

HERODOTUS—THE MOST HOMERIC HISTORIAN?

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HERODOTUS—THE MOST
HOMERIC HISTORIAN?



Edited by
IVAN MATIJAŠIĆ

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PREFACE

This book explores the relationship between Herodotus and Homer and the reason why Herodotus was considered Homeric in antiquity. It stems from a conference at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology of Newcastle University which took place in March 2019, where most of the chapters that make up the book were presented. The conference was funded by the Research Committee of the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at Newcastle, and by the Institute of Classical Studies in London. I wish to express my gratitude to both institutions for their generous support, to the speakers for accepting my invitation to Newcastle, to the other numerous participants for a successful and fruitful discussion during the event, and to the chairs of each session: Federico Santangelo, Rowland Smith, Christopher Tuplin, and Jaap Wisse.

I also wish to thank the *Histos* editors, Rhiannon Ash and Timothy Rood, for accepting this edited book for publication in the journal's Supplements, and especially the supervisory editor of the Supplements, John Marincola, for the extremely helpful guidance and valuable assistance in the final stages of the publication process.

Each chapter is autonomous and includes a self-standing bibliography, but all have benefitted from discussion during the conference and from subsequent exchanges of emails and texts. The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly made our work more challenging, especially because of limited access to libraries, but we hope that our efforts have produced something that will benefit Herodotean and Homeric scholars. If the book manages to stimulate further thoughts or provoke some constructive reaction, it will have accomplished its principal objective.

I. M.

Siena, October 2021

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HOMERIC ALLUSIONS IN HERODOTUS' *HISTORIES**

Jan Haywood

It has been long been recognised—and no doubt even more so amongst his contemporary audience—that Herodotus' prose manner displays a profound debt to earlier epic poetry.¹ This is no more clearly expressed than in Pseudo-Longinus' famous remark that Herodotus is *homērikōtatos* ('most Homeric').² To this, readers may add the Salmacis inscription, discovered in 1998 and dated to the mid-to-late second century BCE, which declares Herodotus 'the prose Homer in the historical genre' (τὸν πρῶτον ἐν ἱστορίαισιν Ὅμηρον).³ It is unfortunate then, that such a striking sobriquet as this had not subsequently paved the way for a more extensive investigation into Herodotus' relationship with Homer than has historically been the case.⁴ Up until more recently, critical analyses had not proceeded very far

* Several individuals have contributed significantly to this paper, which emerges out of a section of my doctoral thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank Ivan Matijašić for hosting such a splendid workshop on Homer and Herodotus in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2019, and for providing such encouraging and generous advice during the development of this paper. I am also grateful to Tom Harrison, Christopher Tuplin and Simon Hornblower, for reading and improving earlier versions of the material here presented, as well as audiences at the University of Nottingham, University College Dublin and the University of Leicester. Finally, I wish to thank the two anonymous readers for their helpful and incisive comments, as well as John Marincola and all the *Histos* editorial team.

¹ For the far-reaching impact that the epic tradition exerted on Greek historiography, see above all Strasburger (1972); Hornblower (1994) 7–15 and 64–7; Marincola (2007).

² [Longin.] *Subl.* 13.3. Cf. also Plutarch's remarks on Herodotus' bard-like delicacy and smoothness coupled with his lack of true knowledge (*Her. mal.* 43), a critique which transforms [Longinus'] positive appeal to Homer, instead including Homer in order to class Herodotus as one of the lying poets, Kurke (2011) 385; Kirkland (2019).

³ See principally Isager (1998).

⁴ The bibliography on Herodotus' relationship with Homer has expanded exponentially in the last few decades but see especially: de Jong (1999); Pelling (1999) 332–5; (2006); Grethlein (2006); (2010) 151–8; Baragwanath (2008) 35–54; Marincola (2006); (2007); Barker

from Dionysius of Halicarnassus' rather unsatisfying observation that Herodotus 'wished to provide variety within his text, being an emulator of Homer' (*ποικίλην ἐβουλήθη ποιῆσαι τὴν γραφὴν Ὀμήρου ζηλωτῆς γενόμενος*, D.H. *Pomp.* 3).

This notion that Herodotus sought to lend his work variety by mimicking Homer advances a much too simplistic picture, however, as evinced by the wide number of recent studies that have addressed various questions concerning Herodotus' debt to the language and content of the Homeric corpus. Christopher Pelling, for instance, has explored how Herodotus adopts a distinctive approach to Homeric values, an approach that is clearly shaped by the cultural and political realities of fifth-century Greece.⁵ Focusing specifically on Herodotus' reading of Homer in the Helen *logos*, Irene de Jong has illustrated the way in which Herodotus' account reinforces the characteristic elements of his own research procedure (*akoē*, *opsis*, and *gnōmē*).⁶ Meanwhile, other scholars have centred their investigations on certain Homeric allusions and parallels in Herodotus' work.⁷ For example, Jonas Grethlein has demonstrated the tendency of various individuals or communities to cite Homeric *exempla* in order to legitimise present actions; he shows then how this is contrasted with Herodotus' much more critical appeals to such a mode of memory, 'namely to highlight issues of his own time'.⁸ The result of analyses such as these has been a far more nuanced appreciation of Herodotus' approach to, and use of, the Homeric poems.⁹

This chapter looks to build on this greater understanding of Herodotus' relationship with Homer by analysing a range of passages in the *Histories* that offer an explicit or implicit allusion to the Homeric poems or to the Homeric poet himself. I will argue that although Herodotus establishes clear distinctions between his work and that of his epic predecessor, he nonetheless intentionally sets out to demonstrate his impressive knowledge of Homer's texts through a series of layered engagements, which range from the

(2009) 138–43; Sammons (2012); Rutherford (2012); Currie (2020); (2021); Rozokoki (2021); and the contributions by Saïd, de Jong and de Bakker in Baragwanath–de Bakker (2012). For earlier treatments, see especially Huber (1965), Strasburger (1972).

⁵ Pelling (2006); cf. Pelling (2019) 202–4 and 213.

⁶ de Jong (2012).

⁷ E.g., Jacoby (1913) 502–4; Hornblower (1994) 65–9; Boedeker (2002) 100–9; Grethlein (2006); Saïd (2012).

⁸ Grethlein (2010) 158–87 (quotation at 184).

⁹ As Boedeker (2002) 109 puts it: 'it is no exaggeration ... to say that without Homeric epic's sustained narrative of great deeds behind it, the *Histories* would not exist at all'.

transparent quotation by the narrator himself to the rather more esoteric evocation of a Homeric passage, phrase or word, given in direct speech by another character. So, alongside certain (well explored) passages that recall the Homeric poems, such as the opening chapters of the *Histories*,¹⁰ or Herodotus' excursus on the vast size of the Persian army (7.60–99), the latter clearly inspired by the Iliadic 'Catalogue of Ships',¹¹ readers can perceive specific verbal allusions to Homer across the *Histories*, some no doubt more than others evoking a particular Homeric passage for Herodotus' contemporary (and later) audiences. For instance, when the Egyptian king Psammenitus is reduced to tears by the sight of a companion's spectacular fall into destitution 'on the threshold of old age' (*ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῶ*, 3.14.10), many amongst Herodotus' readers cannot fail to recall Priam's speech in the *Iliad*, when he laments his many losses 'on the threshold of old age' (*ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῶ*, 22.60).¹² Although 'on the threshold of old age' may have already become a proverbial formula, perhaps even by the time of Homer, the overlap between Psammenitus' and Priam's stories—each losing a son and having a daughter taken into slavery (cf. *Il.* 22.62)—undoubtedly sharpens and enriches this intertext.¹³ But Homeric engagements in the *Histories* are not limited to the evocation of particular words or phrases from the Homeric corpus, and I will begin this examination of Herodotus' Homeric allusions by turning to the systematic critique in Book 2 of Homer's presentation of Helen at Troy. In the discussion that follows, therefore, I will suggest that Homeric allusions in the *Histories* are used both to reflect on the limitations of the epic poet's ability to convey the past accurately, thus serving as a foil for Herodotus' own innovative prose work, but also to draw on an authoritative *textual* source in order to shed light on certain similarities and differences between conflict in the heroic age and the more recent past.

¹⁰ For the *Iliad*, see Pelling (2019) 22–3 and Matijašić, above, pp. 9–14; for the *Odyssey*, see Nagy (1990) 231–3; Moles (1993) 92–8; Pelling (1999) 332–3; Harrison (2003) 242; Marincola (2006) 14; (2007) 13–5; Chiasson (2012) 123.

¹¹ *Il.* 2.484–785; see, e.g., Thomas (2000) 238–9 and Nicolai–Vannicelli (2019).

¹² How–Wells (1923) ad loc.; Huber (1965) 33; Pelling (2006) 88 with n. 35; (2013) 7–8; (with cautions) Kazanskaya (2014) 172–3; Matijašić, above, p. 23.

