

PREFACE

Anthony Ellis

Despite countless challenges to Herodotus' status as the 'father of history', his writing remained one of the most popular paradigms for Greek historians for two thousand years. Within several centuries, the appearance of his *Histories* was perceived as a watershed moment in the history of historiography,¹ and his influence is as visible as ever in the last great work of the classical historiographical tradition: Laonikos Chalkokondyles' account of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. At the same time, the *Histories* is soaked in the religious culture of archaic and classical Greece—theology is inextricably built into Herodotus' vision of historical causation and his dramatic art, and the divine influences human affairs in both momentous and trivial ways throughout the narrative.² Although many pre-modern readers wholeheartedly approved of Herodotus' acknowledgement of god's tangible role in history, the majority self-consciously subscribed to philosophical schools or religious groups which encouraged them to see Herodotus' view of 'God' as fundamentally opposed to their own. This combination of historical authority and theological alterity

¹ See particularly Cicero's oft-quoted sobriquet *pater historiae* (complete with reference to Herodotus' *fabulae*) at *De leg.* 1.1.5 and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' comments at *Thuc.* 5.1 with discussion in Fowler (1996). For the importance of Herodotus to Hellenistic historiography, see below, nn. 7 and 9. For attacks on Herodotus' veracity in antiquity see Evans (1968) and particularly Momigliano (1966) who traces the debate into the modern period.

² A point made forcefully by Harrison (2000), and emphasised in, e.g., Mikalson (2003) and Scullion (2006).

has caused perpetual controversy among Herodotus' admirers, imitators, and detractors.

One fact, above all, has dominated subsequent perceptions of Herodotus' theological ideas:³ Herodotus belonged to the religious and literary culture rejected by Plato in his attack on tragic theology, which laid down a number of principles that would be fundamental to later Platonic and Christian conceptions of God, most importantly that god cannot be held responsible for any misfortune or ills (*κακά*) suffered by humans.⁴ The first surviving work of criticism devoted to Herodotus—Plutarch's scathing essay *On the Malice of Herodotus* (*DHM*) which dominated the critical scene until the 18th century—rebukes Herodotus for his blasphemous abuse of the gods, and does so using theological arguments first heard in the mouth of Plato's Socrates and Timaeus (see further Chs. 1 and 2 of this collection). Consequently, the struggle to come to terms with Herodotus' religious ideas and his strikingly theological 'philosophy of history' has, for most Platonic and Christian readers, seemed fundamental to a proper evaluation of his historical achievement.⁵

³ My use of the word theology, which has fallen from fashion, requires comment. By theology (etc.) I refer to all verbal reflection which touches on the nature of the gods. It is thus a broad concept, overlapping to some degree with the term 'religion', but referring specifically to *thought* about the gods (where religion is typically associated with ritual and practice). It is important to point out that to talk of 'theology', in this sense, is not to imply that Herodotus was a systematic theologian or that only one 'theology' can be found in his work (though many commentators would have it so). The term *θεολογία* is first attested in Plat. *Rep.* 379a5 (where it refers to stories about the gods written by poets as well as the work of a philosopher: cf. Bordt (2006) 16–19); it enjoyed popularity in scholarship on Greek religion until the time of Jaeger (1947).

⁴ For the wider context see *Rep.* 379a–80c. Although Plato's criticisms are directed primarily at 'poetry', they explicitly include texts not in metre: see *Rep.* 380c (*μήτ' ἐν μέτρῳ μήτε ἄνευ μέτρου μυθολογούντα*).

⁵ I borrow the phrase 'philosophy of history' from Fornara (1971) 18, 64–5; the existence of any such thing has, however, been challenged—esp. by Gould (1989) 89, Harrison (2000) 39–40, and Versnel (2011) esp.

The reception of the religious and theological aspects of Herodotus' thought, however, has received almost no attention in scholarship, despite the blossoming of interest in both Greek religion and reception studies.⁶ Recent years have seen scholars explore Herodotus' influence on the historiographical thought of his immediate successors,⁷ Roman literature,⁸ the Hellenistic world,⁹ Byzantium,¹⁰ the Renaissance and the early-modern period,¹¹ into more

190–201—on premises which I question in Ellis (2015). Crucially, to hold that the *Histories* contains a 'philosophy of history' (e.g. the inevitable and fundamental transience of all human affairs at the level of the individual and state) is not to insist that this more general philosophy holds the key to the interpretation of every episode in the work, nor that it is never in tension with other ideas presented.

