

**Zeitschrift:** Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique  
**Herausgeber:** Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'Antiquité classique  
**Band:** 52 (2006)

**Artikel:** Homer and the historians : the influence of epic narrative technique on Herodotus and Thucydides  
**Autor:** Rengakos, Antonios  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-660804>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 24.04.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## V

ANTONIOS RENGAKOS

HOMER AND THE HISTORIANS:  
THE INFLUENCE OF EPIC NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE  
ON HERODOTUS AND THUCYDIDES

Epic poetry is one of the main models for Greek historiography. Early forms of various historical concepts seem already to exist in archaic epic poetry — commonly cited examples being the “Greek national consciousness” and the “clash of East and West” — as do attempts to structure time and space in the narration (genealogy, geography, ethnography). Questions of causality, method, and truth appear also to be dealt with for the first time in the epic; and the prominence of military history, which became canonical from Thucydides onwards, has been correctly traced back to the choice of *klea andrôn* as the subject-matter of the epic. Last but not least, Greek historiography owes to epic a great number of striking literary-formal tools — one need only mention catalogues and *ecphrasis*-type descriptions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A pioneering work is F. CREUZER, *Die historische Kunst der Griechen in ihrer Entstehung und Fortbildung* (Leipzig-Darmstadt 21845). Cf. also Ed. SCHWARTZ, “Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichte bei den Hellenen” (1928), in *Gesammelte Schriften* I (Berlin 1938), 67-87; W. SCHADEWALDT, “Die Anfänge der Geschichtsschreibung bei den Griechen” (1934), in *Hellas und Hesperien* (Zürich-Stuttgart 1960), 395ff., esp. 399ff.; ID., *Tübinger Vorlesungen. Die Anfänge der Geschichtsschreibung bei den Griechen* (Frankfurt 1982), 81ff.; W. SCHMID-O. STÄHLIN, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* I 2 (München 1934), 643ff.; O. REGENBOGEN, “Herodot und sein Werk” (1930), in *Herodot. Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung*, ed. by W. MARG (Darmstadt 1965), 57-108, esp. 76ff.; H. STRASBURGER, *Die Wesensbestimmung der Geschichte durch die antike Geschichtsschreibung* (Wiesbaden 1966), 17, 24ff.; ID., *Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung* (Heidelberg 1972).

But all these similarities in ideas, methods, language, style, themes or motifs are of secondary importance, for what actually had a far deeper influence on Herodotus, to turn to the father of historiography first, was epic narrative technique.<sup>2</sup> There was only one model Herodotus could look to for the composition and structure of the purely narrative parts of his historical work, and this was the Homeric epic, a continuous narrative of comparable extent. Herodotus' predecessors, the so-called *logographoi*, in particular Hecataeus of Miletus, the most important of them, lacked the capacity to see the object of narration as something coherent, to visualize events in causal terms, and make associations between actions involving different agents and taking place in different locations. While Herodotus was not the first practitioner of the art of narration, he was certainly the first to structure the events he narrated in terms of larger groupings and to map the ramifications of these events across several generations.<sup>3</sup> His predecessors should actually be seen as the heirs to the non-narrative tradition of didactic epic, which goes back to Hesiod and whose primary aim was the transmission of information. Herodotus' imitation of Homer was not lost on Thucydides, who largely followed him in this respect — as for that matter did all subsequent ancient historians.

The clearest indication of the legacy of the epic in historiography is the use of the third narrative mode, which combines the two other modes, to wit simple narration (*diegesis*) and *mimesis* or dramatic reproduction of speeches, a combination which Plato viewed as a fundamental component of Homeric poetry (*Republic* 3, 392 c-394 b). Another borrowing from epic is the

<sup>2</sup> L. HUBER, "Herodots Homerverständnis", in *Synusia. Festgabe für Wolfgang Schadewaldt*, ed. by H. FLASHAR-K. GAISER (Pfullingen 1965), 29-52; H. ERBSE, *Studien zum Verständnis Herodots* (Berlin 1992), and I. DE JONG, "Aspects narratologiques des *Histoires* d'Hérodote", in *Lalies. Actes des sessions de linguistique et de littérature* 19 (1999), 217-275; C.W. FORNARA, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1983), 31; O. LENDLE, *Einführung in die griechische Geschichtsschreibung* (Darmstadt 1992), 62.

<sup>3</sup> C. MEIER, *Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen* (Frankfurt 1980), 327.

description of characters' mental processes, in other words the narration of their thoughts, feelings, experiences, motives and intentions, or "internal focalisation" in the terminology of Genette.<sup>4</sup> These two characteristics of ancient historiography, the mixed narrative mode and the reporting of mental processes, have long been identified as part of the legacy of epic in the genre. However, the influence of Homer goes far deeper, above all in terms of the temporal aspect of the narration, upon which I shall be focusing in the next section. The issue of the temporal structuring of the narration needs to be investigated in the context of a more general inquiry into Homer's — and Herodotus' and Thucydides' — narrative strategies, i.e. the methods by which poets and historians sought to awaken the interest of their audience and to steer it in specific directions.

## I

Narration by definition is based on a temporal sequence of events, and thus the representation of time is a constitutive aspect of narrative texts. The basic form of every narrative is an "...and then...", yet in the earliest two, monumental narrative texts of Western literature, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which do not begin *ab ovo* but *in medias res*, the monotonous sequence of events is torn apart, interrupted, altered or even completely annulled in various ways. Upon closer inspection, the seemingly very linear plot of the *Iliad* reveals a complex and masterful manipulation of time in narrative. I shall mention just one example, the so-called "reverberation or *doppelte Zeitlichkeit*" in the first eight books of the epic, that is, the way in which the past nine years of the war are mirrored in the first few of the 51

<sup>4</sup> H. MONTGOMERY, *Gedanke und Tat. Zur Erzählungstechnik bei Herodot, Thukydides, Xenophon und Arrian* (Lund 1965); C. SCHNEIDER, *Information und Absicht bei Thukydides. Untersuchung zur Motivation des Handelns* (Göttingen 1974).

days of the tenth year that the dramatic time of the epic actually covers.<sup>5</sup> The achievement of the poet of the *Odyssey* is equally impressive: the gradual convergence of the two strands of the story, the adventures of Odysseus and the Telemachy, is effected with astonishing dexterity and the background material is artfully distributed throughout various parts of the first half of the epic. The most remarkable examples are the great flashback of the so-called *Apologoi*, Odysseus' long narration at the court of Alcinoüs, and the complex embedding of various temporal levels in the digressions.

If one examines it carefully, Herodotus' treatment of time in the *Histories* turns out to be equally complex, despite the apparently chronographical arrangement of the material. Roland Barthes, one of the founders of modern narrative theory, has fittingly described it as "histoire en zigzags ou en dents de scie".<sup>6</sup> The parallel between the first historical work of Western literature and the *Odyssey* with its intricate structure has been drawn many times and is particularly appropriate. Their basic structural pattern is strikingly similar: in both cases, two strands of the story which are initially presented separately converge in the last third of the work: in the *Odyssey*, the so-called Telemachy and the adventures of Odysseus finally converge in book 15, and in a similar way the primary and secondary strands of Herodotus' *Histories* — the history of Persia and the history of Greece, the latter initially presented as a series of excursuses — only mesh in book 6. Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* also exhibits a complex temporal structure, though to a lesser extent

<sup>5</sup> W. KULLMANN, *Die Quellen der Ilias* (Wiesbaden 1960), 367; J. LATACZ, *Homer. Der erste Dichter des Abendlands* (Düsseldorf 2003), 161ff. A. RENGAKOS, "Die Argonautika und das 'kyklische Gedicht'. Bemerkungen zur Erzähltechnik des griechischen Epos", in *Antike Literatur in neuer Deutung*, ed. by A. BIERL, A. SCHMITT, A. WILLI (Leipzig 2004), 277ff.