¹³ As already argued by Pelling (2006) 88. On Homeric intertexts in Herodotus, see especially Pelling (2006); (2013) 7–13; Kazanskaya (2014); cf. the contributions by Pelling, Barker, and Tuplin in this volume.

1. Arbitrating Traditions

Andrew Ford has argued that, in contrast to his somewhat gnomic appreciation of lyric poetry, Herodotus displays a real expertise in epic poetry, and that this knowledge derives from a close and studious analysis of the epic texts.¹⁴ It is certainly the case that in one of the best known passages from the second book of his *Histories* (2.112–20),¹⁵ in which Herodotus adduces competing Trojan War traditions, audiences can discern his appreciation—and use of—Homer as a fixed (and presumably written?) text.¹⁶ For it is here that Herodotus most clearly illustrates his belief that, regardless of its poetic nature, Homer’s poetry offers a narrative based on real, historical events.¹⁷ This section of the Egyptian *logos* has often been interpreted as an extraordinary section of the *Histories*, particularly since Herodotus attempts to disprove the commonly held belief, which is reaffirmed by a surface reading of Homer’s poetry, that the ‘real’ Helen was held captive in Troy.¹⁸

Herodotus begins his account by stating that the Egyptian priests, those knowledgeable authorities whom he ostensibly consults for much of his Egyptian *logos*,¹⁹ told him about the events concerning Helen (2.113.1; cf.

¹⁴ Ford (2002) 148.

¹⁵ On this passage, see useful remarks in V. Hunter (1982) 52–65; Fehling (1989) 59–65; Vandiver (1991) 124–32; West (2002) 31–9; Grethlein (2010) 151–8; Sammons (2012); de Jong (2012); de Bakker (2012); Haywood–Mac Sweeney (2018) 117–25; Currie (2020); Rozokoki (2021).

¹⁶ Lloyd (1975) 121–3 examines the role that the Homeric tradition plays in Herodotus’ *Aigyptios logos*.

¹⁷ On Herodotus’ firm belief in the Trojan War, partially affirmed by his Egyptian sources, see variously V. Hunter (1982) 53–4; Vandiver (1991) 127; Stadter (2004) 33–8; Grethlein (2010) 153; Saïd (2012).

¹⁸ Of course, the sixth-century lyric poet Stesichorus had already suggested that the ‘real’ Helen was never at Troy; cf. further discussion below. For the connections between Herodotus’ and the lyric poets’ ambiguous relationship with Homer, see Donelli (2016) 12–18.

¹⁹ Fehling (1989) 59–65 argues that here, as elsewhere, Herodotus has fabricated the entire story, in part because the Egyptians could not possibly have invented the story of Helen’s stay in their country. Cf. West (2002) 36: ‘it is much too readily assumed that Egyptians—and other non-Greeks—were likely to interest themselves in Hellenic legend ... the Egyptians had no reason to regard [the Greeks] as culturally or intellectually superior’. Regardless of this considerable scepticism, Lloyd (1976–88) I.89–113 provides a valuable discussion on those passages in which Herodotus purportedly derives his information from the priests, including many useful insights into the long-standing cultural interaction between Greeks and Egyptians, which almost certainly would then have influenced the

2.118.1–120.1).²⁰ They inform him that Paris had intended to travel back with Helen to his native Troy, but after being driven off course by violent winds the couple landed in Egypt, where Paris would eventually be caught and arrested, before being taken to King Proteus in Memphis. Herodotus writes that while Paris was guilty of breaking the laws of hospitality,²¹ he was treated with the highest respect by Proteus; nonetheless, he was ultimately ordered to leave Egypt, while Helen remained in the safe care of the king (2.115.4–6).

Far from considering Homer ignorant of Helen's true location, Herodotus writes: 'it appears to me that Homer knew this account' (*δοκέει δέ μοι καὶ Ὅμηρος τὸν λόγον τοῦτον πυθέσθαι*),²² but did not use it, since he 'did not consider it to be *suitable* for an epic poem such as the one he used' (*ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ὁμοίως ἐς τὴν ἐποποιίην εὐπρεπῆς ἦν*).²³ In support of this, he refers directly to a passage in the *Iliad* in which Hecabe ascends to her chamber:

ἔνθ' ἔσαν οἱ πέπλοι παμποίκιλοι, ἔργα γυναικῶν
Σιδονίων, τὰς αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδής
ἦγαγε Σιδονίηθεν, ἐπιπλὼς εὐρέα πόντον,
τὴν ὁδὸν ἦν Ἑλένην περ ἀνήγαγεν εὐπατέρειαν.

And there were many-coloured robes, the products of
Sidonian women, whom God-like Alexander himself
Led from Sidon, sailing over the broad sea,
On that journey in which he brought the noble-born Helen.²⁴

priests' accounts of, for example, Egyptian history; cf. Moyer (2002); (2011) 42–3. Of course, this is not to say that we should therefore too readily assume that Herodotus' account is a verbatim report based on the Egyptian priests' knowledge; de Jong (2012) shows the considerable extent to which Herodotus' hand is at work in this narrative, demonstrating the prevalence here of 'the story pattern of the enquiring king, the motif of incredulity, and the principle of divine retribution' (141)—all characteristically Herodotean themes.

²⁰ Cf. Dio Chrys. 11.37–41.

²¹ Cf. *Il.* 3.351–4. For the *xenia* concept in Herodotus' Proteus passage as an allusion to the Homeric epic, see Vandiver (2012) 146–55; for a broader investigation into the allusive relationship between the Herodotean and Homeric Proteus, see de Bakker (2012) 118–22.

²² Greek passages from Herodotus are taken from Nigel Wilson's OCT edition of the *Histories*; all translations are my own.

²³ On which criteria Herodotus might have deemed suitable for epic poetry, see further Ford (2002) 150; Pallantza (2005) 154; Grethlein (2010) 155.

²⁴ 2.116.3 = *Il.* 6.289–92. In his recent OCT, Nigel Wilson retains §§4–5 of this chapter (though, following Powell (1935) 76, accepts that these lines could be an awkward

So it is Paris' connection with the Syria-dwelling Sidonian women that leads Herodotus to surmise that Homer knew of his wanderings, concluding that 'these verses' (τοῖσι ἔπεσι) show Homer knew perfectly well of Paris' diverted trip to Egypt, 'for Syria borders upon Egypt, and the Phoenicians, who constitute Sidon, dwell in Syria' (ὁμοῦρέει γὰρ ἡ Συρία Αἰγύπτω, οἱ δὲ Φοίνικες, τῶν ἐστὶ ἡ Σιδών, ἐν τῇ Συρίῃ οἰκέουσι, 2.116.6). The narrator hardly regards these Homeric lines as being recondite; there is no suggestion of any difficulty attached to his acquisition of this highly specific citation. (Indeed, Herodotus cites Homer again, this time *Odyssey* 4, to support his theory that the horns in an animal's head grow more quickly in hot countries than in cold ones, 4.29.²⁵) And strikingly, as I will demonstrate further below, Herodotus deploys these Homeric lines as an effective proof for his own idiosyncratic account of Helen's involvement in the Trojan War.

After positing that Homer was in fact aware of the true version of events related by the Egyptian priests, Herodotus then halts the narrative to show that Homer cannot be the author of the *Cypria*: 'These verses and this passage most acutely show that the *Cypria* is not the work of Homer but of someone else' (κατὰ ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ἔπεα καὶ τόδε τὸ χωρίον οὐκ ἦκιστα ἀλλὰ μάλιστα δηλοῖ ὅτι οὐκ Ὀμήρου τὰ Κύπρια ἔπεα ἐστὶ ἀλλ' ἄλλου τινός, 2.117). This, he argues, is precisely because the *Cypria* relates that Paris and Helen reached Troy within three days with a fair wind and smooth sea,²⁶ whereas

amendment by Herodotus, not fully worked into his text), often regarded as a later interpolation, since §6 appears to refer exclusively to the Iliadic quotation in §3. In the disputed §§4–5, Herodotus also quotes two passages from the *Odyssey* (4.227–30, 35–1), which further support his argument that Homer knew of Helen's true whereabouts. Ultimately, it does not matter for the purposes of the argument presented here whether these additional quotations from the *Odyssey* are authentically Herodotean, since the quotation from the *Iliad* in §3 is beyond dispute. I am persuaded, however, by the view of Sammons (2012) 57 n. 12, who argues that 'the very irrelevance of the *Odyssey* passages argues against interpolation, for an interpolator seeking to buttress the historian's argument could hardly have introduced a less helpful addition'. For the authenticity of these quotations from the *Odyssey*, see now Currie (2021) 11–13, who argues that 'the entirety of chapters 116–17 can be regarded as genuine' (quotation at page 13).

