Centre and Periphery

Spatial Strategies of Storytelling in
Herodotus’ Histories

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Synopsis

This thesis explores aspects of Herodotus’ methods of narrative structure. Specifically, I identify what I suggest are ‘spatial’ strategies of storytelling. I argue that Herodotus at first locates and then deploys the ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ existing in his many and diverse stories. I propose that this enables him to move with ease between these two narratival points and contend that this approach, used as a conduit for imparting various motifs and messages, illustrates his ability to engage in the abstract and demonstrates his organization of the opus into one cohesive whole. Herodotus’ employment of spatial strategies of storytelling ensures the Histories becomes a single interconnected entity rather than a work of disconnected or isolated tales exhibiting qualities both real and intangible.

The thesis is divided into three chapters: Chapter One, ‘the Significance of the Nameless’, begins by investigating the use of the undisclosed individual abiding figuratively in the margins of Herodotus’ tales and argues that his use of them as literary tools moves them into closer focus as they emphasize key points and motifs for a listening audience.

Chapter Two, ‘the Value of the Outsider’, examines geography in Herodotus’ Histories where the fantastic and peculiar, symbolized by the non-Greek, reside literally on the edges of his world, and counterbalance the normalcy that dwell at its Greek centre. I also demonstrate the subtle relationship between the two, where both peripheries and inner central points become blurred by Herodotus’ own innate flexibility and his reversal of stereotypical roles.

Chapter Three, ‘Matters of Principle’, inquires into the roles of those people whose behaviour dictates that they live on the edges of Herodotus’ moral world but whose existence is again central to his storytelling methods. I argue that extremes of moderation and excess set the boundaries of the Herodotean ethical
narrative and that these values provide Herodotus with templates upon which he illustrates the contrasts of principled and unprincipled behaviour, and its inevitable consequences.

Overall the thesis illustrates the pivotal role that spatial strategies of storytelling accomplish in their contribution towards our understanding of the diversity and unity of Herodotus' Histories.
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Next to Herodotus, he remains the greatest comfort in my life.
Centre and Periphery

Spatial Strategies of Storytelling in Herodotus’ *Histories*

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Introduction

The Histories of Herodotus imparts to its audience two revolutionary developments in literature: an astounding view of his known world through the art of prose and inquiry, and a captivating report on the failure of the first bid for universal power. Herodotus inhabits and indeed, shapes a vast universe of intellectuality and learning, and the information he divulges can be perceived as both real and mythical.¹ His ‘display’ is not just a history of ‘great and marvellous deeds presented by Greeks and barbarians’, but also a discourse that embraces ethnography and geography, with smaller texts incorporating notions of zoology, even astrology.² His work concerns not just the Persian and the Greek, but Egyptians and Scythians and Ethiopians, the Hyperboreans and the Issedones, the Sarangians and the one-eyed Arimaspians - and griffins that guard gold.³ Whatever one’s assessment of its analytical and mythical composition, Herodotus brings his work together as a single cohesive unit that entirely evokes 5th-century Ionian life and thought at the transition from the archaic to the classical period. Consequently, it deserves the closest scrutiny, and scholarship throughout the years has studied and dissected it with diverse approach.⁴ For

³ See Hdt. 1.93-94 for the customs of the Lydians; Hdt. 1.131-140 for those of the Persians; Hdt. 1.192-200 for the Babylonians; Hdt. 1.214-216 for the Massagetae; Hdt. 2.35-98 for the Egyptians; Hdt. 3.20-24 for the Ethiopians; Hdt. 3.98-101 for the Indians; Hdt. 4.59-82 for the Scythians; Hdt. 4.104-109 for the customs of the Scythian neighbours; Hdt. 4.168-199 for Libyan tribes and their customs; Hdt. 5.3-8 for the customs of the Thracians; and Hdt. 3.116 for the one-eyed men and the griffins.
⁴ It needs to be noted at this point that I subscribe to John Marincola’s observation that while it is not easy to determine the form of ‘publication’ The Histories initially enjoyed in a ‘largely oral society where the level of functional literacy could not have been high’, it is understood that it was most likely communicated by recital or public performance, and that the majority of Herodotus’ audience were Greek listeners who knew of his work from oral presentations or set performance pieces – see John Marincola, ‘Introduction’ in Herodotus, Histories, p. xii, and
example, Fornara seeks to explain Herodotean perspective by seeing a younger and then older man, a traveler and then philosopher, an ethnographer and then a somewhat creative historian. Lateiner investigates Herodotean intellectuality and style by examining the latter’s thought and the arrangement of his text for justification of the extraneous material. Gould considers the *Histories* from the aspect of style and logic, drawing on recent advances in the understanding of the oral tradition. He proposes that the notion of reciprocity is the guiding principle behind Herodotus’ narrative. Of later date, Baragwanath has made an erudite exploration into the motivation behind Herodotean techniques and suggests he offers many reasons and interpretations for his version of the past. She posits that rather than offering a single authoritative account Herodotus understands the difficulties that arise in knowing about the past and recounting it, and wants his audience to realize this also. Thus he encourages them to weigh the evidence for themselves and to reach their own conclusions. More recently, Purves has explored the ‘language of Herodotean prose as a geographical tool’, her scholarship opening up new ways of representing place and space and adding to the continuing debate on Herodotean narrative structure. These scholars are simply to name but a few. The list of course is endless. My thesis builds on


Alex C. Purves, *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 120.


As a starting point for bibliographies see: John Marincola, *The Greek Historians*, pp. 19-60 or both *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* and *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, noted in the above footnote. Of particular help is Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola, ‘A Selective Introduction to Herodotean Studies’ in *Arethusa*, 20, pp. 9-40, also noted in footnote #9 above.
this research, and that of many others, and explores a particular aspect of Herodotus’ storytelling.

Anecdotes are how Herodotus communicates to his audience. They teach them – and us - to think historically. They expose the dangers of chance and the instability of human fortune, they speak of vengeance and retributive justice, of the supernatural, of conflict between east and west, and of the basic polarities of Greek and barbarian. Stories clarify that the consequences of imprudence, when reading the past and present, can be very dire. As an oral historian Herodotus relies on engagement and response and encourages his listener, and now his reader, to contribute to imputing meaning into his work. In this thesis I have accepted his invitation.

I contend that Herodotus employs what I am going to call ‘strategies of space’ within his storytelling. I argue that these tactics add importance to his various motifs and messages and demonstrate that that this manoeuvre allows him to move effortlessly between the periphery of his narrative world and points at its centre (yet to be defined). I contend that use of spatial strategies in his storytelling assists Herodotus in cohesively organizing his work into an interrelated unit and permits a ready and easy communication of matters of consequence to a listening audience. My interpretation of stories of those who abide on the edges of Herodotus’ work - the undisclosed, the non-Greek and the transgressor – potentially opens new areas for exploration in the structure of Herodotus’ Histories.

It is important at this point to clarify my definition of centre and periphery. In terms of his narrative, the periphery or edge is taken to mean any general storyline in any given account. Centre or axis I identify as those core motifs and messages that continue throughout the Histories and which maintain a focal point of reference. More precisely, in Chapter One, ‘the Significance of the Nameless’, I contend that Herodotus considers nameless individuals to be important literary devices of the oral storyteller’s trade and to be as competent

12 Hdt. 8.104-106 – here Herodotus recounts the story of the chief eunuch Hermotimus and Panionius the slaver.
in this task as those he names. For the purposes of this chapter I have taken the main character in any story to be the centre, and his or her supporting cast the periphery. I argue that, in a reversal of his usual detailed methods of elaborate character development, Herodotus counterbalances his wider narrative with anecdotes containing the unnamed in order to engage to a greater degree with his audience.\(^{13}\) The undisclosed, abiding always on the periphery of their stories by dint of their anonymity, are nonetheless, as I will show, given specific and significant purpose.