⁶ Over the last five years there has been an unprecedented interest in Herodotean reception, visible in a large number of conferences and colloquia, and the resulting edited volumes. In addition to the panel from which this volume arose see: *Hérodote à la Renaissance* (ed. S. Longo, resulting from a conference in March 2009, Paris); *Herodotus and the Long Nineteenth Century* (University of Liverpool, 12–14 Sept. 2012, proceedings currently in preparation, edited by T. Harrison and J. Skinner); *The Afterlife of Herodotus and Thucydides* (Warburg Institute, 6–7 Mar. 2014, proceedings currently in preparation, edited by P. Mack and J. North); and *The Reception of Herodotus in Antiquity and Beyond* (Bristol, 18–19 April 2013 and London, 12–13 August 2013, proceedings currently in publication, edited by J. Priestley and V. Zali. For the 'remarkable and ever-increasing growth of interest in Greek religion' in the last half-century' see Parker (2011) vii–ix.

⁷ See Riemann (1967), Ellis (2016), and the contributions of Baron, Gray, Hawes, Węcowski, and Zali in Priestley and Zali (forthcoming). Hau (2007) also offers an excellent overview of the reappearance of Herodotean historical motifs in classical and Hellenistic Greek historiography.

⁸ Scapini (2011) and Dunsch (2013).

⁹ Priestley (2014).

¹⁰ Fryde (1983) 24–7; Akışık (2013), Kaldellis (2004) and (2014).

¹¹ Fryde (1983) 91–4, Eleuteri (1996), Olivieri (2004), Kliege-Biller (2004), Grogan (2014), Earley (forthcoming, a) and (forthcoming, b); detailed discussion of Herodotus' influence on specific authors and cultures in the Italian, Spanish, and French renaissance can be found in the many fine essays collected in Longo (2012). For a brief introduction to (and list of) paintings illustrating stories from Herodotus, see Liuzzo (2014).

recent centuries;¹² these have examined the impact of diverse aspects of Herodotus' work, including his ethnographic inquiries into foreign peoples, his presentation of the Greco-Persian Wars, his intrusive narratorial persona and source-conscious methodology, and the infamous debate about his reliability. The rich and complex history of intellectual engagement with Herodotean theology and religion, by contrast, has yet to receive detailed study, a lack which this volume hopes, at least in part, to address.

This volume contains four talks given at the Classical Association annual meeting in Reading in April 2013,¹³ revised for publication and with a new introductory essay.¹⁴ Between them, these explore the reception of Herodotus' theological and historical views among some of his critics, admirers, and imitators between Plutarch and the Reformation. The volume is compiled in the conviction that the reception of these aspects of Herodotus' thought is best studied diachronically: if we fail to consider the writings of Plato, Plutarch, and Eusebius, it will be all but impossible to appreciate the complexities of later Herodotean interactions, whether in the expansive historiographical tradition of the Byzantine Empire (from Procopius to Laonikos Chalkokondyles), or in the writings of early-modern Hellenists, theologians, and historians in the Latin West. Understanding the reception of Herodotus' theological ideas will, it is hoped, allow us to perceive Herodotus' contribution to the close dialogue that has existed between theology and history throughout the ages. It is also a very

¹² Between them Momigliano (1966) and Bichler and Rollinger (2000) 114–69 provide broad outlines of Herodotus' reception from antiquity to the present. Kipf (1999) offers a valuable overview of Herodotus in school teaching between the 15th and 20th centuries, with particular focus on the latter centuries. Contributions to the volume edited by Harrison and Skinner (forthcoming) explore many facets of the 19th-century reception of Herodotus, e.g., the contributions of Hall (forthcoming) and Rood (forthcoming).

¹³ The panel, chaired by Tom Harrison, was named 'Reading Herodotus' Gods from Antiquity to the Present'.

¹⁴ It is, however, hoped that further contributions will be added, taking advantage of the possibilities of online publication format.

small step in the direction of understanding the complex and shifting perceptions of Presocratic Greek religion more generally between the classical period and the present.