²⁵ Elsewhere in Book 4, note also the reference to the Λωτοφάγοι at 4.177–8, 183, a tribe who first appear in Homer (*Od.* 9.83–97). Herodotus even writes of one Libyan tribe, the Μάξυες: 'These people claim to be descended from the men of Troy' (φασὶ δὲ οὗτοι εἶναι τῶν ἐκ Τροίης ἀνδρῶν, 4.191.1); cf. Hecataeus' reference to the Nomadic Μάξυες (*FCrHist* 1 F 334), for which see Corcella (2007) ad 4.191.1.

²⁶ Lloyd (1976–88) II.51 notes that Herodotus' testimony contradicts later accounts on the *Cypria*, and tentatively suggests that Herodotus may have confused this with another of

the *Iliad* shows that Paris wandered far out of his way. Herodotus ultimately draws his negative conclusions regarding the authorship of the *Cypria* from his analysis of the Homeric verses cited in the preceding chapter. In this way, he not only accentuates his narratorial interest in the epic canon (more on this below), but he also shows how the close examination of a fixed text can prove an effective tool in addressing a controversial issue: the Homeric Question. The very discrepancy between the message conveyed about Helen by the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* on the one hand, and the *Cypria* on the other, is ultimately demonstrable proof for Herodotus, who clearly expects consistency from Homer,²⁷ that the *Cypria* is the work of some other poet.²⁸

Some scholars have deduced from this brief excursus on Homer that Herodotus displays a Thucydidean distrust of poets.²⁹ But such a conclusion hardly seems tenable given his overall treatment of Homer and epic poetry here or elsewhere in the *Histories*. Herodotus does not aim to challenge the historical foundations of the events recorded in Homer's poems; rather, he implies that there are rules and limits imposed upon the epic genre which limit its capacity to provide an exact representation of the past in comparison to his own genre.³⁰ He directs his criticism of poetry towards specific details and not general ones; his account does not suggest that Homer must be

the Cyclic poems. Herodotus similarly questions the true authorship of the *Epigoni* (4.32): see further below.

²⁷ Vandiver (1991) 127 n. 3. Cf. Graziosi (2002) 194 who argues that scholars underappreciate how Herodotus expects consistency in Homer in a way that he would not, for example, of contemporary dramatists.

²⁸ Currie (2021) 66 argues that this passage can be taken to suggest that the authorship of the *Cypria* was more widely contested when Herodotus was writing.

²⁹ Legrand (1936) 145 n. 1: ('Hérodote n'a pas plus de confiance dans les dires des poètes en général que Thucydide (1.9–10) dans les dires d'Homère'); cf. Lateiner (1989) 99; Austin (1994) 123: 'Homer is being relegated to no more than a poet who would sacrifice historical truth to romantic fancy'. Herodotus is by no means the first to offer a critique of Homer: cf. already Pind. *Nem.* 7.20–3, Heracl. DK 22 B 42; see further Marincola (1997) 219.

³⁰ Cf. Flory (1987) 65. As Sammons (2012) 57 n. 14 notes, Herodotus' use of *πυθέσθαι* here and in other passages concerning the methods of the poet, implies that Herodotus believed that the poet learnt through inquiry. Cf. also Graziosi (2002) 116–17; Grethlein (2010) 156; V. Hunter (1982) 54: 'Herodotus pictures Homer as working rather like himself gaining knowledge through enquiry ... and at times choosing among variant versions'. I am not, however, entirely convinced by de Jong (2012) 133 n. 24: '[Herodotus is] enlisting him as much as possible in the historiographical camp', as this seems to be going a step beyond what is undoubtedly a clear distinction that Herodotus makes between the genres that he and Homer are working in. Cf., however, [Plut.] *Vit. Hom.* 74–90, which credits Homer as the inventor of the *ἱστορικὸς λόγος*!

regarded with less respect or confidence, or even that Homer's poetry conveys falsehoods, but rather that his own innovative work, which is built on inquiry, is one that gives readers a lucid and critical understanding of the past.³¹ As Ligota has observed, Herodotus' motivation here 'is to show not so much that Homer's version is not true, as that it is out of place in a rationalist historical discourse'.³² It is revealing that Herodotus places the greatest trust in his Egyptian informants, precisely because they had conducted the same kind of *historiē* that he repeatedly appeals to, relying as they do on eyewitness accounts.³³ For when he returns to his description of the priests' account, Herodotus notes that they said they 'inquired and knew [much] from Menelaus himself' (*ἱστορίησι φάμενοι εἰδέναι παρ' αὐτοῦ Μενέλεω*, 2.118.1).³⁴ And again, at the end of the priests' description of Menelaus' subsequent impious behaviour in Egypt, sacrificing two local children, he reiterates that 'the priests said that they had learnt of some of these things by *inquiry*, and that they repeated with knowledge and accuracy those things which happened in their own country' (*τούτων δὲ τὰ μὲν ἱστορίησι ἔφασαν ἐπίστασθαι, τὰ δὲ παρ' ἑωυτοῖσι γεγόμενα ἀτρεκέως ἐπιστάμενοι λέγειν*, 2.119.3). Herodotus thus presents his own inquiry as being derived from a series of inquiries that were informed by eyewitness accounts.³⁵

Herodotus' focus on inquiry in these chapters interestingly pre-empts in a number of respects the methods of the modern historian, whose research in part relies on accessing original documents.³⁶ His attitude here cannot

³¹ Marincola (1997) 225–6. Thucydides also questions the subject matter of Homer's work, criticising the historical accuracy of his work (1.9.3, 10.1, 10.3–5, 11.1–2); cf. Moles (1993) 100. On Thucydides' relationship with Homer, see Hornblower (1994) 64–5, 67–9.

³² Ligota (1982) 11.

³³ So V. Hunter (1982) 56–61; Fornara (1971) 19–20; Bakker (2002) 16; de Jong (2012) 128. de Bakker (2012) 122–6 further explores the similarity between the research methods of Proteus and Herodotus in this passage, and demonstrates the persuasive power this elicits for the Herodotean enquirer. For Herodotean *historiē* and other events in the heroic age, see Munson (2012) 210.

³⁴ Austin (1994) 120 n. 4 speculates that when Herodotus asked the priests whether the Greek version of events was just a 'foolish account' (*μάταιον λόγον*, 2.118.1), we may well be detecting an oblique acknowledgment of Stesichorus (*PMG* 257). For similar uses of *ἱστορίη* in the sense of oral enquiry in Book 2, see Lloyd (1975) 88–9 (though he neglects 2.118.1).

³⁵ Cf. de Bakker (2012) 122.

³⁶ Thus Sammons (2012) 64: 'Herodotus' use of *hyponoiai* in combination with the resources of historical inquiry ... with an eye to discovering a verifiable truth rather than

simply be interpreted as reflecting a straightforward preference towards his oral informants, even though it is unequivocally clear that his aim is to show that the priests' account of Helen is correct.³⁷ In fact, this passage shows him working with numerous types of sources of information, attempting to discern some sense of harmony across all of them. Although Homer records a different version of events—a choice that, according to Herodotus, in no small way reflects the constraints of his chosen genre, his central assertion is that a close reading of the *Iliad* nonetheless reveals that Homer was in fact aware of the same tradition reported to Herodotus by the Egyptian priests.³⁸ In the Helen *logos* then, Herodotus operates in much the same way that Stephen Halliwell has proposed for Gorgias in his *Encomium*, not presenting himself 'as the exponent of a rationalizing repudiation of myth but as its reinterpreter'.³⁹ The point conveyed by Herodotus is that the myth must be re-interpreted in light of conflicting evidence in order for it to gain credence in his *Histories*.

Of course, the origins of Herodotus' sophisticated re-reading of Homer's knowledge concerning Helen's whereabouts during the war can be traced back to the archaic period, notably in the so-called 'palinode' (or 'palinodes') of the early sixth-century lyric poet Stesichorus.⁴⁰ Although very little of Stesichorus' poetry has survived, and we rely on later references by authors such as Plato and Isocrates to determine what his 'palinode' (literally a 'retraction') might have looked like, it is clear that Stesichorus offered a radical revisionist account of Helen's actions during the Trojan War. For he appears to have been the first to challenge fundamentally the Homeric

corroborating an imagined one, clearly looks forward to a tradition in the study of literary monuments that is alive and well today'.

³⁷ Herodotus reflects elsewhere on the bookish culture of the Egyptians: they are considered the most *logioi* of all nations, keeping records of the past (2.77.1; cf. Pl. *Tim.* 23.4); some Egyptian priests recite to Herodotus a written list of 330 consecutive monarchs (2.100.1); cf. 2.82.2: the Egyptians keep a written record of omens and unusual phenomena in anticipation of a similar event in the future. On the Egyptian literary tradition in Herodotus' age, see Lloyd (1975) 104–11.

