster (*κακόν*) would befall them at the hands of the Persians, they would end up subjected (*ὑπήκοοι*) to Sparta (7.149.1). To the Argive demands, the Spartan envoys replied that the matter of peace would have to be decided by their assembly at home; with regard to the *hegemonie*, they could only offer the Argive king a share equal to that of the two Spartan kings. Hearing this, the Argives found the greed of the Spartans unbearable; considering that it was preferable to be ruled by the barbarians than to subject themselves (*ὑπεῖξαι*) to the Spartans, they bid the heralds to depart (7.149.2–3).

Version B is “another *logos* current through Greece” about an alleged previous event (7.150.1–3): Xerxes had apparently sent an embassy to urge the Argives to remain neutral and to promise them special regard if

229. See Nagy 1990, 315.

he were victorious. For this reason, when the Greeks tried to enlist them in their cause, the Argives demanded the *arche*: they knew the Spartans would refuse, and the Argives wanted to have an excuse (προφάσιος, 7.150.3) for remaining at peace. A third story (B<sub>1</sub>), introduced as “**another logos that some of the Hellenes tell** about something that happened many years after,” is offered next as a corroborating proleptic appendix to version B. When the Athenian Callias and his colleagues happened to be in Susa “on another mission,” Argive heralds were also present. The Argives asked Artaxerxes whether the friendship they had formed with his father, Xerxes, was still valid, and they received warm reassurances from the king (7.151). What follows is a composite gloss containing the generalization and ending in yet a fourth version (C).

1. **Whether** Xerxes sent a herald to Argos to say these things [B], and whether Argive heralds went up to Susa and asked Artaxerxes about the friendship [B<sub>1</sub>], **I cannot say exactly, nor do I express any other opinion** [γνώμην] **about these things except that which the Argives themselves say.**
2. **But this much I know, that if all men were to bring together all their own evils** [τὰ οἰκήμια κακά] **in the middle, with the intention of making an exchange with their neighbors, after bending down to inspect the evils** [κακά] **of their neighbors, each of them would gladly bring back home those that they had brought over to begin with.**
3. So, not even the Argives behaved in the most shameful way. **And I have the obligation to report the things that are said, but I do not in the least have the obligation to believe them, and let this rule be valid for my entire logos.**
- C. **Because also the following is said,** that it was the Argives who called the Persians into Greece, because the conflict with the Lacedaemonians had gone badly for them and they wished to have anything rather than their present grief [λύπη]. (7.152.1–3)

The first statement (7.152.1) begins by declining to corroborate the indictments in versions B and B<sub>1</sub>. In light of the relative transparency and complexity of the Argives’ own version A, the narrator makes their *gnome* his own. Among various factors that may have contributed to their (at least potential) Medism, the most compelling appear to be their weakness resulting from the defeat they had suffered at the hand of

Cleomenes and their fear of becoming subjects (ὑπήκοοι) of the Spartans (7.149.1). As we have already seen, to avoid *stasis*, the Athenians yielded on the issue of the *hegemonie* (εἶλον, 8.3.1). For the Argives, however, to yield to the Spartans, even in a limited way (τι ὑπεῖξαι, 7.149.2), would have been uncomfortably close to submission.

The point of view of the Argives forms the specific context of the maxim at 7.152.2 and of the added-on version C that closes the gloss. Herodotus' lack of knowledge with respect to the veracity of the various versions is compensated by his experience (ἐπιστάμενος) of a more general nature, which he now brings to bear on his interpretation of this case. The passage is difficult, because it combines the caution of *historie* with the obscurity of the *ainos*, as Nagy saw.<sup>230</sup> At the most immediate level of meaning, the *kaka* that men compare in the gnomic saying are “misfortunes,” like the *kaka* Herodotus elsewhere attributes to war.<sup>231</sup> The specific primary referent of the phrase *oikeia kaka* (domestic misfortunes) is represented by the Argives' defeat by Sparta (called a *kakon* at 7.149.1) and their current vulnerability.<sup>232</sup> The narrator implies that whatever the Argives did, they were acting under the pressure of their misfortune, a pressure made more severe by the subjective (and exaggerated) perception that people have of their own misfortunes in the absence of a suitable “marketplace” opportunity for revising that perception. Seen in this light, the behavior of the Argives is not as culpable (or “shameful” [ἄσχιστα]) as it could have been (7.152.3). This evaluation leads the researcher/arbitrator to illustrate in version C a theoretically possible behavior from the side of the Argives that would be even more shameful than anything prospected so far but that would be similarly motivated by their previous misfortune and their own perception of it (λύπη).

