

## THE EMERGENCE OF HERODOTUS\*

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*Abstract:* The brilliance and sophistication of Herodotus' work have rendered the origins of historiography obscure to us: he had extinguished his predecessors. In truth, he must have been influenced by a number of minor genres, some of which seem barely respectable, while some, like Attic comedy, positively aimed to downgrade and ridicule their subjects: the Socrates of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, and the Euripides of several of his plays are obvious examples. Scholars have often been misled, by Herodotus' great talent and serious reputation, to disregard, or even to deny, his use of such sources. We may reflect that it is, indeed, a very fortunate fact for us, and for our understanding of fifth-century history, that Herodotus was less fastidious, more adventurous, and much more omnivorous, in his collection and selection of his material.

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**B**efore the appearance of writing, the literature of Hellas, like that of many other peoples, was—of course—a literature in verse. Prose, which is verse's younger sister, came into existence only later, and the rise of prose narrative was gradual. As for poetry, it offers us, from the very beginning, works of the utmost perfection. The epic singers who preceded our *Iliad* are like the heroes who lived before Agamemnon: they have left no explicit trace behind them—apart, that is, from the dubious inferences that we can read into the poems which actually exist, and which can actually still be read. Lyric poetry, from what we see of it, appears first with the work of Archilochus; even Attic tragedy, which was a complex form with a definable and datable beginning, has somehow contrived to lose almost every trace, and (indeed) all memory, of the dramatic pieces which preceded the work of Aeschylus.

Prose, too, has also managed—much more completely than we should have wished—to abolish most of its own earliest traces. The great historian Herodotus, the 'father of history', has put his predecessors and contemporaries thoroughly, and lastingly, in the shade; and yet we can still say something about them, and the position is a little more favourable for enquiries into the origins of prose writing generally. Herodotus' historical

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work is, in fact—like Homer’s—extremely subtle and varied. Its ingenious affectation of naïveté has deceived some scholars, both ancient and modern; a fact that has not prevented, and that certainly should not prevent, some acute analyses of the origins and the creation of the work. What, then, were the origins of historiography?

In his widely embracing book, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, Kurt von Fritz<sup>1</sup> derives the advent of historical writing from five factors: the adoption of a system of writing that was simple and generally accessible; the appearance of a new kind of geography; the awakening of a new critical spirit, perceptible equally in philosophy and in astronomy; the influence of some oriental writings, which became accessible, thanks to the rise of Persia; and the breach in continuity, which allowed the heroic period to shine forth in a clearer light, followed by a darker period, which did not live on in memory at all, and which could not be made into history.

Peter Brunt, in his review of the book of von Fritz,<sup>2</sup> points to a surprising omission in this list: that of the Homeric poems.<sup>3</sup> In Brunt’s epigrammatic formulation, ‘the writing of history was born of the epic, from a union with the spirit of the Ionian enlightenment’. He draws attention particularly to the importance of the speeches, and also of the conversations, in Herodotus’ work: the influence of Homer is here obvious and very substantial. It can be added, that Herodotus’ interest in what are called the ‘great deeds of men’, in the κλέα ἀνδρῶν in the words of Homer, in ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θαυμαστά, in the phrase of Herodotus in his prologue, is a central theme of the epic.

It is to be observed, however, that the epic, through its combination with the Ionian enlightenment, aimed to glimpse the light of the whole human world, to understand another world, and to explain how the events of its history really occurred, and how they were really caused. There was, indeed, something radically new coming to birth. Was the pregnancy, we wonder, a long one? Was the delivery very difficult? To put the question in another way: how did the birth occur, and what contributed, to make it possible in the first place? In this paper, I shall put forward the view that we must see Herodotus as influenced by a number of less ambitious minor genres, the consideration of which can help to bring his work into relation to the general culture of his time, and which can play a part in explaining the origins of a work which has been allowed, very often, to remain isolated and rather mysterious.

<sup>1</sup> Von Fritz (1967) 23f.

<sup>2</sup> Brunt (1969) 198.

<sup>3</sup> The relationship of Herodotus with the Homeric epic is emphasised, among others, by Pohlenz (1937).

In addition, I hope to show that scholars have been misled, here as sometimes elsewhere, by a desire to name only serious and respectable sources for the great works of literature with which they themselves are seriously concerned; and that they have, in consequence, been inclined to overlook some more modest and more colloquial ones.<sup>4</sup> Even the very greatest works of literature, such as the plays of Shakespeare, show the influence of much humbler genres: they cannot be simply derived, without remainder, from other works which are all composed in a uniformly sublime and lofty style.

The biographies of Greek writers, as far as they are handed on to us by the ancient traditions, are, in most cases, an extremely poor collection of writings.<sup>5</sup> In the early period, it seems, there was very little interest in biography—not even in the biographies of the most outstanding personalities. When that interest did come to the fore, in the Hellenistic period, what was written to satisfy it was, all too often, the mere production of fantasy. The works of the great men were themselves used—and, in certain cases, such as that of Euripides, even the more or less grotesque inventions about them of comedy and of the satiric poets: Euripides lived in a cave, and the women came to lynch him there, and so on.

The inventions of these biographers are always and in principle unreliable, and they are often visibly absurd. They can illustrate nothing more than the universal human abhorrence of a vacuum, and the equally human taste for an amusing story: especially, perhaps, for one that seems to cut an outstanding personality, or a creative genius, down to size. We should never forget *phthonos* as an ever present motive.

Yet at least one great literary figure was, from an early period, the subject of a more substantial biography: the poet Homer, about whom the absence of any kind of biographical information would have been especially annoying. As in the case of the others, his biography comes down to us only in shapes that belong to a later period; but scholars who have been interested in the longest and most important of these biographies, the so-called Herodotean Life, agree that it derives from traditions of the sixth century BC.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> E.g. the paper of Latte (1958); also Schadewaldt (1970) on the ‘Alleinherrschaft des Logos’, etc. H. Fränkel (1955) 88 expresses, in a rather pompous way, his opposition to such minor elements: ‘Und doch hat der Herodot des grossen Perserkrieges die Darstellung gewaltiger Ereignisse mit kleinlichen Anekdoten in einer Weise gespickt, die uns zuwider ist und zuwider sein darf’. In passing, I should like to register my dissent from that view.

<sup>5</sup> Lefkowitz (1981).

<sup>6</sup> Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1916) 367, 439; Jacoby (1961) 9; Schadewaldt (1942) 38; Pfeiffer (1968) 11.