Chapter Two, ‘the Value of the Outsider, builds on this premise and inquires into the geographic world of Herodotus. I suggest that the same ‘spatial’ strategies of storytelling in tales of unnamed people are also present in his accounts of people who dwell ‘literally’ at the edges of his world. For the purposes of this argument, the centre will be taken as Herodotus’ Greek audience and the periphery as those who are not - those who are non-Greek.\(^{14}\) In this chapter I contend that the fluidity in Herodotus’ notions of the ‘beyond’ ensures his foreigner takes many forms and offers in equal measure peculiarity and appeal. I demonstrate how this adjusting of perspective, this blurring of perceived polarities, adds to our understanding of Herodotean methods of storytelling.

The third chapter, ‘Matters of Principle’, continues the theme but concentrates on Herodotus’ moral universe where the ‘centre’ will manifest in moderation and the ‘periphery’ in excess. I investigate specifically those people whose behaviour dictates that they reside at the edge of this world and demonstrate that excessive behaviour provides a template upon which Herodotus explains his core themes of *hybris* and *nemesis* and their inevitable consequence. I argue that notions of

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\(^{13}\) I have taken Herodotus’ audience to be Greek and then mainly Athenian. There is some contention as to whether Lucian’s report that he took part in a 4-day festival at Olympia, as part of the *agon* is plausible because of the length of *The Histories*. In any event, Herodotus’ audience would have been relatively exclusive – see Stewart Flory, ‘Who Read Herodotus’ Histories’ in *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 14 and 26. James Evans suggests there is ample evidence of Herodotus giving oral performances of his ‘researches’ either as citations from memory or as readings from a written text, but suggests a restricted Athenian audience only in the Lycian *nomos*, tending more to the term ‘Greek public’ as a rule to describe Herodotean addressees – see: James Allan Stewart Evans, *Herodotus, Explorer of the Past* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 93-101.

\(^{14}\) In Hdt. 8.144 Herodotus uses a speech of the Athenians to the Spartans to locate those things in which he believed Greekness lay – the Greeks ‘were a community of blood and language, of temples, ritual and common customs’.
self-indulgence and restraint define his own ethical boundaries and that his moral messages, made all the more persuasive by discreet and cautious delivery, again permit an advancement in our knowledge of the way in which he expresses his ideas.

Overall, this thesis hopes to contribute to current interpretations of Herodotean methods of critical investigation and narrative structure. In particular I wish to add to recent general analyses into Herodotus’ methods of storytelling by identifying his ‘spatial’ strategies and by demonstrating their significance in the organization of his ‘inquiry’ into a single interconnected entity. In assessing the work through such a lens it becomes apparent that far from producing detached stories or exhibiting a propensity for easy distraction, as older scholarship would have argued, Herodotus successfully coalesces peripheries and central points into one cohesive whole. Ionian notions of symmetry and asymmetry are also those of Herodotus, but his treatment of the named and nameless, of Greek and non-Greek, of excess and moderation, are entirely his own. It these ideas that I examine and expand upon here.
Chapter One

The Significance of the Nameless
Chapter One

– the Significance of the Nameless

In my introduction I set out the premise upon which this thesis is written, and to this end I begin by investigating the use of the nameless individual abiding figuratively in the margins of Herodotus’ tales. I argue and demonstrate that their use as literary tools moves them into closer focus as they emphasize key points and motifs for a listening audience. For instance, in all stories ever told there is a star performer who takes the central role, and a supporting cast that shapes him or her and provides the necessary backing for this main character’s development. Herodotus’ stories are no different; indeed, it could be plausibly argued that they set the benchmark for all time. In the Histories there are many main players, each having a company of cooperating characters that come in a variety of guises: they can be individuals or groups, royal or base, slave or free, man or woman, named or unnamed. For example, in the stories of Croesus, until his fall he takes centre stage and is supported by Solon; after his fall he supports Cyrus. Cyrus’ central role is sustained by Tomyris – albeit short-lived by the consequences of her formidable and formulaic revenge. Darius is given a large supporting cast that includes his queen Atossa and various courtiers and generals - Zopyrus, Megabazus, Artaphernes and Otanes. The 300 are of obvious assistance to Leonidas’ central role. Xerxes’ star performance is made possible by the likes of Artabanus or Mardonius – even Demaratus, and most certainly the Greek community as a whole. In the above instances all these supporting people have a name, but they need not. It is those who do not that form the basis of my argument in this chapter and for this purpose I have taken all main characters to mean ‘centre’ and the supporting cast, his or her periphery.

Herodotus is obsessed with names – he methodically registers Egyptian dynasties and he names the Greek gods that allegedly came from that country.\(^{15}\) He mentions final survivors of war; he offers his own version of the battle for

\(^{15}\) Hdt. 2.99-2.163 and Hdt. 2.50 respectively. Of the latter, if one adopts Rosalind Thomas’ suggestion, here Herodotus is seeking the origins of the gods along with the beginning of human history, which he believes lies in Egypt – see Thomas, *Herodotus in Context*, pp. 276-283.
Troy and the players in it; he lists the Egyptian social classes. He specifically singles out the particularly clever groom, Oebares. He names seas and rivers and tribes. He discloses powerful rivaling families and registers their loyal clans. I have already noted the great Lydian king Croesus, and then there are the Persian kings, Xerxes, Darius and Cambyses, or generals such as Themistocles, Leonidas and Mardonius, despots like Polycrates of Samos and the pharaohs, Amasis and Psammetichus. The list is endless. All these individuals are complex characters of differing depths, and in Herodotus’ narrative they can either occupy centre stage or be relegated to lesser roles - and they are always named. Those who are less structured inevitably balance the more elaborate and the individuals who fill these minor roles can be named or unnamed. For example, the 'star' Croesus has a supporting player in a nameless deaf and dumb son; Xerxes has an unnamed horseman observe the Spartans preparing for war; the name of the mutilated wife of Masistes is never disclosed; an unidentified Ethiopian king pinpoints the excesses of his named Persian counterpart; a lowly fisherman returns Polycrates’ ring. There are some 140 nameless essential components of storytelling in the Histories and they run the entire gamut of human endeavour or morality. Like the named they can be treasonous servants or prophets of high character, disabled or hale. It is perhaps a common thought that the centrality of a proper name to the perception and construction of identity implies that its absence indicates irrelevance, or worse, a complete state of oblivion. I believe such insight to be false, at least in the case of Herodotus’ Histories.

I argue that the inclusion of a nameless individual contributes in a significant and unique way to Herodotus’ stories and to his method of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{ Hdt. 1.82, 2.120 and 2.164-167 respectively.} \text{\textsuperscript{17}}\text{ Hdt. 3.85-87.} \text{\textsuperscript{18}}\text{ For example – Hdt. 4.85-87 and for the Scythian tribes see Hdt. 4.102.} \text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{ Hdt. 4.66.} \text{\textsuperscript{20}}\text{ Hdt. 1.34 and 1.85; 7.208; 9.108-113; 3.21; 3.42 respectively.} \text{\textsuperscript{21}}\text{ My count of the anonymous in the Histories excludes heralds and messengers, unnamed tribes, priests and priestesses, entire inhabitants of cities and dream characters. I have reckoned 139 individuals of whom 84 are men, 48 are women and 7 are children of unspecified sex. In comparison Adele Reinhartz in “Why Ask My Name?” Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 3 claims there are roughly 100 unnamed individual characters in the Old Testament. There are rather less in the Homeric epics.} \]
storytelling, especially in light of the early communication of his work by public recital and performance, rather than by reading. Use of an undisclosed character in an anecdote gives Herodotus the opportunity for compensation. Thus, he can and does provide the nameless with deeper role interactions with other players in a story, and this affords his audience occasion to examine the character in far greater detail. A character whose name is undisclosed, forces the listener to focus on other specifics and aspects of his person - and the story that surrounds him. Such reimbursement is unnecessary in someone who bears a name. Let me illustrate.

