I

The Life and Work of Herodotus

HERODOTUS of Halicarnassus (*c.* 490/480–429/5 BC) tells the story of the Persian Wars in which a coalition of Greek city-states, achieving momentary co-operation, defeated a first Persian invasion at Marathon in Attica (490), and then repelled a second invasion at sea off the island of Salamis (480) and then again in the following year on land at Plataea (Boeotia) and Mycale (western Asia Minor). Herodotus wrote more than a generation after these events.

To introduce the theme, he goes back to the first political and military contacts of the Greeks with the east, that is to say with Lydia which reduced the Ionian cities on the coast of Asia Minor and its offshore islands. After an account of earlier clashes between east and west, largely of a mythical or legendary character, the main part of the story begins with the Lydian king Croesus (*c.* 560–546), who completed the subjugation of the Ionian cities. However, Croesus was defeated and overthrown by the Persian king Cyrus I, who had supplanted the Medes and founded an empire extending throughout the middle east. Cyrus reduced the Asiatic Greeks, and his son and successor Cambyses (529–521) invaded Egypt (525). The second book of Herodotus' Histories provides a description of the geography, history and ethnography of that country, and the third tells of its conquest

by Cambyses. He was helped by the powerful ruler of the Ionian island of Samos, Polycrates (*c.* 540–522), whose régime is described. Cambyses was succeeded, after a revolt, by Darius I (521–486), who intervened at Samos and took Babylon. Book IV is devoted to his first, largely abortive, expedition into Europe (512), when he crossed the Danube and marched into Scythia (south Russia).

At the same time a Persian expedition was launched against the Greek settlements in Cyrenaica, of which a description is given as part of a general survey of north Africa. The fifth book tells how Megabyzus, whom Darius on his return from Scythia had left in Europe, reduced a large part of Thrace.

A revolt against Persian rule that broke out among the Ionian and other Asiatic Greeks received help from Athens (which was of Ionian origin) and from the town of Eretria on the island of Euboea. An account is next given of the recent history of Athens and the raid it now launched on Sardis, the headquarters of the Persians in Asia Minor. But the rebellion collapsed, and the sixth book tells of the naval defeat of the Greeks off Lade (495) and the fall of the principal Ionian city of Miletus in the following year.

As the Persians, having reconquered Ionia, strengthened their hold over Thrace and Macedonia, the Athenian political exile Miltiades, who had established himself as an independent ruler on the Hellespont (Dardanelles), moved back to Athens. While Darius' envoys proceeded round Greece demanding homage, the Athenians appealed to Sparta. Herodotus describes the constitutional system of the Spartans and the accession and downfall of their king Cleomenes I. In 490 the Persians, under Datis and Artaphernes, conducted a punitive expedition against Athens and Eretria, and after overwhelming the latter town were defeated at Marathon by the Athenians and Plataeans, under the leadership of Miltiades. The Persian expedition withdrew to Asia. A Spartan contingent, which had arrived too late for the battle, visited the battlefield. Then Herodotus appends a note on the great Athenian family of the Alcmaeonidae, which was suspected of flashing a signal to the Persians. Miltiades died in disgrace after an abortive expedition against the island of Paros.

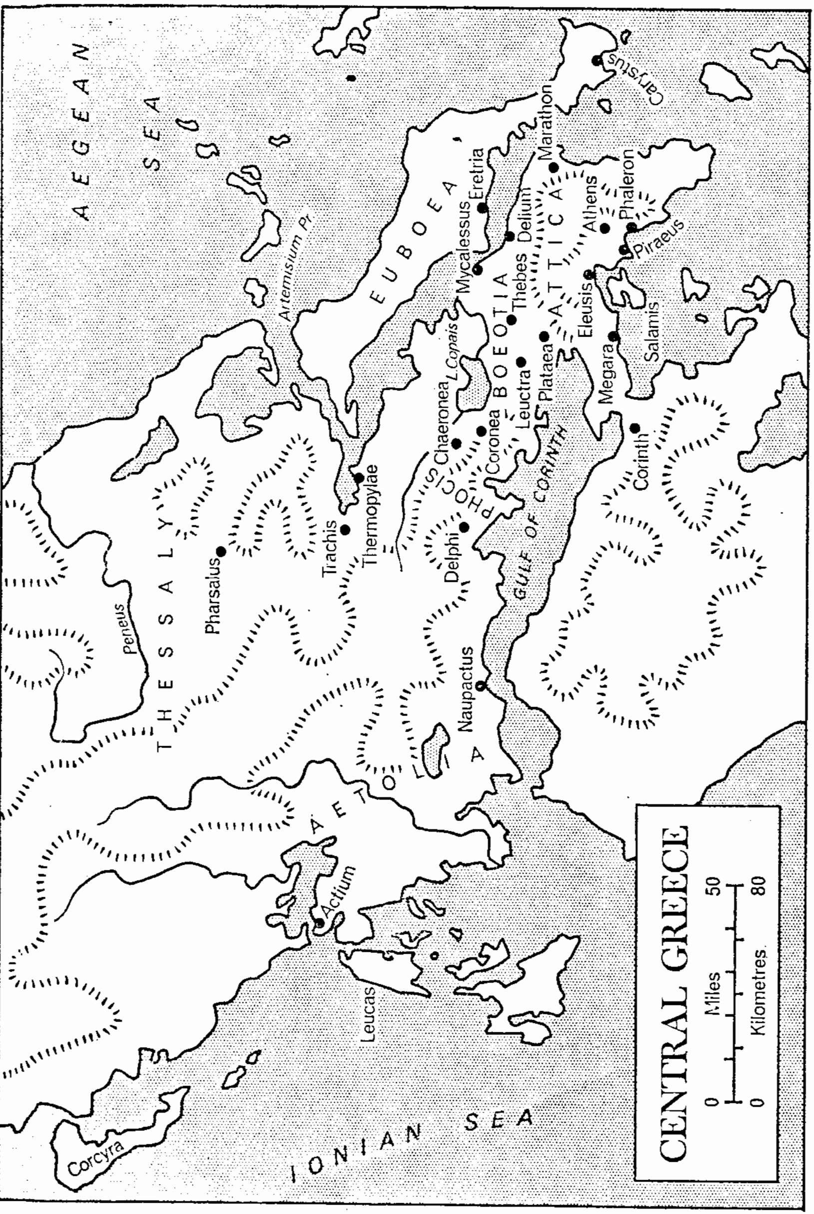
The seventh book begins with the death of Darius and succession of his son Xerxes I (485–465). In 480 Xerxes launched a huge coordinated invasion of Greece by sea and land. The Greeks, uniting

(in spite of exceptions) to a degree unprecedented in their history, prepared to resist. The allied forces were under the supreme command of a Spartan, but Themistocles the Athenian was the guiding spirit. Leonidas, king of Sparta, fell heroically at Thermopylae, and central Greece was lost. The eighth book tells of three delaying actions fought by the Greek fleet off Artemisium (on the east coast), followed by the retirement of the Greek naval force, the occupation of Athens by the Persians, and the shattering defeat of their navy between the island of Salamis and the mainland.

Xerxes returned to Asia, but left an army in Greece. The ninth book describes how its commander Mardonius was defeated and killed at Plataea by Peloponnesians and Athenians under the Spartan regent Pausanias (479). The remnants of the Persian army evacuated Greece, and meanwhile across the Aegean another Persian force was destroyed at Mycale by a Greek force under the Spartan king Leotychidas. Now the cities of Ionia again revolted from the Persians; and this time they were successful. Leotychidas left for home, but the Athenian portion of the Greek fleet sailed north to liberate the cities on the Hellespont from Persian rule. The story ends with anecdotes illustrating Persian misconduct, cruelty and toughness.

The work of Herodotus falls into two halves.[1] The first deals with the origins of the quarrel between east and west, the rise of the Persian Empire, and the historical background at Athens and Sparta. The second half begins after the northern expedition of Darius has won Persia a land-frontier with Greek States in Macedonia. The historian then goes on to tell the story of the wars fought by the Persians, first Darius and then Xerxes, against the Greeks. The division into nine books was probably first made long after Herodotus' death, by a scholarly editor at Alexandria. The task was skilfully done, because each of the books has a leading theme: Cyrus, Egypt, dynastic revolution, Scythia, the Ionian rebellion, Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, Plataea-Mycale.[2]

Throughout two-thirds of the work the Persian Wars provide a connecting link. They seemed to Herodotus the outstanding feature of world history. They had compelled the Greeks, for once, to work together, almost as a single group. When Herodotus wrote, the moment had passed, but its afterglow was still vivid. The wars had opened vast horizons to the Greeks, and had stirred them to want



these sensational events placed on record and to ask what manner of people the enemy had been. Indeed, the Persian Wars gave a decisive turn to the whole story of the Western world. 'The battle of Marathon,' said John Stuart Mill, 'even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings.'

In making a great war, and its causes and events, the framework for his analysis of human behaviour, Herodotus turned warfare into the central theme of history. A vast number of his successors throughout all the ages have agreed that war deserves pre-eminent status. Moreover, this conviction has possessed a large measure of justification, because war, raging almost continuously throughout the centuries, has proved to be the greatest of all catalysts of emotions, customs and values. And yet it has owed its predominance in histories to something else also: to the incomparable, irresistible example of Herodotus.

Yet his work is loosely knit. He himself declares that his purpose is a double one – the Persian Wars only form one of his themes, for there is another as well.

> In this book, the result of my enquiries into history, I hope to do two things: to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and of the Asiatic [barbarian] peoples; secondly, and more particularly, to show how the two races came into conflict.[3]

This modest programme does not cover nearly all that Herodotus has to offer. But it points to his major aims. The first and more general of the two purposes is largely served by digressions, some short and some extremely long. The early part of the Histories includes an outline of the rise of Persia, and long descriptions of Lydia, Ionia, Egypt, Scythia and north Africa, with a shorter note on Thrace and Macedonia.[4] In the later books, as the story gains speed, the excursions are fewer, but room is still found to fill in, for example, the historical backgrounds of Athens and Sparta. In addition to such major digressions, the whole work is abundantly interspersed with those spicy anecdotes and parables for which Herodotus is famous.