Ultimately, it must go back to reports on the subject of Homer that were given out by the ‘Homeridae’: professional rhapsodes, who performed the poems, and who claimed a direct personal connection with the greatest of all singers. It was very natural that they should claim to possess special knowledge of his life and of his personality. This points to the existence and influence of some systematic work on Homer’s ‘poetry, family, and chronology’, most probably that written by Theagenes of Rhegion, who was active in the sixth century BC.<sup>7</sup>

The important role played in it by Homer’s connections with Smyrna makes it probable that the story has origins that are earlier than the destruction of that city. That means that they go back, at least, to the first half of the sixth century. With the passage of time, Homer’s life was adorned with a mass of increasingly fantastic stories: he was the son of a river-god; he was the nephew of the poet Hesiod; he was the cousin of the poet Stesichorus; and he was descended, in the eleventh generation, from Orpheus himself: the legendary master singer.

The early form of Homer’s *Life*, however, looked very different. In that version, we read that Homer’s mother, Critheis by name, was the daughter of poor people in Cyme. She lost both her parents and had a love affair with a man of unknown identity. Her guardian was extremely angry when he discovered that she was illegitimately pregnant. To avoid scandal, he sent her off, away from Cyme, with an expedition which was to settle in Smyrna. There she bore a son, on the bank of the river Meles; the child was named Melesigenes, which was supposed—in defiance of all the norms of Greek nomenclature—to mean ‘Born on the Meles’. She had a hard life and was forced to work with her hands, to feed herself and her child. After a time, she was employed by a schoolmaster named Phemios; she did her work for him well, she pleased her employer, and finally she married him. Phemios adopted the child and taught him his own occupation. When Phemios and Critheis died, he worked as a successful schoolmaster.

A lot of further material follows; but we can stop here and reflect. The first thing that must strike us about this whole story, surely, is its very low social level. Homer does not descend from gods or from poets: he is the illegitimate off-spring of an unknown father. His mother is disgraced, sent away, and forced to manage by doing hard physical work. When she succeeds in marrying a school master, that is for her a happy and fortunate ending. At this point, we must reflect on the very low status that was accorded to school masters in the ancient world. Even that, however, was a considerable promotion, both for this mother and for her illegitimate child.

<sup>7</sup> Diels–Kranz, *VS* 8 A 1 = Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 31.16 Schwartz.

We are, of course, well aware that we are, here, very far from anything that could be called either historical or reliable. Phemius is a name, unmistakably meaning ‘Singer’, which is taken from the *Odyssey*. Surely, it is too good to be true: a suspicion that is confirmed immediately, when we see that the next person to appear in the *Life* is a friendly school master named Mentès. That, too, is the name, in the *Odyssey*, of a friend of Odysseus. This, then, is all invention—but not on a level which reflects much credit, or much distinction, on the unknown inventor.

There is no need to go through the whole of the ‘Herodotean’ *Life* of Homer, but only to extract from it some particular passages. Melesigenes’ change of name to Homeros, we read, came after he was left blind by an illness. He made the public proposal that Cyme should support him at the public expense; he won some support, but he was shouted down by one of the ‘kings’ (the hereditary holders of magistracies), who protested that the burden would be intolerable, if they were to take in every man who was *homeros*: ‘For the people of Cyme’, says this author, ‘call blind men “*home-roi*”.’ This alleged meaning, which is repeatedly mentioned and supported in antiquity, but only in this one context, that of the life of the great poet, is something, all too evidently, which has been invented by one or other of the writers on Homer. As the Germans would say, they have sucked it out of their fingers.

Turned away from Cyme, Homer goes to Phocaea, where he is taken up by another school master, one Thestorides, who exploits him, writes down his poems, and goes to Chios, where he passes them off as his own creations. Poor blind Homer sets off in pursuit of him, but the sailors refuse him passage. A goat-herd offers him hospitality, after he has been set on by his dogs. He becomes the teacher of the children of the goatherd’s master, and thus establishes himself as a school teacher. He has other adventures and successful formulations, not so much on the poetic as on the practical level.

He predicts the future history of Cebrenia. He proposes that the dogs should be fed before the people, because otherwise their hungry howling would disturb the meal—‘and’ (we read) ‘when a host heard that, he was delighted with the advice and paid him great respect’. We are not moving, here, on an intellectual level that is any more exalted than the social one. Homer composes verses, which serve as magic spells: to bring on a storm, which prevents the sailors from putting to sea, until they promise him a passage; or to induce a young woman to reject young admirers, and to give the preference to an old man like himself; or to lay on a band of drinkers either a curse or a blessing, according as they either generously welcome him or roughly reject him from their jolly company.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Chapters 19, 20, 22, 30, 37.

We said that what is depicted here is a life of poverty. The characters are not only schoolmasters, but also travellers by sea, herdsman, and potters. Similarly, Homer's death is brought into connection with the lowest social class: with fishermen, proverbially needy and impoverished. Young fishermen produce their most famous riddle: 'What we caught, we left behind; what we didn't catch, we bring along.' It refers to the fish that they netted, and to the fleas, that they either could or could not catch. That is the signal for the death of the great poet. Many people say that he died of chagrin, because he could not solve the riddle; others, that he simply died of weakness and old age. In any case, the poverty and the lowness of the whole setting are obvious and unmistakable.

What, however, has all this to do with Herodotus, and with the rise of serious historiography? Let us begin with a point that is external and formal. In the first hundred chapters of Herodotus' Book I, there are seven passages quoted in hexameters; and in his *History* there are many others in verse, mostly in hexameters, many of which are quotations of oracles. Herodotus' great work in prose, then, is hospitable to the inclusion of verse passages: that is a striking feature, which will certainly not be found in the work of his great successor, Thucydides. It meets us, however, also in the *Life of Homer*, in which—perhaps naturally—we constantly meet with quotations in verse. What we have here, in fact, is an example of the momentous historic transition from verse to prose.