<sup>6</sup> R. BARTHES, "Le discours de l'histoire" (1967), in *Le bruissement de la langue. Essais critiques IV* (Paris 1984), 166; cf. also Ch.-O. CARBONELL, "L'espace et le temps dans l'oeuvre d'Hérodote", in *Storia della storiografia* 7 (1985), 138-149; P. PAYEN, "Comment résister à la conquête? Temps, espace et récit chez Hérodote", in *REG* 108 (1995), 308-338.

and only in the first book; the remainder of the work has aptly been likened to the more linear *Iliad*.<sup>7</sup>

Can more specific aspects of the temporal structure of both epics be found in the work of Herodotus or Thucydides? Before addressing this question, a few observations on the overall temporal structure of the two historical works are in order. The primary borrowing from the Homeric epics in the case of both historians is the following intricate and intriguing technique: by employing foreshadowing and harking back at judiciously chosen points in the narrative, they manage to expand the temporal scope of their work considerably. The *Iliad* represents the entire Trojan War and the *Odyssey*, the *nostoi* of the Achaean leaders, including that of Odysseus, beginning with the departure of the expedition for Troy. Likewise the scope of Herodotus' narrative is not limited to the narrowly-defined subject-matter of his work, the war between the Greeks and Persians, but encompasses both the recent and more distant past of all the major nations of the then known world.<sup>8</sup> Either explicitly or in subtle, indirect ways, Herodotus regularly alludes to events beyond the temporal limits of his work, namely the final shifting of the theatre of operations to Asia Minor in the winter of 479/478 BC. In a very similar fashion, the *Iliad* contains constant foreshadowings of the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy, both of which came after the death of Hector. In the final three books of his work, Herodotus uses the Persian conquests as a discreet foil for the imperialism of the Athenians in the fifty years leading up to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> S. HORNBLOWER, "Narratology and Narrative Techniques in Thucydides", in *Greek Historiography*, ed. by S. H. (Oxford 1994), 131-166, esp. 140; M. STERNBERG, "Telling in Time (I): Chronology and Narrative Theory", in *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 922ff.

<sup>8</sup> I. DE JONG, "The Anachronical Structure of Herodotus' *Histories*", in *Texts, Ideas, and the Classics*, ed. by S.J. HARRISON (Oxford 2001), 93-116, esp. 96f.

<sup>9</sup> J. MOLES, "Herodotus warns the Athenians", in *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 9 (1996), 259-284 and most recently ID., "Herodotus and Athens", in *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* ed. by E. BAKKER-I. DE JONG-H. VAN WEES (Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002), 33-52.

Thucydides for his part begins his work with a brief overview of early Greek history and then goes on to describe the events which directly preceded the outbreak of the war, in the so-called Archaeology. Later, though, in the *Pentecontaetia* excursus of the first book, he links his work to that of Herodotus by means of an extended flashback covering fifty years.

## II

The similarity between epic and historiography is even more striking when it comes to the narration of simultaneous events.<sup>10</sup> This is a major problem for any narrative, but Homer came up with a superb solution in the so-called 'desultory method', which works as follows: he describes action A until it becomes stable, then puts it aside and starts to describe action B. When the latter in its turn becomes stable, he returns to A, and so on and so forth. As is well-known, synchronicity permeates the macrostructure of the Homeric epic, especially the *Odyssey*. The two strands of the epic, the Telemachy and Odysseus' adventures, are repeatedly suspended and become interlocked many times over.<sup>11</sup> The interlocking primarily serves to generate meaning, as it were: Homer wants to stress the simultaneity of the two strands of the story, that is to say he strives to show that both strands are leading simultaneously to the same goal, the reunion of father and son. The two characters gradually approach each other, their actions becoming increasingly interwoven. These processes are also highlighted by the gradually-decreasing size of the passages that narrate the two strands of the story.

<sup>10</sup> A. RENGAKOS, "Zeit und Gleichzeitigkeit in den homerischen Epen", in *Antike und Abendland* 41 (1995), 1-33, with bibliography; ID., "Zur Zeitstruktur der Odyssee", in *WS* 111 (1998), 45-66.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. E. SIEGMANN, *Homer. Vorlesungen über die Odyssee* (Würzburg 1987), 135ff. Cf. also I. DE JONG, "Developments in Narrative Technique in the *Odyssey*", in *Epea pteroenta. Beiträge zur Homerforschung. Festschrift für Wolfgang Kullmann*, ed. by M. REICHEL-A. RENGAKOS (Stuttgart 2002), 77-91.

Even a cursory examination of the three last books of the *Histories* shows that Herodotus is also a master of the art of narrating simultaneous events, and that he has been schooled in this by his epic predecessor. The task Herodotus set himself was to give a vivid description of the approach of the Persian army and the simultaneous response of the Greeks to this, and he too uses the 'desultory method' to achieve his goal, switching the focus of his narration between the two adversaries. In 7.1-137 we follow the advance of Xerxes' forces until they reach Therme in Macedonia. Chapters 138-178 tell us about the preparations the Greeks were making in the meantime. Successive sections describe the battles at Thermopylae (chs. 179-239) and Artemision (8.1-25). Like Homer in the *Odyssey*, Herodotus gradually decreases the size of the passages that narrate each strand of the story in order to illustrate how the two sides come nearer and nearer to each other until they meet in the decisive sea-battle at Salamis: after 8.23, the next 16 chapters are devoted to the Persian side, and the following 10 to the Greek. Another 5 chapters for each side, and then another 2, bring us to the account of the sea-battle in ch. 73. The frequent switching from the Persian to the Greek side and vice versa serves to stress the close interdependence of the actions of the two sides. Two sequences of events that have been running in parallel up to this point now gradually converge, the Greek victory finally bringing them together.