From the wide range of potential subject matter, the essays collected here focus on four periods and authors, regretfully leaving aside much of interest.¹⁵ The first introductory chapter ('Mortal Misfortunes, *θεὸς ἀνάτιος*, and *τὸ θεῖον φθονερόν*: The Socratic Seeds of Later Debate on Herodotus' Theology') offers a brief overview of the Socratic and Platonic background to later perceptions of Herodotus' views about the nature of god, and specifically the notion of divine *phthonos*. It then explores how the writings of Plato subtly influenced the theological discourse of subsequent classical, Hellenistic, and Christian historiography, and coloured reactions to Herodotus at all periods of scholarship.

In the second chapter ('Defending the Divine: Plutarch on the Gods of Herodotus') John Marincola discusses Plutarch, whose *On the Malice of Herodotus* contains the earliest explicit criticism of Herodotean theology.¹⁶ The

¹⁵ Herodotus' role as a paradigm for Josephus' biblical paraphrase has yet to be evaluated, and may yield interesting results. Writing on the influence of Attic tragedy on Josephus, Feldman (1998) notes many important links between the Greek literary tradition and the Jewish historian, but common elements of prose historiography from Herodotus to Plutarch are consistently identified as being primarily or exclusively 'tragic'. While tragedy is certainly an important source, Josephus' net of allusion drags on a much wider bed, and in many cases it is not exclusively or even necessarily concerned with fifth-century Athenian drama. Indeed, given Josephus' historiographical endeavours, his widespread knowledge of the Greek historiographical tradition, and the knowledge of Herodotus implied by the *Contra Apionem*, it seems likely that Herodotus and the Greek *historians* will have had an equal or greater influence than the tragedians. For one possible example, see Levine (1993); cf. Ek (1945–6). Likewise the reception of Herodotean oracles in Books IV and V of Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica*, or the concept of *συμφορά* in Theodoret's *Church History* may illuminate the influence of Herodotus on the early development of Ecclesiastical history.

¹⁶ This may, of course, be due to the vicissitudes of survival. One wonders whether the commentary on Herodotus by Aristarchus of Samothrace during the 2nd century BC contributed to the debate on

importance of this work to the subsequent reception of Herodotus is hard to overestimate and this is equally true in the case of theology and religion: Plutarch's essay remained the explicit starting point for most scholarly discussion on the topic until the mid-19th century. After reviewing Plutarch's criticisms of Herodotus in the *DHM*, and placing these in the context of Plutarch's wider philosophical views, Marincola explores how Plutarch's theory relates to his practice by discussing his rewriting of Herodotus' dialogue of Solon and Croesus (in the *Solon*), and his presentation of the role of the divine in the Greco-Persian Wars, particularly in the battles of Artemisium, Salamis, and Plataea.

The third and fourth chapters focus on Herodotus' reception in Byzantine historiography, in most cases by erudite historians who drew heavily on ancient historical paradigms and presented their works to a largely or wholly Christian audience. In Chapter 3 ('Fate, Divine *Phthonos*, and the Wheel of Fortune: The Reception of Herodotean Theology in Early and Middle Byzantine Historiography') Vasiliki Zali discusses numerous engagements with Herodotus between the 6th and 13th centuries in Procopius' *Wars*, Psellus' *Chronographia*, and Choniates' *History*. Zali looks closely at the afterlife of some of the most debated concepts in Herodotean scholarship: 'chance', 'the cycle of human affairs', and 'the *phthonos* of the gods', and highlights a number of close engagements with these motifs as they appear in the *Histories*, as well as several striking and self-conscious departures from Herodotean precedents.

In Chapter 4 ('Explaining the End of an Empire: The Use of Ancient Greek Religious Views in Late Byzantine Historiography') Mathieu de Bakker explores the influence of the religious aspects of classical historiography (particularly, but not exclusively, Herodotus) on two late Byzantine historians who grafted their works onto the paradigms provided by Herodotus and Thucydides:

Herodotus' theological views, but surviving fragments shed no light on such issues; for a brief description of the commentary and further bibliography: Priestley (2014) 223–9.

Kritoboulos of Imbros and Laonikos Chalkokondyles, both in the latter half of the 15th century. De Bakker shows how these texts drew on the explanatory paradigms of antiquity in attempting to provide historical explanations for the great cataclysm of their day: the fall of the Greek Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Turks.