That, however, is not, in this context, a very important point. More interesting are two general factors. The first is the presence, in Herodotus' *History*, of passages which deal with simple people and their humble way of life. The second is the appearance of passages in the *History* of stories, the point of which resembles the point of incidents in the *Life of Homer*. The two groups are not to be sharply separated, as we see from Herodotus' treatment of the birth of Cyrus, the great Persian conqueror: of his marginal beginnings, of his demonstration of his outstanding quality, and of his rise to supreme power.<sup>9</sup>

About Cyrus, that great and spectacular figure in world history, many stories were told. He defeated the Medes, he conquered both Lydia and Babylon, and he allowed the Jews back to Jerusalem. Very early, he became a figure of legend. Herodotus himself tells us that he knows four versions of Cyrus' first beginnings (1.95.1), and also 'many' reports of his death (1.214.5). The version of his birth and of his rise to power which is acceptable and reliable, is described by the historian as 'what some of the Persians say: those,

<sup>9</sup> Binder (1964); 'Herodots Kyros-geschichte stammt sicherlich aus mündlicher Überlieferung ... einheitlich überliefert', says Jacoby (1913) 423.25: in my opinion, too positively formulated.

that is, who are not just praising Cyrus' career, but who are anxious to tell the truth about him'. It is certainly not a story in the sublime style, and it is played out in strikingly humble ranks of society.

Cyrus' grandfather, Astyages the king of Lydia, had a dream: that the son of his daughter would become a great king. Because of it, he married her off, not to a Mede, but to a Persian; when she bore a child, he ordered Harpagus, whom he trusted, to expose the child on the mountains, as a prey for wild beasts. The shepherd, to whom the vizier had delegated this distasteful task, and whose wife had recently given birth to a still-born child, exposed the dead baby instead and brought up the young prince as his own child, seeing that it was 'big and good looking' (I.112.1).

Ten years later, Cyrus showed his royal nature: being chosen by the children of the village as their 'king', he used this position to punish a nobly born Median boy who had disobeyed his orders. The incident gave rise to a scandal, which reached the ears of King Astyages: the herdsman was summoned to his presence and forced to come out with the truth. This story, of course, is an example of a type that is widely distributed: Oedipus is another example. Romulus, too, rose from the lowest and most vulnerable of human positions, that of a child exposed and abandoned to die, to the highest point of human fortune, as a king, and as the founder of a great city.

Such a story pattern has a charming and universally interesting feature: that of giving the hero the widest possible range of human experience—one even wider than the American pattern of ascent to the Presidency from the raw frontier, 'from log cabin to White House'. Herodotus tells the story in a manner which brings out explicitly its humble and everyday aspects. The vizier, to whom the task had been entrusted of killing the child, goes home and tells the story briefly to his wife; the herdsman, on to whom he had decided to unload the responsibility, in turn has quite a lengthy conversation with his own wife, and in the end it is she who persuades him to save the child, and to accept it as his own.

The children of the village play their games 'in the street', and the orders that the unrecognised boy Cyrus gives them are described explicitly: 'Some are to build houses; others to act as his body-guards.' One, apparently, is to act as The Eye of the King (the title of a high-ranking Persian functionary, by which the Greeks were greatly amused), and another to act as a messenger. We see, and we relish, the homely details: the women, the babies, the children playing their simple games.

All these details certainly do not have the effect of making Cyrus' rise to power 'exalted' in style. On the contrary, they bring out the human and homely elements in the tale with particularly striking prominence. Herodotus shows that he, throughout, is conscious that the thing which belongs especially and centrally to the story, as it also does to that of Romulus, is the

fact that a baby, predestined to greatness, is exposed by men but preserved by heaven, using extraordinary means. It is suckled, and is saved, by an animal: in this case not by a she-wolf, but by a she-dog. Such a story would be too obviously fantastic for Herodotus' manner, and he limits himself to saying that the name of the herdsman's wife was Spako, which meant 'bitch', and that her name was the origin of the story. It is not hard to see the more exotic and fantastic version that must have lain behind that rationalisation.

Herodotus' narrative, which is purely human, resembles (in my opinion) the opening chapters of the ancient *Life of Homer*: there is the pregnancy of his mother—'and when her guardian Kleanax heard of it, he was extremely angry at what had happened: he summoned Critheis and reproached her severely, pointing out to her the disgrace which she had brought on herself in the eyes of the citizens ...'

Later, after the birth of her child, 'she lived for a time with Ismenias; but after a while she left him. She supported herself and the child with the work of her hands, finding work here and there, and bringing up the child as best she could. At that time there was a man living in Smyrna named Phemios, who taught the children to read and write, and who educated them generally. He gave Critheis some work, as he lived alone: she was to spin for him the wool which he received regularly in payment for his teaching.'

She worked for him with great cleanliness and great care, and he was delighted with her. In the end, he proposed that she should live with him as his wife. To convince her, he laid especial emphasis on speaking of the child: the boy would be treated as his own son, and, when he was grown up, he would be somebody. 'Phemios could see that the lad was intelligent and naturally gifted ... Very soon, he outstripped all the other local children.'<sup>10</sup>

With this story, we find ourselves in very much the same world as in Herodotus' Median narratives, in which childless people are on the lookout for a promising child, whether 'big and good-looking' or 'intelligent and teachable', and with the explicit description of the fate of the child, and how it was discussed and decided. The obvious danger of circularity lies in the fact that the *Life of Homer* was in its time ascribed to Herodotus, and that its author actually attempts to imitate the dialect and the style of the historian; but I believe that such resemblances as those which we have discussed, lie at a rather deeper level than this. The anonymous author makes no reference to the narrative of Herodotus about Cyrus, as he easily could have done, nor to any other passage in the work of the historian, and his conception of imitation seems to be very limited: it is restricted to a superficial Ionic colouring of the dialect.

<sup>10</sup> *Vita Herodotea* 2–5.

I regard it as more natural to ascribe a great part of the similarities between the two works, not so much to imitation on the part of the biographer, as to an original similarity between the earliest treatment of the poet's life, and the material which Herodotus found already present for his treatment of the career of Cyrus. The *Life of Homer*, in fact, presents material of this sort, as it may have looked, before Herodotus set himself to rework it: enlarging it, and (in particular) enlivening the indirect speech that was present in his source with directly recorded conversations. A cleverer imitator of Herodotus would have made his pastiche more attractive, by attempting to emulate these conversations, to which Herodotus' narrative owes so much of its charm.

It is a completely different matter, although—in its own way—a very revealing one, when we read in the *Life of Homer* that, after the death of his mother and that of her husband Phemios, the shipman Mentès succeeded in persuading the young man to accompany him on a world cruise; the *Life* goes on to say that Mentès 'persuaded him that it was worth his while to see the countries and the cities, while he was still young' (ch. 6). That, says the author, appealed to Homer: 'for perhaps he already had the idea of composing poetry'. So he took him on the journey, 'and, wherever he went, he looked at all the places and informed himself about them, by interrogating people. In all probability, he also made written notes, as aids to his memory.' This charming passage shows us the author sending his poet on a sea journey with a shipman whose name is taken from the *Odyssey*: he seizes on the opportunity to make him resemble Odysseus.