But it was Thucydides who elevated the method just discussed to the status of a governing principle in his historical work.<sup>12</sup> Both ancient critics and modern scholars have repeatedly taken the historian to task for obscuring the sequence of

<sup>12</sup> Cf. A.W. GOMME, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History*, Sather Classical Lectures 26 (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1954), 127ff.; J. DE ROMILLY, *Histoire et raison chez Thucydide* (Paris 1956), 56ff.; E. DELEBECQUE, *Thucydide et Alcibiade* (Aix-en-Provence 1965); C. DEWALD, *Taxis. The Organization of Thucydides' History, Books II-VIII* (Berkeley 1975); W.R. CONNOR, *Thucydides* (Princeton 1984), 219ff.; H. ERBSE, *Thukydides-Interpretationen* (Berlin-New York 1989), 42ff.; T. ROOD, *Thucydides. Narrative and Explanation* (Oxford 1998), 120ff.

events through excessive, annalistic segmentation into summers and winters, and even within the framework of these relatively short periods of time, Thucydides very often interrupts the narration in order to provide information about events that were taking place somewhere else in the meantime. The third book, which has been often criticized in this respect, is a fine example of this practice. The account of the Mytilenean revolt of 427 in the first 26 chapters of this book is interrupted no less than four times so that Thucydides can report events that were taking place in other theatres of operations in Western Greece, Attica and Boeotia. The same method is employed even in the brief account of the *Pentecontaetia* excursus of the first book. The expedition of the Athenians to Egypt (from 460 BC), which takes up chapters 104-110, is narrated in parallel with the Aegina war (460-56) and the battles at Oenoe (460), Tanagra and Oinophyta (457). It is obvious that this choice cannot only be meant to provide a more precise chronological framework, as has often been argued; rather, the consciously-employed technique is intended to impress upon the reader the explosive energy of the Athenians during the *Pentecontaetia* and the Peloponnesian War. To give some other notable examples: in the second part of book 4 the focus alternates between Brasidas' expedition against the Athenian allies in Northern Greece and the unsuccessful operations of the Athenians in Boeotia. Similarly, the end of book 6 and the beginning of 7 are devoted to an account of the precarious position in which Syracuse found itself as a result of the Athenian siege and to the journey and arrival of the Spartan Gylippus who rushed to the city's aid. Again, the historian's use of the 'desultory method' is particularly effective at generating meaning. In the case of book 4, Thucydides emphasizes the thoughtlessness of the Athenians: had they reacted in time, they could have stopped Brasidas' advance with a fraction of the forces engaged in Boeotia. In the case of book 6, he underscores Syracuse's last-minute, narrow escape in a highly dramatic fashion.

## III

The technique by which Homer and the ancient historians awakened and sustained the interest of their audience best illustrates the close relationship between epic and historical narrative; we may safely label it "epic suspense".<sup>13</sup> Contrary to what was commonly accepted until a few years ago, the epic poet constantly endeavours to generate and sustain suspense, especially anticipatory suspense as to how the action will unfold, known as "*Spannung auf das Wie*". By contrast, suspense as to how the narrative will end, or "*Spannung auf das Was*", commonly used in the modern novel, is foreign to the epic since the conclusion of the story is fixed in the tradition. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* in the case of historical works because they too deal with events whose sequence and outcome are known in advance. In the two Homeric epics suspense is achieved by four means: a) retardation in its three forms, i.e. interruption of the plot, deceleration of its pace and temporary reversal of its direction, b) step-by-step clarification of the course of action, c) 'dramatic irony', which stems from the contrast between the knowing audience and the ignorant characters in the epic (or the contrast between knowing and ignorant characters), and d) intentional misleading ('misdirection') of the audience by the poet.<sup>14</sup>

Retardation is used mainly in the *Iliad* while misleading of the audience is common to both epics. 'Misdirection' is brought about by means of major discrepancies between predictions about important events and what actually occurs. In the *Iliad*, for example, this method is used to generate suspense about the

<sup>13</sup> A. RENGAKOS, "Spannungsstrategien in den homerischen Epen", in *Euphrosyne. Studies in Ancient Epic and Its Legacy in Honor of D.N. Maronitis*, ed. by J.N. KAZAZIS—A. RENGAKOS (Stuttgart 1999), 308-338; also still important is G.E. DUCKWORTH, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (Princeton 1933).

<sup>14</sup> J.V. MORRISON, *Homeric Misdirection. False Predictions in the Iliad* (Ann Arbor 1992).

scale of the victory, guaranteed by Zeus' promise to Thetis, which the Trojans will achieve before Achilles sends Patroclus to battle in his place. In the *Odyssey* it is primarily Athena, the protector of both Telemachus and Odysseus himself, who functions as the poet's agent. The goddess' announcements and admonitions to both heroes, which also outline to the audience the subsequent development of the plot, are in most cases misleading.

I shall now focus exclusively on how Herodotus generates epic suspense in his work, examining in more detail the techniques of retardation, dramatic irony and misdirection of the audience which the historian uses in the so-called Xerxes *logos*, i.e. books 7-9.

Retardation<sup>15</sup> in all three of its varieties (interruption, deceleration and temporary reversal of the direction of the narrative) is particularly in evidence in this part of the work.

i) Especially effective is the strikingly slow pace of the narrative in the first of the three Xerxes books, the account of the Persian army's long march from Asia Minor to the borders of Thessaly. Every place, river or mountain crossed by Xerxes' army is listed with meticulous care, multifarious notes are inserted and, in short but elaborate scenes, detailed descriptions and catalogues follow one after another: the historian uses every means at his disposal to suggest the image of a huge, unstoppable wave surging in from the East.<sup>16</sup> In this long and relatively uneventful stretch of the narrative (from 7.1 to ch.138, 65 pages of text in the *OCT* edition), not a word is said about the reaction of the Greeks, who are thus cast in the role of silent and powerless spectators.

ii) In the introductory part of book 7, retardation is achieved not only via the slow pace of the narrative but also by means of

<sup>15</sup> For a definition of "retardation" see M. REICHEL, "Retardationstechniken in der *Ilias*", in *Der Übergang von der Mündlichkeit zur Literatur bei den Griechen*, ed. by W. KULLMANN-M. REICHEL (Tübingen 1990), 127.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. POHLENZ, *Herodot. Der erste Geschichtschreiber des Abendlandes* (Leipzig 1937), 129; also A. BAUER, *Die Entstehung des herodotischen Geschichtswerkes* (Wien 1878), 162.

various scenes, catalogues and similar digressions which interrupt the plot. The most important of these 'stationary points' in the Herodotean narrative is the first detailed scene of the Xerxes *logos*, right at the start of book 7, the session of the royal council in which the Great King himself announces his decision to wage war upon the Greeks in a lengthy speech (7.8 a-d 2). Mardonius then delivers an inflammatory speech against the Greeks (ch. 9), after which Artabanus speaks against the war (ch.10). This is followed by Xerxes' outraged retort (ch.11) and the famous account of the triple dream (chs. 12-19) which finally convinces the now wavering Xerxes, as well as the sceptical Artabanus, of the necessity of war.