In the final chapter (*Herodotus Magister Vitae: or Herodotus and God in the Protestant Reformation*) I look at the reception of Herodotus' moral and theological ideas as the *Histories* began to be read again in the Latin West, focusing on 16th-century humanism north of the Alps. I examine Lutheran scholarship written and inspired by the classicist and reformer Philipp Melanchthon, as well as the writings of two giants of sixteenth-century Francophone scholarship: the Calvinist Henri Estienne and his son-in-law Isaac Casaubon. This chapter explores the attempts of several of the most influential scholars of Protestant Europe to incorporate Herodotus and Greek historiography into humanist pedagogy and to defend Herodotus from his attackers (ancient and contemporary) by finding Christian beliefs and teaching in his work.

While the second and fifth chapters focus on direct criticism which names Herodotus as its subject, each essay also explores less explicit engagements: the way in which later authors borrowed from and rewrote the subject-matter of the *Histories*, or echoed Herodotus' own words. It is, therefore, important to establish the criteria which constitute an engagement with the *Histories*. Yet the stylistic traits and thematic motifs that mark Herodotus out from others depend largely on the company in which he is put: the quality of being 'Herodotean' thus varies according to the canon which any given reader has in mind. Once characteristically Herodotean traits enter the repertoire of the wider historiographical tradition, it becomes still harder, though not impossible, to tie their influence to a single work or writer. Yet motifs can be both common to the wider literary tradition, while retaining a distinctive link to a

particular author.¹⁷ From a methodological perspective, the focus on the relationship of later writers to Herodotus (rather than the historiographical tradition as a whole) also requires us to be on guard against the natural tendency to exaggerate Herodotus' importance. These and the other difficulties are inherent to an interdisciplinary reception study focused on one author; they are, however, worth facing in order to gain a synchronic perspective on a crucial aspect of Herodotean thought.

The religious and theological content of the *Histories* continues to meet with radically different assessments today, above all due to the apparent diversity of opinions embedded within Herodotus' vast and generically varied work. The reformer Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the scholar-printer Henri Estienne (†1598) claimed that the *Histories* contained theological messages quite amenable to a true understanding of Christian doctrine, and many 18th- and 19th-century scholars strove to show that Herodotus subscribed to the main tenets of Christian or Platonic theology.¹⁸ At the same time, many readers have put their energies into emphasising the foreignness of Herodotus' religious ideas and his gross theological errors. These have

¹⁷ When Procopius writes about Constantine: ἀλλὰ ἔδει, ὅπερ ἐρρήθη, Κωνσταντίνῳ γενέσθαι κακῶς (*Wars* 6.8.18; cf. 6.8.7: Κωνσταντίνος, χρῆν γάρ οἱ γενέσθαι κακῶς, ...) he echoes Herodotean comments about, e.g., Candaules (1.8.1: χρῆν γάρ Κανδαύλῃ γενέσθαι κακῶς) and Apries (2.161: οἱ ἔδεε κακῶς γενέσθαι), as becomes clearer when contemplating the many further close echoes set out by Braun (1894) 41. Yet variants of this expression had also been used by others like Josephus (*Ant.* 5.312: ἔδει γὰρ αὐτὸν συμφορᾷ περιπεσεῖν) and mocked by Lucian as an overused trope among Herodotus' imitators (*Hist. Conscr.* 17: ἔδεε γὰρ Πέρσησι γενέσθαι κακῶς; cf. similar but not identical usages of ἔδει in Plut. *Ant.* 56.5, *Phil.* 17.2). Here, then, Procopius seems to be engaging with wider historiographical tradition but, in the context of his particularly 'Herodotean' phraseology here and elsewhere, the Herodotean lineage remains an essential part of the allusion.