As we remember from the opening lines of the *Odyssey*—and the whole narrative unmistakably recalls the opening lines of that poem—Odysseus 'saw the cities of many men and learned to know their ways of thought'. That does not mean that he travelled for pleasure. Quite the opposite, in fact: he was driven on from one place to another, and he was involved in one adventure after another. His creator, in the opinion of his biographer, who (naturally) found the *Odyssey* much more rewarding for his purpose than the *Iliad*, had similar experiences, except that, in his case, they were voluntary. We recall with pleasure how Herodotus describes the journeys of Solon, more than a century earlier, saying that he travelled 'to see the sights that were worth seeing', *θεωρίας πρόφασιν* (1.29.1), 'and, like a philosopher, he travelled great distances, in order to see something of interest': *φιλοσοφείων γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίας ἔνεκεν ἐπελήλυθε* (1.29.1).

In the travels of Solon, Herodotus sees his own predecessor; perhaps he saw Homer in the same light.<sup>11</sup> So Homer became a traveller, and as he had been a school master in Smyrna, he became, first, a private tutor, and then a

<sup>11</sup> Redfield (1985); Drexler (1972) 25f.

school master on Chios. He also travelled about and performed his songs.<sup>12</sup> In this way he resembles the various travelling experts—doctors, seers, and intellectuals of all kinds—whom Herodotus describes as flocking to King Croesus. He mentions quite a number of them as travelling to Lydia. Herodotus, who gave readings from his *Histories* in Athens and elsewhere, is himself in the same tradition. That fact helps to explain his special interest in such men as Democedes the doctor and Megistias the seer: both of them were men whose mental powers brought them fame, enabling them to distinguish themselves, and to attain good success, far away from their original homes.

As we have seen, Homer's mother had the ill luck to become pregnant, with the result that her guardian, her father being dead, had to decide what was to be done with her. Very similar motifs turn up in Herodotus, and in a surprisingly important historical context. He opens his *Histories* with a passage that was found amusing in his own time, and which was parodied by Aristophanes (*Acharnians* 524f.): the great wars between the East and the West began with nothing more than reciprocal abductions of women!

It was the Phoenicians who started it. Phoenician traders came to Argos and sold their wares from their ship, which they had beached on the shore. Then they grabbed some of the local women, who had come to buy things on the beach, including the princess Io, and sailed away with them. The abduction of Helen, which led to the Trojan War, was an incident in the same series, and the destruction of Troy was the beginning of lasting hostility between Europe and Asia. That, according to Herodotus, was the version of the learned men (λόγιοι) of Persia,<sup>13</sup> according to which it was, in the last resort, the Phoenicians who were responsible for the expedition of Darius (Dareios), and also for that of Xerxes.

The Phoenicians, on the other hand, opposed to this account a version of their own, which presented them in a much less discreditable light: it was a fact, they alleged, that Io had a love affair with the captain of the Phoenician ship, discovered that she was pregnant, and chose rather to sail away with him than to expose herself to the anger of her own people.

In literary terms, one of the advantages of the motif of abduction is that it makes it possible for the narrator to move a female person, and her offspring, from one place to another. But this story has, in my opinion, a family resemblance to the story of Critheis, the mother of Homer, which was connected both with Cyme and with Smyrna. Herodotus seizes on another

<sup>12</sup> On Neon Teichos, chapter 9; on Phocaea, 15; he plans a fresh journey in Greece, 27; to Samos, 29.

<sup>13</sup> I cannot enter into the much discussed question, whether these 'Persian scholars' ever really existed. Cf. Fehling (1971) 39f.

variant of the tale, to tell the story of Battos, the leader of the colony from Thera, which founded Cyrene in North Africa.<sup>14</sup>

Battos' mother Phronime, Herodotus informs us, was a woman from Crete. Her father married a wicked step-mother, who 'resolved to be a step-mother in fact as well as in name'. She caused poor Phronime all kinds of suffering, and finally she convinced her husband that the girl was unchaste. So he induced a friend to swear that he would drown her in the sea. The friend, naturally, did not like the job, and so he simply dipped her in the water, pulled her out again, and took her with him to Thera, where she subsequently bore him a son, named Battos.

These stories, of course, have their counterparts in the myths, where angry fathers attempt the death of their indiscreet daughters or of their inconvenient offspring. Such tales as those of Auge, of Canace (to whom her father sent a sword), and of Danae, cast adrift in the sea, can serve as examples. In Herodotus, as in the story of Homer's mother, milder and more humane methods suffice. Io leaves the country; Phronime is subjected to nothing worse than a play on words—almost a game; and Homer's mother is shipped off to another city.

Another biography which it would be interesting for us to possess, is that of Aesop. Perry, the learned editor of the ancient fables, was actually convinced that no prose form of the life of Aesop ever existed: 'Prose works from the sixth and fifth centuries BC were not biographies but dealt with serious subjects: the history of peoples'.<sup>15</sup> And yet it is beyond doubt that there was a short sketch of his career extant, as early as the middle of the fifth century.

Aristophanes (*Wasps* 144ff.) alludes to the story of his death at Delphi, while Herodotus himself mentions, in passing, that Aesop was a fellow slave of the famous beauty, Rhodopis. He is talking about Rhodopis, not about Aesop, and he mentions him only by the way; but that gives some food for thought. People had a clear conception, evidently, of Aesop's career. A *Life of Aesop* must have had a definite character. We get a hint of that in the *Wasps*, where Philocleon, drunkenly ranting, tries to extricate himself from a scrape by turning it into a joke, citing some effective answers that had been given by Aesop in similar situations: he was once barked at by a drunken bitch, 'and Aesop said ...' And again, 'Aesop once told the Delphians this story ...'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Hdt. 4.154.

<sup>15</sup> Perry (1952) 5.

<sup>16</sup> Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1401, 1446.