He himself refers to these deviations from his main path as supplements and insertions, and professes at times to call himself back to the main stream of his narrative:[5] 'A remarkable fact occurs to me – I

need not apologise for the digression; it has been my plan throughout this book to put down odd bits of information not directly connected with my main subject.'[6] And then he goes on to report – in the middle of discussing a country hundreds of miles away – that mules cannot be bred in Elis, though Elis is not a cold place. And he is, in fact, well aware that these digressions, long or short, form an integral part of his work; they are something he is not prepared to dispense with. For 'Herodotus will not deny himself', as Albin Lesky says, 'the pleasure of picking flowers at the roadside'. Some of these out-of-the-way pieces of information go far beyond the war theme and far back in date, and were added from the pure pleasure of telling a story. Conventions have changed, and this large view of what constitutes unity and relevance would scarcely be practicable for a modern historian. But the attitude of the Homeric poets had been the same; and all his readers had been brought up on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It was right to call him the most Homeric of authors.[7] Even the deliberate digressions *within* digressions, anticipatory of the Arabian Nights, have epic precedents.

Besides, the whole feat of organisation is handled with extreme ingenuity. Sometimes, indeed, the skill merely consists of finding the most appropriate place to introduce a piece of loose material. Generally there is no great attempt to tie the links together firmly. But it will often be found that the digressions are located in such a way as to give the maximum effect both to themselves and to the portion of the narrative which they accompany.[8] Accounts of foreign peoples, for example, are supplied at the moment when these nations first came into contact with Persia. Descriptive notes on the vital early history of Athens and Sparta, all necessary and relevant, occur piecemeal in a series of apparently casual asides, usually at a critical juncture in the relations between east and west. Every moment of direct impact is thrown into relief so that the general pattern shall emerge more clearly. Frequently, too, digressions are sandwiched neatly between the preliminary statement of a theme and its subsequent working out in greater detail.

Although deeply interested in geography and prepared to enlarge on its ramifications at considerable length, Herodotus never lets the historical dimension out of sight: Egyptian customs merge into Egyptian history. His loose construction reflects a complete awareness of the complexity of history. The main line must be a unified

orderly account. And yet, after all, the Persian Wars had resulted from the interplay of varied and disjointed factors; so that broad horizons are necessary. There seemed to be a general pervasive principle of interconnection between the expansive tendencies of the various oriental empires. Since eastern attacks on Greece had begun not with Persia but with Lydia, the work starts with the Lydian King Croesus (*c.* 560–546), who first 'within my knowledge inflicted injury on the Greeks'.[9] But Herodotus' concept of unity is wider and more subtle still. For when every incidental digression is over, we find that we have what is virtually a continuous story of Greece from the mid-sixth century onwards.

One reason for the episodic, apparently disjointed structure of the Histories is that they were written to be read aloud. Herodotus recited extracts of the work at Olympia and Athens, and he made his living by readings and lectures of this kind. The whole work could not be recited all at once, so that composition in well-defined parts was essential. In any case silent reading, if not totally unknown, was still infrequent. It is first attested in 405 BC,[10] and people could obviously read in silence minor compositions such as letters,[11] but the practice of dealing with literary works in this way continued to be rare throughout antiquity. The Greeks and Romans reacted more responsively and immediately to the eloquent spoken word than we do, and in the absence of numerous copies of books it was natural that history, like other compositions, should be read aloud, at public or private gatherings.

That is what Herodotus did[12] (and historians were still doing so eight hundred years later). The fact that the text of his work, as it has come down to us, comprises passages designed for recitation explains certain features of his style: 'squeeze-outs' in which strict grammatical sequence is lost sight of, minor corrections as he went along, connecting links and recapitulations that display an associative rather than a rational continuity.[13]

The practical requirements of recitation were also bound to modify the actual substance and contents of the history. Our knowledge of the sounds of Greek is too imperfect for us to understand the effects that were produced. Yet it is clear enough that they were all-important. Herodotus also had to keep his audience amused. We learn that at Olympia he once went on speaking for too long; though

his fascinating material, displayed in that easy flowing style which looks so simple but is the product of consummate skill, makes that hard to believe.

Like many writers, Herodotus did not completely fulfil his plan. For example, he promised a digression on Assyria, to balance the long Egyptian survey.[14] If it was written, however, it was omitted; or else it was never written. Such indications, as well as the surprising design of the whole work, have inspired the view that the book was first intended to be quite different from what finally emerged. According to this opinion, Herodotus originally proposed to write a 'Journey', very much on the lines of the Journey of Hecataeus. Or perhaps he intended, again like previous writers, to offer a description of the Persian Empire (p. 17), into which these various disquisitions about foreign countries would be woven. But then, it is conjectured, he became caught up instead with the absorbing subject of the Persian Wars, and radically changed direction so as to make those his leading theme. Nevertheless, the argument continues, he decided to incorporate in the new plan the geographical, ethnological portions of his original project, and these are the major digressions that still appear.

Scholars who oppose this interpretation admit that the digressions represent the old, Hecataean type of approach, and that the second half of the work shows a more close-knit structure than the first. But they attribute this greater tightness to intensified emotional concentration rather than to a radical change of design, and see no reason why Herodotus should not have combined them with his narrative in a single creative act representing a single, once-and-for-all, unaltered plan. The controversy between these two contrary views, and the establishment of various intermediate points of view, comprises one of the main preoccupations, often *the* main preoccupation, of Herodotean scholars today.

Perhaps there were two main phases of composition. First, extending over a number of years, came the highlights, presented as recitations or lectures, but not published. Whether these recitations mostly consisted of geographical or historical passages we cannot tell; probably both, with the geographical parts (of the earlier books) composed first. Then, at a later stage, these already existing portions were supplemented by others, and welded together into what had now become a single and larger work.

But rewriting was a laborious business in the ancient world, when books were copied singly on to papyrus rolls or scrolls. These could easily get lost or transposed. They were also much harder to handle than the later parchment codex. There was no separation of words. Enlarged initials were not used. Accents were omitted – except occasionally in lyric poems. Inverted commas did not exist. Punctuation was at best highly arbitrary, and much more often wholly absent. Furthermore, until 403 BC Athens officially used an old and inaccurate alphabet. For all these reasons the task of trying to rewrite what had already been written was a formidable one, and it is unlikely that Herodotus undertook it on any extensive scale.

Certainly, he may have added some marginal corrections and deleted certain passages. But, if so, the job of welding was thoroughly done, for the literary texture of the early books (especially II) is particularly close-knit; this is a compensation for the loose unity of the subject. On the other hand, the later books possess an internal near-repetitive allusiveness which suggests production during a single, more or less uninterrupted, period of sustained composition. Perhaps, though we cannot be sure, this took place at the time when they were blended with the pre-existent portions and the whole work was thrown into the shape in which it has come down to us.

The two sections, on the whole, stood for two different types of literature, because Herodotus lived and wrote at precisely the transitional moment of historical writing when he was able to combine detailed geographical digressions of the type familiar from Hecataeus with a new sort of narrative history bent on reconstructing the past.

Details about the lives of ancient writers, as opposed to men of action, were not usually preserved with any care or accuracy; and we know far too little about who Herodotus was. He is the subject of no ancient Life except a short notice in a lexicon (Suidas), and he himself is modest and reserved about his own remarkable personality and travels. We do not know the names of any of his close friends; we are not even told if he was single or married. Although anecdotes about other people abound in his work, personal reminiscences are austerely ruled out. The reader is reduced to guessing; for example, when he remarks that no Egyptian would kiss a Greek on the lips, one wonders if he is speaking from personal frustration.

He was the son of Lyxes and Dryo. His father came of a good

family at Halicarnassus (Bodrum) on the coast of south-western Asia Minor, a defensible wine-producing harbour-town that was traditionally the place of eternal spring and had once been called Zephyria. It was fitting that Herodotus should write about the clash between the western and eastern ways of life, because this was the fringe where Greeks and Asiatics met. Originally the place had belonged to Carians, but in the ninth century BC these 'barbarians' (that is to say, speakers of a language that was not Greek) had been subdued by Greek immigrants,[15] Dorians who then intermarried with the native population. The name of Herodotus' father, Lyxes, was Carian, and the historian is very unlikely to have been a pure Greek.

Just north of this Dorian zone of the coast was the more popular and prosperous Ionian region, with cities such as Miletus and Ephesus. The Ionian influence spread southwards, and by the fifth century the Dorian–Carian community of Halicarnassus had become sufficiently Ionicised to speak in the Ionic dialect. This appears on a Halicarnassian inscription of 454 BC,[16] and it is the language of Herodotus. Before the wars against the Persians the place had been controlled by them; the historian speaks proudly of the somewhat questionable exploits of its queen Artemisia on the Persian side at Salamis.[17] Then Halicarnassus was ruled by her son Lygdamis, who became engaged in a civil war that resulted in the death of Herodotus' uncle Panyassis, a distinguished epic poet (461). Herodotus withdrew to the island of Samos. By 454/3 Halicarnassus had got rid of its despot and was a member of the Delian League dependent on Athens.[18] Herodotus may possibly have returned home to take part in the expulsion of Lygdamis, but if so he did not stay. Instead, he remained an exile, thus widening his experience and sharpening his emotions.

He travelled. Perhaps he had made earlier journeys, since he was already well known in the early sixties.[19] At any rate he ranged widely now. He went to Athens. His visit to that city decisively influenced his life and outlook, and may well have been the happening which caused him to abandon his mainly geographical interests and write instead about the Persian Wars in which the Athenians had played so great a part. He enjoyed among them a large reputation as a man whose travels and experience of foreign lands had given him much unfamiliar knowledge. His pro-Athenian attitude was

likewise welcome; and it is recorded that he was paid an unprecedentedly large sum for reciting at Athens.