Two further extensive non-narrative digressions occur immediately after the departure of the Persian army: they form the so-called second *prooimion* (20.2-21) where, in a manner that was to become canonical in ancient historiography, Herodotus emphasizes the magnitude and scope of Xerxes' enterprise, chiefly by comparing it with earlier expeditions. In addition, the historian is particularly interested in certain technical aspects of the Persian preparations for the expedition, namely the construction of the Athos canal, the Strymon bridge and storehouses, which he describes in detail (22-25). The passage of the Persian army from Asia to Europe (ch. 54-55) gives occasion for a new 'stationary point' in the narrative, the historian emphasizing it with the extensive conversations which Xerxes has with Artabanus (ch. 46-52) and Demaratus (ch. 101-104) as well as with the lengthy cataloguing of the Persian army (59.2-99, on the occasion of the inspection of troops at Doriskus). Thus the advance of the immense Persian force pauses at the gates of Europe for more than 24 pages of text.

iii) The third variety of retardation, temporary reversal of the direction of the narrative, is employed twice at the beginning of book 7, albeit in a relatively short stretch of the narrative. Immediately after Xerxes becomes king, we learn that he initially had no intention of attacking Greece (7.5.1). Only after the first speech of Mardonius, the pressure applied by the exiled Alevads

and Peisistratids and the falsification of the oracles of Musaeus by Onomacritus does the Great King eventually change his mind (7.5.2-6). The royal council mentioned above also provides occasion for a surprising reversal of the direction of the narrative: following the decision to go to war, Xerxes decides before going to sleep not to attack Greece after all (7.12.1); but an apparition which comes to him in a dream then attempts to persuade him not to abort the expedition (12.2). The next morning the king announces his decision not to go to war (13), but the apparition revisits him in a second dream and threatens him with the loss of his power (14). A third dream, in which Artabanus is visited by the apparition, finally leads to the decision to attack Greece (15-18). Clearly the main purpose of the dreamed apparitions is to show that the destiny of a man who commits *hybris* cannot be escaped. Nevertheless, the dramatic effect produced by the portrayal of the Great King struggling against the war is extremely powerful.

#### IV

Retardation is not the only means by which Herodotus builds up suspense in his Xerxes *logos*; the interest of the audience is also intensified by misdirection, a concept whose deployment in a historical work might at first sight seem inappropriate. By 'misdirection' I mean all those narrative techniques which result in the audience wondering 'how?' with increasing urgency. In the course of his account of Xerxes' expedition Herodotus systematically brings to the fore a host of elements which at first seem to hint at a Persian victory — the opposite of what eventually happens, in other words. By doing this, however, Herodotus constantly confronts his audience with the question of how the Greek victory could have happened under the circumstances he recounts.

To achieve his goal, Herodotus starts by describing the Persian preparations for war in exhaustive detail. When illustrating

the might of the Persians the historian does not merely report the numerical superiority of the invading force but instead subtly heightens his audience's suspense about the five decisive battles of the war by providing all sorts of information at carefully selected points in book 7. For example, he compares the invasion of Greece with famous expeditions of the past, describes the engineering works ordered by the Persian high command, lists the numerous contingents of the army with their multifarious geographical origins and special weaponry and discusses complex logistical problems.

Right at the beginning of the Xerxes *logos* we are told of Darius' impressive preparations for the campaign against the Greeks (7.1.2): "he lost no time in sending messengers around to the towns and cities with instructions to raise an army; every community was required to provide considerably more men than they had before, as well as ships, horses, supplies, and transport vessels. Asia was in turmoil for 3 years as a result of these demands...". The preparations of his successor Xerxes are described in much greater detail (19.2-25): the prelude is the abovementioned second *prooimion* (20.2-21), which compares Xerxes' expedition with famous campaigns of the past (Darius' attack on the Scythians, the Scythian invasion of Asia Minor, the expedition of the Achaeans against Troy etc.) and ends with the historian's tempestuous rhetorical questions: "After all, was there any Asian people he did not lead against Greece? And was there any source of water, apart from huge rivers, they did not drink dry?" In what follows we learn all kinds of technical details about the Athos canal, the preparations for the construction of bridges and store-houses (22-25) and are then given a very detailed description of the construction of the Hellespont bridge (34-37.1); after this we read a short note about the royal escort (ch. 41) and an Iliadic catalogue of the Persian army and fleet giving the ethnic origin of the people in each contingent, the name of their leader and information about their weapons (59.2-99). At a later stage we learn of the tremendous burden imposed upon the European cities which hosted the Persian

army (118-120) and of the immense stretch of coast-line occupied by the Persian camp at Therma (127.1) and, just before the first battles at Artemision and Thermopylae, the mightiness of the still-intact Persian army (184-187), with an estimated total of 5.283.220 men, is detailed.

The powerful threat posed by Xerxes' army is further confirmed by Herodotus' accounts of the first Persian successes and of the various manifestations of Persian self-confidence, which also serve to mislead the audience, increasing suspense by making them wonder whether a Greek victory is possible despite the superiority of the barbarians. For instance, the historian often stresses the fact that Xerxes "conscripted everyone ... into his army" (7.108.1): in ch. 110 he mentions all Thracians except the Satrians, in 115.2 the nations inhabiting Pangaion. The Persian feeling of superiority is apparent from Xerxes' excursion into the Tempe valley (7.128-30), which gives the impression that he is just taking a walk through Greece, and from the freeing of the Greek spies which is mentioned soon afterwards (7.146-47). Note too the horse races that the king organizes between his own and the Thessalian cavalry, the best in Greece (7.196; the result: "the Greek horses were easily beaten"), or the measures taken by the Persians in the sea-battle of Artemision to prevent the Greeks from fleeing immediately (8.6.2: "However, they decided that this was not the time to make a frontal assault, in case the Greeks turned and fled at the sight of them coming, and night came down while they were trying to escape. If that happened, the Greeks would presumably get away, but as far as the Persians were concerned no one, not even a fire-bearer, should escape alive."). The Persians' confidence that they will soon be victorious is not only shared by their Greek subjects, the Ionians; even the historian himself views it as fully justified (8.10.1-2): "When Xerxes' troops and their commanders saw the small number of Greek ships bearing down on them, they were certain that the Greeks must have gone mad. They too put to sea, expecting an easy victory — *not an unreasonable hope, since they could see that their ships far outnumbered*

*the Greeks' and were more manoeuvrable too.* And so they confidently set about encircling the Greek fleet. However, some of the Ionians in the Persian fleet, who were pro-Greek and had joined the expedition against their will, were very concerned at the sight of the Greeks being surrounded. They were sure that, given the apparent weakness of the Greek forces, none of them would return home".

In book 7 the motif of the "dried-up river" occurs frequently, suggesting that the huge Persian force descended on Greece like some natural disaster. I have already mentioned the rhetorical question in the so-called second prooemium ("was there any source of water, apart from huge rivers, they did not drink dry?"), and this anticipates the dried-up river motif which makes its first appearance at 7.43.1: "When the army reached the Scamander, which was the first river they had come across since leaving Sardis and setting out on their journey that failed to provide enough water for the men and animals and that they drank dry", etc. Reports of this type, that this or that river failed, appear time and time again in what follows and are often phrased in a very similar way: the Black River (58.3) and a lake in the region of the Thasians in Thrace (109.2), the river Echeidorus in Therma (127.2), the river Onochonus in Thessaly, and the river Epidanus in Achaëa (196.2), which all but dried up. Herodotus also brings the dried-up river motif into his calculation of the size of the Persian army (187.1): "In short, it does not surprise me in the slightest that the waters of some rivers should have failed; what I find far more astonishing is the logistics of feeding all those tens of thousands of people."

What is said about the reaction of the Greeks to the Persian attack also contributes significantly to the build-up of suspense via the technique of 'misdirection'. Especially noteworthy is the Greeks' defence plan (chapters 138ff.), which Herodotus describes after the first part of book 7, which deals exclusively with the Persian advance. In a council of war at the Isthmus the Greeks, who have resolved to fight against the barbarians, make three decisions (145.1ff.): first, "to lay aside all mutual antago-

nism and end any wars that were currently being fought among themselves"; second, "to send spies to Asia to keep an eye on Persian affairs" and, third, to dispatch embassies to Argos, Sicily, Corcyra and Crete in order to forge an alliance against the Persians. While Herodotus allots just one sentence to informing us that the first part of this defence plan, the putting aside of all internal feuds, was successfully implemented (146.1), we are given a lot more detail about the failure of the other two parts.