But again, because something is circumstantially plausible and is said does not mean that it really happened. To the subjectivity of people's motives for action corresponds the partiality of the accusations. Between the reports of versions B and B<sub>1</sub> and the even more damaging version C, Herodotus recalls two rules that govern both his scientific/historical inquiry and its judicial counterpart. First, sources need to be heard. Second,

230. Nagy 1990, 315, citing Aesop's fable “The Two Packs” (266 Perry) as a parallel to Herodotus' formulation.

231. See especially 6.98.2, 8.3.1. This interpretation is supported by Legrand (1946, 7.151) and others.

232. Cf. especially 6.21.2. Threat of war and conquest is also implied in πάθεα . . . οἰζήμα πάθεα at 1.153.1.

the *logoi* have only inconclusive evidentiary value, for they are likely to be politically biased in a historical context, just as they are culturally determined in an ethnographic one.<sup>233</sup> In this particular case, then, the researcher/arbitrator's self-referential glosses acquit the Argives by appealing to the unreliability of the *logoi*, just as his referential glosses of interpretation and evaluation at least excuse their behavior on the basis of the subjective validity of their own perception.

The reading I have just given is, however, one-sided. Understandably, Plutarch appears more exasperated than usual in the face of this passage and applies to it the unforgettable verdict Ἐλιπτὰ κούδὲν ὑγιᾶς ἀλλὰ πᾶν πέριξ [all twisted, nothing sound, all back to front].<sup>234</sup> One reason why our interpretation does not fully satisfy is that it requires that the main point of the generalization at 7.152.2 must be the implicit idea “[People's behavior should be excused because] men have an exaggerated perception of their own misfortunes,” rather than the explicitly described stage when one would hypothetically compare one's *kaka* with those of one's neighbors and decide to keep them after all. For the comparative operation to confirm or produce, rather than correct, the subjective perception of “all men,” the *kaka* each person brings to the middle must be “wrongdoings.”<sup>235</sup> Then, the meaning of the generalization for the specific case is, first, that the Argives do not consider what they did all that bad in comparison to the bad actions of others. Second, those ready to convict the Argives of the most serious wrongdoings are under the same subjective perception: they are excessively harsh toward others and underestimate their own wrongdoings. The subjectivity of the source-protagonist is again counterbalanced by that of the accusing *logoi*. From Herodotus' objective standpoint, “not even the Argives did the most shameful things,” with αἰσχίστα in the evaluation picking up on κακά (in the sense of αἰσχρόα, “shameful”) in the maxim.<sup>236</sup>

The suggestion that others besides the Argives have *kaka* (wrongdoings) to account for applies both to the world of the narrated and to the extratextual world of the performance. In Herodotus' narrative, The-

233. Cf. in an ethnographic context, 2.123.1 and 4.195.2, with similar glosses of noncorroboration.

234. Plut. *De Malign. Herod.* 28 = *Mor.* 863E, quoting from Eur. *Andr.* 448. The translation is by Bowen (1992, 57).

235. See especially Macan 1908, 1.1.209, followed by How and Wells 1928, 2:191.

236. Cf. the sophistic *Dissoi Logoi*, 90 DK 2.18 and 2.26, where τὰ αἰσχρόα (shameful things) is what is being compared and found καλά (beautiful/honorable) by different people. See “Funeral Customs and Other *Nomoi*” earlier in the present chapter.

ban actions certainly appear more “shameful” than those of the Argives. In the real world of the narration, Argos had settled down to peace and inactivity, in the least culpable position imaginable at least since 451 B.C.<sup>237</sup> By contrast, each of “the leading states warring with one another about the *arche*” (6.98.2) had been exerting itself in the hope of obtaining the help of Persia against the other.<sup>238</sup> The Spartan king Archidamus in Thucydides perhaps formulates a typical argument when he says, “For all those who, like us, are the objects of designs from the part of the Athenians, it is not a matter of reproach to provide for their own survival [διασωθῆναι] by acquiring for our side not only Greeks but also barbarians” (Thuc. 1.82.1). For Herodotus, to seek the cooperation of Persia for the purpose of making war against other Greeks is a bad action.<sup>239</sup> But in a world where different groups of Greeks rationalize this type of behavior for the sake of their mutual wars, even the most unlikely worst actions of the Argives, who feared Spartan domination, were not ἀσχίστα, that is, without parallel in their baseness.

The maxim at 7.153.2 contains one of three instances of the phrase “all men” (πάντες ἄνθρωποι) in Herodotus’ metanarrative. In one of the other cases, as we have already seen, it appears in the very similar passage that envisions people comparing *nomoi* (customs) and finally choosing their

237. Argos was at peace with Sparta (see Thuc. 5.14.4) as well as with Athens (from 462: see Thuc. 1.102.4). Cf. Thuc. 5.28.2. Herodotus’ leniency toward Argos contrasts with his negative (though, as usual, unmarked) representation of Thebes (see, e.g., 7.205.3, 222, 233). Correspondingly, on the Athenian tragic stage, Argos, in contrast to Thebes, emerges as a city that “can be saved”: see Zeitlin 1990.

238. See Thuc. 2.7.1; cf. 4.50, perhaps later than Herodotus’ *Histories*. See How and Wells 1928, 2:190. See also Aristoph. *Acharn.* 61–134. For the fateful Spartan embassy to Persia mentioned by Herodotus at 7.137 (cf. Thuc. 2.67), see “Divine Retribution” earlier in the present chapter.

