

REVIEW

SPEECHES IN HERODOTUS 5–9

Vasiliki Zali, *The Shape of Herodotean Rhetoric: A Study of the Speeches in Herodotus' Histories with Special Attention to Books 5–9*. International Studies in the History of Rhetoric, 6. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014. Pp. x + 383. Hardback, €140.00/\$179.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-27896-7.

In this stimulating book, a revised version of her UCL PhD dissertation, Vasiliki Zali (Z.) analyses the speeches in Herodotus 5–9, both in light of the well-known Herodotean theme of the polarity between the Greeks and non-Greeks, especially the Persians, and also in order to illustrate how the speeches demonstrate Greek disunity during the Persian Wars.¹ After setting out these themes in the Introduction, four chapters divided into three Parts are followed by a short Conclusion, two Appendixes (Alternation of Speech Modes in Debates and Conversations; and a Catalogue of Greek and Persian Debates), a lengthy Bibliography, Index of Passages Cited, and a General Index.

In Part I ('Architectonics of Speech') = Chapter I ('Allocation of Speech'), Z. shows how speeches, both direct and indirect (including a third category, 'Record of Speech Act', 'a more strict and remote form of indirect speech which summarizes the content of an utterance', 4), play a vital role in the narrative of events, and in particular how they characterize the speaker. The first of four sections in this chapter (1.1), 'Modes of Analysis', covers the topics of silence ('[t]he rhetoric of absence is as important as the rhetoric of presence', 39) and the alternation of speech modes between direct and indirect speech when Herodotus reports discussions between individuals and groups, a method familiar from literature going back to Homer. The second section (1.2), 'Greek vs. Greeks', shows how the allocation of speeches is not random, but 'is particularly significant for the depiction of Greek unity' (52). The fragility of this unity is indicated by compression or suppression of debates, omission of speeches to highlight the antagonism between Sparta and Athens (e.g. Aristagoras' speeches at Sparta and Athens are reported, but not those at Eretria and Argos), and the use of speech to describe national character, in particular Spartan dislike of long speeches as opposed to Athenian eloquence. All this is

¹ I should, at the outset of this review, apologise to the author for the length of time it has taken; and I should also declare that, as I write, I am the President of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, in whose series this book is published, though I was not involved in the commissioning or editing of the work.

largely uncontroversial, though I am not fully persuaded by Z.'s interpretation of the quarrel between Pausanias and Amompharetus before Plataea (71–2), that the absence of direct speech prevents the scene from becoming 'excessively comical'. In a third section (1.3), 'Speech and Power/Authority', Z. examines the separation of authority from power: for example, Xerxes has absolute power, but lacks moral and intellectual authority, and the authority of Greek and Persian individuals is regulated by Herodotus' allocation to them of direct or indirect speech, compression and omission. Themistocles and Xerxes then serve as the focus of Z.'s analysis. Z. perhaps downplays Xerxes' rhetorical powers a little too far here ('The absolute power of Xerxes is evident in the brevity of this reaction, as is his rhetorical weakness and lack of authority', 91), given that we are told later in the context of his exhortatory speech at Abydos (Hdt. 7.53) that it 'is surprisingly more efficient than any other harangue in Herodotus and employs the greatest number of hortatory motifs' (291). Indeed, 'Herodotus challenges Greek presumptions of national stereotypes by assigning the Persian king Greek-style rhetoric' (292). In the final section of Chapter 1 (1.4), 'Greeks vs. Persians', Z. looks briefly at the allocation of speech to the Greeks and Persians, for example noting with reference to Appendix 2 the interesting fact that the majority of Greek debates are recorded in indirect speech, whereas the majority of Persian debates, though they are far fewer in number, are largely in direct discourse.

In Part 2 ('Speech and Competition') = Chapter 2 ('Debates'), Z. focuses on debates, which she defines flexibly as 'a formal public discussion entailing exchange of opposing opinions, between two or more interlocutors, over important issues that affect the whole community, such as matters of national strategy' (105). A helpful Catalogue of the debates so defined which occur in books 5–9 is given in Appendix 2, and the definition is designed to help her contest the 'still widespread' view 'that the *Histories* contains only a small number of debates, most of which merit no particular notice' (103). Her analysis of the language and mechanics of debate again illustrates 'the fragility of Greek unity and the distinction between Greeks and Persians' (104–5). After some 'General Observations' (2.1) on Herodotus' stance, in the second section (2.2), 'Language', Z. examines the use of the vocabulary of collectivity and disunity, autocracy and openness. In a third section (2.3), 'On the Cusp between Homer and Thucydides', she compares debate in Herodotus, Homer, and Thucydides; and finally in section 2.4, 'Test Cases', Z. turns to a series of case studies on each side, three Greek and five Persian (including the Constitutional Debate in book 3). Debates tend to undermine the Graeco-Persian polarity: Greek debates are disorderly and antagonistic, with self-interest and deception to the fore, one speaker often prevailing and unity rarely the outcome, while Persian debates with a democratic feel occur among an elite who are subject to an autocracy, which precludes genuinely open debate. Herodotus' staging

of them, with narratorial interventions, indicates the defectiveness of debates on both sides.