Later, however, he embarked on his travels again, joining a new Greek settlement that was being founded at Thurii or Thuria on the Gulf of Taras (Taranto), the instep of Italy, just across the Ionian Sea from Greece. Thurii was intended to replace Sybaris, which had been obliterated by its neighbour Croton in 510 and is today being sought for again by excavators. At first the coins of the new foundation bore the old name of Sybaris, but then the new one ('rusher') was adopted from a neighbouring spring, which was channelled in a bronze pipe. The town of Thurii, set in front of a series of semicircular hill-terraces resembling a huge amphitheatre, stood in a small fertile plain built up by two rivers, one of which, the Crathis, pointed a short cut to the western (Tyrrhenian) sea. The new foundation had come into existence because the ageing survivors of Sybaris had asked Athens and Sparta to help them re-establish their city. Sparta refused, but when the group from Sybaris made a first attempt in 452, and were suppressed by Croton, the Athenians gave aid to the fugitives.

Soon afterwards Athens, instigated either by Pericles (as his first overseas venture) or by Thucydides the son of Melesias (not the historian) who preceded him as a leading figure in the Government, launched a remarkable pan-Hellenic migration to settle the place (444/3). By now the Athenians had become the leaders of maritime trade; and they were keen to offset the power of Sparta's daughter-state Taras near the new site. It was Athens, therefore, which provided the money, the naval escort, a democratic constitution and the founders. These included a famous expounder of sacred law, Lampon, and other notable intellectuals including the philosopher Protagoras of Abdera who drew up the civil law code, and Hippodamus of Miletus, a famous town-planner. In spite of all the building-projects requiring labour at home, Athens, in contrast to Sparta which still stood aside, was demonstrating its ability to lead a joint undertaking of the Greeks. For the membership of the community was impressively varied. The ten 'tribes' into which it was divided included not only four from the Athenians and other peoples of Ionian origin, but three from the Peloponnese (Arcadia, Elis, Achaea) and three from the eastern areas of central Greece.

One of the original colonists, or a very early recruit, was Herodotus.

It is not known why he went. Possibly he was disappointed by a law of 451/50 at Athens which prevented him from gaining full citizenship there. At any rate he became a citizen of Thurii, and good manuscripts of the Histories describe him as a man of Thurii, and no longer of Halicarnassus.[20] Presumably he went there in order to obtain franchise and land. He could, it would seem, have gone back to his original home instead. But the exciting breadth of the new project, a practical application of the new spirit of scientific experiment, must have appealed to a man whose mind was not limited by ordinary horizons.

Thurii became prosperous. Yet Pericles could not or did not prevent it from falling successively into civil strife, war and unfavourable peace with Taras; and the settlers became disillusioned with the alleged high-minded internationalism of imperial Athens.[21] We do not know whether Herodotus stayed on at Thurii until he died, or returned to mainland Greece for a short final period. But Thurii may have been uncomfortable for an Athenian sympathiser after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (431). The Histories contain a few references to the years 432–429[22] which seem to suggest that he returned to Greece and perhaps to Athens for his last few years. But they do not prove it – and his tomb and epitaph were shown at Thurii. Later, Halicarnassus commissioned his statue and, in Roman imperial times, portrayed him on its coins.

The date when the historian collected his various categories of material can be deduced, at least conjecturally, from the little that we know of his career. Since so many of his travels belong to the years 454–443 a great deal of the geographical data must have been collected then. Facts about the western Mediterranean could naturally have been added while he was living in south Italy, though his occasional references to that area are not systematic.[23] As for the main part of the book and its treatment of the Persian War, this information is most likely to have been collected at Athens before 444/3, perhaps with some additions (if he ever revisited the city) at the end of his life.

The question when the work was completed and published is, of course, quite a different one. If the final version of his Histories came from something like a single act of composition (p. 30), this is likely to have been accomplished not earlier than the first years of the

Peloponnesian War, to which, as has been seen, there are references in the text. On the other hand the work was available by 425, for that was the year in which the comic dramatist Aristophanes seemed to be making fun of Herodotus' survey of the mythical 'origins' of the war (a little unfairly since Herodotus had written the passage with his tongue in his cheek).[24] That is to say the Histories, as we have them, date from the very end of his days, when he was probably in his mid-fifties. Under the lowering clouds of the Peloponnesian War, there was a strong impulse to write. At a time when Greece was falling apart, the victory over Persia seemed a particularly glorious triumph of co-operation between Greek and Greek.

There are indications that he died before he had quite finished (p. 30). Moreover, the last chapter provides an unexpected and enigmatic conclusion. This goes right back to Cyrus I, founder of the Persian Empire. Herodotus records the king's reactions to a suggestion that the Persians, now that they were powerful, should quit their small and barren country and find a better one. Cyrus, he says, disagreed with the proposal, pointing out (in accordance with a doctrine later enunciated by the medical school of Hippocrates of Cos)[25] that strength and courage thrive on a hard soil. And so the Histories end. It is possible to argue that they were *not* meant to end here, but would have gone on – perhaps the author himself never decided what his terminal point would be. Yet this does not seem a necessary deduction, especially as the date at which the work breaks off is dramatically satisfactory, coinciding with the final elimination of the Persian menace. Furthermore, from a formal point of view this sort of conclusion can be paralleled from earlier Greek compositions, which often began elaborately and wound up abruptly.

Let us assume, then, that this termination could have been intentional and deliberate. But, if so, what message did Herodotus intend it to convey? Perhaps he is harking back to the beginning of the work, in which he had very soon, and then again, praised healthy moderation. There had likewise been an early reference to Cyrus.[26] Yet, however good Herodotus' memory may have been, there was a limit to what readers (or audiences) could be expected to remember. And, in any case, his final words seem to carry an underlying allusion to Athens. Not that there was any plan for transferring its location, as the Persians were said to be considering the transference of theirs. But the empire of the Athenians had given them just the sort of

tendency to luxury which is under discussion. Perhaps we are being told, with a tactful obliqueness, that luxury, in spite of Cyrus' warning, had caused his successors to fail, and the story must not be repeated by Athens. For Attica, too, was an austere country which had now tasted empire, and ancient moralists, among whom most of the historians were numbered, always liked to advocate a return to simpler modes of life. Herodotus himself had migrated to a richer land, in southern Italy. Was he saying that he had made a mistake, and that the Athenians should note the lesson for themselves?

2

The Background and Beliefs of Herodotus

HERODOTUS had lived in Ionicised Halicarnassus, in Ionian Samos, in Athens which was of Ionian origin, and in Thurii where Ionia played a leading part with Athens. In very many ways, therefore, he was an Ionian. His Histories are written in literary Ionic, less simple than the language of Hecataeus or Heraclitus,[1] and not, it appears, a version that was actually spoken in any part of Ionia, but one combining the general features common to most of the forms of speech to be found in that country.

Not unnaturally, the Histories give very detailed treatment to Ionia. Herodotus was patriotic about his home-town Halicarnassus, and he gratefully and rightly declared that the Ionian island of Samos, where he took refuge, was a remarkable place which deserved detailed description.[2] And yet, partly because Samos was at variance with other Ionian towns that were readier to accept Persian rule, he adopts a critical attitude to the qualities of the Ionian people as a whole, who are unfavourably contrasted not only with Dorians but with their own distant relatives the Athenians on the mainland. A view, said to be current in Scythia, that the Ionians made splendid slaves but were inadequate as free men, is

quoted with evident relish; and Aristagoras of Miletus, who led their rebellion against Persia and then abandoned them, is dismissed as a poor-spirited creature.[3] Indeed the whole Ionian revolt is condemned as a foolish enterprise which was doomed to failure. Herodotus declared that it started three generations of troubles for Greeks and Persians alike.

And yet what he owed to Ionia was enormous. Not only are his specific debts to lost Ionian writers (pp. 416f., nn 5, 18, 19) evidently greater than we can recapture, but the whole idea of writing history was directly derived from the enquiring, explaining spirit of the Ionian philosophers. 'His general beliefs', says W.G. Forrest, 'are basically those of a typical, if non-professional, product of the Ionian enlightenment.' The broad cosmopolitanism and tolerance of Herodotus are derived from the Ionian cities which were so accustomed to contacts with a variety of Asian lands, and from Ionia again comes the uncommitted detachment with which he studied foreign customs, recognised how one people differed from another, and desired to attain scientific explanations on the basis of systematic evidence.

Here is the Ionian determination to discover what is knowable. The scientist-philosophers of the country had primarily dealt with physics, and Herodotus adopted the doctrine that each regional variety of mankind possesses its own process of *physis*, growth, as well as special modes of behaviour (*nomoi*) conforming with its own habitat. There seems to be an echo here, though a cautious and fairly conservative one, of the thinking of the philosopher Protagoras, the contemporary of Herodotus and his companion at Thurii, whose saying that 'man is the measure of all things' implied that all customs are relative. There are also links, or at least analogies, with the school of the physician Hippocrates (469–399), which explained the connection of national characteristics with soils in terms suggestive of Herodotus (p. 36). The historian might have learnt of such views from Hippocrates himself; or perhaps this sort of idea was generally in the air.

