

Conclusion

The discussion in this book has sought access to the *Histories* first and foremost through the discourse: it has attempted to understand what the text says by examining how it says it. I have analyzed three functions of referential metanarrative (comparison, interpretation, and, in a more limited way, celebration) to show how they contribute to transforming historical narrative and ethnographic description—the surface declarative modality of the text—into a lesson for the here and now of narration. Largely based on Herodotus' experience of foreign societies through time and space, this lesson includes a warning to the Greeks to take stock of essential similarities beyond contingent differences and to recognize the likely human responses, common values, and constraints that emerge from the cultural norms and historical vicissitudes of “all men.” Herodotus' warning is moralistic, because it is implicitly based on the idea that human beings have control over their behavior and consequently, to some extent, over their fortunes. The text also leaves room, however, for the adviser's ultimate *aporia* with regard to the ways in which the recipients of the narrative can usefully apply the teachings he provides. It conveys no confidence that they will in fact be able, or still in time, to benefit from them. Thus, the imperative and interrogative features of the *Histories* radically modify the movement toward a happy resolution in which the narrative, when considered only from the point of view of its declarative aspects, may appear to be emplotted.

Herodotus' performance wants to be considered from the point of view of the audiences for which it was intended and in light of the circumstances that obtained at the time. This is a risky undertaking for us modern readers: precisely what times, what places, what circumstances, and what audiences are we talking about? Herodotus no doubt composed and performed the *Histories* piecemeal. They must represent a considerable portion of his life's work. Some parts perhaps originated as independent expositions and have been only imperfectly adapted to the final form

of the whole. The whole itself appears at once both finished and provisional. Nevertheless, we can safely bracket off the third quarter of the fifth century B.C. as an extratextual context of Herodotus' performances. We are relatively well informed about the most memorable events of that time and about some of the contemporary reactions and ideological predispositions of the public. Against this background, I have tried to show that the ideological underpinnings of the ethnographic descriptions represent a well-suited complement to the political thought that emerges from the history, including from those historical narratives that reflect domestic concerns and belong to the most recent identifiable layer. A more precise reconstruction of the circumstances of performance would require relating the *histor* Herodotus to the real author Herodotus at a particular time. If we do so on the basis of the evidence that is available to us, however, we may end up exercising our imagination to a greater degree than is appropriate to a scholarly task.

The external tradition about the life of Herodotus is fragmentary, composite, sometimes derived from the interpretation of hints in the *Histories*, and for the most part late. It portrays an itinerant lecturer, an Ionized Dorian, possibly half-Carian, born from a distinguished family but perhaps not an aristocrat, politically active but not a military man.¹ A figure on the margins in the most literal sense, he started out on the eastern border of the Greek world, a Persian subject; he moved away (somewhat like those Ionians of whom the *Histories* approve) and eventually ended up in a mixed Greek democratic community in the far west. The Thurii Herodotus joined was not an Athenian imperialistic venture but a unique Athenian initiative with Panhellenic aims; it was inspired, at least for some of those involved, by the atmosphere of conciliation that briefly followed the stipulation of the Thirty Years' Peace.² What we

1. On Herodotus' life, see especially *Suda*, s.vv. Ἡρόδοτος and Πανύασσις, and the sources collected and discussed by Jacoby (1913, 205–47) and Legrand (1932, 5–15). See also Brown 1988, especially 4: “Unlike the three major historians with whom he is usually compared—Thucydides, Xenophon and Polybius—Herodotus was not a military man, he remained a civilian all his life. And *that should not be forgotten if we are to understand the way he thought*” (emphasis mine). I also agree with Brown (1988, 8) that the statement in the *Suda* that Herodotus came from a distinguished family (τῶν ἐπιφανῶν) does not necessarily imply a noble birth. The personal narrative at 1.143 seems ironically to imply that, unlike his predecessor Hecataeus, Herodotus was not in a position to show off his lineage.

2. The main primary sources for the foundation of Thurii are Diod. 12.9–11 and Strabo 6.1.13–15. The original aims and meaning of the enterprise are controversial. See Cloché 1945, 95–103; Ehrenberg 1948; Wade-Gery 1958; Kagan 1969, 154–78, 382–84. Kagan (1969, especially 168) attributes the initiative to the desire of Pericles to deflate the

know about the foundation of Thurii reveals practical and political motives;³ it also suggests, however, that a utopian impulse may have played a role in this enterprise. Plato, after all, would later find inspiration for his ideal state precisely in this part of the world.