The Greek intelligence mission to Asia (146-147) turns into a farce and ultimately serves to re-emphasize Xerxes' superiority and confidence in his own victory. The Greeks who have been sent to spy on the Great King's army in Sardeis are captured and sentenced to death, but when Xerxes learns of this, he sets them free and allows them to continue their reconnaissance before returning to Greece, reckoning that Greek intelligence about the Persian preparations will play to his advantage, i.e. that if the Greeks are convinced of the Persians' superiority, they will not resist. The anecdote about Xerxes seeing Greek merchant ships bound for Aegina and the Peloponnese crossing the Hellespont (147.2) also suggests his certainty about victory: he lets the ships pass, reasoning that, with the crushing of the Greek resistance imminent, it is the Persian army that will soon be profiting from their cargo.

The attempts of the Greek allies to secure the assistance of other Greek forces failed miserably. As Herodotus explains in 148-171, none of those asked by the allies for help was willing to stand up for the freedom of Greece. In Argos, the first state the allies turned to, the embassy immediately met with a rebuff (148-152), and Herodotus counts Argos among those who adopted a position of neutrality — and, as he puts it, "if I may speak bluntly here, remaining neutral was the same as collaborating with the Persians" (8.73.3). Herodotus goes into even greater detail about how Gelon came to power and the fruitless negotiations which the Greek embassy to Sicily had with the tyrant, who, as the historian has already remarked at 7.145.2, had "enormous resources, far greater than those available to any-

one else in Greece" (cf. 156.3). The length of the section on Gelon undoubtedly emphasizes the fact that the Greeks bitterly regretted his unwillingness to help, for he had the ability (158.4) to raise 20,000 hoplites, 2,000 horse, 6,000 lightly armed soldiers and a fleet of 200 ships (more than half of the Greek fleet at Salamis!); the modest Greek army which subsequently advanced to Thessaly (approximately 10,000 hoplites; 173.2) pales in comparison with such forces. Corcyra and Crete, the other two Greek powers whose help the allies attempted to secure, also declined the invitation to join the Greek camp.

In the last three books of the *Histories*, the Greeks' fear of the advancing Persians is mentioned in many passages and is another striking way by which Herodotus brings about misdirection with regard to the reactions of the Greeks. Recurrent and conspicuous (it appears in a total of 16 passages), the fear motif clearly indicates that the narrator intends to mislead the audience: since the motif occurs before major Greek victories, the audience probably perceives these victories as totally unexpected.

Some of the 16 passages in question are part of the section on the Greek reaction to the Persian invasion which I referred to above. The tone is set by Herodotus' conclusion in 7.138.2 that "other Greeks had not given these tokens of submission and so were terrified, first because there were not enough ships in Greece to confront the Persian advance, and second because most of them did not want to take an active part in the war, and were therefore eagerly collaborating with the Persians". The Greek ambassadors to Gelon also justify their fear that Greece will fall to the Persians with the same arguments (157.2) and the tyrant himself thinks that the Greeks may not be able to withstand the onslaught of the barbarians (163.1), an opinion also shared by the Corcyreans (168.2: "they did not anticipate a Greek victory but expected that the Persians would easily win and would gain control over the whole of Greece"). So it is not surprising that the Greek force which advanced to Thessaly to confront the Persians retreated as soon as the envoys of Alexan-

der, the king of Macedonia, advised them "to pack up and leave the pass without waiting to be trampled underfoot by the advancing army". As Herodotus himself remarks, "the deciding factor was fear, induced by the fact that they had found out that there was another route into Thessaly from inland Macedonia" (173.3-4). Finally, the Delphians consulted the god "because they were frightened about their own future and that of Greece as a whole" (178.1). In the short section dealing with the preparation of the Greeks (chapters 132ff.), the fear motif appears no less than seven times, as it were setting the tone for the beginning of hostilities in chs. 179ff.

Fear and an almost instinctive tendency to flee are the dominant characteristics of the Greeks in every major battle. The Greek fleet, which is stationed near Artemision, retreats to the south towards Chalcis immediately after the first skirmish, in which the Persians destroy three Greek ships (183.1: "The news made the Greeks afraid and they changed their anchorage from Artemision to Chalcis."). As Xerxes draws near the narrow path at Thermopylae, the fearful Greeks prepare to flee (207; here, as at 178.2 and 183.1, Herodotus uses the strong verb *katarrhōdeō* [cf. *arrhōdiē* in 173.4]). After the battle of Thermopylae the Greek navy, which has regrouped near Artemision, prepares to flee once again (8.4.1: "when the Greeks stationed at Artemision saw how many ships were moored at Aphetæ and saw Persian troops spread out everywhere, they were terrified [another use of *katarrhōdêsantes!*], because this was not the condition they had expected the Persians to be in, after the storm"). The fleet is only persuaded to stay at Artemision when Themistocles bribes both Eurybiades and Adeimantos on behalf of the Euboeans, although one would certainly have expected it to flee, as the Persians evidently do (6.2): "the Persians decided that this was not the time to make a frontal assault, in case the Greeks turned and fled at the sight of them coming, and night came down while they were trying to escape. If that happened, the Greeks would presumably get away, but as far as the Persians were concerned no one, not even a fire-bearer, should escape

alive". Immediately after the sea-battle at Artemision the historian observes stereotypically in 8.18 that the Greeks "had been badly mauled (especially the Athenians, half of whose ships were damaged) and decided to retreat down into Greece". This manoeuvre of the Greek navy is again characterized as "fleeing" soon afterwards in 23.1: "a man from Histiaea sailed over to the Persians and told them that the Greeks had escaped from Artemision".

The fear motif is also prominent in the account of the sea-battle at Salamis, in which the Greeks scored their most decisive victory. Five times the Greeks are about to flee, above all after the devastation of Attica (8.56.1): "When news of the events on the Athenian Acropolis reached the Greeks on Salamis, they were so panic-stricken that some of the commanders did not even wait for a final decision on the proposal about what action to take, but rushed for their ships and began to hoist their sails with the intention of beating a hasty retreat". Their fear lasts until the eve of the sea-battle. While the Persian fleet is *en route* to Salamis and readying itself to engage the enemy on the following day, "the Greeks were seized by terror. The Peloponnesians were particularly afraid, because there they were on Salamis, about to fight for Athenian territory, and if they lost the battle they would be trapped and blockaded on an island, leaving their own territory undefended" (70.2). The same motif appears in 74.1: "so the Greeks at the Isthmus undertook the task of building a defensive wall, because the race they were running was an all-or-nothing-affair, and because they did not expect great things from the fleet. Although their colleagues on Salamis heard what they were doing, it did not alleviate their fear (which was for the Peloponnese rather than for themselves)". Soon these fears bring out the typical Greek tendency to flee (75.1-2): Themistocles dispatches Sikinnos to the Great King and informs him that "the Greeks are in a state of panic and are planning to retreat". There are two versions of the beginning of the battle of Salamis, an Athenian account and an alternative which Herodotus reproduces without revealing its ori-

gin. According to the Athenian account, the battle began as the Greek fleet attempted to flee but its flight was interrupted by a chance event, while the alternative account has it that a miraculous apparition of a woman harshly reprimanded the Greeks with the taunt "fools, when are you going to stop retreating?" (84.2).