³⁸ Sammons (2012) 57–64 argues that Herodotus aims to show that Homer not only knew the true version of events, but also intended to reveal this through a series of cryptic hints. For Sammons, Herodotus interprets Homer by way of *hyponoia* or 'hidden-meanings', a device used amongst ancient critics; cf. Graziosi (2002) 116–18.

³⁹ Halliwell (2011) 271.

⁴⁰ See Davies–Finglass (2014) 121–6, 299–343 for text and analysis (with commentary) respectively; cf. Allan (2008) 18–22. Davies–Finglass (2014) 308–17 weigh up the evidence for more than one 'palinode'; cf. Kelly (2007) 15–9.

account of Helen by replacing the real Helen at Troy with an *eidōlon* or phantom (Pl. *Resp.* 9.586c).⁴¹ In a separate fragment, also preserved by Plato, Stesichorus states firmly that ‘This story is not true, You did not embark the well-decked ships, You did not arrive at the citadel of Troy’ (οὐκ ἔστ’ ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος, | οὐδ’ ἔβας ἐν νηυσὶν εὐσέλμοις, | οὐδ’ ἴκεο Πέργαμα Τροίας’, Pl. *Phdr.* 243a). Moreover, according to another anonymous fragment, Stesichorus placed Helen’s *eidōlon* at Troy, arguing like Herodotus that the ‘real’ Helen resided with Proteus (fr. 90.14–5).⁴² Similarly to Herodotus’ later account then, Stesichorus’ challenge to Homer centres around the figure of Helen, who is no more firmly based at Troy than she is in the *Histories*; in both works, Helen is in fact a resident at the court of king Proteus in Egypt.⁴³

As much as these similarities might tempt one to argue for a Stesichorean model underlying Herodotus’ account, it is important to acknowledge that no such *eidōlon* features in his Helen *logos*, which is even more radical than the narrative of the lyric poet in its insistence that no manifestation of Helen, whether real or imagined, could be found at Troy.⁴⁴ What is more, almost nothing is known of the “palinode” other than these preliminary observations,⁴⁵ and it is unlikely that many other features of the poem’s narrative, beyond its commentary on Helen’s location, substantively shaped the Herodotean narrative. For, as I have argued, Herodotus’ *logos* is highly idiosyncratic in its repeated emphasis on the motif of inquiry and in its projection of a self-conscious narrator who weighs up rival, overlapping yet conflicting traditions.⁴⁶

⁴¹ For the presence of phantoms elsewhere in epic literature, see Davies–Finglass (2014) 305–6. One testimonium suggests that Hesiod introduced the motif of Helen as *eidōlon*, fr. 358 M–W; for a thorough critique, see Davies–Finglass (2014) 302–3.

⁴² Cf. Davies–Finglass (2014) *ad* 90.15.

⁴³ The other major (surviving) literary work to deny that Helen ever went to Troy is, of course, Euripides’ *Helen*, first performed in 412 BCE; see Allan (2008). This widespread interest in Helen during the latter half of the fifth century can also be extended to include the Gorgianic *Encomium of Helen*, a work that possibly predates Herodotus and sets out to rebuke the ‘univocal and unanimous’ (poetic) interpretations of Helen’s life (*Hel.* 9).

⁴⁴ As Currie (2020) 153–4 points out, the Stesichorean account of the phantom Helen is incompatible with Herodotus’ account; this might well explain, therefore, Herodotus’ notable silence regarding Stesichorus’ version.

⁴⁵ Kelly (2007) 20–1.

⁴⁶ See also Haywood–Mac Sweeney (2018) 120–3. For the contrast between the Helen of Homer with the Helen of Stesichorus and Herodotus, see Austin (1994) 127–36.

What emerges most pointedly from the extant Stesichorean fragments, therefore, is the difficulty that readers face in charting the level (if any) of Stesichorus' influence on Herodotus. The impact of Homer in 2.112–20 is inarguable, and I have argued above that Herodotus artfully shapes specific lines taken from the *Iliad* to support his central thesis that Helen lived in Egypt, not Troy. In contrast, while it is possible to recognise some clear affinities between the Herodotean and Stesichorean accounts on Helen, it remains impossible to determine the level of narratorial interaction with the 'palinode' in the *Histories*, since so little of Stesichorus' poetry has survived and Herodotus makes no explicit reference in this account or elsewhere to the 'palinode' (or even to Stesichorus himself).⁴⁷ The Stesichorean account nonetheless forms an important locus in the elaborate, intertextual web of mythological traditions regarding Helen that Herodotus had inherited;⁴⁸ so just as his composite account unambiguously foregrounds a diverse set of intellectual affiliations and relationships, it also obscures, marginalises, and even erases other likely or potential connections. From this point of view, the precise nature of Stesichorus' influence can remain only provisional, but his elusive 'palinode' surfaces as another one of those textual traditions that Herodotus might well have shaped his account around and/or alluded to, even though such a textual interaction goes entirely unsignalled in his work.⁴⁹

In his quasi-scholastic deconstruction of Homer's famous text, then, and through his engagement with a well-established tradition that challenged the Homeric version of Helen's location during the Trojan War, I propose that Herodotus is chiefly concerned not with denouncing Homer as a liar, but rather with displaying his own critical acumen as an inquirer interested in the value that different kinds of literature bring to historiographical

⁴⁷ Allan (2008) 23 argues that Homer is the chief target in Herodotus' account. While I agree that the epic poet comes to the forefront in this narrative, readers should remain open to other, potentially significant allusions to those texts that have since become lost, such as Stesichorus' 'palinode'; cf. E. L. Bowie (2018) 56.

⁴⁸ See further Allan (2008) 10–28; Blondell (2013). Given the lack of substantial evidence concerning the content of Stesichorus' account of Helen, however, it is difficult to sustain West's view that Herodotus' account is 'quite plainly a version of Stesichorus' (West (2004) 89); cf. (more cautiously put) Blondell (2013) 154. For other critical readings of Homer's account on Helen in early lyric poetry, see Donelli (2016) 14–15.

⁴⁹ Note also Diels (1887) 441–4, followed by Lloyd (1976–88) II.47, who proposes Hecataeus as another likely source for Herodotus in this *logos* (based on Hecataeus' reference to Menelaus' journey in *FGrHist* 1 FF 307–8).

research.⁵⁰ Herodotus' use of Homer as text looks to underline the superiority of history-writing, which, through critical engagement with others' *logoi*, is best equipped to reveal the realities of the past.⁵¹ The *logos* highlights Herodotus' wider belief that, as Stephanie West puts it, where non-poetic sources are lacking, 'it might be possible to strip off fabulous and fictional accretions and expose a sound historical core'.⁵²

Before leaving this passage, I would like to consider one further point, which sheds additional light on Herodotus' relationship with Homer here. Irene de Jong has well demonstrated the conspicuousness of Herodotus' own fingerprint throughout this passage, despite the various appeals to the priestly authorities from whom Herodotus purportedly derived his information.⁵³ This is no clearer than in the concluding chapter, where Herodotus argues from probability that (2.120.2)

οὐ γὰρ δὴ οὕτω γε φρενοβλαβῆς ἦν ὁ Πρίαμος οὐδὲ οἱ ἄλλοι <οἱ>
προσήκοντες αὐτῷ, ὥστε τοῖσι σφετέροισι σώμασι καὶ τοῖσι τέκνοισι καὶ
τῇ πόλι κινδυνεύειν ἐβούλοντο, ὅκως Ἀλέξανδρος Ἑλένη συνοικέη.

⁵⁰ Cf. the rather more dogmatic formulation proffered by Ford (2002) 152: 'in his historicising approach, *Herodotus regards epics fundamentally as texts* [my italics], valuable for their antiquity but to be critically and closely collated with other traditions and other texts'. Though it is indisputable that Herodotus treats the Homeric poems at various points as texts, it is far less clear as to whether the same can be said for the epic tradition *in toto*.

⁵¹ Similarly, Brown (1962) 262; Marincola (1997) 226; Asheri (2007a) 31.

⁵² West (2002) 47; cf. Munson (2012) 197, although I am not persuaded that Herodotus displays 'more confiden[ce]' than Thucydides in recovering events from the heroic age; Herodotus' unwillingness at 1.5.3 to validate the stories told by Persians and Phoenicians paves the way for his account, which looks to the much more recent past. The notion that poets embellished their accounts, or veered away from the truth, is of course prevalent in various authors predating Herodotus, see, e.g., Hes. *Theog.* 27–8: 'we know how to tell many lies that appear to be like true things, but we know, when we are willing, to tell the truth' (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, | ἴδμεν δ', εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι); Solon (F 29 *IEG*²): 'many poets lie' (πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἄοιδοί); Pind. *Ol.* 1.28–30: 'In a way the speech of mortals also [goes] beyond the true word, and tales, mixed up with multi-faceted lies, deceive' (καὶ πού τι καὶ βροτῶν | φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον | δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι). For further discussion on the vast topic of 'truth' and the poets, see E. L. Bowie (1993) 11–20; Pratt (1993) 106–13; Halliwell (2011) 13–24, with further bibliography at 13 n. 26.