Take for example the unnamed mother of Cleobis and Biton, or the butchered son of Harpagus, or Darius’ servant who is commanded to remind him of the Athenians whenever he sits down to sup.22 This woman and the boy and slave are given very lesser roles within their individual stories but their significance lies precisely in their position as part players. Just as those named co-stars mentioned in the first paragraph interact and support their more elaborate centre-stagers, so too I argue, do those who are unidentified. Indeed, I suggest they give cause for deeper analysis. After all, if Cleobis and Biton are the second happiest men Solon is reputed to have met – how exceptional must their mother have been? The disobedience of Harpagus and the terrible fate of his unnamed son give pause to all who are parents. The anonymous slave of Darius performs a relentless function that signifies an even greater ruthlessness on the part of his owner. I argue that Herodotus has these unnamed bit players fulfill a definite and precise purpose as they remain, by dint of their namelessness within the margins of their stories - and that he does so for many reasons. To begin with, as with his named bit players, the nameless provide, with equal usefulness and competence, added emphasis to a core message, and ably counterbalance the narrative of Herodotus’ more elaborate characters – as I now demonstrate.

22 Hdt. 1.31, 1.119 and 5.106 respectively.
Life Lessons

For example Herodotus in his Histories tells us that Cambyses, King of the Persians humiliated the Egyptian Pharaoh Psammetichus by forcing him to watch his son and daughter parade before him as slaves, and to witness an old friend in such dire straits that necessitated beggary.\textsuperscript{23} The names of this prince and princess and that of the pharaoh’s old friend remain undisclosed. As I will demonstrate however, these people, seemingly marginalized not only by their status of anonymity but also by that as captured slaves, are nonetheless of vital importance to the implementation and the dramatization of the tale Herodotus recounts.

The extremes of the pharaoh’s sorrow gives truth to the bonds of paternity and veracity to the strengths of friendship as Herodotus has him grieve privately for his children, his anguish too great for public show, and openly for his old unnamed friend.\textsuperscript{24} Their literary function at this stage is to give Cambyses cause for inquiry. Psammetichus’ answer to the king’s question as to why he grieves so differently is of such profound humanity as to stay his own execution – a skilful use of the ‘clever answer that motivates drama’.\textsuperscript{25} The entire performance of the story has unfolded thus. Herodotus:

- ensures Cambyses conforms to his required despotic role by his actions of parading the children and sending the older man into penury;
- warrants that Psammetichus’ unexpected reaction forces an inquiry from Cambyses;
- guarantees the embattled pharaoh’s heroic answer produces a reversal of the king’s original action.

\textsuperscript{23} Hdt. 3.14.
\textsuperscript{24} This scene carries Homeric echoes of Priam’s distress at the impending doom of his house – see Homer, Iliad, trans. A.T. Murray (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, 2001), 22.60.
Centralized by definition of their social standing to the pharaoh and the king and counterbalancing their more elaborate structure, the three unnamed characters are exploited to dramatic effect as Herodotus gives originality to a story of otherwise rudimentary revenge. He provides certain entertainment for ancient listener and modern reader alike - if we do indeed follow Solon’s instructions and look to the end of the story before passing judgment on anyone’s life, we are richly rewarded.²⁶ Psammetichus takes his own life in fear of retribution for subversive activities against Cambyses, no doubt inspired by the plight of his children, and Cambyses dies childless, a victim of his own sword wounds after misinterpreting the true nature of an oracular divination and a prophetic dream.²⁷ Herodotus’ core theme of *hybris* and *nemesis* is writ large in a story entirely contingent upon the inclusion of its three unnamed characters.

A great many anecdotes in the *Histories* include unnamed sons who suffer terrible ends for one reason or another, but one whose life delivers a surprisingly uplifting *denouement* deserves further consideration, especially in terms of his ability to emphasize a central theme and offset the more structured role of his father.²⁸ He is a son of Croesus and thus a prince of Lydia, and disadvantaged on two counts: he is second born, and deaf and dumb.²⁹ Yet this young man’s presence in a tale of lost empires holds such power as to merit two mentions by the Pythia. Herodotus has the Delphic Oracle tell the petitioners of Croesus:

οἶδα δ’ ἐγὼ ψάμμου τ’ ἀριθμὸν καὶ μέτρα θαλάσσης,  
καὶ κωφοῦ συνήμι, καὶ οὐ φωνεύντος ἀκούω.³⁰

I know the grains of sand on the beach and the measure of the sea, and understand the speech of the dumb and hear the voiceless.

²⁶ Hdt. 1.32.  
²⁷ Hdt. 3.15 and Hdt. 3.65-66 respectively.  
²⁸ For examples of sons who suffer, see Hdt. 1.119 in which the 13 year old son of Harpagus is butchered by Astyages and served to his father as punishment for Harpagus’ disobedience; Hdt. 3.35 in which the son of Prexaspes is shot by Cambyses; Hdt. 4.84 in which the three sons of Oeobazus are executed for their father’s impertinence; Hdt. 7.38-39 in which the eldest of Pythius’ five sons is cleaved in two; Hdt. 7.114 in which nine boys are buried alive at the Nine Ways under orders of Xerxes; Hdt. 8.106 in which the four sons of Panionius are castrated.  
²⁹ Hdt. 1.34 and 1.85.  
³⁰ Hdt. 1.47.
Later she warns the foolish Croesus not to wish to hear the longed-for voice within his palace for his son’s first word will be spoken on a day of sorrow:

\[\alpha υδησει γαρ \ εν \ ηματι πρωτων \ ανολβω.\]

The presence of this young man is essential to the development of Herodotus’ story. Through mischance and misfortune he is catapulted into heir-apparent status on the untimely accidental death of his older sibling.\(^{32}\)

The worthlessness of the disabled son is so presumed by Herodotus’ audience that the disability is used as a literary device.\(^{33}\) Herodotus tells his listeners the boy was much loved by Croesus, the father doing everything possible to alleviate the disadvantage, going so far as to seek advice of the Delphic Oracle.\(^{34}\) At the moment when Croesus loses his empire to Cyrus and is about to be killed by a Persian soldier Herodotus has the mute son shout an order that stays a soldier’s sword. Given this pivotal role in the story, the first words spoken with great authority by the boy save the father. The audience is comforted by the veracity of the Pythia’s knowledge and advice - and the gentle end to the tale: the boy apparently retains the power of speech for the remainder of his life and Croesus, ‘a good man whom the gods loved,’ continues on in a role of wise advisor to the Persian court, giving counsel to both kings Cyrus and Cambyses.\(^{35}\)

The unnamed prince has several uses within this myth of many variants.\(^{36}\) His character has no history and he is entirely unstructured in order to provide a greater contrast to his more substantial father and better-endowed brother, but he is central to Herodotus’ theme of following Solon’s advice to look to the end

\[\text{\textsuperscript{31} Hdt. 1.85.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{32} Hdt. 1.34-45.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{34} Hdt. 1.85.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{35} Hdt. 1.87, 3.14 and 3.35-36.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{36} For further information on the life and times of Croesus see James Allan Stewart Evans, 'What Happened to Croesus?', The Classical Journal, 74, No. 1 (Oct-Nov, 1978), pp. 34-40.}\]
and to consider the great mutability that human life presents. He is also proof that the Delphic Oracle carries weight - Croesus is permitted to gain an heir only when he loses his empire.

In another tale of unnamed sons and in a direct link to Herodotus’ core theme that human prosperity does not abide long in the same place, he ends his work with a story of incomparable brutality cloaked under the notion of retributive justice. It concerns the death of the unnamed son of Artayctes, stoned by the Athenians before his father’s crucified body as revenge for the latter’s corrupt satrapy under Xerxes. The cruelty of the boy’s death and the uncivilized nature of his father act as convincing pointers, emerging as they do from the margins of the story to the central message Herodotus seeks to impart, that of the impermanence of life. But Herodotus has a second premise quickly materialize - the Athenians are capable of resembling the barbarian. He is subtly implying prudence against the burgeoning imperialism of Athens, and just as cleverly he tempers it with a challenge. He links the unfortunate Artayctes, and