¹⁸ See, respectively, Ch. 5 (in this volume) and (from many possible examples) De Jongh (1833). See Ellis (forthcoming) for discussion of the 18th- and 19th-century reception of the archaic Greek concept of divine *phthonos*, in which Herodotus frequently features.

included Platonists like Plutarch (ca. 46–120 AD), Catholics like François Geinoz (1696–1752) and Pierre-Henri Larcher (1726–1812), and Protestants like Julius Müller (1801–1878). These two quite different impulses created opposing interpretative traditions that survive largely intact into the 21st century,¹⁹ with the result that reception scholars are likely to find themselves investigating the genealogy of their own opinions. If the resulting circularity makes reception scholarship more confusing, it also makes it more important. Numerous interpretations of key scenes and concepts, adopted by formidable Christian commentators in the early years of Germany's *Altertumswissenschaft* and often mediated through anglophone scholarship in the 20th century, continue to exert a largely unacknowledged influence on many areas of scholarship today, despite the fact that the intellectual paradigms which gave rise to them are long discredited.²⁰ By learning how the inventory of the

¹⁹ Thus Munson (2001) sees necessary 'ethically rational' *τίσις* and the 'divine retribution' for 'immoral [human] behaviour' as the defining feature of Herodotus' religious outlook, following a well-established approach to Herodotus (associated with an exclusive emphasis on divine justice) to be found in various forms in Lloyd (2007), Darbo-Peschanski (1987), Lloyd-Jones (1983), Macan (1895), Meuss (1888), De Jongh (1833), Baehr (1830–5), Schweighäuser (1816), and Lodewijk Valckenaer's 1763 notes on the *Histories*, a view anticipated in several aspects by Henri Estienne's *Apologia pro Herodoto* (1566). On the other hand the great Herodotean commentator David Asheri wrote ((2007) 39) that Herodotus' gods 'are the enemies of humankind': 'not driven by moral principles' but rather by 'envy, self-esteem, and self-love, and the desire to avenge and persecute'; the fundamental aspects of this view can be traced through Fornara (1971), Stein (1869/71), Dahlmann (1823), to the Abbé François Geinoz (1753), and this view of Herodotus' theology is intimately related to the Platonic criticisms of Herodotus' theology made in Plutarch's *DHM*.

²⁰ The importance of reception history to the study of Greek religion has been made forcefully in Renaud Gagné's seminal study of ancestral fault. Gagné rightly stresses '[t]he unique position of Greek religion in the history of the Western imagination, especially its crucial history at the very heart of the founts that defined early Christianity, and as a figure of reference to which, century after century, various currents of medieval and modern Christianity constantly returned to give shape to the differences of the past and the present'; hence 'a journey through

‘common conceptual store’ (as Robert Parker has called it) was formed, we can better identify those ideas that urgently require rethinking.²¹

As a whole, the volume aims to provide a number of case studies which show individuals from various theological and linguistic cultures interacting with the religious ideas of the archaic and classical Greek world, as represented by Herodotus’ *Histories*. By collecting them together, it also illustrates the convoluted afterlife of an iconic ancient text. The chronological cut-off point for this volume—the early 17th century—is chosen not because interest in Herodotean theology wanes after that point. Rather, the complexity and frequency of interactions with Herodotus post-1600 in the *Querelle*, the Enlightenment, and the early days of *Altertumswissenschaft* is so great and unexplored that it requires dedicated examination in its own right, which goes far beyond the scope of the panel in which this volume originated.

In conclusion, it is worth reflecting on one rarely discussed reason why theology continues to play a central role in most areas of Herodotean scholarship today. In considering quintessentially ‘literary’ questions, interpreters inevitably take a position on Herodotus’ theological worldview, whether or not this is made explicit. Those who think that Herodotus narrates the histories of Croesus, Polycrates, and Xerxes as monitory tales which illustrate the ethically rational consequences of good and bad behaviour must assume that the stories unfold in a world where the metaphysical powers-that-be steer events to their just and appropriate conclusion. Those who think that Herodotus narrates these same events as tragic tales which excite our pity at spectacles of undeserved suffering equally build theological, or metaphysical, ideas into their readings. It is clear that, for an author who recognised the influence of the

the *longue durée* of cultural memory is a precondition for understanding any aspect of Greek religion’ ((2013) 19–20, cf. 54–6).

²¹ See Parker (2011) ix. Among the book’s many virtues is the depth of perspective it offers by discussing the origin and development of various debates about Greek religion.

divine on every aspect of human life, views about plot, characterisation, and ethics cannot be formed independently of views about the gods, their nature, and their modes of behaviour. If we can speak of ‘narrative patterns’ in the *Histories*, then we can speak of ‘narrato-theological’ patterns. Understanding early interpretations of Herodotean theology, then, allows us to understand much more than the interpretation of the *Histories*’ metaphysical content. It enables us to consider the reception of Herodotus’ narrative art more generally.

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