⁵³ de Jong (2012).

Surely Priam, or those others closest to him, were not so deranged that they would wish to endanger their own lives and their children and their city, just so that Alexander could live with Helen.⁵⁴

A little further on, by way of a final flourish, he asserts (2.120.5):

ὡς μὲν ἐγὼ γνώμην ἀποφαίνομαι, τοῦ δαιμονίου παρασκευάζοντος ὄκως πανωλεθρίη ἀπολόμενοι καταφανὲς τοῦτο τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι ποιήσωσι, ὡς τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλαι εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν.

Thus I declare my opinion, that the god prepared things for them [the Trojans], so that in complete destruction, they should make clear to all of humanity that great injustices meet great retribution from the gods.⁵⁵

In his concluding remarks, Herodotus incorporates the idea of divine retribution—a motif that pervades his work—into his own explanation of the Trojan War.⁵⁶ In doing so, he refracts the Homeric version of the war, reimagining the gods' actions as being based on a set of ethical values.⁵⁷ This further helps to make the Trojan War a precursor to the more recent Greek–Persian Wars, which, as narrated by Herodotus, were at least partly the result of the *hybris* of Xerxes.⁵⁸ Such a re-interpretation of the gods' involvement in the Trojan War betrays not only Herodotus' refusal banally to regurgitate any accepted reading of Homer, but also implies a more discursive approach to his epic predecessor, to such a degree that he opens

⁵⁴ Cf. 1.4.3: 'And the people of Asia, according to the Persians, when their women were seized by force, had made it a matter of no account' (σφέας μὲν δὴ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας λέγουσι Πέρσαι ἀρπαζομένων τῶν γυναικῶν λόγον οὐδένα ποιήσασθαι). On the insupportable grounds for the *'cherchez-la-femme* motif as an adequate historical explanation for Herodotus (or for Homer), see Węcowski (2004) 152–3.

⁵⁵ For the final clause and the focus on divine punishment as a response to criminal or profane acts, cf. the similar sentiments expressed at 4.205; 6.84.3, 91, 139.1; 7.134–7; 8.129.3. In this context, I find the following statement of Fowler (2011) 61 surprising: [amongst Herodotus' many achievements is] 'the manoeuvre [he] adopted in order to discuss heroic legends such as that of Helen—I mean the *elimination of supernatural involvement* [my italics]'; for a more precise formulation, see Austin (1994) 135; Baragwanath–de Bakker (2012a) 18.

⁵⁶ See, i.a., Harrison (2000) 102–21; Munson (2001) 183–94.

⁵⁷ Similarly, the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (60–2) assert that Zeus Xenios necessitated the fall of Troy after Alexander's theft of Helen.

⁵⁸ Cf. de Jong (2012) 140–1.

up new possibilities (obliquely related by Homer) to explain the reasons behind the Greek and Trojan hostilities at Troy.

2. Homer the Poet

Herodotus' extended discussion of Helen's whereabouts is not, of course, the only passage to refer to Homer in the *Histories*. Elsewhere in Book 2, Herodotus engages in the difficult question of dating when Homer was active (2.53). In this passage, Herodotus is principally concerned with showing that the Greeks had only recently acquired any knowledge of the gods (2.53.2):

Ἡσίοδον γὰρ καὶ Ὀμηρον ἠλικίην τετρακοσίοισι ἔτεσι δοκέω μεν
πρεσβυτέρους γενέσθαι καὶ οὐ πλέοσι. οὗτοι δὲ εἰσι οἱ ποιήσαντες
θεογονίην Ἑλλησι καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας δόντες καὶ τιμὰς τε
καὶ τέχνας διελόντες καὶ εἶδεα αὐτῶν σημήναντες.

For Hesiod and Homer, as it seems to me, lived no more than four hundred years ago; and it is these [two poets] who informed the Greeks of the gods' genesis and gave the gods their titles and divided up their honours and specific skills and indicated their forms.⁵⁹

Herodotus then tackles what is clearly a controversial issue, namely, the precise order of the poets, and he brusquely asserts his belief that all of the other poets said to pre-date Homer or Hesiod came later (οἱ δὲ πρότερον ποιηταὶ λεγόμενοι τούτων τῶν ἀνδρῶν γενέσθαι ὕστερον, ἔμοιγε δοκέειν, ἐγένοντο, 2.53.3).⁶⁰ As is characteristic of much of the *Histories*,⁶¹ the narrator

⁵⁹ Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 112. Modern scholarship largely conforms with Herodotus' dating of Homer to the eighth century: Lloyd (2007) ad 2.53.1. Note Herodotus' interest in the Greek gods' names earlier at 2.50.1–3, 52.1–3; cf. Gould (1994) 103–4 on the names of Greek and non-Greek divinities in the *Histories* more broadly.

⁶⁰ This is a clear case of open polemic against other writers who place Orpheus (e.g., Damastes (*FGrHist* 5 F 1) and Musaeus (e.g., Gorgias (DK 82 B 2)) before Homer and Hesiod; further references in Lloyd (1976–88) I.247–8, 251. Cf. also Burkert (1990) 26, who argues that the line 'but from where each of the gods had their birth, or whether all of them had always existed, and of what form they are' (ἔθεν δὲ ἐγένετο ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν, εἴτε αἰεὶ ἦσαν πάντες, ὁκοῖοί τε τινες τὰ εἶδεα, Hdt. 2.53.1) 'entspricht auffällig' with Protagoras' famous remark on the gods: 'Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or that they do not exist' (οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι οὔθ' ὡς εἰσίν, οὔθ' ὡς οὐκ εἰσίν οὔθ' ὁποῖοί τινες ἰδέαν).

⁶¹ For a useful overview, see Marincola (1987).

finishes by indicating the provenance of his information: he derived the first section from the priestesses of Dodona, while the latter material on Homer and Hesiod is the author's own opinion.⁶²

The passage is significant for our immediate purposes for three reasons: first, as John Gould argued, it clearly illustrates that 'there was no other or earlier source [than Homer or Hesiod] that Herodotus could think of for the shared religious perceptions and imagery of the Greeks'.⁶³ Secondly, and related to this, the implicit reference to others' opinions shows that Herodotus is actively engaging with other intellectuals in his attempt to clarify the inchoate picture of early Greek religion.⁶⁴ When seeking to clarify the origins of Greek religious ideologies and praxes, Herodotus, like his contemporaries, mines his knowledge of earlier poetry (including the works of Homer and Hesiod), specifically because it is these texts that best reveal the religious-cultural heritage of the Greeks.⁶⁵ Thirdly, the passage makes an important methodological point; for Herodotus supposes that Homer was operative some four hundred years after the time of the Trojan War (cf. 2.145.4: Πανὶ δὲ τῷ ἐκ Πηνελόπης ... ἐλάσσω ἕτερα ἔστι τῶν Τρωικῶν, κατὰ ὀκτακόσια μάλιστα ἐς ἐμέ)—a considerable length of time in comparison to the few decades between the conflict that he relates. His remark thus further demarcates the generic boundaries between his own brand of historiography and Homeric epic, since only the latter looks to narrate in detail events from a distant epoch.⁶⁶

These boundaries are distinguished even further in an earlier passage from Book 2, where Herodotus remarks on the *muthos* concerning the River Ocean that is carried into the 'obscure' (*ἀφανές*) and asserts that 'Homer or one of the earlier poets must have invented this name and introduced it into his poetry' ('Ὅμηρον δὲ ἢ τινα τῶν πρότερον γενομένων ποιητέων δοκέω τοῦνομα εὐρόντα ἐς ποίησιν ἐσενείκασθαι, 2.23). This passage forms a useful companion-piece to Herodotus' later remarks concerning the true version of Helen's whereabouts being unsuitable for epic poetry (2.116.1), since it offers some indication of what, in contrast, (he presumes) Homer considered *is*

⁶² τούτων τὰ μὲν πρῶτα αἱ Δωδωνίδες ἰέρειαι λέγουσι, τὰ δὲ ὕστερα τὰ ἐς Ἡσίοδον τε καὶ Ὅμηρον ἔχοντα ἐγὼ λέγω; cf. Lloyd (2007) 228–32.

⁶³ Gould (1994) 104–5.

⁶⁴ Cf. Burkert (1990) 26: 'So ordnet sich Herodot in das Diskussions-niveau seiner Zeit ein'.

⁶⁵ R. Hunter (2018) 81.