In Part 3 ('Speech and Typology'), Z. analyses two specific types of speech from the viewpoint of rhetorical theory on deliberative and epideictic oratory. In Chapter 3 ('Alliance Speeches'), Z. discusses in the first section (3.1), 'Literary Tradition and Early Rhetorical Handbooks', the *Rhetoric to Alexander* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and the moral and utilitarian arguments for and against alliance they put forward, followed by a brief examination of the occurrence of these arguments in the literary tradition from Homer to tragedy and historiography (Thucydides and Xenophon, as well as Herodotus). Recurring themes are kinship, past favours, self-interest, justice, and flattery, and in the next section (3.2), 'Alliance Motifs in Herodotus', Z. considers a range of general examples followed in section 3.3 by four 'Test Cases': 'Self-Interest Cloaked: Aristagoras and the "Rhetoric of Deceit"'; 'The Embassy to Gelon: Turning a Request for Alliance into a Fight for Leadership'; 'Constructing a Debate to Display Ethnic Feelings: Alexander and the Spartans at Athens'; 'Threatening with Betrayal to Achieve Unity: Employing Negotiating Tricks to Face a Non-Responsive Audience?'. The analysis of the Gelon episode in book 7, and the competition between him, the Spartans, and the Athenians for leadership of the Greeks, is a barometer of Greek disunity and looks forward to the Peloponnesian War ('The indirect reference to Pericles' Samian funeral oration in Gelon's speech is significantly conducive to this proleptical reading', 216). Z's primary focus in this chapter is on the Greeks, but she ends with a brief fourth section (3.4) on 'Persian Alliances: An Overview'.

In Chapter 4, 'Pre-Battle Speeches', Z. opens in the first section (4.1), 'The Genre of Pre-Battle Exhortation', with a discussion of the existence or otherwise of pre-battle exhortations as a rhetorical genre. Having satisfied herself that 'these were considered a real-life genre' (240), though much of the evidence is considerably later, Z. moves on in section 4.2 to the hortatory themes, 'Exhortation and Exhortatory Motifs in Literature and Rhetoric', before addressing in section 4.3, 'Herodotean Harangues', the inadequate attention so far paid to pre-battle exhortation in Herodotus. Here, Z. discusses traditional hortatory *topoi*, proverbs, and maxims from Homer onwards, and the mixing of deliberative and epideictic with hortatory themes. In section 4.4, 'Function of Exhortations: Case Studies', Z. presents seven case studies, naturally including Miltiades at Marathon (who 'clusters together partly idealistic and partly self-centred motives, 268) and also the above-mentioned exhortation to unity by Xerxes at Abydos which, Z. perceptively argues, 'presents affinities particularly with the Athenian *epitaphios* ideology' (292). A final section (4.5) on 'Harangues and Herodotean Narrative', in which Z. points out that 'Any long, inspiring exhortation speech by a prominent general is lacking' (300), is followed by a concluding chapter in which she highlights the Bakhtinian 'dialogic

nature of the *Histories*' (305) and reflects on (increasingly popular) metahistorical interpretations of Herodotus.

This brief overview cannot do full justice to the range of topics covered in Z.'s book and the originality of her approach to the *Histories*. There are, of course, quibbles: the illustration of those topics inevitably involves an amount of repetition of passages, and doubtless historians will feel that at times her literary analysis of the rhetoric of the speeches might be accompanied by a greater awareness of what the sources for them might have been and emphasis on what actually happened. Herodotus' readers knew that Gelon's well-known threat about the spring being taken from the year (7.162.1) turned out to be an empty one (and Z. notes the likely derivation of the story from Pericles' funeral oration for the Samians, 213), but in that light her comment seems rather lame: 'This loss may potentially lead to another, worse loss, that of the Greek army at the hands of the Persians' (213). The speeches in Herodotus may all be deceptive, but some at least led to the correct action. Z.'s will not be the final word on them, but will stimulate plenty of further discussion of Herodotus' historiographical methods. That, for me, makes this a very good book.

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