The scientific writer, however, to whom Herodotus was obviously likely to owe most was the geographer Hecataeus, since so much of the Histories is geography. He repeats a great deal from the earlier writer, including some of his mistakes. Indeed, although the main purposes of their work were different, his geographical account may

be described as pure Hecataeus, *plus* his own observations and enquiries. Yet Herodotus only names him once as a source, citing him for an alternative version of a story without passing judgment. He also twice speaks of Hecataeus as an actor in historical events, treating his part in the Ionian revolt sympathetically;[4] and he mentions him once as a traveller, with the implication that he took a shorter view than the Egyptians (p. 19). Very few ancient historians were exempt from the vice of criticising their immediate predecessors, and Herodotus makes it clear, by implication, that he found the geography and cartography of Hecataeus childishly schematic.[5] Yet, although he mocks his forerunner's symmetrical patterns of an equal-sized Europe and Asia, Herodotus himself is not wholly free from such ideas with reference to the north and south of Europe. But he does realise there may be an indefinite eastern extension of the continent, and he will not accept the circumambient Ocean River handed down by Hecataeus from Anaximander.[6]

One of the specific improvements introduced by Herodotus was to tie up all this geography much more closely with history. He could have said, with Michelet, that without a geographical basis the people who make history are walking on air. And, indeed, so inseparable did the two subjects seem to him that he freely applied the geographical, scientific methods of the Ionians to the entirely different field of human affairs.

But Herodotus was an Ionian not only in his adherence to these recently established standards, but above all in his debt to the Homeric *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Though he had advanced beyond the idea that myths explained wars, the poetic language and zest for digressions and catalogue which he derived from the Ionian epic made him the 'most Homeric' of writers (p. 28). Homeric, too, was his desire to ensure by his literary art that great deeds should be preserved from oblivion, so that fresh splendour might be spread over the glorious past. There was the same wide epic canvas, the same profound and sympathetic understanding of the human soul, and the same sense of divine interposition, however much at variance with the new scientific spirit this might be. Shared with the epic poets, again, was the theme of a struggle between west and east, Europe and Asia, and reminiscent of them, also, was his ambivalence towards this central subject of warfare. Homer had called war

hateful and baleful, but he had spoken, nevertheless, about the joy and exaltation of the fight. Herodotus, too, profoundly felt the evil of war,[7] and yet none could have described with deeper feeling the glory of Leonidas at Thermopylae.

The speeches quoted in the Histories of Herodotus are another profoundly Homeric feature. The great majority of ancient historians regarded such speeches as an important feature of their work. But they are a considerable stumbling-block to the modern reader, who often reads them with a suspicion that no such speech was ever delivered, if, indeed, the occasion was accompanied by any speech-making at all; and, even if it was, the writer who provides the report possessed no means of knowing what had been said. The practice of every Greek and Roman historian in this respect has been analysed with care, and critics have frequently been kind enough to 'defend' them. But such defences are largely beside the point. The suspicions of the reader are often justified, but they are not entirely relevant. It was not for the sake of the exact accuracy of a first-class newspaper-report or Hansard record that the speeches were included. They were included to provide a background to situations, to explain the thoughts or feelings or points of view of the participants or of the author himself, to underline patterns of behaviour, to engage with the reader in that discourse or enquiry which is the essence of *historie*.

In the Homeric poems, similar orations had formed a superb and integral part of the whole. Like any of his compatriots – to whom talk was a way of life – Herodotus enjoyed discussion and made whatever literary use of it he could. His work is therefore studded with speeches. Most of them form a natural enough part of the story, counterbalancing the annalistic narrative with spicy diversity. But they also point the way to all the roles which such orations were destined to fulfil in the works of historians from now onwards, forging, as time went on, a close relation between history and rhetoric. Herodotus' speeches are often admonitory, coming from a warning friend, perhaps in the form of an illustrated parable.[8] His dialogues, likewise, are effective, ranging from a counterpoint of long speeches to a rapid fire of altercation. In one case, too, there is a set piece, a debate between Persian plotters on the rival merits of different constitutions.[9] Here was a fashionably modern theme (p. 44), and Herodotus was to some extent indebted to the forensic

speeches of contemporary rhetoric and drama (p. 43). But, for all that, his oratory remains in the Homeric tradition.

He was also influenced by the epic and lyric poets who had come after Homer. In contrast to prose models, they are cited frequently by name, with snatches of quotations. This is because Herodotus was reciting, and the educated people who formed his audiences knew the poets but could not be expected to know prose authors. In particular, it may be surmised that Herodotus owed a great deal to a writer who had revised epic in his own day, Panyassis, who was his own kinsman, probably his father's brother. It was because of Panyasses' death at the hands of the local autocrat that Herodotus had been forced to leave Halicarnassus (p. 33). Interested, like his nephew, in oracles, Panyassis wrote an *Ionica* about the foundation of Ionian cities, and his epic poem about Heracles caused him to be ranked among the five greatest epic poets.[10]

Herodotus, reticent as always about matters relating to himself or his family, has nothing to say about his relative. But if the poems of Panyassis had survived we might well have found that they represented a major influence on the historian. For example, Panyassis had almost certainly echoed the Homeric desire to shed renown on the past, perhaps in terms similar to those in which his contemporary Pindar of Cynoscephalae in Boeotia gloriously re-asserted the same ambition.

> Even high deeds of prowess
> Have a great darkness if they lack song;
> We can hold up a mirror to fine doings
> In one way only:
> If with the help of Memory in her glittering crown
> Recompense is found for labour
> In words' echoing melodies.[11]

The finest of fine deeds, Herodotus believed, was the contribution which Athens had made to the victory over the Persians. At Marathon in 490 the Athenians had behaved heroically.

> They came on, closed with the enemy all along the line, and fought in a way not to be forgotten. They were the first Greeks, so far as I know, to charge at a run, and the first who dared to look without flinching at Persian dress and the men who wore it.[12]

Eleven years later their spokesman was able to say;

> 'In that fight we stood alone against Persia – we dared a mighty enterprise and came out of it alive – we beat forty-six nations to their knees!'[13]

And by that time they had again, in Herodotus' view, been the saviours of Greece, for they had saved it in 480 as well. Writing in the full flood of Athenian imperialism (p. 71), he knows very well that such opinions will not please everyone, and admits as much. Yet he still feels obliged to maintain that the policy of the Athenians before Salamis, when they evacuated their city but insisted on fighting at sea instead of retreating behind the isthmus of Corinth, proved the salvation of the whole of Greece.[14] He also makes them the heroes of Plataea (479), although modern historians allot them a less pre-eminent role, and in the same year he declares that it was likewise the Athenians who were the bravest of the Greeks fighting at Mycale. And there was a particular reason why these tributes must be paid to them: because their deeds had been devoted to the defence of the pan-Hellenic ideal.

> There is the Greek nation – the common blood, the common language; the temples and religious ritual; the whole way of life we understand and share together – indeed, if Athens were to betray all this, it would not be well done.[15]

It is not surprising that these magnificent eulogies helped to earn Herodotus the largest rewards any lecturer or reciter had ever received (p. 34). He did not write his final work exclusively *for* the Athenians – they are described as 'those' people, and their statesman Solon is twice introduced in words they would have found superfluous.[16] Yet other allusions presume an Athenian public, and the influence of the historian's residence at the city is detectable on many of his pages.

The new Athenian fashion of rhetoric, it is true, made little impression on his style. This novel and elaborate art from Sicily, which had just been described in the first known manuals,[17] was introduced to Athens by Gorgias from Leontini in that island. But Gorgias only came to Athens in 427, and at most it can be said that some of Herodotus' speeches, advancing beyond their Homeric models, show traces of the new formal structure,[18] and echo current

arguments from 'probability' which the rhetoricians were adapting from the philosophers (p. 92).[19]

Much more important, however, was the whole impact of Athens upon his historical thinking and feeling. For when he turned from his geographical interests to the chronicling of the Persian Wars there were recitations or writings by Athenian genealogists which could be of assistance (p. 417, n. 15), and he could listen to many other Athenians, too, as they welcomed and befriended him in their city. Indeed, perhaps he listened to them too much, since there are signs of the party politics of Athens in his work. The great family of the Alcmaeonidae, once radical and always rich and elegant, taught him much of his Athenian history, and he favours them against the upstart Themistocles, to whom Herodotus, growing up at the time of his decline, gives credit indeed, but slightly grudging credit all the same.[20] The widely held belief that the Alcmaeonids treasonably flashed a shield as a signal to the Persians in 480 is rejected – though Herodotus admits a shield *was* flashed.[21] And it was they, he said, who had been the true liberators of Athens from its tyrant Hippias (the son of Pisistratus), turned out of the city in 511.

As for Pericles (d. 429), the leader of Athens in his own day, he too, on his mother's side, was of Alcmaeonid blood, and Herodotus, in a single passage, displays sympathy with him and echoes one of his phrases.[22] Whether he was a whole-hearted admirer of Pericles we cannot say. But he was certainly alive to the glamour and glory of Athens. For one of his main basic themes is the frequently expressed contrast between the irrational despotism of the Persians and the rational freedom of the Greeks, which alone allowed the individual and the community to attain full spiritual development:[23] and the best example of that freedom seemed to him the democratic government of Athens.

When Herodotus made Persian plotters debate the best form of government (p. 41), he was probably not the very first to discuss this theme. For Hippodamus of Miletus, who was with him at Thurii, had also dealt with such matters.[24] Moreover, a surviving work by someone else, a rather rough, sarcastic *Constitution of Athens*, written by an anti-democratic author whom we know as the 'Old Oligarch', has now been dated to *c.* 443 instead of *c.* 428–425 (p. 112). Herodotus joins these writers in pointing the way to many a future Greek analysis of the rival merits of constitutions. In the

Persian discussion, which is a blend of traditional ideas and a more novel philosophical approach, a monarchist has to be made to win, because monarchy was the form of government which, in fact, continued to prevail among the Persians. But democracy gets the better of the argument. Herodotus knew that history was a pendulum perpetually alternating between authority and liberty, and he chose the latter. He saw its finest manifestation in the Athenian system, of which the principal elements had been established by Cleisthenes at the end of the sixth century. It was not for nothing that the ancients said 'the Athenians' where we would say 'Athens'.