After Artemision, Thermopylae and Salamis, Plataea is the fourth battle before which the Greeks experience fear of their adversaries. After the Macedonian king Alexander has revealed Mardonius' plan to attack the next morning to the Greeks, "Pausanias became afraid of the Persians" (9.46.1). He proceeds to shift the positions of the Greek forces so that the Athenians will face the Persians, but the stratagem is foiled by the corresponding repositioning of Mardonius' forces and thus the adversaries end up resuming their original positions. Mardonius then taunts the Spartans: "you've already pulled back and left your post" (48.2); later he tells the Thessalian leaders accompanying him that "the Lacedaemonians never flee from battle, you told me. Their military prowess is unsurpassed... You've already seen them swapping their positions around, and now, as we can all see, they have used the cover of darkness last night to run away" (58.2). The fear induced in the Lacedaemonians by the Persian cavalry is also mentioned in 56.2.

## V

The third technique which Herodotus uses to increase suspense is 'dramatic irony', employed frequently in the last three books. As suggested above, 'dramatic irony' ensues from the discrepancy between the knowledge of the audience and the ignorance of the main characters in the Xerxes *logos*. This ignorance primarily manifests itself in book 7, through a multitude of cross-references (*Fernbeziehungen*) to events described subsequently. These references take the form of predictions which are put into the mouths of Persians for the most part and bring to

the fore the false expectations of the attackers. Another series of predictions is included in the speeches of characters who function as typical Herodotean warning figures — whose warnings always go unheeded, as is stereotypically the case with such figures. The first warning of this kind is given in the royal council at the beginning of book 7. The almost prophetic speech of Artabanus, which, as we shall see, accurately predicts future events in many respects, provides a remarkable foil to the blindness of Mardonius and Xerxes. The latter's programmatic speech in 7.8 is characterized by reckless arrogance throughout: he aspires to world domination (8.1ff.: "We will make Persian territory end only at the sky, the domain of Zeus, so that the sun will not shine on any land beyond our borders. With your help I will sweep through the whole of Europe and make all lands into a single land"; the essence of this statement is repeated in 50.4 and 54.2) and believes that he is the agent of divine will (8.1: "It is the god who steers us in this direction, and so we prosper as we follow his guidance time and again"). What he actually names as the cause of his decision, revenge on the Athenians, ironically reveals the limit of his enterprise (8.2: "I will not rest until I have captured Athens and put it to the torch. The Athenians were the original aggressors against me and my father").

Likewise, Mardonius' incendiary speech against the Greeks (7.9), which falsely predicts the outcome of the war, contains an assertion which will repeatedly turn out to be completely off the mark: he threatens that, should the Greeks wish to fight the Persians, they will learn that "when it comes to military matters there is no one in the world to match us". Three subsequent passages, one apiece in the accounts of the battles at Thermopylae, Salamis and Plataea, hark back to this assertion and reveal the emptiness of Mardonius' boasting. After the first failed Persian attacks against the Greeks we hear in 7.210.2 that "they made it plain to everyone, however and above all to the king himself, that although he had plenty of troops, he did not have many men" and in 211.3 "the Lacedaemonians made it quite clear

that they were the experts, and that they were fighting against amateurs". At 8.68 Artemisia advises the Great King not to engage the Greeks in the narrows of Salamis "because at sea your men will be as far inferior to the Greeks as women are to men". Xerxes is soon forced to reach the same conclusion (8.88.3): "My men have turned into women and my women into men!". Finally, in the account of the climax of the battle of Plataea, Herodotus makes the following remark (9.92.3): "In courage and strength the Persians and the Greeks were evenly matched, but the Persians wore no armour; besides, they did not have the skill and expertise of their opponents." Needless to say, both Thermopylae and Plataea correspond exactly to the advice that Mardonius offers to the "thoughtless" Greeks in his speech (7.9.2): instead of fighting on level ground where even the victors suffer heavy losses, "they should find a battleground where it is particularly hard for either side to defeat the other and fight it out there". Similarly, his view of the rivalries among the Greeks (9.2) will prove to be mistaken. As we have already seen, the putting aside of internal hostilities was the only Greek defense measure to bear fruit (7.146.1).

I have called Artabanus' warning (7.10) a prophetic speech because it accurately predicts subsequent events in many respects. The same may be said of his second conversation with Xerxes at Abydus and of the conversation of Demaratus with the Great King at Doriscus, which also predicts important subsequent events. Artabanus' prophetic speech resembles Zeus' famous prophecies in the *Iliad* and predicts developments that will take place throughout the Xerxes *logos*. In particular Artabanus not only anticipates the Persian defeat by land and sea (7.10.1f.) and the death of Mardonius on Greek soil (3), but also outlines the dangers that will later beset the Persian army in reality. In ch. 10 he points out that "even a massive army may be destroyed by a small force if it attracts the god's resentment and he sends panic or thunder, until they are shamefully destroyed". Some of Artabanus' predictions come true when the Persians are advancing into the region of Troy (7.42.2): "while

they were spending a night at the foot of Ida they encountered their first thunderstorm, with high winds, and quite a large number of them were killed". Then the following night "fear spread throughout the army" (43.2). Later, panic will also destroy the Persian contingent that advances to Delphi (8.38).

Artabanus moreover recalls Dareius' expedition against the Scythians and hints that after a victory at sea "the Greeks might sail to the Hellespont and dismantle the bridge". This is a constant threat to Xerxes' expedition. The king becomes anxious about the Hellespont bridge immediately after the disaster at Salamis (8.97), directly puts together a plan for flight and commands his fleet to sail as soon as possible from Phaleron to the Hellespont (8.107.1) in order "to guard the pontoon bridge". Themistocles' suggestion that the Greek fleet should pursue the Persians and sail to the Hellespont to dismantle the bridges (108.2) is rejected by Eurybiades. And so Artabanus' fear that the fate of the entire army would depend on a single man (7.10.2) materializes, exactly as happened in Dareius' expedition against the Scythians. Then it was Histiaeus, the tyrant of Miletus, who averted the dismantling of the bridges over the Thracian Bosphorus and thus saved the fleeing Persian army. A final verbatim reference to Artabanus' words to Mardonius ("what kind of men you are trying to persuade the king to attack") is made in the cry of Tritantaechmes, the son of Artabanus, after the battle of Thermopylae (8.26.3): "Well, Mardonius, what sort of men are these you have brought us to fight?"

Artabanus' later predictions in his conversation with Xerxes at Abydus also turn out to be fairly accurate. At 7.49.2 he expresses concern that "in actual fact, if you were to assemble further troops, the two factors I have in mind would become even more of a problem. The two factors are the land and the sea. As for the sea, there's no harbour anywhere, as far as I can tell, with the capacity to shelter this fleet of yours in the event of a storm and so keep your ships safe....The chances of starvation are increased the more land you gain and the more time you spend getting it". And the Persians are indeed faced with

both the lack of safe harbors and an inadequate food supply. At 7.188.1ff. Herodotus reports the loss of 400 Persian ships at Cape Sepias due to a storm, and more specifically because only a few ships could be beached on the narrow shore while the others had to be anchored at sea and were thus wrecked by the storm. Hunger, the second danger mentioned by Artabanus, afflicts the Persian army not when it is advancing but when it is retreating (8.115).