239. Callias’ embassy to Susa mentioned by Herodotus at 7.151 was almost certainly part of the negotiations that eventually led to peace with Persia in 449 B.C. According to Samons (1998, 135), on that occasion Athenians and Argives went to Susa together after stipulating their alliance with anti-Spartan intent in 462/461. If Herodotus were implying as much, his mention of that mission would be another point in favor of the equivalence between the actions of the Argives and those of other Greek powers. However, Herodotus 7.151 perhaps mentions Callias and the Athenians with him to provide a clue to the source of this story, but otherwise clearly implies that their meeting with the Argives at Susa was coincidental. We can also speculate that Herodotus would have approved a cessation of the offensive war against Persia in and of itself (*pace* Badian 1993, 134), and that his statement that the Athenians were there “on another matter” is designed to dissociate Callias’ mission from the self-serving Argive embassy. On this difficult passage, see also Macan 1908, 1.1.209. The role Herodotus attributes to the Callias family is problematic also at 6.121, a passage we will discuss in chapter 4.

own (3.38.1; repeated with πάντων [ἀνθρώπων] at 3.38.4). The third case is the generalization that “all men know equally about the gods.”<sup>240</sup> We should consider the interconnections among these three generalizations on the topic of beliefs and opinions held by different people as the sign of the contribution of ethnographic *historie* to Herodotus’ political ideology. The use of the phrase “all men” also links *historie* in the sense of “inquiry” and *historie* in the sense of “arbitration.” In each of the three cases, the phrase “all men” refers to a human community whose overall identity both depends on and transcends its internal differentiation. While at 3.38.1 and 2.3.2 the internal differentiation of the entity “all men” from the point of view of practices and beliefs coincides with the subdivision of humankind into different *ethne*, the generalization at 7.152.2 implicitly replaces membership in an *ethnos* with membership in a Greek polis to account for differences in perception. Whether they are misfortunes or wrongdoings, the *kata* are chosen, discarded, and evaluated in different ways on the basis of men’s political outlook as citizens of Argos, Athens, Sparta, and so on. The narrator’s statement of cultural relativism at 3.38 is designed to promote a cosmopolitan attitude in the listeners; it encourages them to overcome their cultural subjectivity in the only way it can possibly be overcome, namely, by recognizing its compelling universality as objective proof of the equivalent value of the different *nomoi*. The maxim at 7.152.2 follows the same model for the purpose of mediating disagreements among the Greeks and to provide the audience with a higher vantage point for judging themselves and others. The *histor* pursues these goals by means of a verdict that, in a characteristic way, explicitly acquits and implicitly convicts. The narrative of the *Histories* spares none of the Greeks. In this context, to apply the norm of subjectivity to a political quarrel is to invite the different parties to rise above that norm and reexamine with a more impartial outlook their own “bad actions.”

### Conclusion

The generalizations in the voice of the narrator represent sporadic but precious indicators of the substance of the message that the *Histories* as a whole wants to communicate to the Greeks. At the highest level of inquiry, we find a tenacious attempt to verify and demonstrate certain truths that

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240. 2.3.2. See “Equal Knowledge” and “Funeral Customs and Other *Nomoi*” earlier in the present chapter.

belong to the supracultural theological sphere: the fluctuations of human fortune with respect to individuals and states, the moral participation of the divine in these processes, and the willingness of the gods to share some of their knowledge with humans. The central problem of human misfortune in the overarching context of the *Histories* is represented by war and the painful confusion between the need of any state to cultivate the values and the resources that will enable it to maintain its freedom, on the one hand, and the agonistic impulse to fight for the acquisition of rule, on the other. Concomitant with and symbolic of the unnecessary armed conflicts of Greeks against Greeks are the verbal and ideological quarrels in which claims, counterclaims, self-justifications, and accusations are all a part of a rhetoric of mutual aggression. Here Herodotus establishes an implicit parallel between Greek ethnocentrism and Greek polis particularism. Just as the Greeks cannot seem to find a balance between the awareness of their own cultural worth and the systematic misunderstanding and disparagement of foreign cultures, so they define their political identity on the basis of a hegemonic polis ideology. The connection Herodotus draws between antagonism toward the barbarian other and antagonism toward other Greeks may seem paradoxical if we consider that Panhellenism “in itself accentuated rather than softened the distinction between Greek and barbarian.”<sup>241</sup> The connection is, however, fully justified, for example, in Athenian uses of Panhellenic ideology as an imperialistic tool vis-à-vis other Greeks and in the confusion of the contemporary Greek political discourse in general concerning who the other might be.<sup>242</sup> Herodotus’ authority rests on his knowledge of the world and on his lack of allegiance to any particular state. From this vantage point, he teaches his audience the ambivalent character of reality and provides them with a model of arbitration for negotiating their differences.

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241. Guthrie 1971, 162.

242. Cf. Antiphon DK 87 B44, frag. B: “we are barbarians to each other.” For the relation between Panhellenism and imperialism, see Perlman 1976.