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38 Hdt. 1.32-33.
39 Hdt. 1.5 and 9.115-122. The death sentence in the latter text was carried out under the pretext of vengeance for Artayctes’ violation of the sanctuary of the Trojan hero Protesilaus who was the first Greek to leap onto the shores of Asia – see Homer, The Iliad, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Bk. II, p. 37. Herodotus is thus both linking his story to Homeric text and alluding to boundaries best not crossed. Homer’s influence on the Histories is inestimable – see Rosalind Thomas, ‘Introduction’ in Robert B. Strassler, ed., The Landmark Herodotus (London: Quercus, 2008), p. xviii; and Marincola, Greek Historians, p. 19. Homer’s use of the anonymous is well documented – in The Iliad Patroclus’ companions are unnamed, Bk. 1, p. 9, and Briseis is abducted by two unnamed servants of Agamemnon, Bk. 1, p. 10. We are not privy to the names of six brothers of Andromache or that of her mother – see Bk. VI, p. 109. There are numerous instances where Odysseus either chose not to reveal himself or to take no name at all – see Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fagles (England: Penguin Books, 1996), especially Bk. 9. 410 for the most obvious example – the escape from Polyphemus. Also see Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Walter Shewring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) for further translation – of particular note the names of the wife and housekeeper of Maron who give Odysseus gifts and wine remain undisclosed, Bk. IX, p. 103; the twelve serving women whom Odysseus hangs at the conclusion of the epic are anonymous, as are most of the suitors, Bk. XXII, p. 275 and Bk. XX, p. 241-251 respectively; and Odysseus himself takes some time to reveal himself to his loyal swineherd and cowherd and to Penelope and Telemachus, Bks. XIV-XVI, pp. 165-197, Bk. XIX, p. 239 and Bk. XVI, pp. 19-196 respectively. Moses Finley remarks that anonymity might appear ‘essentially irrelevant to either action or plot, but it nonetheless underscores and elucidates behaviour, gives colour to proceedings and persistently reminds the listener of the truthfulness of the account’ are observations that perhaps could be adopted for the anonymous in Herodotus’ work. See Moses Finley, The World of Odysseus (England: Penguin Books, 1979), esp. p. 75.
40 Marincola, Greek Historians, p. 25. Marincola suggests many scholars believe the Histories contain traces of not only Athenian and Spartan antagonism but also debate over Athenian
by definition his less defined son, to a third aspect. In a manner that tests preferred Greek/barbarian antitheses Herodotus questions Persian excess and instead underscores their formidable qualities.41

These three case studies demonstrate that the nameless in Herodotus’ stories are at least as significant as their more easily identified co-players when used to impart Herodotean core messages such as hybris and nemesis, the unpredictability of human fate, or the dangers of Athenian imperialism. And each is perfectly capable of counterbalancing the more elaborate characters in their stories: the Egyptian prince and princess offset their father and the Persian king, and the unnamed sons of Croesus and Artayctes do likewise. But I also argue that the nameless carry considerable weight when used as prompts for their oral storyteller or as cues for his listeners. Take for example the unnamed man who crowns Amasis king of Egypt.42

The function of this unknown kingmaker is to operate as a stimulant for Herodotus, and to lay down vital signals for his audience. His action of crowning Amasis sets in motion a chain of events crucial to Herodotus’ delivery of his regular core messages of dishonouring aggression and retribution.43 Let us consider for a moment the sequence of events that originates from his one action. As king, Amasis befriends the beleaguered Samian despot Polycrates, a complex, powerful character of some repute within the Histories. Amasis, of

41 Christopher Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They? National Stereotypes in Herodotus’, Histos 1 (1997), pp. 64-65.
42 Hdt. 2.162.
43 It is interesting to note that long before the Histories an Akkadian tragi-drama hero-saga deployed the same strategies of storytelling through the seemingly menial tasks of an unnamed wife who delivers a similar central message of irreversible fate. See Maureen Gallery Kovacs, The Epic of Gilgamesh (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998). The unknown wife of Utanapishtim, a central character in the epic, performs traditional roles such as bread making but this supposedly menial task aids the hero Gilgamesh in his quest for immortality. She is relied upon by the hero in diverse ways and accordingly holds great authority and power, her anonymity in no way deflecting from her significance – see especially p. 104. Gilgamesh was a real historical figure who ruled the city of Uruk c. 2,700-2,500 BC - see p. xxvii and the epic originated as a series of Sumerian legends that drew on long oral tradition - see pp. xxii-xxiii. Also relevant is Ephraim Avigdor Speiser, ‘Akkadian Myths and Epics’ in James Pritchard ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, Third Edition with Supplement (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 95.
equal status if not grander, rules Egypt for forty-four years, dying peacefully. The Persian king, Cambyses defiles his corpse.\(^{44}\) Coupled with other inappropriate acts this outrageous deed ensures Cambyses suffers an ignominious death inflicted by his own sword.\(^{45}\) *Hybris* and *nemesis* as suggested in my earlier case studies, are constant themes throughout Herodotus’ work, but here Herodotus hints to his listeners that moral contrasts such as these can also be subject to unpredictable change.\(^{46}\) He has used the actions of an unnamed kingmaker as a cue for his audience and joins two central themes into one short anecdote.

There is of course a great deal more to the abilities of the nameless than their simple capacity of emphasizing Herodotean core messages or counterbalancing the more structured players in their narrative, or indeed as literary ‘reminder tools’. For instance, I suggest that Herodotus, with an artful contrivance, grants them an extraordinary talent. Many nameless characters are given direct speech and thus become endowed with quasi-oracular skills. Furthermore a considerable number have their messages contain clever and understated meaning. For example:

Read My Lips

Herodotus tells his audience that Ethiopia became the target of insatiable desire for expansion by Cambyses, earlier referenced as a defiler of corpses.\(^{47}\) Cambyses’ tactic of sending spies bearing gifts as a ruse to reconnoitre the situation is transparent enough not to deceive the Ethiopian king and his

\(^{44}\) Hdt. 3.10 and 16.

\(^{45}\) Hdt. 3.65-66. Earlier in the text we are privy to Cambyses’ excesses - he defiles the Egyptian god Apis, is of unsound mind, murders his brother and pregnant sister/wife, drinks too much, buries noblemen alive, generally treats his fellow countrymen savagely and mistranslates oracles and dreams – see Hdt. 3.29-38.

\(^{46}\) Herodotus considers the Persians *hybristai* by nature, naturally inclined if you will, to dishonouring aggression, and he has Croesus the first to detect it – see Hdt. 1.89. *Nemesis* or retribution and revenge, follows them in almost equal measure, and anyone else who appears overly confident or who enjoys excessive pride. For further scholarship on the notion of *hybris*, see N.R.E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1992), esp. pp. 343-385.

\(^{47}\) Hdt. 3.17. See Hdt. 3.10 and 3.16 for Cambyses’ inappropriate act.
subsequent speech to the Persian envoys is boldly edifying – especially to Cambyses:

"οὔτε ὁ Περσέων βασιλεὺς δῶρα ὑμέας ἔπεμψε φέροντας προτίμων πολλοὺ ἐμοὶ ξείνος γενέσθαι, οὔτε ὑμεῖς λέγετε ἀληθέα (ἣκετε γὰρ κατόπται τῆς ἐμῆς ἀρχῆς), οὔτε ἐκείνος ἀνήρ δίκαιος, εἰ γὰρ ἦν δίκαιος, οὔτ’ ἄν ἐπεθύμησε χώρης ἀλλής ἢ τῆς ἐωτοῦ, οὔτ’ ἄν ἐς δουλουσόν θαυμάζων ὑγε ὑπ’ ὑμιν μηδὲν ἡδίκηται. γὰρ ἡ δύνας πόλεως τόδε διδόντες τάδε ἐπεα λέγετε, βασιλεὺς ὁ Αἰθιόπων συμβουλεύει τῷ Περσέων βασιλεύ, ἐπεάν οὔτω εὐπετέως ἔλκωσι τὰ τάξα Πέρσαι ἑόντα μεγάθεϊ τοσά ὑπετέως τῶν ἐλκωσί τὰ τόξα Πέρσαι ἑόντα μεγάθεϊ τοσά τῶν ἐλκωσί τὰ τόξα Πέρσαι ἑόντα μεγάθεϊ τοσά, τότε ἔπ’ Αἰθιόπας τοὺς μακροβίους πλήθει ὑπερβαλλόμενον στρατεύεσθαι: μέχρι δὲ τούτοι θεοῖσι εἰδέναι χάριν, οἳ οὐκ ἔπι νόον τρέπουσι Αἰθιόπων παισὶ γῆν ἄλλην προσκτάσθαι τῇ ἐωτοῖς."48

The king of Persia has not sent you with these presents because he puts a high value upon being my friend. You have come to get information about my kingdom; therefore, you are liars and that king of yours is unjust. Had he any respect for what is right he would not have coveted any other kingdom than his own, nor made slaves of a people who have done him no wrong. So take him this bow, and tell him that the king of Ethiopia has some advice to give him: when the Persians can draw a bow of this size easily, then let him raise an army of superior strength and invade the country of the long-lived Ethiopians. Till then, let him thank the gods for not turning the thoughts of the children of Ethiopia to foreign conquest.