At Doriscus Demaratus takes on the role of warning figure and he too makes predictions which are borne out by subsequent events. At 7.102.2f. he foresees that the Spartans will resist under any circumstances: "as for the size of their army, there's no point in your asking how, in terms of numbers, they can do this. If there are in fact only a thousand men to march out against you (though it may be fewer or it may be more), then a thousand men will fight you". This obviously anticipates the number of Greeks who will make the last stand at Thermopylae (300 Spartans and 700 Thespians, 7.222).

After the aforementioned apparitions in dreams and the final decision of Xerxes and Artabanus to attack Greece, Herodotus puts a multitude of false predictions into the mouths of various Persians. Artabanus himself adopts Xerxes' view that Persian victory is favoured by the god (7.8.1) and formulates it thus (7.18.3): "but since your impetuosity is god-given, and since the destruction overtaking the Greeks is apparently heaven-sent, it is my turn to back down and change my mind". At the beginning of book 7, a series of mistaken interpretations of various signs underscores the Persians' blindness: at 7.19 the Magi interpret one of the Great King's dreams as a prediction that he will achieve world domination; at 7.37.2f. an eclipse of the sun is similarly interpreted by the Magi, who "said that the god was foretelling the abandonment by the Greeks of their towns and cities, because in their view the sun prophetically symbolized the Greeks, and the moon themselves". After the crossing of the Hellespont Herodotus reports two more omens but also points out explicitly that Xerxes failed to grasp that in truth they fore-

told his defeat (7.57.1f.). The Persians' increasing confidence that they will be victorious also serves to generate tragic irony. Before the crossing of the Hellespont Xerxes reiterates his plans for world domination to Artabanus (7.50.3): "by the time we get back home we will have conquered the whole of Europe." Immediately after inspecting the army he tells Demaratus that "it seems to me that all the Greeks, and even the combined forces of the entire western world, would be incapable of withstanding my advance, unless they formed a unified front" (7.101.2).

## VI

The above-discussed techniques for structuring time and generating suspense are not the only narrative tools which Herodotus borrowed from the epic. Equally important are the techniques of foreshadowing and harking back, the so-called *Fernbeziehungen* (cross-references),<sup>17</sup> which are crucial in providing an overview of larger sections of the narrative and in linking smaller sections to one another. A complex network of associations permeates the work and serves to connect even distant sections with one other; it is the presence of these associations which reveals the unity of Herodotus' work, because the relevance of many of the sections is often not immediately apparent; they 'refer' to, or can be understood only in relation to, another part of work. Let us look at two particular categories of indirect *Fernbeziehungen* borrowed from the epic, 'piecemeal complementation'<sup>18</sup> and the use of the 'anticipatory doublet'.<sup>19</sup>

Both in the epic and in Herodotus' *Histories*, information about sequences of events which do not belong to the main plot

<sup>17</sup> M. REICHEL, *Fernbeziehungen in der Ilias* (Tübingen 1994).

<sup>18</sup> "Stückweise Ergänzung" in the terminology of W. SCHADEWALDT (*Iliasstudien* [Darmstadt 1966], 85 n. 2).

<sup>19</sup> B. FENIK, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (Wiesbaden 1968), 213f.

is often given in a number of different parts which are fairly far from, and complementary to, one another. In the *Odyssey* this is well exemplified by the narratives of Nestor and Menelaus about the return of the Achaeans, since they complement one another but also by the *Apologoi*. From the *Histories* one can mention, e.g., the digressions on the history of Athens or Sparta in books 1, 5 and 6, i.e. before the main narration of the Persian wars. In the work of both Homer and Herodotus, these disparate parts are meant to be viewed in a larger context: the later parts refer the audience back to the previous, interrupted narrative.

As for the 'anticipatory doublet', one of its main features is the preparatory character with which the first passage in which the motif appears is almost always invested: in other words, a short form of a type-scene (or of some other structural pattern) precedes a fuller version, as if to familiarize the audience with the concept before its most significant occurrence. For example, Achilles grants old Priam's request to bury his son (the episode is presented in detail in book 24) as he had earlier permitted the burial of Andromache's father Eetion (Andromache briefly mentions this at *Il.* 6.416-20). In much the same way, chains of motifs are also generated through the repetition and simultaneous intensification of a motif: these exemplify the epic technique of "*gestaffelte Vorbereitung*", "step-by-step preparation", first identified by Schadewaldt; the best-known example is the encounters of Ajax and Hector.

In the *Histories*, the large-scale use of the 'anticipatory doublet' is apparent in the high number of common motifs in the accounts of Darius' Scythian expedition and Xerxes' Greek expedition.<sup>20</sup> Most of these motifs appear briefly in book 4 and then much more expansively in books 7-9. The entire Scythian *logos* thus functions largely as an anticipation of the Persian attack against Greece. In fact, Darius' Scythian expedition is

<sup>20</sup> A. RENGAKOS, "Epic Narrative Technique in Herodotus' *Histories*", in *Seminari Romani di Cultura Greca* 4 (2001), 256ff.

modelled on Xerxes' Greek expedition, i.e. most of the motifs in book 4 should be viewed in the light of books 7-9. The Scythian *logos* is unique in Herodotus' work on account of its many intra-textual associations with the last third of the *Histories*, and for this reason has aptly been characterized as "the main link that safeguards the unity of the work".<sup>21</sup>

To sum up: some of the most important weapons in Herodotus' narrative arsenal are taken from the epic. The historian faced a complex task: he had to construct a plot in order to narrate, in a comprehensible, plausible and vivid manner, chains of events which spanned vast stretches of time and space. To meet this challenge he made a decision which was to have far-reaching consequences: to write history substituting a poetic format for the chronicles and catalogues of his predecessors, whose sole aim had been to transmit information. The fact that Herodotus was imitated by generations of historians, beginning with Thucydides and continuing down to our own times, is no small tribute to the "father of historiography" and his genius.

<sup>21</sup> H. IMMERWAHR, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Atlanta, Georgia 1986), 106.

## DISCUSSION

*E.J. Bakker* : I would like to talk about Herodotus' manipulation of time in light of Chapter 9 of the *Poetics* of Aristotle, where of course the distinction between *historia* and *poiesis* is made. Your discussion of Books 7-9 of the *Histories* with their 'desultory' technique of jumping back and forth between two action strings (the Persian preparations and march to Greece, and the reaction from the Greek side) that will in the end converge into one really suggests some kind of Aristotelian *sustasis tōn pragmatōn* — much more in fact than *the whole* of the work with the excursuses on the Greeks in Book 1 and so on. I was wondering whether this difference in perceived unity of two (or more) separate action strings is related to the markers in the text for 'meanwhile'. For example, Herodotus uses *en de toutōi tōi chronōi* much more often than does Thucydides, who seems to be much more 'Homeric' in this regard. On the assumption that *en toutōi tōi chronōi* signals a simultaneity between *causally unrelated* events I can understand that as a consequence of Thucydides seeing everything that happens in 'his *polemos*' as always already related, causally. So I wonder whether there is a difference in this regard between Herodotus' Books 7-9 and the earlier books.