⁶⁶ So Graziosi (2002) 112.

suitable for epic poetry. With this talk of poets and their invented *mythoi*, Herodotus reinforces a theme picked up already, namely his desire to treat others' reports critically and his methodological avoidance of embellished or invented stories.⁶⁷

In addition to his concern over the date of Homer's *floruit*, Herodotus is also interested in outlining the extent of genuine Homeric authorship. Indeed, his scepticism as to whether Homer is the authentic author of the *Cypria* is not the only instance in which he questions whether a text is genuinely Homeric or not. Embedded within one of the *Histories*' ethnographic accounts,⁶⁸ Herodotus writes that neither the Scythians nor anybody else is able to speak of the Hyperboreans; he then adds, however, that Hesiod speaks of them, 'and Homer too in the *Epigonoï*, if Homer really was the composer of that epic poem' (καὶ Ὀμήρω ἐν Ἐπιγόνουσι, εἰ δὲ τῶ ἐόντι γέ Ὀμηρος ταῦτα τὰ ἔπεα ἐποίησε, 4.32).⁶⁹ While Herodotus' attitude is notably more ambivalent in comparison to his outright rejection of the *Cypria* as a genuine Homeric poem earlier in Book 2, this second passage both confirms his expansive knowledge of the Homeric poems and reinforces the way that *historiē* compels him to collect and assess various sources, questioning others' assumptions. And it is noteworthy too, that once again Herodotus refers to Homer as an authority on a pertinent topic but does not specifically set out to reject what he says is false.

It is clear, then, that Herodotean allusions to Homer and his poems in the author's own voice present a somewhat textured picture. Herodotus evinces a firm sense that his aims as author are quite different from those of his epic predecessor, notably on account of the generic gulf between Homer's poems and his own prose account. Nevertheless, he also emerges as something of a connoisseur of the Homeric poems, displaying a willingness to refer to and quote from Homer, who might even serve, as seen in the case of Helen's whereabouts during the Trojan War, as an authoritative (albeit obscure) source of information.

⁶⁷ That Herodotus never uses the term *muthos* to denote his own work and that he demonstrates a critical awareness towards poetic inventions shows, *pace* Williams (2002) 149–71, that the epistemological gap between Herodotus and Thucydides, who famously criticises τὸ μυθώδες (1.21.1), is not as profound as some have argued.

⁶⁸ Cf. Skinner (2012) 243–8, arguing for the need to see ethnography and history intertwined in the *Histories*.

⁶⁹ Verdin (1977) 59 comments approvingly on the critical ramifications of this passage.

3. Recalling the Homeric Past

The discussion thus far has focused on explicitly marked references in the narrator's own voice to Homer in the *Histories*; yet there are a host of occasions in which a passage in his *logos* forms a less overt intertextual relationship with a specific account in the Homeric corpus. A well-known intertext surfaces, for instance, in the embassy scene between the Athenians and the Spartans on the one hand, and Gelon of Syracuse on the other.⁷⁰ The Spartan Syagrus takes exception to the idea of Syracusan leadership of the Greeks against the mounting Persian threat,⁷¹ remarking (7.159):

ἦ κε μέγ' οἰμώξειε ὁ Πελοπίδης Ἀγαμέμνων πυθόμενος Σπαρτιήτας τὴν
ἡγεμονίην ἀπαραιρησθαι ὑπὸ Γέλωνός τε καὶ Συρηκοσίων.

Surely, he would groan aloud, Agamemnon, the son of Pelops, if he heard that Spartiates had been deprived of their leadership by Gelon and the Syracusans.⁷²

For many readers—both ancient and modern—this line immediately evokes the *Iliad*,⁷³ when King Nestor chides his fellow countrymen for their lack of

⁷⁰ On the strong intertextual links with Homer in this passage, see How–Wells (1923) *ad loc.*; Hornblower (1994) 66; Pelling (2006) 89–90; Grethlein (2006); (2010) 160–73; A. M. Bowie (2012) 281–2; Kazanskaya (2014) 163–4. Note, however, the cautious reservations of Boedeker (2002) 101, who argues that certain phrases may have become common rhetorical expressions and were not necessarily intended to evoke a specific Homeric passage for the reader. Despite Boedeker's caveats, I am persuaded by the following axiom formulated by Hinds (1998) 26: 'There is no discursive element ... no matter how unremarkable in itself, and no matter how frequently repeated in the tradition, that cannot in some imaginable circumstance mobilize a specific allusion'.

⁷¹ On the Homeric intertext serving to undermine Syagrus' outrage here, see further Grethlein (2006); Pelling (2006) 90; Saïd (2012) 94; A. M. Bowie (2012) 281–2. On the 'complex network of Spartan motivation' behind this reference to Agamemnon, see the valuable discussion in Zali (2011) 71–5, who illustrates conflicting, unresolved interests—both parochial and panhellenic (quotation at p. 74).

⁷² Pelling (2006) 89–90 and Grethlein (2006) 489 note that the first part of the sentence is a near-hexameter; cf. Hornblower (1994) 66, who argues that Herodotus intentionally avoided the hexameter, *contra* Griffiths (1976). For hexameters elsewhere in Herodotus, see Jacoby (1913) 502–3; Boedeker (2001) 124; Pelling (2006) 90 n. 40. For the significance of Πελοπίδης, see Hornblower (1994) 66.

⁷³ In Xenophon's *Symposium*, Niceratos states that he was forced to learn the *Iliad* by heart (*Symp.* 3.5); further examples of the popular consumption of the epics in Greece are listed in Howie (1995) 143–6.

courage in facing Hector by activating the memory of Peleus (7.124–5):

ὦ πόποι ἦ μέγα πένθος Ἀχαιΐδα γαλαν ικάνει.
ἦ κε μέγ' οἰμώξειε γέρων ἱππηλάτα Πηλεὺς.

O shame! For a great sorrow attends the land of the Achaeans,
Surely he would groan aloud, Peleus, the aged horseman.

While others have rightly stressed that readers should avoid assumptions concerning intertextual relationships, unrealistically expecting Herodotus' original audience to spot them at every turn (some intertexts being far less marked than others, and besides that, always experienced differently by each recipient), the wider context of this passage reveals how this will resonate as a Homeric allusion with many amongst Herodotus' audience.⁷⁴ After Gelon states that the Syracusans would be content with leading the army or the navy (7.160.1–2), the Athenian envoy present also protests, citing amongst other things the strength of the Athenian navy; the envoy closes in a similar manner to the Spartan Syagrus, by recalling an epic precedent, namely Athens' role in the Trojan War (7.161.3):⁷⁵

... τῶν καὶ Ὅμηρος ὁ ἐποιοὺς ἄνδρα ἄριστον ἔφησε ἐς Ἴλιον ἀπικέσθαι
τάξαι τε καὶ διακοσμήσαι στρατόν.

... and [Menestheus] was one of [the Athenians], of whom even the epic poet Homer says was the best man who came to Ilium in ordering and marshalling armies.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Grethlein (2006) 487–8 (cautious approach to studying intertexts), 488–90; cf. further cautions in Rood (1998) 41. In this context, note the instructive comments of Raaflaub (1987) 233 on fifth-century Athenians: '[they were trained] to grasp a wide variety of poetic allusions and moral and political 'messages' in the annual theatrical performances. They had learned to understand the contemporary relevance of mythical paradigms presented to them on stage and to recognize the importance of new variations of traditional myths introduced with specific inventions by the poets'. Cf. also Fornara (1971) 65; Vandiver (1991) 12–13.

⁷⁵ For an earlier Athenian appeal to an epic *exemplum* in a political situation, observe the Athenians' claim to Sigeum in the Troad, based at least partly on their participation in the Trojan War, as portrayed in the *Iliad* (5.94.2). For references to the Trojan War elsewhere in Herodotus' latter books, see Richardson (1993) 27; Carey (2016).