The Ethiopian king goes on to scoff at the gifts, approving only of the palm wine as the one thing of superior quality. The report that the spies deliver to Cambyses upon their arrival back in Egypt so enrages him that he sets forth at once to march against Ethiopia, paying no mind to preparation, provision of supplies or to the great distances to be endured by his troops. Herodotus says he went completely mad.49 The invasion was a disaster: ‘food supplies ran out before one-fifth of the march was completed and, after eating the baggage animals, the army resorted to drawing lots and killing and eating every tenth

48 Hdt. 3.21.
49 Hdt. 3.25.
soldier of their own numbers – only the threat of unmanageable cannibalism forces Cambyses to abandon his attempted conquest and to turn back.\textsuperscript{50}

Although the Ethiopian king’s name remains undisclosed throughout this story his wisdom and immutability counterbalance and highlight the stupidity and ill-conceived spontaneity of Cambyses. Herodotus portrays his perspicacity as a direct foil to the foolishness of the named, elaborate Persian antagonist, Cambyses, and he is a major factor in the latter’s inevitable downfall.\textsuperscript{51} The extreme remoteness of Ethiopia signifies the boundaries that Cambyses must not cross – the unbendable bow a symbol of the great inaccessibility of Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{52} This thesis will consider geographical remoteness and its significance in Herodotus’ world in the next chapter, but it is sufficient here to propose that Herodotus constructs the character of the nameless Ethiopian king for his own purposes and manipulates the narrative to make a specific point. The king is as spotlit as Cambyses, and with a challenging and prophetic voice Herodotus has him exhibit strengths great enough to taunt the Persian and courage enough to expose the very real weaknesses of his army.

Just as the talents of the unnamed Ethiopian king are used to reveal deficiencies in a Persian enemy so too do the actions of an unidentified Persian soldier who once shared a couch with an Orchomenian notable named Thersander. We know a little about the status of this man from Thersander’s alleged reportage. He is most decidedly the servant of another, the great Persian general Mardonius, and therefore ultimately the slave of King Xerxes. The tale is related directly to Herodotus by Thersander some years after the event: that on

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Gould, \textit{Herodotus}, p. 105.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Interestingly this plot tactic is supported in Old Testament text in which a foreign nameless queen, of Sheba, also carries considerable weight within her relevant narrative. She is also given direct voice and contributes significantly to her adversary’s character development and downfall, that of King Solomon. See: The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments in the King James Version (Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 1 Kings 10: 1-13 and II Chronicles 9: 1-12: Reinhartz in "Why Ask My Name?" suggests that the absence of the queen’s proper name draws attention to her complex power relationships with the man with whom she interacts, king Solomon. She asserts that the queen functions not only as an agent in plot development but that her encounter with Solomon contributes significantly to his characterization as ‘wise’. Further, the contrast between the queen and Solomon’s foreign wives highlight the manner in which he will be the architect of his own downfall – see especially pp. 72-74.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Hartog, \textit{Mirror of Herodotus}, p. 44; Hdt. 3.21.
\end{itemize}
the eve of the great battle of Plataea in 479BC (the most glorious in the eyes of Herodotus) this Thersander and fifty Thebans are invited to a feast given by a man named Attaginus in honour of their Persian masters.\textsuperscript{53} The Thebans were collaborating with the Persians at the time and so the Persian commander, Mardonius and an equal number of distinguished Persians are treated to a banquet. The undisclosed Persian who shares Thersander’s couch speaks Greek and, as with the Ethiopian king, Herodotus privileges him with direct speech, immediately giving him quasi-oracular form; his anonymity at once at odds with the importance of his role.\textsuperscript{54}

The unnamed Persian muses that since they have eaten and drunk together at the same table, he wishes to leave Thersander with something to remember him by - something that might keep him safe. The Persian weeps as he opines that on the morrow his fellow Persians at the banquet and many of those in the army camp over the river Asopus will soon be dead. The alarmed Thersander suggests the Persian might relate his thoughts to his commander and other high-ranking officials, to which the Persian replies:

\[ Ξείνε, ὃ τι δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμῆχανον ἀποτρέψαι ἀνθρώπωι: οὐδὲ γὰρ πιστὰ λέγουσι ἐθέλει πεἰθεσθοι οὐδείς, ταῦτα δὲ Περσῶν συχνοὶ ἔπιστάμενοι ἐπόμεθα ἄνοιγκαὶ ἐνδεδεμένοι, ἐξήςτη δὲ ὀδύνη ἔστι τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις αὐτῇ, πολλὰ φρονεόντα μηδενὸς κρατέειν.\textsuperscript{55} Μυριαταύτα, ὃς ἐνδείκητα συχνὰ ἐπιστάμενοι ἐπομέθα ἄνοιγκαὶ ἐνδεδεμένοι, ἐξήςτη δὲ ὀδύνη ἔστι τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις αὐτῇ, πολλὰ φρονεόντα μηδενὸς κρατέειν.\]

My friend, what God has ordained no man can by any means prevent. Many of us know what I have said is true; yet, because we are constrained by necessity, we continue to take orders from our commander. No one would believe us,
However true our warning. This is the worst pain a man can have: to know much and have no power to act.

The undisclosed Persian speaks many more thought-provoking words and while the plot is plausible the recollections of Thersander, some twenty-five years after the event, require scrutiny. He is an apparent eyewitness to these events and as such is expected to have seen them, to understand what he witnessed and to be impartial enough not to alter their meaning, but his memory will be personal, involving both perception and emotion. Thus it is timely to consider why the Persian’s sentiments are so strangely familiar. I argue that his anticipation of ruin reflects Xerxes’ reflections prior to his crossing of the Hellespont and they are also reminiscent of those of the conspirators who earlier plotted against the Magi. All three events are occasions in which Herodotus himself could have in no way been privy to the uttered reported words, and indeed Thersander, and by definition the unnamed Persian, are typical of his informants – a notable Greek or non-Greek who establishes a personal connection. In this instance Herodotus’ audience, invested in the notion of truth, has the true disposition of the enemy revealed to them from a Greek point of view through the agency of an unnamed Persian. But Herodotus takes the concept of the nameless quasi-oracle further. Employed to utter sentiments that are entirely Greek, he has the Persian carry the credentials of proxy - he becomes a substitute not for any other individual in the Histories, but for the author himself.

Nameless individuals with quasi-oracular ability can also be women and they too can illustrate Herodotean political acumen and his deep knowledge of society. During his account of the important battle of Salamis he has a phantom woman issue an accusatory question. She does this to urge the Greek fleet

57 Hdt. 7.45-52 and 3.80-83.
58 See Gould, Herodotus, pp. 19-41 for a lucid account of Herodotus’ methods of inquiry and social memory and the problems of communication in general.
59 For similar sentiments also see Gould, Herodotus, pp. 19-41 as referenced above. Gould suggests that Thersander’s account is genuine testimony but cautions that either he or Herodotus may have tampered with details to reflect Greek attitudes – a possibility Gould suggests needs to be kept in mind throughout a reading of the Histories.
forward and onward in order to avoid imminent disaster – ‘strange men’, she asks in voice that can be heard by all, clearly announcing her supernaturalism, ‘how much further do you propose to go astern?’\footnote{Hdt. 8.84.} Disembodied, unnamed and unknowable, she is indeed a formidable and noteworthy voice – it is her quasi-oracular utterance that re-sets the entire battle onto the desired Greek course.