However, he was by no means blind to the faults of democracy, as is shown by his remark that it is easier to deceive a multitude than one man.[25] He agreed, therefore, with the type of Athenian aristocrat who accepted democracy so long as it did not go too far. This was also the view of contemporary dramatists, Sophocles and Aristophanes. Aeschylus, too, had already offered commentaries on various aspects of the same theme. His *Persae* (472 BC) foreshadowed Herodotus' contrast between oriental despotism and Greek freedom. The *Oresteia* trilogy (*Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*; 458), culminating in the emphasis on a just régime over which it is the duty of a state to preside, had praised the enlightened workings of democracy. And the *Prometheus Bound* dwelt disturbingly on the brutalities of autocratic governments. The date of play is uncertain, but was the tragedian warning the Athenians that even in a new and vigorous democratic system relapses were still possible and must be guarded against?

For in the long period of guidance by Pericles, Athens, although democratically governed, had become a strongly guided democracy. Herodotus was prepared to put up with this arrangement and indeed to admire it, provided there was no infringement of the rule of law over free individuals. And yet, already when he was writing, there was a somewhat old-fashioned air about his identification of law with freedom. For 'law' was no longer regarded as such a simple concept. He himself recognised the regional variability of customs, and the modernist thinking of Athenian sophists had gone a good way further in its emphasis on the relative, subjective nature of legal codes (p. 39).

Old-fashioned, too, was Herodotus' straightforward contrast between Greek freedom and Persian despotism. The contrast was

not, it is true, very old. As Herodotus himself reports (using the word 'democracy' for the first time), the Persian Mardonius had himself chosen to give Greek cities puppet administrations of this very sort in 492. However, the antithesis between the Hellenic and Persian spirit had become established during the Persian Wars and is enshrined in Aeschylus' *Persae*. But by 425 the generation which heard Aristophanes making mild fun of Herodotus' remarks on the origins of the east–west struggle no longer thought of Persia in quite the same hostile way. Indeed the country had ceased to be in the forefront of their thought, because they had been plunged for the past six years in the Peloponnesian War between Greek and Greek. That is why Herodotus felt it so imperatively necessary to evoke those events of half a century earlier in which the Greeks had been united together in freedom's cause.

When he admitted the likelihood that his pro-Athenian attitude about those events would be unpopular, he was expressing awareness that times had changed since the Persian Wars because of the brutal imperialism and power-politics of Athens in recent years. In 446 Pindar had written:

> Force trips up at last
> Even the loud boaster.
> Cilician Typhos with a hundred heads did not escape her,
> No, nor the Giants' king.
> They went down before
> The thunderbolt and the arrows of Apollo.[26]

This was meant as a warning to Athens, the enemy of his native Boeotia.

Herodotus, on the other hand, even if he allowed himself an oblique reference to Athenian luxury (p. 37), steered clear of condemnations. He preferred to dwell instead on the glorious past. His attitude to the role of the Spartans in the Persian War is not unfavourable; for his home-town Halicarnassus was still predominantly Dorian, and Herodotus respected Sparta as the leading Dorian city. Consequently, King Demaratus is made to tell Xerxes that the Spartans, fighting together, are the best soldiers in the world, and that they too, like the Athenians, obey the rule of law.[27] The historian admired their political stability and rich land,[28] and by giving credit to Sparta as well as Athens for the victories over

Persia he reflected the pro-Spartan views of many Athenian nobles.

And yet on a further scrutiny he does not seem quite to do justice to Sparta after all. For, in fact, the Spartans had been the leaders of Greece in the Persian Wars, and Athens a member of their confederacy; retrospective Athenian claims to a hegemony at that time were a myth. Again, he stresses how right the Athenians were, and how wrong the Spartans, in their strategy that led up to the successful battle of Salamis. And on such occasions he treats the Spartans with an irony which, at times, tends to conceal their gallantry in the war.

These attitudes echo contemporary events. Herodotus could not fail to rally to his beloved Athens at a time when, from 431 onwards, Spartan armies were ravaging Attica every year (p. 71). Indeed the fact that he even achieved the measure of impartiality that he did argues almost miraculous objectivity. And already during the formative stages of his work he must have been deeply affected by a preliminary outbreak of hostilities between Athens and Sparta (457–451), which is sometimes known as the First Peloponnesian War.

But the influence of Athens upon Herodotus went much deeper than this. Ionian enlightenment had not yet fully made its appearance in the city. The great Athenian tragedies were preoccupied less with the democratic movement than with the whole divine background of cause and effect. And so was the historian. The tragic poets enunciated the view that prosperous men were bound to arouse the jealousy of the gods, who would bring them down in the end. Aeschylus in his *Agamemnon* declares the penalties of success:

> For Ruin is revealed the child
> Of not to be attempted actions,
> When men are puffed up unduly
> And their houses are stuffed with riches.
> Measure is the best. Let danger be distant:
> This should suffice a man
> With a proper part of wisdom.[29]

This view that all happiness and well-being are insecure forms a very large part of the philosophy of Herodotus as well. Artabanus is made to say as much to his master, King Xerxes:

> You know, my lord, that amongst living creatures it
> is the great ones that God smites with this thunder,

> out of envy of their pride. The little ones do not
> vex him. It is always the great buildings and the
> tall trees which are struck by lightning. It is God's
> way to bring the lofty low.[30]

And most conspicuous of all is the overthrow of King Croesus of Lydia, even though he has served the gods with meticulous devotion. He declares to his Persian conqueror, Cyrus: 'If you recognise the fact that both you and the troops under your command are merely human, then the first thing I would tell you is that human life is like a revolving wheel and never allows the same man to continue long in prosperity.'[31] For to the Greeks, as to the Jews and Dostoievsky's Alyosha Karamazov, pride brought hideous delusion or *ate*. Aeschylus sees this as a personal fiend in a world full of demons, under an angry, Homeric, authoritarian Zeus of arbitrary caprices, like the whims of 'archaic Greek nobles'. And so Herodotus, too, regards anything that threatens the norms as liable to incur the ill-will of the gods. Only once, in relation to Croesus, does he describe it as Nemesis. Elsewhere it is Jealousy. This was a special characteristic of the divinity – though it was interpretable also, when he was feeling more Ionian and scientific, as the restoration of a physical balance, reminiscent of Heraclitus' identification of justice with strife (*c*. 500). For one of the leading ideas of Herodotus is this compensation and balance in mortal actions and destinies. As certain philosophers were saying, there is a cycle in the affairs of men (p. 416), and well-being never stays in one place.[32] For retribution intervenes. Psychologists have called this the Polycrates Complex, after the king of Samos (*c*. 540–522) whose excessive power Herodotus showed to be the cause of his ruin. We, too, are subject to this complex when we note that there is good weather, and say, 'We shall have to pay for this'.

Herodotus allows his characters to be actuated by personal motives; but they get carried away to disaster by *ate*. Though human purposes seem to be directing events, the penetrating eye can see Jealousy working secretly beneath. There is no consistent divine plan at work, but suffering finds an occasion to seize upon a man.[33] The way the gods choose to inflict suffering is amoral or even downright immoral; it is evil, and evil is what comes of it. This was a doctrine of the early poets which worried Aeschylus in his *Prometheus Bound*, and shocked Plato in the following century. But

Herodotus did not see things in quite this way, because he noted that, however blind the stroke, at least it restored the balance. To him, as Forrest remarks, 'jealousy is the force that maintains justice; a god who is "fond of disturbing our lot" will hardly worry a man who takes it for granted that disturbance is part of the natural order of things'.

Alongside this attitude, at the time of Herodotus, there was a second point of view maintaining that what arouses divine jealousy is not so much prosperity as sin. This ethical approach was more recent; a product of the transition from Shame Culture to Guilt Culture. The Zeus of 'God's in his heaven, all's wrong with the world' had been transformed into an agent of morality. Indications of such an attitude had occurred in the Homeric poems, but they had been rare.[34] Thereafter, however, it was this view that tended to prevail. In the words of Solon, writing early in the sixth century BC,

> Zeus forever is watching the end, and
> strikes of a sudden. . . .
> He does not, like a mortal, fall in a rage
> over each particular thing. And yet
> it never escapes him all the way when a man has a
> sinful spirit; and always, in the end,
> his judgment is plain.[35]

In the tragedies the theme is all-pervasive.

> The mortal who sacks fallen cities is a fool;
> Who gives the temples and the tombs, the hallowed places
> Of the dead to desolation. His own turn will come.[36]

Yet this doctrine that sin is what causes the overthrow of men is closely linked with the other belief that prosperity by itself is fatal, for the simple reason that the lofty are very easily led to commit wickedness. Success causes arrogance (*hubris*), and this, as Heraclitus warned, 'is more to be extinguished than a conflagration',[37] because it is bound to be followed by disaster. That is the spirit in which Aeschylus speaks of

> Those high hearts that drive to evil
> houses blossoming to pride and peril.[38]

Herodotus, too, emphasises this direct connection between prosperity and sin when he makes Themistocles say that 'the gods and heroes

were jealous that one man should be king at once of Europe and Asia – *more especially a man like this, unholy and presumptuous*'.[39]

He is speaking of Xerxes, who seemed to him the classic case of *hubris*. He had appeared in the same light to Aeschylus,[40] who told of the king's reversal of the elements, when he turned sea into land by a bridge which impiously cast the Hellespont into chains. Aeschylus had created the Persian legend in this mould, and anyone wishing to please the Athenians must now conform to it. Herodotus evidently felt a special sympathy with Aeschylus, who had actually taken part in these great events, fighting at Marathon and Salamis. And so the historian, too, emphasises the barbarity and presumption of Xerxes, who ordered the strait to be whipped and rebuked.[41] To him, then, as to Aeschylus, the downfall that followed was due not merely to grandeur but to wickedness. The ferocious autocracy of Xerxes is continually stressed, and so is his power of life and death, and a peculiarly horrible tale is told of the fate which befell a woman who attracted his roving eye.[42]

Croesus, too, did not fall entirely because of his success and the rhythmical rise and fall of human fortunes. For, although devout, he was also proud, considering himself the most fortunate of men. He did not listen to warnings; and he exacted tribute from the Greeks and then failed to defend them. Herodotus repeatedly asserts that wrong behaviour brings retribution, 'in which the hand of heaven is most plainly manifest'; and the worse the behaviour the graver the penalty.[43] The idea that evil falls arbitrarily is abandoned, at least to the extent that no unjust man shall fail to pay the penalty.[44] Perhaps he would not always have to do so in his own person, for there is such a thing as inherited guilt, which likewise pervades the tragedies of Aeschylus.[45] The unfairness was recognised, but such a sanction was effective at a time when family solidarity was strong. Thus Herodotus sees yet another cause of Croesus' downfall in the action of his ancestor Gyges, who had murdered his own predecessor and incurred punishment from Apollo.