The extensive *Life of Aesop* which is extant<sup>17</sup> is clearly a late Hellenistic composition, originating in Egypt. It knows a whole series of similar anecdotes: of witty replies and of apparently senseless actions and utterances, from which it emerges that they possessed a very definite point, and which aroused uneasiness in his hearers, or which corrected them and put them right on some point. Herodotus actually picks up a story which is found in our collection of Aesop's *Fables*: the tale of Cyrus the Conqueror, who had tried in vain to induce the Greek cities of Asia Minor to rebel against Croesus, and who rejected their belated offer of submission, once he had overthrown Croesus. A flute player played music to the fishes in the sea, but they would not dance; when he saw them cooking in the pan, he said, 'Don't dance now: when I played music for you, then you would not dance!'<sup>18</sup>

Such anecdotes as this were told of other people than Aesop, although they were especially characteristic of him. Herodotus has a special affection for stories of this type. We read, for instance, that King Croesus once resolved to build a fleet, and to attack the islanders of the Aegean. The wise Bias of Priene appeared at the court of the king; asked for the news, he replied that the islanders were recruiting a force of cavalry, in order to attack Lydia. Great was the delight of King Croesus, when he heard that his enemies were preparing to make war on him in his own style. 'And don't you think', said Bias, 'that the islanders are delighted to hear that you are planning to bring disaster on yourself, by attacking them on their own element?' That corresponds exactly to the style of Aesop: the *ainos*, which seems to us merely incidental, but which has a devastating effect. We read in Herodotus that King Croesus 'was delighted with this story, thought it very appropriate, and abandoned the building of the ships.'<sup>19</sup>

This motif, very simple but highly effective, of the Oriental monarch, wealthy and powerful but rather unreflective and simple-minded, confronted with the modest but intelligent Hellene, and hearing a message but failing to understand it, is one that would soon be ridden to death in the stories of the Seven Sages. For example, the wise Pittacus was offered great treasures by Croesus: he rejected them, with the puzzling words, 'I already have twice as much as I want.' 'What do you mean, twice as much as you want?' 'My brother has died and left me all that he possessed.'<sup>20</sup> With stories like this, Hellas was taking its revenge on the opulence and splendour of the

<sup>17</sup> In Perry (1952) 35–130.

<sup>18</sup> Hdt. 1.141; *Aesop*, Fable 11 Perry; cf. Hirsch (1986).

<sup>19</sup> Hdt. 1.27.

<sup>20</sup> Diog. Laert. 1.75.

Orient, by emphasising its own superior gift of understanding.—‘So it’s certainly not true that we envy you your wealth ...’.

Herodotus deepened the sense of the contrast and lent it a more profound tone. Demaratus, accompanying King Xerxes to Hellas with his great army of conquest, is shown the mighty fleet and army of the King, with the troops assembled from the whole of Asia, and also from Syria and Egypt. ‘The Greeks will not fight against this!’ says the King; ‘in fact, they won’t even face the Persian armies—especially as they are all independent and not subject to fierce discipline and to the lash, as my troops are.’ ‘On the contrary’, replies Demaratus, ‘they do have a master, and one whom they fear more than your slaves fear you—their master is the Law.’ Xerxes laughed—but in time he will learn to understand the deep truth of the words of the Greek.<sup>21</sup>

That is a story that Herodotus has invented, in order to bring out the difference between Hellenic independence and Asiatic subjection: an important theme of his whole *History*. We can find something similar, in a simpler and drier form, in the story, which is told elsewhere, of King Croesus and the wise Pittacus. ‘Who is the greatest ruler?’ asks the King, expecting that the answer will be himself. ‘It is the painted wood’, answers Pittacus: a riddling reply, which is elucidated by reference to the wooden tablets on which the laws are inscribed.<sup>22</sup> Out of that, Herodotus creates a long, lively, and moving scene—for Demaratus now has a complex psychology. Exiled from his country, and on the march against it with its despotic enemy, he extols freedom and law with an insistence that rescue his narrative from banality.

Herodotus also uses the motif for another, quite different, purpose—and, again, in a conversation between King Croesus and the wise Solon. The king boasts of his vast wealth and of his mighty power, like Xerxes, and asks Solon who is, in his opinion, the happiest man in the world. Solon snubs him, unexpectedly but appropriately, by mentioning an obscure dead Athenian who lived the model life of an Hellenic citizen, served his city, begat sons, and died honourably on the field of battle. That, says Solon, is better than the vast riches of the Orient. But Herodotus shows Solon going on, after this effective snub to Croesus, to say that the *next* happiest men are two equally obscure Hellenes, who had performed an extraordinary service to the cult of the gods; when their proud mother prayed that the gods would grant them, as a reward, that which is best for a man, they both died that night in their sleep.

<sup>21</sup> Hdt. 7.101–4.

<sup>22</sup> Diog. Laert. 1.77.

That is: not only is the modest scale of Hellas better than the colossal but fragile kingships of the East—if we could only understand the real truth, death is better than life, and no man should think himself ‘happy’ until he has reached the end of his life in freedom from want and from disaster. Croesus, of course, simply derides and rejects these ideas: but in the end, defeated and condemned to death, he understands and recognises their profound truth.<sup>23</sup>

These two scenes are brilliantly written and impressively planned; they are among those in Herodotus’ *History* which most linger in the memory, and which most provoke thought. Clearly, they possessed great significance for him. But we can also see how closely they are akin to each other, and how artfully Herodotus has worked them out, in such unpretentious forms as simple anecdotes,<sup>24</sup> with fables, riddles, puzzles, and cryptic oracles, pregnant with meaning.

The oracles in Herodotus are, in fact, much too numerous to be all assembled here,<sup>25</sup> but a few can be cited. King Croesus was told that he need not worry about the future of his kingdom, until the day when a ‘mule’ should become the King of the Medes. Later, it came out that Cyrus was a ‘mule’, because he was born of unequal parents.<sup>26</sup> Again, the Spartans were told where they could find the bones of Orestes: ‘There is a place where strong winds blow with violence, where blow follows blow, and where woe follows woe.’<sup>27</sup> That puzzled the Spartans, until they worked out that it referred to a blacksmith’s smithy.

In an exceptional case, an Hellenic king can be as helpless, confronted with a riddling oracle, as an Asiatic. Cleomenes, King of Sparta, was told that he was destined to conquer Argos; he succeeded in capturing and burning a wood, but then he abandoned the war in despair, on realising that the hero to whom the wood was sacred was named Argos, so that he had unintentionally fulfilled the oracle.<sup>28</sup> The oracular saying, concentrated and opaque, hangs in the air and awaits its interpretation and its understanding. We are close, here, to the world of Sophocles.