However, building on the oracular abilities that denote the significance of the nameless in the Histories, by far their most stimulating feature is Herodotus’ skill in developing their role. He exploits them to tempt his audience to engage with the more theoretical and speculative aspects of a story. At this level the concept of the undisclosed individual is expanded upon as used by storytellers before him. Herodotus has them manipulate his narrative and gives ancient listener and modern reader alike cause for reflection.\footnote{Alan Griffiths, ‘Kissing Cousins’ in Nino Luraghi, ed., The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 173-178.} His listener is encouraged to engage, analyze, consider and above all, ruminate on the story he is hearing and we as readers are persuaded to dig deeper into a tale to retrieve its more covert and insightful message. No doubt this is a result of oral storytelling becoming a finer art, but I suggest that it is in this regard that the nameless exhibit their most important role in the Histories. Herodotus can compensate for their lack of identity by specifically focusing on their person and the story that encompasses them. More than the clever and understated meaning he affords those with quasi-oracular voice and much more than their role as counterbalance to an elaborate personage or as the conveyer of themes, or prompts, these messages of the nameless are presented as connected and profoundly subtle. As a result, assumption and conjecture on the part of the diligent listener and reader repay both in full.
Hidden Messages

For example Herodotus' recounts a story of an unnamed Spartan queen who supposedly gave birth to a premature son. Dewald suggests the woman's anonymity relates to Greek traditions of proprietary, that it symbolizes the constraints of both her society and her nature, but it is worth noting the playwright Euripides had no compunction in naming the goddess Creusa as the mother of an illegitimate son. The Spartan queen has several roles: she counterbalances her known son Demaratus, she is given quasi-oracular speech, but it is through her agency that Herodotus proclaims not only his sentient religious conservatism but also an innate political acuity.

At the outset of this micro-narrative Herodotus tells his audience the gods bless this woman, and as he shapes the story her presence begins to carry greater weight. His audience is made aware of the profound changes wrought by divine intervention upon the anonymous Spartan woman. She changes from an ugly child to grow up to be the most beautiful woman in Sparta and she marries the king. Within this, her second marriage, the unnamed woman delivers a prince, Demaratus, supposedly before term. Here her role begins to counterbalance that of the more elaborate character in the story, her son. The question of the son's parentage becomes all encompassing and when he in turn grows to manhood and assumes kingship upon his supposed father's demise, rumours persist. For the best part of this story Herodotus maintains a realistic stance but once Demaratus is deposed, through the faulty advice of a bribed Pythia, and malicious gossip surrounding the mother persists, Herodotus deploys an Homeric strategy. He moves the story into the realms of legend and

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62 Hdt. 6.61.
64 Hdt. 6.61.
65 Hdt. 6.62.
66 Hdt. 6.64.
67 Hdt. 6.68.
She assures her son of his royal paternity and emphasizes her point by implicating a god/hero, Astrabacus, into the circumstances surrounding his conception. This gives Demaratus the choice of mortal or immortal genesis and her actions are at once instructive and illuminating.

Burkert suggests the referencing of divine origins in Demaratus' conception legitimizes his right to be king. He explains Astrabacus as an obscure and essentially Spartan veneration, connected not only to the particularly draconian initiation ceremonies for young Spartan males, but also to stories of bridal abduction and the intervention of higher powers in certain births where the child is destined for extraordinary things. Astrabacus is therefore an obvious choice for Demaratus' mother to invoke – she was 'abducted' from Agetus, her first husband, her son is allegedly a prince, and should this be proven her social politics will demand great destiny of him. As Baragwanath alludes, a first-time audience may wonder at Herodotus' motivation in keeping her anonymous, that there must be some significance to his act. And indeed there is. Herodotus plays to the suspense her namelessness evokes in his audience and gives her the power to raise her son to a new level. While his earlier victory at the Olympic games confirmed his eliteness, Demaratus is now imbued with certain divine radiance. He is not the son of Ariston but the son of a god/hero. This may stretch 21st century notions of credibility but it clearly did not do so for Herodotus. But what is Herodotus doing? We know that Demaratus accomplished nothing remotely marking him as unique in Greek history - he died a Persian vassal and a petty prince far from his homeland.

68 Hdt. 6.69.
70 Burkert, 'Demaratos, Astrabakos, and Herakles', pp. 100-103.
71 Hdt. 6.61 and 6.63.
72 Baragwanath, Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus, p. 39.
73 Hdt. 6.70; Burkert, 'Demaratos, Astrabakos, and Herakles', p. 100.
75 Burkert, 'Demaratos, Astrabakos, and Herakles', p. 103.
Herodotus is clever. He understood the legend he narrated and knew his audience well. Demaratus rejects his mortal father in favour of Astrabacus and breaks with his native city and its comprehensive legalities and legitimacies. He decamps to the court of the Persian king. Should Xerxes (and therefore Demaratus) succeed, tyranny will be the fate of the Greek homeland and will give Demaratus the chance of endless good fortune. Of course Herodotus’ audience knows this did not eventuate but there was a moment in Spartan history, following the terrible defeat at Thermopylae, when Demaratus seemed about to accomplish the extraordinary fate his mother proposed. Here Herodotus demonstrates his canny political acumen. He reminds his audience of how close they have come to living under despotic and arbitrary rule – that even the Spartans who regarded tyranny as an especial anathema were so very nearly overwhelmed – and by one of their own. Herodotus’ methods of persuasion are deeply rooted within the agency of this unnamed Spartan queen. He flags his involvement in the politics of his day – an Athens dangerously opposed to Sparta - and issues a timely warning of her present course in the affairs of men.

Yet Herodotus goes even further with his anecdote of the anonymous Spartan queen. Fornara considers Herodotus a conservative sophist and his observation bears out in this story. Herodotus exploits the queen’s power to confirm the authority of an unsullied Pythia - Demaratus was not the son of Arisotn - and to reveal the true significance of her anonymity. His audience is engaged in her extraordinary deeds and is introduced to the pitfalls of assumption and expectation. They can see she has refused to bow to societal pressure or to accept the specious advice of a bribed Pythia, and they understand she has provided her son with an alternative identity. By raising Demaratus to the status of a newfound divinity full of the promise of an unimagined future the Spartan queen gains added influence. Herodotus has had her subtly disclose

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78 Hdt. 6.67.
79 Fornara, Herodotus: An Interpretative Essay, p. 90.
81 Hdt. 6.66.
82 Burkert, ‘Demaratos, Astrabakos, and Herakles’, p. 103.
contemporary political propaganda as disseminated by her deposed son and his
government-in-exile.  

Supporting the Spartan queen’s story in its speculative capacity is
Herodotus’ tale of a lowly Samian fisherman who sets in motion a chain of events
resulting in the fulfillment of a friend’s well-meaning advice. This story carries
no political inference but its hidden message is no less weighty. Sandwiched
within a micro narrative concerning the tyrant Polycrates and a macro narrative
of general Persian history is a tale of perceived good luck. The extraordinary
good fortune of the Samian despot Polycrates is well known and it is sufficient
here to simply recount that he took the advice of his Egyptian friend (who just
happened to be a pharaoh) and deliberately lost that which was most precious to
him - his emerald signet ring – and that he, Polycrates, hoped he had lost it
forever. A few days later an impoverished man (an obvious counterbalance to
the many complexities of Polycrates), working as a fisherman caught a fine big
fish and, believing it to be a gift worthy of a king, took it to the palace with this
intent in mind. His generosity was accepted and he was invited to sup with
Polycrates. As the kitchen slaves prepared the fish for dinner the emerald
signet ring was discovered in its belly.

As with the Spartan queen, the great significance of the fisherman in this
micro narrative lies within his agency. He is used to emphasize a point, to
investigate the ‘unstable boundaries between the legitimate and the excessive
- in both generosity and revenge.’ Herodotus’ audience is alerted to the fact that
in the final analysis this lowly man’s intervention will contribute to Polycrates’
ordained fate and downfall but his presence in this story of excess and divine
requital carries more than a message of simple warning. The ring, the symbol of
Polycrates’ power is visible and again back in play and Herodotus’ second point

84 Hdt. 3.40-45 and 3.120-125.
85 Hdt. 3.41.
Harvard University Press, 2000), III. 42.
87 Hdt. 3.43.
88 Nick Fisher, ‘Popular Morality in Herodotus’ in Egbert Bakker, Irene de Jong, Hans Van Wees,
is the unavoidability of human fortune. The angler’s skill lies not simply in his aptitude for fishing, but also in his ability to hook the listening spectators to Herodotus’ performance. They understand that the destiny of the great Polycrates cannot be changed, that the advice of his friend, Pharaoh Amasis was sound, and moreover, they are aware of the terrible and undesirable fate that awaits said despot.  