The architect of Thurii was Hippodamus of Miletus, who reorganized Piraeus and codified the orthogonal subdivision of urban space on the model of the Greek cities of Asia. This eccentric polymath was also versed in political theory, concerned with the ideal size and proportions of the democratic city-state and the best form of government. His proposed constitution envisioned equal political rights for a population of ten thousand citizens divided into three classes: artisans, farmers, and an armed force for the purposes of defense. We can perhaps relate these features to Herodotus' interest in such subdivisions (e.g., at 2.164–68), his essentially democratic preferences, his concern vis-à-vis the excessive growth of cities, and his approval of a state's readiness against external attacks. Hippodamus also apparently maintained that in a well-run state, judges should be allowed to render qualified verdicts. This measure, objects Aristotle, would turn a judge into an arbitrator and obliterate the clarity of the judicial process. But Herodotus' own subtle attempts to settle discords may indicate that he shared Hippodamus' concerns about the possible unfairness of absolute condemnations or acquittals. Similarly, Hippodamus' idea that there should be a law for awarding honors to any citizen who should make an invention of benefit to the state may throw light on Herodotus' exploration of specious or wise inventions by reformers and nations around the world.⁴

Whatever Hippodamus' influence might have been on the constitution of Thurii, Protagoras of Abdera undertook the task of writing the new city's laws. This is the thinker, as we have seen, with whom Herodotus' text carries on an implicit dialogue on the subjects of relativism and the knowability of the gods in relation to the world's different religious

rhetoric of his domestic opponents by demonstrating “his moderation, his lack of imperial ambition, and his Panhellenic sentiments.”

3. The practical impulse for the first Athenian settlement at Sybaris would have been represented by the opportunity to provide for surplus citizens. The second dispatch of Athenian colonists and individuals from other Greek city-states to the new location of Thurii partly filled the need to reinforce the original Athenians of Sybaris. An allotment of land would have provided a strong economic incentive for the colonists. See Kagan 1969, 157, 166–67.

4. See Arist. *Pol.* 2.5, 1267b–1269a. On inventions (verb ἐξευρίσκειν), see especially chap. 2, n. 35 and corresponding text, in the present book.

traditions. Equally remarkable is the fact that one of the oikists was Lampon, a diviner (μάντις) and friend of Pericles.⁵ Plutarch anecdotally relates how Lampon once explained a unicorn as an ominous phenomenon, while Anaxagoras showed that the malformation of the animal's cranium was due to natural causes. Modern historians maintain that Pericles doubtless accepted the scientific explanation as correct, while recognizing that the conservative religious perspective was comforting and necessary for the uneducated masses.⁶ Herodotus, for one, would not have been so ready to interpret the disagreement between the natural philosopher and the seer in this manner. The two explanations reflect the double level of causality that, as Herodotus teaches us, is applicable to the same phenomenon. In the new enterprise of Thuri, the planned cooperation of Protagoras and Lampon may have represented a deliberate match of the best sort of innovation with the healthiest respect for religious tradition.⁷ The invitation to Greeks of different cities to participate in the settlement, the decision to start over in a new site after eliminating the supremacist group of the original Sybarites,⁸ the constitution of democratic stamp—all these features are consistent with an experiment in diversity, equality, and harmony.

The settlement seems to have employed a number of advisers renowned for their experience of the world at large. Herodotus, the *sophos* and the traveler, had much to tell about Greeks and non-Greeks, the dangers of leadership in all forms of government, the importance of negotiation and arbitration, the validity of different ways and points of view, the causality and the evils of war, the communality of experience and the role of the divine in the affairs of all men: for him, an unofficial role in the Thuri project was the perfect job. Here was a brand-new city that could learn from the wisdom of foreigners; it had the potential to fulfill the best values of the Greeks, avoid the mistakes of the past, be *eudaimon* without *pleonexie*, and grow in moderation without engineering its own decay. Here, the audiences from almost all over Greece, such as Herodotus had addressed in the past at the ephemeral gatherings of

5. See Graham 1964, 36–37.

6. See Plut. *Per.* 6, on which see Ehrenberg 1948, 164–65, quoted with approval by Kagan (1969, 168–69).

7. Cf. the religious aspect of Hippodamus' planned state, see Arist. *Pol.* 2.5.1267b.

8. For the troubles between the Sybarites and the Athenians who had taken part in the first settlement of Sybaris (probably in 446/445) and the move to the new site of Thuri, see Diod. 12.10–11; Strabo 6.1.13.