⁷⁶ Cf. *Il.* 2.552–3: τῶν αὐθ' ἡγεμόνευ' υἱὸς Πετεῶο Μενεσθεύς. | τῷ δ' οὐ πώ τις ὁμοῖος ἐπιχθόνιος γένετ' ἀνὴρ | κοσμήσαι ἵππους τε καὶ ἀνέρας ἀσπιδιώτας. Although Menestheus'

On this occasion, the reference to Homer is explicit. Given the close proximity between this speech and Syagrus' earlier defence, and that both the Athenians and Spartans are appealing to the heroic past in order to establish their right to hegemony, readers can place more confidence that the reference to Agamemnon's 'groaning' (*οἰμώξειε*), embedded in Syagrus' speech, transposes the strikingly similar line enunciated by Nestor in the *Iliad* (7.125).⁷⁷

Gelon's oft-cited subsequent dismissal of the Greek envoys, 'announce to Greece that the Spring has been taken out of her year' (*ἀγγέλλοντες τῇ Ἑλλάδι ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τὸ ἔαρ αὐτῇ ἐξαραίρηται*, 7.162.1),⁷⁸ clearly emphasises the fissiparous nature of the Greek alliance in 480/479—a point repeated elsewhere in Herodotus' battle narratives, notably, the damaging dispute over leadership between the Spartans and Argives (7.148–9), or that between the Athenians and the Tegeans before Plataea (9.26–7; see further below). This rather un-Panhellenic state of affairs in turn evokes the disjointed relations between the Achaeans that occupies much of the *Iliad*.⁷⁹

attributes are slightly different in this Homeric context (namely, excellence in arranging horses and shielding the men) than in the Herodotean passage, it is probable that the Athenian envoy is nevertheless referring to this passage, particularly given his proud remark that his proof derives from what 'the epic poet Homer says'. Another possible source that might have inspired this episode is one of the three Eion epigrams composed in the 470s, celebrating the Athenians' victory over the Medes at the Strymon river in 475 ('Simonides' XL *FGE* = Aeschines 3.185): *ἔκ ποτε τῆσδε πόλῃος ἄμ' Ἀτρείδῃσι Μενεσθεὺς | ἠγέλτο ζάθειον Τρωικὸν ἄμ πεδίον, | ὄν ποθ' Ὀμηρος ἔφη Δαναῶν πύκα χαλκοχιτώνων | κοσμητῆρα μάχης ἔξοχον ἄνδρα μολεῖν. | οὕτως οὐδὲν ἀεικὲς Ἀθηναίοισι καλεῖσθαι | κοσμητὰς πολέμου τ' ἀμφὶ καὶ ἡγορέης.*

⁷⁷ Indeed, Grethlein (2006) 489 notes that this is the only place in which the phrase *ἦ κε μέγ' οἰμώξειε* is found in epic poetry. For other appeals to myth in Herodotus' text, see further Zali (2011).

⁷⁸ Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.7; 3.10, who twice ascribes these same words to Pericles, from a funeral oration given after the Samian War of 440. For further intertextual links between the embassy scene and the *Iliad*, see Grethlein (2010) 162–4, who notes the similarity between Gelon's ultimate rejection of the Hellenic ambassadors with Achilles' dismissal of the Greek delegation sent to reintegrate him into the ranks in *Iliad* 9. Cf. also the useful comments in Pelling (2006) 91–2.

⁷⁹ *Contra* Zali (2011) 74. See also Miltiades' speech before Marathon at 6.109.3–6: 'of us generals, who are ten in number, the opinions are divided, some urging to attack, others not' (*ἡμέων τῶν στρατηγῶν ἑόντων δέκα δίχα γίνονται αἱ γνώμαι, τῶν μὲν κελευόντων τῶν δὲ οὐ συμβάλλειν*, 6.109.4); cf. Pelling (2013) 10–11 for similarities and differences with the *Iliad* here.

As Christopher Pelling observes, ‘So it happened in the Homeric past; it happened in 480 ... overreaching hegemonic ambitions and inter-*polis* jealousies were continuing to devastate Greece still’.⁸⁰ In this way, the evocation of the Homeric poems in this episode enables readers to engage with themes and ideas that are no less relevant for the recent past than they were in the distant past. The clear intertextual link here with Pericles’ Funeral Speech, articulated many years after this event, is also a noteworthy feature.⁸¹ It illustrates that the *Histories*’ temporal gaze is not restricted to the past, but also to the present, or the ‘future-past’ within his narrative.⁸² Just as the evocation of Homeric heroes by the Athenians and the Spartans bridges the gap between the ancient past and the more recent past, the spring metaphor acts as both an analepsis and a prolepsis, inviting Herodotus’ immediate audience to reflect too on the bleak struggle for hegemony in their own contemporary context and how such contemporary struggles interact with and inform their understanding of inter-poleis dissent in the recent past.⁸³

A similar passage to the debate between the Syracusans, Athenians, and Spartans in Book 7, is the reported dispute between the Tegeans and Athenians about the Greeks’ battle formation at Plataea in Book 9 (9.26–8).⁸⁴ But while in the earlier scene it is the extradiegetic narrator that undercuts the Spartans’ and Athenians’ appeals to the epic past by underlining Gelon’s firm refusal to send help, in the latter passage it is the intradiegetic narrators—the Athenians—who question explicitly the validity of such a rhetorical manoeuvre. To begin, the Tegeans cite a longstanding pact made with the Peloponnesians, in which the Tegeans have always been granted the privilege to command a wing in battle, ever since their king

⁸⁰ Pelling (2006) 92; cf. Pelling (2013) 12; (2020) 5–6; Baragwanath (2012) 35. I am not persuaded by van Wees (2002) 341, who argues that Herodotus represents the ‘Spartans as the villains of this episode’; rather, it is more the case that Herodotus portrays the Spartans in such a way as to reflect on the (f)utility of citing ancient *exempla* for present purposes.

⁸¹ See Munson (2001) 218–9; cf. Grethlein (2010) 168–70; and already, Hauvette (1894) 337.

⁸² On the complex panopticon of different times in Herodotus, see Grethlein (2010) 172.

⁸³ Another, more explicit reference to the Atheno-Peloponnesian War occurs at 6.98.2; cf. Fornara (1971) 32. For Herodotus’ critical view of contemporary Athens, see especially Fornara (1971); van der Veen (1996) 90–110; Moles (1996); (2002); Harrison (2009); Irwin (2018).

⁸⁴ Good discussions in Solmsen (1944) 248–50; Vandiver (1991) 64–7; Grethlein (2010) 173–86; Boedeker (2012) 18–23; (2013) 150–91; Zali (2014) 275–91. For the historicity of this debate, see How–Wells (1923) II.296.

Echemus successfully defeated king Hyllus, thus excluding the Heraclidae from settling in the Peloponnese for one hundred years (9.26.2–7).⁸⁵ In response to this, the Athenians refer to various past achievements, including, amongst others: the significant support they offered to the Tegeans in overcoming the tyrant Eurystheus; their memorable exploits against the Amazons; and their by no means insignificant role at Troy (9.27.2–4). Having cited this combination of historical and mythical precedents, however, the Athenians continue (9.27.4–5):

ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ τι πρόχει τούτων ἐπιμενησθαι· καὶ γὰρ ἂν χρηστοὶ τότε
 εἶντες ὡστοὶ νῦν ἂν εἶεν φλαυρότεροι καὶ τότε εἶντες φλαῦροι νῦν ἂν εἶεν
 ἀμείνονες. παλαιῶν μὲν νῦν ἔργων ἄλις ἔστω.

But it is to no avail in recalling these things, for those powers that were previously great may now be rather more trivial, and those who were formerly trivial might now be much stronger [cf. 1.5.4]; *now let that be enough of these ancient matters*.⁸⁶

Having thus questioned the value of appealing to ancient *exempla*, and remarking on the instability of individual prosperity, as does Herodotus at the close of the *Histories*' proem, the Athenians resume their list of achievements by referring to their far more recent valour at Marathon, arguing (*contra* Herodotus) that they alone fought off the Persian forces, overcoming forty-six nations (9.27.5).⁸⁷ Following some brief concluding

⁸⁵ Grethlein (2010) notes the correspondence between the Tegeans' ancient *exemplum*, and their present situation, since in 'in their attempt to conquer Greece, the Persians resemble the Heraclidae who tried to push into the Peloponnese' (174).

⁸⁶ Flower–Marincola (2002) 156 note that the Athenians' rejection of ancient deeds mirrors Herodotus' 'rejection of the mythical stories with which his history begins in favour of historical time, what he himself knows'. While it is of course true that Herodotus verbalises his intention to begin from the 'first of whom we know' to have committed unjust deeds against the Greeks, it is not straightforwardly the case that Herodotus rejects the mythical stories with which he opens his account. Indeed, he pointedly remarks that *he will not pass judgement* over the truth or falsity of the Persian and Phoenician *logoi* that comprise the opening chapters (1.5.3). Cf. the more measured observations of Fowler (2011) 46–7, 59 n. 54, emphasising the primacy of 'knowability'; cf. too Fowler (2009) *passim*, esp. 33. On the very peculiar, un-Herodotean nature of these opening traditions, see Węcowski (2004) 149–53.

⁸⁷ On the Athenians' characterisation of Marathon as a purely Athenian victory (*contra* Hdt. 6.108.1), both here and in the Attic orators, see further Loraux (1986) 158–9; Zali (2014)

remarks, Herodotus states that the Lacedaemonians unanimously voted in favour of the Athenians' speech (9.28.1).⁸⁸

There are several important points to be made about this passage. First, as Elizabeth Vandiver notes, these chapters indicate that by the early fifth century BCE it was now possible to employ historical as well as mythical *exempla*.⁸⁹ Like the fourth-century orators, the Athenians prefer to focus on more recent achievements, elevating their significance to that of the great deeds of the heroic past,⁹⁰ and even suggesting that they are more pertinent for present purposes.⁹¹ In so doing, the Athenians clearly look to epicise the battle of Marathon. Secondly, the Athenians' curt dismissal of the practice of evoking long-gone matters for present purposes (*παλαιῶν μὲν νῦν ἔργων ἄλλῃς ἔστω*) can certainly be read as an implicit Herodotean reflection on the construction of memory, that is, as a metahistorical moment in the text in which Herodotus' readers are encouraged to reflect actively on how past events are perceived and drawn upon in the present.⁹² Such metahistorical moments of course occur elsewhere in Herodotus' work, for example, when he veers away from a critique of the Persian and Phoenician *logoi* presented in his opening chapters, opting instead to report from the much more recent time of Croesus onwards.⁹³ But it is also worth bearing in mind a contrary

281–2. Branscome (2013) 150–91 reads Herodotus' variant account as a rejection of the epitaphic tradition, which held that the Athenians alone fought at Marathon.