*A. Rengakos* : It is doubtless true that the *sustasis* in Books 7 to 9 is much more intense than in the previous books. But the 'Greek' line is present in the first books not only through the excursuses on Athens/Sparta in Books 1, 5, and 6, but also in other ways: beginning from 1.5, where Herodotus announces that he will start with Croesus, who was the first to attack the Greeks, the motif of Ionian revolts and subjugation by the Persians is a well known unifying device of the

*Histories*. The 'Greek' story-line is also present through the aborted mission of Darius' doctor, Demodorus, and through the whole Scythian logos which anticipates the final Persian expedition.

I am not sure that 'markers' of simultaneity like *en toutōi tōi chronōi* combine two causally unrelated events. I am thinking in particular of the second half of Book 5 where Herodotus links with this phrase the operations of different Persian armies against the revolted Ionian cities of Asia minor. These episodes are clearly causally related events.

A. *Sens* : I would like to ask about Herodotean and Homeric 'dramatic irony' and in particular about the character and extent of narrative 'commentary' on the ignorance of individual speakers or actors. Am I wrong to think that, despite the fact that Herodotus' narrative ego is much more prominent — in the sense that he regularly comments on his own methods and so on — the Homeric narrator more often comments omnisciently on the foolishness of an utterance or action? I'm thinking, of course, of passages like the narrator's observations about the true cause of the absence of Helen's brothers from the battlefield in *Il.* 3 or comments of the 'nēpios ...' type. In Herodotus, the foolishness of speaker seems to emerge from the outcome of events without specific commentary from the narrator, and this makes me wonder of the role of tragedy as an alternative model for this sort of irony.

A. *Rengakos* : I agree with you that Herodotus very rarely comments directly on the action or the sayings of a person. In that respect he is much more close to Thucydides (whose judgments of persons are limited to Pericles, Brasidas, and Alcibiades) and to Homer. Although, it is true that tragedy has had an important influence on Herodotus (cf. the 'mini-tragedies' of Gyges or Atys in Book 1), I think that the way he uses 'dramatic irony' throughout Books 7 to 9 is very Homeric and especially Odyssean.

*Chr. Tsagalis* : Apart from the narrative techniques the Herodotean narrator shares with his Homeric predecessor, one could point to the 'low-key' end of both the Homeric epics and Herodotus. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reach their climax in Book 22 (with Hector's death and the *mnēstērophonia* respectively), just as Herodotus closes the *Histories* with the 'low-key' end of Xerxes returning to Asia and the story of Amestris, Masistes' wife.

Other techniques one might look at are comments concerning the way 'dramatic irony' is expressed. In Homer, it is the external narrator who does that. Andromache is waiting for Hector to return from the battlefield in vain, and it is the external narrator who tell us that Hector had died and that she was ignorant of that development. In Herodotus, as in Greek tragedy, there is a tendency to generalize, the difference being that — due to genre-restrictions — in Herodotus this is done by the external narrator (*phthoneron gar to theion*) whereas in tragedy it is done by the characters themselves.

*G. Danek* : Chariton unterbricht seine Erzählung der Kallirhoe-Linie in 3, 2, 17 mit der Bemerkung: "Ich will zuerst berichten, was während derselben Zeit in Syrakus geschehen war". Er greift damit ausdrücklich in der Zeit zurück und erzählt, was auf einem 'verdeckten Handlungsstrang' geschehen ist. Dasselbe macht Heliodor, wenn er in 5, 4ff. die Erlebnisse von Charikleia und Theagenes seit der Trennung von Knemon (2, 13) als auktorialer Erzähler 'nachträgt'. Die Roman-Autoren verwenden damit sichtlich eine Erzähltechnik, die für das historiographische Genos zu ihrer Zeit voll etabliert und akzeptiert ist, die aber bei Homer streng vermieden ist: Zielinskis 'Gesetz' verbietet den Nachtrag von 'verdeckter Handlung' durch den primären, aber auch durch einen sekundären Erzähler (Achilleus Tatios wird den zweiten Typus ausgiebig zur Erzeugung von Spannung einsetzen). Gibt es bei Herodot eine Stelle, wo der Erzähler in ähnlicher Weise in der Zeit zurückgreift und einen 'verdeckten Handlungsstrang' nachträgt? Ich kann mich an

keine Instanz erinnern, und ich glaube, dass Herodot in dieser Beziehung, der Präsentation der unterschiedlichen Handlungsstränge in ihrem zeitlichen Verhältnis, sich ganz eng an die künstliche Stilisierung des Zeitablaufs bei Homer anlehnt.

A. Rengakos : Ich glaube, Sie haben Recht: es gibt bei Herodot keine Erzählung eines 'verdeckten Handlungsstranges'. Er greift in der Zeit zurück, aber das betrifft Fälle, wo er die Zeitebene seiner Geschichte verlassen hat (z.B. 7.137.3). In diesem Fall verweist er ausdrücklich darauf hin, dass er "zu seinem vorherigen Logos zurückkehrt".

M. Fusillo : I would have just a general, methodological question. How do you see the relationship between your epic interpretation of Greek historiography and the debate of literary theory on the rhetoric and narrative nature of historiography? (I am referring obviously to Hayden White's very controversial book *Metahistory*.)

Secondly, a small remark: I would say that even in the modern tradition the *Spannung auf das Wie* plays a prominent role, especially if we think of the master of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock, who strongly preferred and theorised the Homeric type of suspense.

A. Rengakos : I believe that Herodotean and Thucydidean historiography is, despite the protests of Momigliano against H. White, 'emplotted' and that on a whole it fully supports the *Metahistory's* central thesis of the historical work being mainly a literary artefact.

Chr. Tsagalis : What about advance mentions in the sense of 'orange-light' passages, like 'passing a river' or the '*dis hepta*' formula? This of course brings in mind the Homeric technique of anticipation but I am rather talking about elements recognizable by the audience (features colored by their traditional referentiality, their metonymical force).

*E.J. Bakker* : I'm not sure Herodotus and Thucydides took Homer as an example in the matter of internal, psychological motivation, at least not as regards narrative strategy and linguistic articulation. Herodotus and Thucydides have an elaborate syntax of indirect speech which is not found in Homer and which must be an innovation in narrative and in grammar. Homer does have psychological deliberation, of course, in the addresses of heroes of their *thumos*, but that is a different strategy, direct speech. I think the difference between Homer and the historians, in particular Thucydides, is in the end determined by the possibilities and constraints of speech and writing: it is difficult if not impossible to perform someone's inner feelings, emotions etc.

*A. Rengakos* : 'Internal focalisation' is certainly much more developed in Thucydides than in Herodotus or Homer. But even in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* cases of 'participial motivation' as those studied by Mabel Lang in Thucydides are very often.

*P. Chuvin* : La présence de catalogues chez Hérodote, que vous soulignez à juste titre, ne montre-t-elle pas que l'influence hésiodique est présente aussi chez le "père de l'historiographie"?

*A. Rengakos* : C'est sans doute une influence hésiodique, mais plus généralement épique, puisque les catalogues sont aussi un élément des poèmes homériques.