Olympia or separately in their own city, were represented in a single place by a permanent Panhellenic community of fellow citizens.⁹

The new state must have soon turned out to be a disappointment to the original settlers.¹⁰ At about the same time as the conflict of Corcyra with Corinth that Thucydides regarded as one of the precipitating factors for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Thurii experienced internal struggles of its own: perhaps the developments in mainland Greece increased the tension between the Athenian and the Peloponnesian elements of the colony's diversified population.¹¹ We may fantasize that Herodotus applauded both the decision of the Thurians to seek the arbitration of the oracle of Delphi and the Delphic response. Asked who was to be called the oikist of Thurii, the Pythia named none other than Apollo himself. This made the colony responsible for resolving its own internal troubles and gave it divine sanction for managing its external policy autonomously from the political pressures back home. The colony distanced itself from Athens and was content with a cautious and mostly inactive alliance.¹²

But Herodotus' adoptive city now reflected in a microcosm contemporary intercity discords in the rest of Greece, just as his native Halicarnassus had been a sample of the earlier fights of the Greeks on behalf of constitutional freedom. The *stasis* in Thurii, as well as the *stasis* outside,

9. The population of Thurii was divided into ten tribes. One was for Athens; three were for Euboea, Ionia, and the islands, respectively; three were Peloponnesian tribes (Arcadians, Eleans, and Achaeans); and three tribes included other Dorians (from Boeotia, Amphictyonia, and Doris). See Diod. 12.10–11. As Kagan observes (1969, 162–63), Spartans and Corinthians must have been few and grouped with other Dorians—not surprisingly, since Sparta was underpopulated and Corinth had ample means for supporting her citizens.

10. Most scholars assume that Herodotus was one of them. See, e.g., Legrand 1932, 15. However, according to Parke (1946, 88–89), Herodotus only went to Thurii just after the publication of the *Histories* in their current form (i.e., after 430), when the grant of citizenship and allotment of land made him able to support himself. Parke's argument and the speculation that Herodotus gave up public recitation after his departure for Thurii are far from convincing, but the fact remains that we do not know when Herodotus joined the colony or, for that matter, whether or not he moved elsewhere at the end of his life. See Legrand 1932, 18–19.

11. This is so at least according to Diod. 12.35, though Graham (1964, 198) remarks, "this may be an over-simplification, since there were settlers from many other parts of Greece." The civil struggles in Thurii ca. 434 B.C. were preceded, early after the city's foundation, by an unsuccessful war with the neighboring Spartan colony of Taras over the territory of Siris (see Strabo 6.1.15; cf. *SIG* 69).

12. On the subsequent history of Thurii and its alignment during the Peloponnesian War, see Graham 1964, 198–99.

must have affected both Herodotus' relationship with his audiences and the import of his message to them. Either as a citizen or as a performer, the Herodotus of the biographical tradition always seems to have attracted both praise and blame.¹³ At Thurii as at Halicarnassus and other cities of Greece in his earlier years, his position may not have been entirely stable and comfortable if the honors accorded to him were mixed with hostile reactions and φθόνος.¹⁴ The charm of Herodotus' narrative, the caution with which he expresses himself, his silences about current affairs, his diplomatic elusiveness in arbitrating differences, and his adoption of the mode of the *ainos* are joined to a sometimes breathtaking tactlessness and irony. The narrator of the *Histories* seems to both follow and disdain the Pindaric "norm of the polyp."¹⁵ The allusive features of his discourse may have obscured for his audiences the true worth of his political message. At the same time, as even Plutarch's later reaction demonstrates, they were not destined to hide his ambivalence (or what Plutarch unfairly calls viciousness) toward all sides.

At the end of our study of the *Histories*, the best we can do is observe that "Herodotus of Halicarnassus" and "Herodotus of Thurii," both attested in the programmatic first sentence, emerge as a strong unified

13. The biographical tradition is insistent in registering episodes of politically motivated public approval or disapproval to Herodotus. At Athens, he allegedly received an exorbitant honorarium granted to him on the proposal of one Anytus (according to Diyllus, *FGrHist* 73 F 3, cited at Plut. *De Malign. Herod.* 26 = *Mor.* 862A–B), and he was honored by the Council as a result of a reading from his work (Eus. *Chron. Olymp.* 83.4 = 83.3 in the Armenian version). According to Aristophanes the Boeotian (*FGrHist* 379 F 5, cited at Plut. *De Malign. Herod.* 31 = *Mor.* 864D), the Thebans refused payment to Herodotus, and their magistrates prevented him from conversing with the city's young. See also n. 14 in the present chapter.

14. The *Vita* of Herodotus from the *Suda* relates that after helping to drive the tyrant out of Halicarnassus, Herodotus migrated to Thurii "after he saw himself being the object of resentment/envy [φθονούμενον] on the part of the citizens." For the narrator of the *Histories* as an object of φθόνος, see 7.139.1, discussed especially in chap. 3, "Specific Glosses of Interpretation," in the present book; his alter ego Artemisia is similarly the object of φθόνος (8.69.1). Xerxes' odd generalization about strangers being less invidious to one another than are fellow citizens (7.237.2–3) perhaps functions as an indirect reassurance of Herodotus' goodwill to the Greeks.