Related to these stories, but not identical with them, are those in which riddling messengers are reported. The tyrant Periander of Corinth received

<sup>23</sup> Hdt. 1.29–33, 86. Cf. Regenbogen (1930); Immerwahr (1966) 146–51.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Es ist unzweifelhaft, dass hier die (sicherlich ionischen) Märchen- und Geschichtenerzähler eine wichtige, stark benutzte Quelle für Herodot bilden’: Meyer (1899) 233.

<sup>25</sup> Kirchberg (1985).

<sup>26</sup> Hdt. 1.55, 91.5.

<sup>27</sup> Hdt. 1.67.4.

<sup>28</sup> Hdt. 6.76.1, 80, 82.1. Cf. Gottlieb (1963) 37.

a message from his dead wife; to guarantee the truth of what she had said, she added a reference to a secret that was known to them alone: he had put his loaves in a cold oven. Periander recognised that as an allusion to an act of violation which he had committed on her dead body.

Periander also understood the significance of another encrypted message—in this case, one not put into words. He sent to ask Thrasybulus, the tyrant of Miletus, for his advice: how should he strengthen his hold on power in his city? Thrasybulus made no reply, but walked through a corn field in company with the envoy and, with his stick, struck off the heads of four of the highest growing ears of corn.<sup>29</sup> The messenger did not understand; he reported Thrasybulus' behaviour as that of a mere madman—but Periander understood the riddle and followed the advice that it contained: he executed any Corinthian who showed himself to be outstanding. Cleverness of that sort explains why Periander was regarded as one of the Seven Wise Men, although he had been a wicked tyrant—an inclusion that later Greeks would find puzzling and distasteful.<sup>30</sup>

Two further examples: King Croesus, appearing this time in the role, not of the one to whom the riddle was posed, but as the one who posed it, ordered the city of Lampsacus to set free his friend Miltiades: otherwise he would destroy them 'like a pine tree'. The Lampsacenes were at a loss to understand this threat, until it became clear to 'one of their oldest men': the pine, unlike other trees, when chopped down, does not send up any fresh shoots, but is killed for ever.<sup>31</sup>

Still more difficult to interpret were the gifts which King Darius received from the Kings of the Scythians, when he was planning a campaign against them. They sent him a bird, a frog, a mouse, and five arrows, with the message that the Persians, if they were clever, would be able to interpret their meaning. The Persians held a council, and King Darius inclined to the view that the Scythians were offering their submission, the Persian symbol for which was earth and water, the two elements of their life: 'the bird was most like a horse [!]', they reasoned, while sending the arrows meant that the senders had given up their warlike spirit. Gobryas, however, the wise old Persian, took a different view: 'Unless you can fly up in the air like birds, or creep under the earth like mice, or dive under the water like frogs, you will not be able to evade our arrows.'<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Hdt. 5.92.

<sup>30</sup> Stahl (1983). Herodotus admires cleverness of all kinds: Drexler (1972) 39–42.

<sup>31</sup> Hdt. 6.37.

<sup>32</sup> Hdt. 4.131–2. See S. West (1988): this learned and interesting paper does not discuss the Aethiopian story.

These gifts, with their sinister significance—Gobryas, of course, was quite right—are placed by Herodotus in contrast with the ineffective sending of gifts by the Persians to the Ethiopians, with whom they had decided to go to war. To them King Cambyses sent scarlet material, golden necklaces, perfumes, and palm wine. The point was a simple one: to impress the Ethiopians with the wealth and power of Persia.<sup>33</sup> But the Ethiopian king, unimpressed, replied that the scarlet dye and the perfume meant falsehood; the golden necklaces were chains, but weak ones; while the wine was responsible for the shortness of the Persians' lives. As his counter-gift he sent a mighty bow, with the message that the Persians should not think of attacking the Ethiopians, until they were strong enough to bend such a bow with ease. After this exchange, we hardly need to be told that, if it comes to an invasion, the Persians will find themselves on the losing side. Cambyses has already lost the battle of the significant gifts.<sup>34</sup>

Riddles of this kind were in fashion in the sixth century and at the beginning of the fifth. Thus, when Heraclitus was asked by the people of Miletus for his advice, at a time of crisis, he said nothing, but in the presence of the envoys he prepared a meal, by soaking barley in cold water and eating it. That was to show them that they must forswear their taste for expensive delicacies, and must resolve to subsist on the simplest possible food that would sustain life.<sup>35</sup> We see that something that was highly esteemed in the wise men of the period, was their ability to reduce their wisdom to very short and pregnant formulations. Every one of the Seven Sages was credited with a pertinent *gnomé*—a saying of this kind: 'Measure is best'; 'Nothing in excess'; 'Recognise the right moment' (the *kairos*).

Heraclitus is already familiar with the story that the death of Homer was occasioned by his failure to solve a riddle; that shows, says Heraclitus, how far he was from true wisdom! As for Hesiod, who was also famously wise,<sup>36</sup> he did not even know the nature of day and night: he spoke of them as two things, while in fact they are one. It followed that Homer is condemned for his inability to solve an old riddle, and Hesiod for giving up on a new one.

The reader must ask himself in what sense day and night are being treated as one and the same thing—in some deeper sense, evidently, than that of normal speech or ordinary thought. Other philosophers practised

<sup>33</sup> Hdt. 3.30–1.

<sup>34</sup> The historian Ctesias, *FGrHist* 688 F 13, presents Darius and the Scythian king (*sic*) as each reciprocally giving the other his bow: the bow of the Scythian king is more powerful—and Darius turns tail. Here, the motif has been altered and coarsened. Cf. Hartog (1980) 62.

<sup>35</sup> D–K, *VS* 22 A 3b (Vol. I, p. 144).

<sup>36</sup> *VS* 22 B 56, 57 (Vol. I, p. 163).

similar brevity, and we find a whole series of gnomic sayings among the Pythagoreans, such as ‘Do not poke the fire with a sword’, meaning that one should not struggle with a man who is angry.<sup>37</sup> Every one of the Seven has some sayings of this sort ascribed to him.