He was in sympathy, then, with the attitudes of Aeschylus. But he was also a personal friend of Sophocles, whose *Antigone* (441 BC) pays him the compliment of a direct echo showing that the dramatist had heard one of his famous recitals.[46] We also have a considerable fragment of an ode which Sophocles wrote in honour of the historian, perhaps when the latter was leaving for Thurii. Sophocles, while

interested in up-to-date sophistic attitudes and arguments – more interested than Herodotus – was also the last great exponent of the old view of human beings helpless before vindictive heaven. His *Women of Trachis* is a play which contains much magic, and there are many archaic features in the *Ajax* and *Antigone* as well. The attitudes revealed in these works show numerous correspondences with Herodotus. Ths historian does not emphasise the ordeal of suffering like Sophocles, but he resembles him closely in his employment of dramatic irony, the *double entenore* by which a character uses words to mean one thing to himself and another to the reader. Both writers persistently use this method to explain apparent failures of oracles which are nevertheless fulfilled, and men's vain planning to elude them. There are also various other analogies, for example between Herodotus' account of Darius' Scythian expedition and the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles. Like Neoptolemus, who was the hero of that play, Darius comes through after enduring the gravest peril.

The Lydian section of Herodotus' work demonstrates the same dramatic Athenian influences even more clearly. Not only is the whole downfall of Croesus a conception involving the tragic modes of thought, but it also exhibits, in a typical fashion, the dramatic reversal (*peripeteia*) of tragedy. Moreover, the same reversal is found again in smaller Lydian plots within a plot, such as the death of Croesus' son Atys. Herodotus' tale of the capture of Sardis,[47] too, is told in terms that must have been strongly reminiscent of a sensational play (now lost), *The Capture of Miletus*, which was produced in 494 BC by the tragic dramatist Phrynichus and caused such distress among the audience that it was banned and the playwright fined.

But, above all, the saga of Gyges, the forbear of Croesus, provides explicit evidence of Herodotus' links with Athenian tragedy, because fragments have now been found of a play actually telling the same stories and telling them in the same way.[48] Although a third-century BC date has been proposed for this work, it could also be contemporary with Herodotus and Aeschylus, in which case the historian and the unidentified tragic poet were drawing on a common source – or one may even have been drawing on the other. The analogy between the new history and the Athenian drama could not be clearer. Their subject-matter, over a wide range, was the same. Ancient writers compared their purposes, too, declaring that both aimed at stirring the emotions and both offered consolations

and deterrents. That is why Aristotle called Herodotus a *mythologos*, a teller or weaver of plots, dramatically setting acts or incidents in relation to one another. Dramatic, again, are many of his literary devices: the care with which a digression about Athens is balanced against one about Sparta; the virtual abandonment of digressions, towards the end, in favour of direct narrative, just as the choral odes of plays are followed by a rapid sequence of tightly packed events; even the flow of Herodotean prose often falls for a time into the very rhythms of tragic poetry.

The spiritual life of Athens during Herodotus' formative years 460–400 BC is largely unknown to us. Yet it is clear enough that the religious attitudes which the tragedians had inherited and adopted from the past were gradually being overlaid by Ionian scientific ideas. The phenomenon is already visible in Aeschylus: and Herodotus follows him in attributing events to human agencies *as well as* to divine chains of causation. Thus Croesus fell not because of the wrath of the gods alone but also partly because his foreign policy failed. Xerxes, too, was not only driven to war by a dream sent by heaven: he was also prompted by the human motive of ambition, just as he was later misled at Salamis both by the jealousy of the gods and by a cunning Greek who deceived him. And so modern, rational explanations of cause and effect – explanations, moreover, in which immediate and permanent causes are carefully distinguished – blend into the divine pattern.[49] This had also, no doubt, been the procedure of Hecataeus. To us it looks like a rather disconcerting oscillation, inviting us, in effect, to look at each case on its merits and judge whether its motivation is natural or supernatural. But 'the Greeks', as P.A. Brunt observed, 'did not make the sharp distinction between the divine and the human which we have derived from Jewish thought'.

And so Herodotus neither accepts nor denies the Athenian belief that a great snake lived on the Acropolis. 'They present a honeycake every month as to a creature existing.' Again, writing of madness, he believes that there are both natural and heaven-inspired forms of these disturbances. Narratives of divine management are customarily given at second hand, or as antecedents rather than causes. Sometimes the conclusion tentatively comes down on the side of scepticism. 'The Chaldaeans say – though I do not believe them – that the god

Bel enters his shrine at Babylon in person and takes his rest upon the bed.'[50] A discussion of a geographical feature displays a similar suspension of belief.

> The natives of Thessaly have a tradition that the gorge which forms the outlet for the river Peneus was made by Poseidon. And the story is a reasonable one; for if one believes that it is Poseidon who shakes the earth and that chasms caused by earthquake are attributed to him, then the mere sight of this place would be enough to make one say that it is Poseidon's handiwork. It certainly appeared to me that the cleft in the mountains had been caused by an earthquake.[51]

And so this question, allegedly involving the supernatural, is handled with deliberate delicacy. For Herodotus, evidently aware of the incompatibility of the two attitudes, regards the whole subject as inflammable, and considers it best evaded whenever possible.

> Such animals as there are in Egypt – both wild and tame – are without exception held to be sacred. To explain the reason for this, I should have to enter into a discussion of religious principles, which is a subject I particularly wish to avoid – any slight mention I have already made of such matters having been forced upon me by the needs of my story.[52]

This attitude of caution is prompted by the feeling that such deviations into rationalism as he may permit himself could be interpreted as blasphemy – the offence for which the philosopher Anaxagoras was indicted at Athens, either in *c.* 450 or in *c.* 430.

> If Heracles was a mere man (as they say he was) and single-handed, how is it conceivable that he should have killed tens of thousands of people?
>
> And now I hope that both gods and heroes will forgive me for saying what I have said on these matters.[53]

And yet Herodotus, for all his tentative straying into rationalisation, remains a thoroughgoing believer in divine intervention. 'Many things prove to me', he says, 'that the gods take part in the affairs of man.' It was a special providence, for example, that caused the winds to blow the Samian explorer Colaeus all the way from the eastern Mediterranean to the Strait of Gibraltar and beyond. Again, various reasons were alleged for the death of the Spartan king Cleomenes I. But Herodotus accepts the version that it was a judgment upon him for doing wrong.[54]

In the last three books of the Histories, perhaps under the influence of Athens and its tragedians, the divine direction of affairs becomes strongly accentuated. After the battle of Plataea we are told that not a single Persian soldier was found dead in the holy precinct of Demeter. 'My own view is – if one may have a view at all about these Mysteries – that the Goddess herself would not let them in, because they had burnt her sanctuary at Eleusis.' Herodotus' diffidence about speaking of the Mysteries, that characteristic institution of archaic Greek religion, recalls that he himself had been initiated into secret sites of the same sort that were practised on the island of Samothrace.[55] In Egypt, too, he had received teaching of a comparable mystic character.

When the approach of the Persians to Delphi was heralded by alleged miracles, Herodotus found these less surprising than the natural accidents (falls of rock, thunderbolts) that also befell them on the way.[56] But this shows a degree of credulity that was unusual in him, representing a mark of deference towards the exceptional sanctity of the Delphic shrine, about which he never shows any scepticism whatever.[57] Elsewhere, on the other hand, dealing with other matters, he generally draws the line at the physically impossible, and does not claim it for the gods. About alleged *signs* from heaven, however, as opposed to actual miracles, he is far more credulous. Indeed, this is the most conspicuous element in the whole of his religion. His older relative, the poet Panyassis, had been an expert on the subject, and Herodotus believed most firmly that forthcoming events can be foretold by divine indications. There is nearly always, he says, a warning sign of some kind, when disaster is about to overtake a city or a nation.

This might take the form of a portent, or a dream.[58] But above all he believed in oracles; and that was why Delphi – though strongly suspected of a feeble surrender to the Persians – is treated with so much reverence. If he had not done more than to point out that oracles were history because they influenced people's conduct, he would have been right. But he also expressed himself strongly against incredulous attitudes towards divine warnings. After a seer, typical of an outgoing age of ecstatic religion, had supposedly prophesied the sea-battle at Salamis, he declared: 'With that utterance of Bacis in mind, absolutely clear as it is, I do not venture to say anything against prophecies, nor will I listen to criticism from others.'[59]

Oracles were a vital part of his conception of the world. He knew of existing collections of such pronouncements, and he quoted examples with great care. But he felt they could very easily be perverted.[60] Above all, they frequently *seemed* wrong – seemed to have failed. But that was because they had been misinterpreted; and then they came true after all. This theme gave Herodotus some of his best stories, and many opportunities to display dramatic irony in the manner of Sophocles, who makes this the theme of two of his plays, *The Women of Trachis* and *Oedipus the King*. And Sophoclean, again, is the ironic contrast between the ineluctable fulfilment of oracles and the useless scheming of people like Croesus to escape them.