15. See Gentili 1988, 132: "the difficult external circumstances in which Pindar's professional duties have placed him are a visible source of embarrassment. It is as if the poet were unable to conceal completely his efforts to follow the precept of Amphiaraus and imitate the polyp that assumes the color of the rock to which it clings." Gentili goes on to quote Pindar frag. 43 SM: "Let your mind, my son, behave like the skin / of the rock-clinging beast of the sea / and consort with men of all nations; go along willingly with those around you, / change your thoughts to suit the seasons" (trans. Gentili and Cole).

subject to whom the *logos* as a whole belongs.¹⁶ The image of the road he travels as researcher and narrator shows him to be transient, unestablished, and uncommitted to one place. He is comfortable away from home and comfortable with the fragmented diversity of the world. Though powerless to coerce and unlikely to persuade, he is also more qualified than most of his fellow Greeks to undermine current assumptions. He is free like Artemisia, an original like Hippoclidides, and subject, like Arion, only to the technical and ethical requirements of his task. He sets himself up as a foil to a variety of types that populate his *logos* and potentially his public: partisan citizens, conventional thinkers, the politically unfree, performers working for a patron, scientific or juridical *histores* with vested interests or perverted methods, poets who invent myths, tourists and mindless colonists who demean native traditions, and the overly rationalistic deniers of the work of the divine.

At the center of Herodotus' concern is the need to place the experience of the Greeks in a broader context. Only cultural comparison will allow them to define and assess correctly their language, their customs, their values, their public and private actions, and the cultural tendencies these reveal. The problematic embodied in the questions "What is Greek?" and "What is not Greek?" competes with the question about the legitimacy of formulating them in this way. The importance of these issues is related to the political significance, as it emerges from Herodotus' text, of both the historical and the ethnological activity. The professional *histor*, his sources, his audience, and men in general are all retellers of the past as well as observers of customs. The thoughts they hold on these matters are bound to affect their actions toward others.

Herodotus achieves a demythologized reconstruction of Greek resistance to the Persian invader and the later attempts of different groups of Greeks to interpret that event in their own ways. He portrays what the Greeks conceive Greekness to be as it actually manifested itself in precious moments at Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea. His is,

16. The unanimous reading in the manuscript tradition is Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέως. But earlier sources and especially the quotation by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3.9.2.1409a) give Ἡροδότου Θουρίου. Some later authors testify to his migration to Thurii by saying specifically that he eventually "was called Thurian" (see especially Strabo 14.2.16; Plut. *De Malign. Herod.* 35 = *Mor.* 868A). Plutarch attests that in his day, some manuscripts gave Θουρίου (*De Ex.* 13). Jacoby (1913, 205) and Legrand (1932, 12–15) argue that Θουρίου is the original reading, and Legrand has adopted it in his edition. It would be fitting, however, and no less a possibility, that both versions were authored by Herodotus and in circulation during his lifetime.

however, a qualified portrayal that reveals at least the fragility, if not the utter falsity, of the cultural superiority to which the Greeks lay a claim. From their success against the Persians, the Greeks have derived a self-confidence and a sense of entitlement able to transform a defensive stance into aggression, first against the enemy, then against each other. This always occurs in the name of the same old antithesis between “us” and “them” that the conflict with the Persians seemed historically to embody. Who plays the civilizing role now and who are the Amazons, however, will depend on the point of view. To recognize one’s own subjectivity is equivalent to fulfilling the Delphic imperative “Know thyself” and is in turn the basis for acting according to “nothing in excess.” Not to recognize it falls under the heading of what we would call ethnocentrism and leads to oppressive, tyrannical behavior. For Herodotus of Halicarnassus and Thurii, who is centered in no place and belongs to nowhere, what is wrong with the Greeks of his time in their dealings with one another was already visible during their common resistance against the Persians and even earlier still. Their difficulties are partially due to a cognitive error he attempts to correct: their inadequate understanding of themselves and others. The subversiveness of his *logos* was perhaps destined to exceed Herodotus’ intention. It set out to explain causes, celebrate achievements, and present realistic paradigms drawn from long stretches of time and space; in the end, it produced a statement that the Greeks and Greekness itself were bound for an uncertain future. What remains in the *Histories*, so irresistibly seductive to this day, is the cumulative representation of the many different ways in which a civil society can be what it ought to be, coupled with an astonishing awareness of that goal’s always imperfect fulfillment.