The well known cult of a compressed mode of speech can be seen in Herodotus, elegantly combined with the riddling but significant gesture. Thus, of a group of Samian exiles, pleading with the Spartans to assist their attempt to return home: ‘They made a long speech, as people do when they are seriously asking for something.’ When they had finished, the Spartans replied that they had forgotten the beginning of the speech and had not understood its end. Consequently, the Samians, next day, appeared before them with an empty sack and said, ‘The sack needs corn!’ The Spartans replied that the words ‘the sack’ were unnecessary; but that they would help the Samians.<sup>38</sup>

The reason why I have dealt with these incidents at length—perhaps at excessive length—is to emphasise explicitly that Herodotus’ *Histories* are significantly influenced by forms that are non-literary, or that stand on the very edge of literature.<sup>39</sup> The riddle is, of its nature, an oral form; and so, too, is the *brachylogia*, the epigrammatic conciseness, practised by a Sage: a man who can compress his wisdom into a sentence, or even into a gesture. The stories of the Seven Sages; the life of the wandering singer; the career of the ingenious inventor of fables; all of them must have circulated orally, passing from mouth to mouth, before they found a written form.

They seem to be distinct from anything that can properly be called the ‘Ionian Enlightenment’: from the cosmic speculations of a Thales or a Parmenides, which form the material for our books (the first of them was written by Aristotle) on the pre-Socratic philosophers. We must accept that any such definition of Ionian philosophy comes from Aristotle to us, not from the Ionians: and that it is sadly anachronistic, robbing those energetic and impressive men of a significant part of their identity.

The Wise Men who impressed and fascinated their contemporary public by telling them that water was the origin of all things; or that all things were eternally immobile, and movement was an impossibility; or that Day and Night were really one and the same thing: such men had much in common

<sup>37</sup> *VS* 58 B 6 (Vol. I, p. 465.26–7). ‘Wie viele Apophthegmata mag dieser Mann [sc. Herodotus] im Kopf gehabt haben!': Pohlenz (1937) 188.

<sup>38</sup> Hdt. 3.46. See also 7.226, the striking reply of the Spartan Dienekes: ‘Then we shall be fighting in the shade!’ ‘This retort of Dienekes, and others of a similar sort’ were well known in Laconia. The man ‘showed himself as the best of them all’ at Thermopylae.

<sup>39</sup> The question of the actual ‘orality’ of Herodotus has been much discussed. See, for instance, Hartog (1980) 282ff.; Lang (1984).

with the impressive figures in Herodotus, who declare that the Law is a stricter slave-master for the free man than the slave-driver is for a slave, or that the greatest of all kings was less happy than two obscure Greeks who had died young.

They also resemble the historian himself, who informed his readers that the Hellenes had derived their gods from the Egyptians; and that the Persians had personal names that were as impressive as their persons, and that all ended with the same letter; and that his own chosen subject was greater than that of the *Iliad*, with which his subject was connected by a chain of hostilities between Europe and Asia, all of which were occasioned by abductions of women.<sup>40</sup> The desire to impress and dazzle his readers is as conspicuous as the pure desire for scholarship. The reader is like a listener, who must be held by the powerful charm of applicable, enigmatic, and fascinating sayings and judgements.

In conclusion, I should like to address another topic. This time, it is a problem about the material, rather than of the style or the presentation. I observed that the story of Cyrus took the reader among simple people, far away from the political history which would be presented, exclusively, by Thucydides. Not the least of the differences between the two great historians lies in the fact that, in Herodotus' *History*, an important role is played by women, and that we actually hear them speak—while in Thucydides it is well known that no woman ever says anything, and that almost never is a woman even named; nor do his pages ever invite the reader to enjoy genre scenes from social or family life.

Every reader of Herodotus remembers the story of the elite young men of Hellas, all wooing Agariste, the daughter of the tyrant of Sicyon, and spending a year at her father's court. There, they took part in athletic contests and 'were tested for their manly excellence, their knowledge, their education, and their character'. A winner was finally announced, when his rival Hippoclidides, who had almost been victorious, had disgraced himself by an unseemly exhibition of drunken dancing. 'When the girl's father saw him standing on his head on the table and showing off the dance steps with his legs in the air, he could contain himself no longer, but said: "Son of Tisander, you have danced away your wedding!" Hippoclidides answered merely, "Hippoclidides doesn't care!"'<sup>41</sup>

About this story, Wolf Aly writes: 'To look for historical truth behind this story, would be to mistake the story teller's intention': the anecdote is a wide-spread motif; we find it in many literatures, and it has a kinship with

<sup>40</sup> Thales, Parmenides, Heraclitus; Hdt. 2.43.2, 139; 7.20.2; 1.1–5.

<sup>41</sup> Hdt. 6.126–9.

fables that dramatise the activities of birds and beasts.<sup>42</sup> But to approach the story in this way, it seems to me, involves missing an important point. Admittedly, we should be irresponsibly optimistic, if we asserted with confidence that Clisthenes actually uttered these words, or that Hippoclidides danced on the table and performed a head-stand on it. But what about the setting of the story: the extraordinary form of entertainment that the tyrant devised for the courtship of his daughter, and the participation in it of suitors from all over Hellas? Did anything like that actually happen, in Hellas in the sixth and fifth centuries? In the absence of sources in prose, we reach for the aid of poetry.

Homer does not describe for us the wooing of Helen, or how Menelaus won her; but the story seems to have been told in the *Catalogue of Women*, a poem ascribed to Hesiod.<sup>43</sup> The poet told how all the princes of Hellas, inflamed by reports of her beauty, sent their courtship gifts—but Idomeneus the Cretan, by contrast, excited by those reports, ‘did not send an envoy but himself sailed in his black ship over the sea to her father’s house, to see Helen for himself, and not to have to rely on reports.’<sup>44</sup> We, nowadays, can hardly tell how many suitors there were, according to [Hesiod]: we can name roughly a dozen, and the names of many others have, doubtless, been lost.

The whole episode was treated at unusual length and with exceptional fullness in the *Catalogue*, and it appears to have played a decisive role in that poem, serving as the beginning of the story of Zeus’ decision to destroy the heroes by means of the Trojan War, and thus to bring in our own, inferior, unheroic generation.<sup>45</sup> Herodotus, too, lists the suitors of Agariste with unusual fullness: he names thirteen men, each provided with a patronymic and a home country—a whole page of the Greek text.<sup>46</sup> The *Catalogue* chose the unusual, even unnatural, route of making the suitors conduct their business from a distance; but it appears that the lyric poet Stesichorus described them as all personally present.<sup>47</sup>

The *Catalogue of Women* tells of other girls who were greatly wooed: of Demodike, who rejected all her suitors, and who bore a son, in the end, to the god Ares; and of Atalante, who could run faster than any man. Her

<sup>42</sup> Aly (1969) 159.