⁸⁸ Zali (2014) 288–9 observes the scene's forensic qualities, with the Spartans arbitrating between the Tegeans and Athenians.

⁸⁹ Vandiver (1991) 66; cf. Rood (2010) 67, noting the distorting quality of 'claims made on the more recent past'. For the use of historical *exempla* in oratorical works, see Grethlein (2010) 127–33; cf. Calame (1999) 135–6.

⁹⁰ Flower–Marincola (2002) 152.

⁹¹ So Boedeker (2012) 23. Indeed, at the end of their speech, the Athenians ask 'do we not, for this single deed [the defeat of Persia at Marathon], deserve to hold the right wing?' (*ἀρ' οὐ δίκαιοι εἰμὲν ἔχειν ταύτην τὴν τάξιν ἀπὸ τοῦτου μόνου τοῦ ἔργου*; 9.27.6); cf. [Dem.] *Epitaph*. 8–10.

⁹² Grethlein (2010) 159, following Fornara (1983) 104–20, argues that given the rhetorical, presentist nature of ancient historiography, 'references to the past by characters invite a meta-historical interpretation'; cf. Grethlein (2011); Zali (2014). Related to this issue, of course, is the highly vexed question of the authenticity of speeches as reported by Herodotus: see Solmsen (1944); Høhti (1974). Add too Schellenberg (2009), exploring the prevalence of irony in numerous Herodotean speeches, a technique befitting his 'congenially intrusive narrative persona' (135).

⁹³ Flower–Marincola (2002) 156; Saïd (2012) 95. For Herodotus' account of Croesus, see Haywood–Post forthcoming.

example in the form of the 'Wise Adviser' Artabanus, who urges Xerxes: 'Therefore take to heart the ancient saying (*palaion epos*), since it has been said well that the end of all things does not reveal itself entirely at the beginning' (ἐς θυμὸν ὦν βαλεῦ καὶ τὸ παλαιὸν ἔπος ὡς εὖ εἴρηται, τὸ μὴ ἅμα ἀρχῇ πᾶν τέλος καταφαίνεσθαι, 7.51.3). It scarcely needs to be noted that Artabanus' *palaion epos* echoes the sentiments of Solon's advice on 'the necessity of looking to the end of all matters' (σκοπέειν δὲ χρὴ παντὸς χρήματος τὴν τελευτήν, 1.32.9);⁹⁴ the outcome of Herodotus' work shows that such advice proves to be well-grounded, though neither recipient (Xerxes and Croesus respectively) is shrewd enough to realise this in the heat of the moment. It is not straightforwardly the case then, that Herodotus rejects the utility of citing ancient deeds *tout court* (the *palaion epos* at 7.51.3 surely a fine example of the ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά that the *Histories* save from oblivion).⁹⁵ But Herodotus' audience and their recent forebears, who were steeped in Homeric tradition, were clearly able to offer and accept alternative rhetorical uses of the past, in which myth could play a much more muted role.⁹⁶

While these episodes constitute only a few instances of the various appeals to Homeric precedents and epic formulae across the *Histories*, they illustrate well the complex nature of Herodotus' Homeric allusions. It is historical actors such as the Spartan Syagrus or the Athenians before Plataea who, in direct speech, evoke a Homeric saying, word, or idea in support of their claims for legitimacy, and yet the context of such appeals at significant moments in the *Histories* shows how readers should be alert to Herodotus' role as compiler and author. The placement of Homeric allusions is rarely, if ever, incidental, and such moments create a range of effects on the reader, who must wrestle with the validity of, purposes behind, and effects of such intertextual references to the Homeric corpus.

⁹⁴ Grethlein (2011) 119.

⁹⁵ Rejecting *ta palaia* becomes a standard trope from Thuc. 1.22.4 onwards. For instance, Ephorus passes over what 'is hardly accessible to investigation' (*FGrHist* 70 F 31b); Demosthenes homes in on more recent deeds that have not yet been exalted by the epic poets (60.9); and Strabo states that he 'must omit most of what is really ancient and mythical' (9.4.18). For further discussion, see Saïd (2007) 80; Zali (2014) 287–8.

⁹⁶ Similarly, Baragwanath (2012) 42–3.

4. A ‘Most-Homeric’ War

To conclude, I have argued for a consciously critical engagement with Homer in the *Histories*, identifying some of the different registers adopted by Herodotus when he alludes to Homer and the Homeric poems. Certain passages illustrate a pattern in which recent events are elevated to that of the heroic deeds at Troy, although the Herodotean narrator is more typically cautious than his protagonists in straightforwardly juxtaposing heroic events against more recent ones.⁹⁷ But regardless of such prudence, Herodotus’ subtle criticism of Homer’s genre, his tendency to ratify traditions which are in some way derived from the characteristic elements of his *historiē*, his interest in the authorship of several epic works, his own close intertextual engagement with specific scenes in Homer (often illustrative of paradigmatic motifs concurrent in both the Homeric poems and the *Histories*), all combine to demonstrate the very pervasiveness of Homer and epic paradigms in Herodotus’ work.⁹⁸

This analysis of the various explicit and implicit references to the Homeric corpus has illustrated not only Herodotus’ pointedly critical and discursive approach to his epic predecessor, but also both his and his readers’ extensive poetic repertoire. The specific appeal to the Homeric past in the *Histories* by various Greek states, such as that debate between Tegeans and Athenian before Plataea, reflects the extent to which a fifth-century Greek was steeped in the past as filtered through the poets. As John Dillon observes:

the tendency to buttress one’s arguments by adducing characters or situations from the great store of Greek mythology, as portrayed by Homer, Hesiod, or any of the lyric or tragic poets, is deeply ingrained in the psyche of educated Greeks.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Grethlein (2010) 171; Baragwanath (2012) 55 (‘his entry into this terrain as narrator is more often complicating and destabilizing, alerting readers to problems surrounding the past and its application to the present’).

⁹⁸ Cf. Huber (1965) 29.

⁹⁹ Dillon (1997) 211; cf. Arist. *Metaph.* 994b: ‘Some people, therefore, will not accept the statements of a speaker unless he gives a mathematical proof; others will not unless he makes use of illustrations; others expect to have a poet cited as witness’ (οἱ μὲν οὖν ἐὰν μὴ μαθηματικῶς λέγῃ τις οὐκ ἀποδέχονται τῶν λεγόντων, οἱ δ’ ἂν μὴ παραδειγματικῶς, οἱ δὲ μάρτυρα ἀξιούσιν ἐπάγεσθαι ποιητήν).

Herodotus' exposition of Trojan War traditions at 2.112–20, illustrates this deep familiarity with the Homeric poems (and no doubt other unsigalled 'sources' such as Stesichorus' 'palinode'), showing that Herodotus regards Homer not only as a preeminent authority, but equally as a textual rival, whose presentation of the past is open to scrutiny and refinement. As I have argued, the metahistorical significance of this rather academic approach to the Homeric text in these chapters is vital: in presenting himself as weighing up Homer's poetry against other traditions, Herodotus accentuates the truth value of his own inquiry into the past.

Alongside the metahistorical significance generated by Herodotus' engagement with Homer, the discussion has also highlighted how Herodotus skilfully incorporates Homeric characters, lines, and patterns into various speeches and *logoi*, in order to reflect the way that Homer's poetry was indeed a distinctive, and at times integral, feature of people's lives in fifth-century Greece.¹⁰⁰ This point reminds me of a line from an interview with the modernist film director Michelangelo Antonioni, who asserted that 'we are still living with the moral concepts of Homer': such blurring of the boundaries between fiction and real life holds no less true for Herodotus' age than it does our own. Given this, it would be truly remarkable if Herodotus were to have presented an account of the Greek-Persian Wars which concealed or erased any such real-life engagement with the Homeric texts and their characters.

¹⁰⁰ Pelling (2013) 1–3 focuses on the way that fiction informs our lives, on how narrative codes impose order on 'the messiness of reality' (1); similarly, see Pelling (2000) 166–7 for example, on 'types' in tragedy; Damon (2010) 381 ('historical actors ... were themselves aware of the literary and historical precedents for their situations').

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