In view of Herodotus' special devotion to oracles, the god whose name figures most prominently in his writings is Apollo, the patron of these manifestations. Yet the historian has risen somewhat beyond the Homeric belief in individual members of a Hellenic pantheon. To us it is a little tedious to read careful identifications, which have no historical basis, between this or that Greek and Egyptian deity. But a remark that no nation knows more about religion that any other[61] suggests that Herodotus pursued this line because he had a more advanced conception in mind. He believed, that is to say, in a heavenly power that is common to all humanity. And, like the Ionian scientist Anaximander before him, he describes such a power by a neuter adjective 'the divine' (*to theion*), without any personal differentiation. When this agency spoke in oracles, it was convenient to departmentalise its activity by the bestowal of a name. Yet what keeps the balance in the universe and the world is deity undefined.

The relation of this divinity and of human beings towards fate was a subject which engrossed contemporary tragedians, as it had also engaged the earlier poets who stressed the mighty, almost malevolent inscrutability of destiny. The problem exercised Herodotus, whose treatment of his theme illustrates the profound conviction that the course of events is ruled by fateful means. Men are doomed to meet their ends, and their disastrous decisions are predetermined.[62] Apollo may want to help Croesus, but he cannot do so except in minor respects, because, like the gods in Homer, he is unable to divert the destined course of events. The role of fate is in one passage of Herodotus played by Zeus, who repels a plea by Athena.

Sometimes men have a tragic foreknowledge of their future destiny. And yet all Herodotus' stories imply at least the illusion of free

will, and much free will, too, that is not illusory but authentic. For it had now become clear that a historian's very subjects, the actions of men in communities, presuppose that human decisions have some power. But they are hampered by fate. What is more, they are hampered by accident, since Herodotus, like the tragedians, was very conscious that this is another factor which widens and deepens the gap between real and ideal. Accordingly, at the beginnings of his threads of causation, there is often an unresolved, irrational strand.[63] Greek nouns such as Chance (*Tyche*) can mean anything between an abstraction and a goddess receiving worship. Chance had appeared in Greek literature as early as the post-Homeric epics, and had gradually taken shape until it was represented and portrayed by sixth-century sculptors. It was also occasionally personified in tragedy.[64] Later Greeks would elevate it to a major deity, but its role in Herodotus, though vital, is not as great as that. The operations of Chance may be neutral, or catastrophic, or favourable. Its insertion into a story was a way of saying that some links in the course of events are not known. A complete understanding of causation is not claimed, and there is still room for the unique and decisive accident – a factor that is under-estimated by many modern historians.

3

The Methods of Herodotus

Such, then, was the background against which Herodotus told his story. The interaction of human and divine motives which he saw at work left him with a powerful conviction of the difference between right and wrong. His desire to instruct was, it is true, less urgent and pervasive than that of many successors. Yet it was he who initiated among the Greeks the moral and didactic view of events which was already so familiar in Hebrew literature, and which later persisted, often to an exaggerated extent, among almost all subsequent ancient historians.

Universal truth seemed to him only discoverable through this or that human being. It is true that he often attributed to them what he regarded as the typical motives of their type and class. All the same, he was convinced that the individual is the driving-force of history. He is up to date enough to talk about the fashionable subject of city constitutions, but the actions of persons are represented as much more important. Indeed, his stories about men such as Cyrus and Cambyses and Themistocles and a hundred others foreshadow the art of historical biography. It is foreshadowed, again, by his preference for private rather than public motives. Even when public affairs are discussed, political causes are not clearly defined, and personal motives still predominate. Granted that he does not take

too seriously his mythical account of the origins of the Persian Wars, in which everything is seen to go back to personal wrongs concerned with women, Persian expansion is very much equated with the anger of Darius and Xerxes.

The Greeks were not greatly interested in the hidden conflicts of the human mind. Nevertheless, Herodotus, like the philosopher Democritus who was his younger contemporary, believes that the will matters as much as the execution.[1] The historian likes to explain both will and execution by recording what the doer said, or might have said, or would reasonably say, in order to justify his action. By these and many other means a few words are made to conjure up, with superb skill, a vast range of human portraits, Greek and Asiatic and Egyptian alike. Great men receive correspondingly great attention. But rather than blame Herodotus for what Nietzsche and Carlyle made a perilous approach, we should recall that in the ancient world decisive happenings were engineered by a minute proportion of the population, so that these potent personages deserved to receive very close attention.

This preoccupation with great men, a preoccupation tinged with strongly ethical ideas of man's destiny, gave depth to Herodotus' conviction that the Persians, represented by such dramatic and terrible figures as Darius and Xerxes, were wrong, and the Greeks were right. We are left in no doubt that the east–west struggle, which had been suggested by Homer and was to be crystallised by Virgil, is part of a divinely ordered plan. Unlike Homer, Herodotus underlines for the first time the utter difference in outlook between Greeks and non-Greeks or 'barbarians'. The contrast continually emerges, not only in the opposition between autocracy and democracy, but in profound differences of customs.[2] This theme, as J.B. Bury remarked, gives the work's external structure a deeper inner unity. It also had ominous repercussions on later peoples, who have erected such distinctions into chauvinisms and colour bars.

But it would be wrong to impute anything of the kind to Herodotus. It is true that, having been born inside the Persian Empire, his knowledge of foreigners had sharpened his Hellenic patriotism. Yet he based this concept, by a significant advance, on customs as well as blood.[3] It is also true that his decisive years 460–440 were a time in which the Greco-Persian clash was still on and had not become

out of date: an Athenian fleet even attacked Persian-controlled Egypt, launching an invasion which lasted for five years (p. 71). However, Herodotus himself adopted an extraordinarily tolerant attitude towards the Persians. Their virtues are not allowed to disguise their faults;[4] but he specifically praises some of their customs, for example the habit of keeping their children with women until they are five years of age, and the rule that forbids even the king to condemn anyone to death for a single offence.[5] He had claimed it was one of his principal tasks to describe the achievements of eastern non-Greeks (p. 27), and the promise is amply fulfilled by a magnificent series of portraits of great Persians. All this was too advanced for many Greeks, with their local patriotisms, and more than five hundred years later Plutarch (who had other and more parochial reasons for his dislike) still saw him as *philobarbaros*, a pro-barbarian or lover of wogs.

Such tolerance was part of a widely ranging, cheerful broad-mindedness. The object of all travelling was to learn,[6] and it was this spirit of enquiry, revealed in a hundred passages, which gave 'history' its modern meaning. It meant that parochial prejudices were impossible. The insertion of speeches is only one of a hundred devices employed to bring out viewpoints transcending purely regional considerations. And so the first comprehensive historical work ever produced was also a cultural history, a story of civilisation.

Herodotus' interest and curiosity were combined with an inexhaustible flair for good stories. Today we have few historical authors who rely so much on narrative, but in the right hands the method cannot be bettered. Herodotus is the most amusing of all historians; only Gibbon comes anywhere near him. A characteristic anecdote occurs when King Cleisthenes of Sicyon invites his daughter's suitors to dinner.

When dinner was over, the suitors began to compete with each other in music and in talking on a set theme to the assembled company. In both these accomplishments it was Hippocleides who proved by far the doughtiest champion, until at last, as more and more wine was drunk, he asked the flute-player to play him a tune and began to dance to it. Now it may well be that he danced to his own satisfaction; King Cleisthenes, however, who was watching the performance, began to have serious doubts about the whole business. Presently, after a brief pause,

Hippocleides sent for a table; the table was brought; and Hippocleides, climbing on to it, danced first some Laconian dances, next some Attic ones, and ended by standing on his head and beating time with his legs in the air.

The Laconian and Attic dances were bad enough; but Cleisthenes, though he already loathed the thought of having a son-in-law who could behave so disgracefully in public, nevertheless restrained himself and managed to avoid an outburst. However, when he saw Hippocleides beating time with his legs, he could bear it no longer. 'Son of Tisander,' he cried, 'you have danced away your wife!' 'I could hardly care less', was the cheerful reply.[7]

Whatever Herodotus may have done for the word *historie*, this is not history in the modern sense, because it is myth. The story has in fact been traced back to an Indian tale with a peacock as its hero. Such stories have a splendid good-humoured flippancy that owes something to epic. But, most of all, it comes from Herodotus himself, and however careful he might be about religion it made Plutarch regard him as impious and immoral.[8]

But the technique is as valid for history as for myth, and it provides a unique succession of pictures of historical or quasi-historical events and episodes in a modernised Homeric manner. These pictures, which are the core of Herodotus' work, may be long and complex,[9] or they may be short and vivid.[10] Sometimes they are noble, sometimes grotesque or tragic or horrible or murderous, and often, even in gloomy circumstances, they are funny. When, for example, the Greeks in Macedonia and Thrace complained how expensive it was to have to entertain Xerxes' army, 'a man of Abdera called Megacreon spoke to the point when he advised all the people of the town to take their wives to the temples and pray heaven to continue to spare them one half of their troubles, with proper gratitude for the blessing already received, that King Xerxes was not in the habit of taking *two* dinners a day'.[11]

This taste for spicy points and tales provides a mass of piquant information about foreign parts. It is impossible for a reader or listener not to be intrigued by this tit-bit about the health service at Babylon: 'The Babylonians have no doctors, but bring their invalids out into the street, where anyone who comes along offers the sufferer advice on his complaint, either from personal experience or observation of a similar complaint in others. Anyone will stop by

the sick man's side and suggest remedies. . . . Nobody is allowed to pass a sick person in silence.'[12] Herodotus remarks what a good system this is. And the Arabian method of collecting a spice likewise appeals to his sense of the ridiculous. 'Still more surprising is the way of getting ledanon – or ladanum as the Arabians call it. Sweet-smelling substance though it is, it is found in a most malodorous place: sticking, that is to say, like glue in the beards of he-goats who have been browsing among the bushes.'[13] Paradox, again, is what fascinates him about the Atarantes in the interior of Africa; people who deviated interestingly from two universal customs – the possession of personal names, and the worship of the sun. 'The Atarantes are the only people in the world, so far as our knowledge goes, to do without names. Atarantes is the collective name – but individually they have none. They curse the sun as it rises and call it by all sorts of opprobrious names, because it wastes and burns both themselves and their land.'[14] And then there are the Lydians, whose 'way of life, apart from the fact that they prostitute their daughters, is not unlike our own'. We are also invited, not altogether seriously, to believe a tall story about their inventive capacity, displayed at a time when the whole of the country was suffering from a severe famine.