<sup>43</sup> Hesiod, fr. 195–204 MW.

<sup>44</sup> Hesiod, fr. 204.56f. MW.

<sup>45</sup> M. L. West (1985) 114f.

<sup>46</sup> Hdt. 6.127.

<sup>47</sup> *PMG* 190: ἐπὶ μνηστείαν τῆς Ἑλένης παρόντων (‘They were present for the courtship of Helen’).

father announced to a great gathering that, if any suitor could defeat her in a foot race, he could have her as his wife—but that, if he should lose, it should cost him his life. Such a story implies, at least, a considerable gathering, and it has something of the aristocratic and chivalrous atmosphere that characterises the wedding of Agariste (one is reminded, also, of the story of Puccini's *Turandot*).

There were other myths that told of brides who were offered as prizes for races: Hippodamia, for example, and the daughters of Danaus. Both stories are mentioned by Pindar.<sup>48</sup> This story pattern apparently goes back to a cult practice at Olympia: the sexual union of the winner of a race for men with the winner of a race for women.<sup>49</sup> The wrestling contest between Thetis and Peleus—he could not marry her, until he had defeated her in wrestling—is a similar example: another athletic test, with the girl, again, as the prize.

Herodotus presents the race for the hand of Agariste, not just as a simple, old-fashioned athletic contest, but also as a competition in manners and in character. Hippocles loses—but thanks to a lack of manners, not because of an athletic defeat. The story itself remains thoroughly aristocratic, but in a different and more refined sense: aristocracy now includes breeding, good manners, and *savoir faire*. But all these stories point in the same direction: to the depiction of a society in which display, and competition, and family pride, belong to the most important and most pervasive motifs.

By bringing this motif, which was at home in poetry and in the myths, into prose, Herodotus (it seems to me) has preserved a part of the atmosphere—of the social history—of the sixth century: something that would certainly not have been preserved by political historiography in the style of Thucydides. It is, however, not unimportant for the historian that here we are dealing with the century which saw the founding of the great Panhellenic Games, and the erection of enormous temples and consecrated buildings. That such a society still existed in the 460s BC, is made probable (for instance) by the opening of Pindar's seventh *Olympian*, where the bride's father sends to his newly acquired son-in-law a precious gold cup, filled with wine to the brim—'the summit of his wealth', *κορυφὰν κτεάνων* (es ging ihm nichts darüber: 'he had no dearer treasure')—as a sign that he truly accepts him, so as to glorify him in the sight of all the group'.<sup>50</sup>

The Hesiodic *Catalogue* shows also another point of contact with Herodotus. The wanderings of Phineus, driven on by the Harpies, are related to ge-

<sup>48</sup> *Ol.* 1; *Pyth.* 9.

<sup>49</sup> Cornford (1912).

<sup>50</sup> *Ol.* 7.1–6.

ographical writings. Phineus travelled the whole world, and his journeyings, like those of Hecataeus, gave some inspiration, doubtless, to those of Herodotus. We read of girls who travelled for love, like Europa; of a girl brought up amid the sheep, like the young Cyrus; of a girl who tries to wean her father from an evil and disastrous custom (Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus). She is a predecessor of the Spartan princess Gorgo, daughter of King Cleomenes, whose two appearances in Herodotus present two of our motifs: once, when she holds her father back from accepting the dangerous and increasingly seductive offers of Aristagoras; and again, when she is the only person in Sparta who knows what to do when the banished Demaratus sends a warning on an apparently empty writing tablet.<sup>51</sup>

The *Catalogue*, like all mythical compositions, is full of disputes within the family: tyrannical fathers, cruel stepmothers, disputes over inheritance, disputes between brothers. Material of this kind has an interest generally for Herodotus, which it does not possess for Thucydides. The family complications in the Eurysthenid royal house in Sparta, for instance, do not yield to the myths at any point: as with the story of King Anaxandridas, who takes two wives and has children by each of them, who engage in intrigues against each other—like the remarkable stories of the suspicious birth of King Demaratus, whose mother declared that he was the son of a supernatural father: the hero Astrabacus. All of these Spartan stories centre on women—on their unusual marriages, child-births, and confessions.<sup>52</sup> The Homeric epic, which has its own very definite atmosphere, avoids such stories, but the tradition generally is full of them.

All of that, beyond question, provides the background from which the great *History* grew up. I am not, of course, denying that Herodotus rose well above it. According to his ancient *Life*, Homer was a travelling singer—just like the travelling doctors, prophets, and singers, who appear so frequently in Herodotus. Walter Burkert has recently drawn attention to the antiquity, and to the significance, of stories of this kind in Hellas.<sup>53</sup> Our knowledge of them, broadly speaking, is provided by a mass of narrative material, partly in written form, partly from an oral tradition; many of the stories told of such men must have had their central point in the ability of men of this kind to produce striking and apt formulations: in their mastery, that is, of the *logos*.

Traditions of this kind also permit us glimpses of the social life of the sixth century, such as so often enliven Herodotus' *History*: the stories of aris-

<sup>51</sup> Hesiod, fr. 124, 294, 296; 140-1; 17a.8. Tyro: fr. 30.25; Gorgo: Hdt. 5.51.2; 7.239.

<sup>52</sup> Hdt. 5.39-48; 6.51-70.

<sup>53</sup> Burkert (1984).

tocratic ostentation and of aristocratic hospitality, such as the story which presents the ageing Miltiades sitting on the stoop in front of his house, when a troop of Thracians, in exotic dress, goes past. The hospitable aristocrat invites them in—and that is the beginning of his adventures, which will be so important for the history of the world.<sup>54</sup>

The stories of pregnant girls and their angry fathers, of rival wives and their competing sons, connect the *History* on the one side with the myths, and on the other with an historical reality which is otherwise inaccessible to us. This sort of material began to find a form in different settings and in different styles: in the narratives of Homer and of Aesop; in the legends of notable families; in the latest creations of epic poetry;<sup>55</sup> in the admiring anecdotes that surrounded the persons of the famous thinkers and writers of Hellas. All of that found its way into Herodotus' work, and all of it was vital to a history that was to be social as well as narrative, epigrammatic as well as epic, morally and philosophically effective, and (at the same time) materially complete.

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<sup>54</sup> Hdt. 6.35.

<sup>55</sup> It is to be borne in mind that Herodotus is said to have been the nephew or the cousin of the epic poet Panyasis.

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