However, the hapless fisherman may indeed have set in motion a series of incidents that result in the fulfilment of Amasis’ misgivings, but in a masterful stroke revealing a subtle understanding of the abstract, Herodotus delivers a third speculative strand to his audience. Were I to adopt Alan Griffiths’ somewhat speculative suggestion it could be considered that Polycrates would have been no more pleased than Astyages had been when the latter discovered the heir to his throne had not been dispensed with. There, too, what the king had wished lost forever is recovered. Griffiths contends that the feast Astyages gave to Harpagus parallels the meal Polycrates gives the unfortunate fisherman. Further, that Herodotus’ late 5th century Greek audience, their senses heightened by their knowledge of the fate of Harpagus’ son and the rough treatment of Harpagus concerning that son, engage with the story and understand what doom awaits the unknown angler. Without delivering an overt coup de grace Herodotus combines the fragile destiny of an unnamed fisherman with that of the great and known Polycrates and conflates them into Solon’s advice of looking to the end. While Polycrates’ end was most unpleasant, so too as Griffiths suggests, must have been the fisherman’s.

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89 Hdt. 3.125.
91 Hdt. 1.119 and see Baragwanath, Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus, p. 39.
92 Hdt. 1.32.
93 Hdt. 3.125 and Griffiths, ‘Stories and storytelling in the Histories’, p. 142.
Conclusions

This chapter has acknowledged that Herodotus employs timeless strategies of storytelling to construct his Histories and that the use of central characters, counterbalanced by those holding lesser roles, is fundamental in any narrative. Further, that those players in a supporting cast can be named or nameless. Reinhartz’ work on unnamed characters in biblical texts takes my argument further. She suggests the great importance of the undisclosed lies in their ability to provide crucial links within plots. This observation is relevant to the nameless in the passages considered in this chapter and is particularly demonstrated in the stories of the unknown kingmaker of the Egyptian pharaoh, Amasis and the wretched son of Artayctes, with his powerful prompts to Herodotean themes of civility and barbarism. Nonetheless, to a greater and lesser degree I have demonstrated that all share a commonality in their provision as vital ‘reminder’ tools for the storyteller. I have also shown that more than affording decisive links within plots, each of my selected characters can illustrate that unnamed individuals offset Herodotean depictions of the more structured: the Ethiopian king balances the great Cambyses of Persia, the Spartan queen counterbalances her son Demaratus, the Samian fisherman equalizes Polycrates, the mute prince and his father/king and so on.

Further, I have demonstrated that Herodotus’ oral storytelling techniques are as plausibly and as inextricably bound to the unnamed individuals within his stories as to those who have names and that if we follow, for example, the ‘what the gods decide no man can avert’ motif, we quickly understand that the Ethiopian king sagely forewarns of the weaknesses of Cambyses and his army, that very likely the Samian fisherman suffered the same fate as the son of Harpagus, and that the speech imparted by an unnamed Persian while

94 John Wilson, ‘Egyptian Myths, Tales and Mortuary Texts’ in James Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, Third Edition with Supplement (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 19. Wilson suggests the ‘name’ to the ancients was an element of personality and power that could be ‘so charged with potency it may not be pronounced, or that a god might retain a hidden name known only to himself. This then would be a mark of his supremacy’. It is reasonable to propose this may be the beginning of the Jewish god Yahweh whose name could not be uttered.
incumbent on Thersander’s couch entirely embodies Greek feelings for a soon-to-be vanquished enemy – and is in all probability the voice of Herodotus himself. The mute son of Croesus flags not only the Herodotean ‘looking to the end theme’ but that human prosperity is fleeting; while Demaratus’ mother, providing her son with newfound divinity, offers Herodotus the opportunity to showcase his political acuity.

Herodotus’ spoke and wrote of human experience, and the nameless character, so evident throughout the history of oral storytelling, becomes one of his integral tools. Each carries the same weight as a named individual as each is deliberately drawn to emphasize a central point, or trigger an association with a familiar problem or occasion of concern or note. As with the enigmatic Delphic responses so integral to Herodotus’ communication of information, the assumption of these same attributes by the nameless makes obvious their very great significance in each of their stories – each again requiring conscious hermeneutic effort on the part of the listener to translate their message. All therefore become an illustration of Herodotus’ profound ability to engage in deep abstract thought, and each one a subtle reminder of a promise to probe not only the history of the great but also that of the small.

Thus, in this first chapter I have demonstrated that the nameless individual, necessarily cast in a minor role, is as useful and as competent in adding weight to the various Herodotean core motifs and messages, as those who are named and who also play supporting roles. Further, these less structured characters, given no real history or definition, are offset against the more elaborate for specific reasons. I have argued that Herodotus significantly adds to their special status and influence by endowing them with genuine voice and having them speak as quasi prophets, capable of delivering additional covert messages. My selection of case studies has revealed that within respective plots, the modes of interaction assigned to those who have no name are allowed to materialize, and the listener, and later the reader, can focus on their role descriptions. These designations become their pseudo-labels, their locus of consequence if you will. Therefore, I suggest that the fact that these individuals carry no proper names does not detract from their tale or in any way diminish
their part in it. Rather, occupying a place in the ‘margins’ of their stories by dint of their anonymity, Herodotus lifts them beyond perceived irrelevance and gives them momentary central space. While use of undisclosed individuals is by no means exclusive to the narrative of the *Histories*, their inclusion manifests as a demonstrable development in its concept from earlier works such as the Akkadian epic *Gilgamesh*, eastern biblical texts or the poems of Homer. In the hands of Herodotus the nameless become useful tools of critical inquiry and a significant addition to his spatial strategies of storytelling.
Chapter Two

The Value of the Outsider
Chapter Two

- the Value of the Outsider

Chapter One demonstrated how Herodotus uses the nameless as a literary device to counterbalance his narrative of more structured individuals; that figuratively he brings them in from the ‘margins’ of their stories to a more central point and endows them with abilities that permit the delivery of clever and understated messages. I have shown how they are as useful and as competent in this task as any named counterparts. Chapter Two builds on this premise and suggests that those people who quite literally reside on the edges of Herodotus’ geographic world are also used to skilfully advance Herodotean notions, this time of proximity and distance. As a result, they take a role in evolving these same ideas in Herodotus’ listening audience. I will demonstrate that not only does the non-Greek also emphasize Herodotean core messages and motifs and play roles that counterbalance the known and familiar, but they are also used as literary devices, for other less overt but more important tasks. For the purposes of my argument in this instance, ‘centre’ and ‘proximity’ will manifest in Herodotus’ Athenian audience - or Greeks, and those who are not part of this privileged minority will become my ‘periphery’, my ‘distance’ if you like - in other words, the non-Greek, or the outsider. I have done this for a reason. As will become clear - ‘non-Greeks’ or barbaroi, like Greeks in the world of Herodotus take many forms.96

For instance, Herodotus begins his Histories with a story about the kingdom closest and most accessible to his audience, Lydia. He tells them the Lydian king Croesus attacked Ionia and Aeolia in turn – on various pretexts - and forced all the Greeks in Asia to pay him tribute.97 Not long after however, when the city of Sardis was at the height of its wealth and prosperity, Greek

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96 I understand the use of the word barbarian can mean many things in Herodotus’ world and may be problematical, thus I define it as ‘outsider’, ‘other’, ‘non-Greek’ or ‘foreigner’. For further scholarship see Jonathan M. Hall, Hellenicity (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 111-117 and his Chapter Six, pp. 172-220.