They began to look for something to alleviate their misery. Various expedients were devised: for instance, the invention of dice, knucklebones, and ball-games. In fact, they claim to have invented all games of this sort except draughts. The way they used these inventions to help them endure their hunger was to eat and play on alternative days – one day playing so continuously that they had no time to think of food, and eating on the next without playing at all. They managed to live like this for eighteen years.[15]

Herodotus listened to such stories in an immense number of different places. The range of his travels, extending from Scythia and Persia to south Italy, is undeterminable in detail, but it cannot have been equalled for centuries to come. Probably he travelled as a trader or with traders; this makes him interested in ships and navigable waters, commercial goods and industries, the interpreting of foreign languages, the weights and measures of various lands. His determination to get at the truth is beyond all praise. Interested in an Egyptian god he identified with Heracles, 'to satisfy my wish to get the best information I possibly could on the subject, I made a visit to

Tyre in Phoenicia, because I heard that there was a temple there, of great sanctity, dedicated to him. I also saw another temple there, dedicated to the Thasian Heracles; so I went on to Thasos. . . .'[16] Two thousand miles, remarks Forrest, on a point of comparative religion! This was one of the many subjects which stimulated Herodotus' spirit of enquiry; and, even if his identifications between the gods of different nations were facile, he did notice real parallels between Greek and oriental religious customs.

He also knew, even better than Hecataeus, that human habits form an essential part of both geography and history. He was the pioneer not only of history but of anthropology and enthnology. His description of the Argippaei of Scythia is a model specimen of field observation which brings race, language, institutions, appearance and diet into play.[17] No sort of curious fact is beneath his attention.[18] He is as interested in geology and agriculture and methods of fighting as he is careful to note physique and dress. And, although breed counts for a lot, he knows that custom does too. Each people has customs of its own, but even they are by no means immutable.[19]

Why does the Nile flood? Why were the Dodona priestesses called doves? That is the sort of question Herodotus asks. And if we want to know how the pyramids were built, why no wine jars are found in Egypt, why Persians have thin skulls and Egyptians thick ones, why Scythians climb trees to wait for the animals they are hunting, he will tell us. And the view that all these tales can be dismissed as pure romance is now out of date. Indeed, it is clear that he actually erred on the side of over-scepticism in doubting land crossings of the Sahara, and questioning circumnavigations of Africa when 'the sun is on the right hand'.[20] His description of the embalming of corpses by the Scythians has been dramatically confirmed by the discovery of royal tombs in the Kuban. His ants 'smaller than dogs but larger than foxes' seem to be marmots on the Tibetan border. His Amazons were some Asiatic people or other which possessed matriarchal customs. His 'river beyond the Sahara' was the middle Niger, filled with crocodiles that are vividly if inaccurately described. His long account of Egypt, though occasionally mythical, displays at many points the results of an acute and conscientious survey.

His sources for all this material were very mixed – personal observation, oral hearsay and tradition, literary sources and documents. Of

his personal observation it need only be repeated that this was the man who crossed the entire eastern Mediterranean to check a single fact. Yet he is characteristically modest about everything he was able to see. When enquiring into the sources of the Nile, he emphasises not so much that he journeyed nearly six hundred miles south of the Mediterranean, but that what happened farther on still is unknown to him except at secondhand. 'On this subject I could get no further information from anybody. I went as far as Elephantine to see what I could with my own eyes, but for the country still further south I had to be content with what I was told in answer to my questions.'[21] The conditions facing a traveller of the fifth century BC presented such almost inconceivable difficulties that the extent of Herodotus' journeyings and personal observations can scarcely be comprehended or credited. It is true that oral traditions were more extensive than we can easily appreciate since they continued to be handed down on a large scale even after writing had been introduced. Yet they were also incomplete, untrustworthy and contradictory. Herodotus cites verbal reports from forty Greek states and almost as many foreign countries. If he did not visit all these places himself, at least he deliberately questioned people from every one of them. It is hard to see how he managed to tackle this mass of oral material. We can only admire the stupendous achievement, and tentatively identify an occasional informant.[22]

Oral evidence was paramount, and it was best if it came from eyewitnesses; and the principle that their reports are the best substitute for personal observation remained a cardinal doctrine of historians. Literary sources were less important. They were not, probably, quite so sparse as our deficient knowledge leads us to suppose. Yet they were still extraordinarily meagre. 'The slender current of history', said F.M. Cornford, 'flashed only here and there a broken gleam through the tangled overgrowth of legend and gorgeous flowers of poetry'. Moreover, the consultation of any books at all, poetry or history, involved the most laborious unwindings and rewindings (p. 31). But eastern inscriptional records, archives and official chronicles and land surveys, are explicitly or implicitly referred to on a number of occasions.[23] It is because of all this material that the oriental sections of Herodotus' work are the richest in biography. These documents, in whatever form they became accessible to him, were also of assistance in helping to solve the appalling task of

achieving a relative chronology,[24] the job which Hecataeus had begun to tackle. But they were only of limited use to a writer whose whole work was the very denial of the official history which was all that the Mesopotamian and Persian civilisations had provided. And not much of this archive material related to Greece, where history was still mainly transmitted by word of mouth.

In the light of this situation Herodotus' choice of the Persian Wars as his theme was exceptionally audacious. Hard facts about the subject were desperately few. A whole generation had passed; his problem has been compared, fairly enough, with that of a modern journalist chasing an unpublished story thirty years old. Never has any practitioner of history had a more difficult task than its father.

It is therefore scarcely surprising that Herodotus' accounts of battles scarcely enable the reader to reconstruct what really happened. Apart perhaps from a little street fighting in Halicarnassus, he had no personal experience of warfare, and he is demonstrably far astray on strategies and numbers. The strength of Xerxes' army, for instance, is magnified as much as tenfold. Besides, detailed technical descriptions of battles were unsuitable for oral delivery. But he does show us what the men in the ranks thought was happening. Besides, granted that his accounts of the engagements are confused, so were the engagements themselves. After discovering what he could about them, he felt like Pierre Bezukhov in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* who found the battle of Borodino no set piece but a haphazard collection of struggling individuals. Yet Tolstoy converted the result into unforgettable pictures; and so did Herodotus.

For his desire to tell a good story came before everything else. This invites further reflection about his critical method. He believes his friends too much, he makes mistakes,[25] he includes a good deal against his better judgment – very often because, in a world where information was scarce, it seemed important that the evidence should be preserved. Divine causation gets in the way, and the story of Hippocleides is only one among many myths scattered throughout his work,[26] following classical patterns of epic, tragedy, folklore and romance. Yet, even if he did believe, like most of his successors, that the epic sagas are garbled history that only needs to be tidied up, he knows well enough that fifty-century wars were not caused by myths. He is also thoroughly well aware that ancient traditions defy

precise assessment.[27] After all, probability is often the best one can achieve (p. 44).

With few exceptions, he refuses to admit the physically impossible (p. 54).[28] And when presented with inadequate information he is fully conscious of its shortcomings. 'About the far west of Europe I have no definite information. . . . In spite of my efforts to do so, I have never found anyone who could give me first hand information about the existence of a sea beyond Europe to the north and west.'[29] Sometimes he has acquired several divergent accounts of an event or series of events. When that is the case, he makes a great effort to reach the truth: 'I could, if I wished, give three versions of Cyrus' history, all different from what follows. But I propose to base my account on those Persian authorities who seem to tell the simple truth about him without trying to exaggerate his exploits.'[30] Although the total dossier remains very sparse, alternative versions mount up in the later books.[31] But Herodotus remains just as careful. At a time when the historical approach had not been formulated, when it was still being formulated by himself, no one can read of his attitude to hearsay evidence without a feeling of exhilaration. No doubt such second-hand material was often the best that could be obtained, and 'My business is to record what people say. But I am by no means bound to believe it – and that may be taken to apply to this book as a whole.'[32] These are the words of good sense that went with a critical eye and ear.[33] There was no line of professional historians for Herodotus to draw upon. Yet his exceptionally intelligent and observant attitude to his material was what created the line of professionals which has continued from his day to ours.

Once this material had been acquired, his arrangement and presentation were very much his own. Employing a style of which the central features are speed and a comfortable expansive directness, he improved upon the writing of his forerunners and made prose into a fine art. The close connection he established between history and poetry stayed with historians throughout the ancient world. Modern historians are likely to find this relationship alien, or indeed incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the Histories of Herodotus are a work of subtle genius, displaying perfect control of the medium its author had selected. Some have seen him as an artist at perfect peace with the world. Others, more accurately, have detected beneath his

cheerful humour a certain fundamental pessimism and sadness. He did not survive to endure more than a fraction of the horrors of the Peloponnesian War. But he had lived through troubles enough. Moreover, he still suffered from the anxieties about divine interposition which some other men of his day were beginning to throw off. He was not only an entertainer but a deep and powerful thinker, though like Mozart he does not always get the credit for this. Herodotus ranks with the giants of his century: and, since that was the fifth century BC, there could be no higher praise. He must also have been a very nice man, kind, sympathetic and understanding.

People giving an account of ancient historical writing are faced with a difficult artistic problem. When one reflects upon Herodotus, it is impossible to imagine how anything to follow can fail to be anticlimax. This does not, in fact, prove to be the case. But it was very soon clear that no one could ever excel him in his own sort of history. And so a new sort had to be invented.

2

Thucydides