97 Hdt. 1.26.
intellectuals flocked to it.⁹⁸ Thus, from the very outset of his inquiries Herodotus embraces the notion of the non-Greek outsider and gives him unmistakable but ambiguous form. He at first establishes boundaries and then blurs them, and in so doing, does the same for his central point. I will argue that Herodotus arranges his borders to appear unproblematic as part of his endeavour to discover the meaning of nomos for the enlightenment of his listeners. He positions peripheries to suit a particular purpose. Here is another example. Herodotus sees the Persian Wars as part of a continuous cycle of retributive conflicts between Europe and Asia that begin with the abduction of Io by the Phoenicians, and have persisted thereafter in a sequence of unjust deeds.⁹⁹ Towards the end of the conflict that occupies the greater part of his work Herodotus tells his audience that the Persian barbaroi sought to negotiate terms with the Greeks.¹⁰⁰ Not once but twice he has the Athenians emphatically declare that they would never parlay with Xerxes.¹⁰¹ Clearly the Persians can be decidedly ‘outside’ when playing the part of the archenemy, but remarkably close to the notion of ‘Greek’ when compared with, say, the Massagetae - as I will demonstrate later.¹⁰² Hartog talks about this in reference to the Scythians – the closer the encounter of a non-Greek to a Greek’s home base the less ‘wild’ the so-called barbarian; and the further afield, the more untamed and fanciful.¹⁰³ Herodotus lessens the distance between the notion of Greek and non-Greek – yet, at other times he stresses it. It is this ambiguity that concerns me in this chapter.

To this end, I first demonstrate how Herodotus uses the outsider to advance his notions of centre and periphery, and how they emphasize his core messages and counterbalance his narrative of the known and familiar. As I have cited his text of the occasion of Greek against Persian above, I take as my first

⁹⁸ Hdt. 1.29.
⁹⁹ Hdt. 1.4 and 5.
¹⁰¹ Hdt. 8.143 and 144.
¹⁰² Herodotus indulges in only one polarity at a time – see Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They?’, p. 51.
outsider under examination to be one of them – not a man, not any non-Greek, but a Persian, a noble and a woman.

The Case of the Dissembled Barbarian

According to Herodotus, the Persian Intaphrenes had his own army, was a courtier and held the invidious position of personal bow carrier for King Darius. Further, as a fellow conspirator against pretenders to the Persian throne he clearly occupied an elite place. He also appears to have had a most exceptional wife. Herodotus tells us Darius was about to execute Intaphrenes, his children and all close relatives for that most serious of crimes, failing to show proper respect and suspicion of subversion. Following the arrests, his wife arrives at the palace gates so dissembled in her grief that Darius is moved to pity, and a royal messenger dispatched to set out his conditions of clemency. The woman’s answer, that she would prefer the life of a sibling be spared - over that of her husband or children - so amazes Darius that he sends again to ask why such a strange choice – to which Herodotus has her give a direct reply:

ὦ βασιλεῦ, ἀνὴρ μὲν μοι ἄν ἄλλος γένοιτο, εἰ δαίμων ἐθέλοι, καὶ τέκνα ἄλλα, εἰ ταύτα ἀποβάλοιμι: πατρὸς δὲ καὶ μητρὸς οὐκέτι μευ ζωόντων ἀδελφοίς ἄν ἄλλος οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ γένοιτο. ταύτῃ τῇ γνώμῃ χρεωμένη ἔλεξα ταύτα.

My Lord, god willing, I may get another husband and other children when these are gone. But as my father and mother are both dead, I can never possibly have another brother. That was the reason for what I said.

Why is Herodotus depicting this courageous woman in a complex verbal exchange with her king? Previously in the Histories he has portrayed Darius as

104 Hdt. 3.118-119.
105 Hdt. 3.119.
highly sophisticated in his skills of argument and debate, and wily if not deceitful in his actions to gain his throne, but here he allows a Persian woman to give as good as she gets – indeed to get the better of a personage as great as a king.\textsuperscript{106}

There are many strands to this story and some scholars might suggest ‘the cleverness of Intaphrenes’ wife’s rings hollow’.\textsuperscript{107} For example, her obvious act of loyalty to her king implies a willingness to abandon her marital relationship in favour of her familial. Sancisi-Weerdenburg suggests her actions reflect the clash of loyalties often experienced by highborn Persian women forced to ‘choose between their roles as wives of ambitious tribal chieftains and satraps, and the families who raised them’.\textsuperscript{108} Darius’ reaction in granting clemency to not only her brother but also her eldest son would seem to corroborate this notion ‘as obligations to both these relatives could lead to future conflicts of loyalty’.\textsuperscript{109} Sancisi-Weerdenburg may be correct, and certainly pragmatic. But Herodotus is also insinuating that Darius is not the only manipulator of language in his kingdom, for when we remove ourselves from this individual case of apparently sophisticated verbal exchange and view the \textit{Histories} in its entirety, we observe that Intaphrenes’ wife joins ‘a long list of cynical and compliant courtier-subjects who ultimately corrupt the ability of the Persian king to govern effectively’.\textsuperscript{110} Her actions suggest that Darius’ resources and power are to be found only within his tractable and devious subjects as she successfully demonstrates the mutability and interchangeability of Asian monarchies. Of course Herodotus could simply be deploying a favourite motif of having kings admire the wisdom they receive, but clearly the significance of this exchange lies in its ability to present challenges,

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\textsuperscript{106} Hdt. 3.82 and 3.86-87. See also Carolyn Dewald and Rachel Kitzinger, ‘Herodotus, Sophocles and the Woman who Wanted her Brother Saved’ in Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola, eds., \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 124.

\textsuperscript{107} Dewald and Kitzinger, ‘Herodotus, Sophocles and the Woman’, p. 124. And see pp. 125-127 for Dewald and Kitzinger’s discussion of the similarity between the wife of Intaphrenes and Sophocles’ Antigone.


\textsuperscript{110} Dewald and Kitzinger, ‘Herodotus, Sophocles and the Woman’, p. 124.
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not only to Darius but also to Herodotus’ audience. Through the agency of Intaphrenes’ wife Herodotus can toy with the nature of power and the impotency of Darius’ absolutism.

Herodotus holds great importance with custom and he uses the actions of Intaphrenes’ wife to add weight to a central message of difference, one recognizable to his Athenian audience. Running through the Histories is a common motif of eastern luxury and the immorality of kings opposing Greek austerity and democracy, which I will deal with in greater detail in Chapter Three. Sufficient here to suggest that the eloquence of the noblewoman links her master to his past so that Herodotus can stress the corruptibility and weakness of the Persian nomos of monarchy - he flags the reason for Persian defeat at the hands of the Greeks. Yet in an even subtler premise, Herodotus is counterbalancing the impotency of Persian absolutism against the effectiveness of a newer, Athenian imperialism. However, while Herodotus has given this non-Greek woman direct speech in order to offset the narrative of the familiar and the unknown for the benefit of his audience, this is not her sole purpose.

Modern scholarship on the geographies and ethnographies in the Histories to a very great extent attests to the ability of the non-Greek to give weight to Herodotean core themes - such as masquerading as subtle warners of reckless ambition or, as in the case of Intaphrenes’ wife, signifying a mirror image in which the Greeks might ponder their own identity. I suggest that these contentions do not extend the notion far enough. Intaphrenes’ wife has far

112 On the other hand, the remarks of Intaphrenes’ wife are remarkably similar to those uttered by Antigone in Sophocles’ eponymous play, and while Intaphrenes’ wife is no Antigone, Sophocles’ choice of these words is insightful, as are Stephanie West’s remarks regarding intertextuality between the two works. West asserts that both playwright and historian perpetuate the stereotype of the Oriental autocrat, the royal megalomaniac whose life and those of his subjects turn on a whim: See Sophocles, ‘Antigone’ in Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O’Neill, Jr., eds., The Complete Greek Drama, Vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1938), 904-920, pp. 447-448. And Stephanie West, ‘Sophocles’ Antigone and Herodotus Book Three’ in Jasper Griffin, ed., Sophocles Revisited: Essays Presented to Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 112.
113 Hdt. 3.38.
greater use beyond underlining a simple central motif of the corruptibility of kings, or the covert identification of the strengths of democracy. As I will demonstrate, she can assume many forms, and thus neutralize Greek notions of proximity and distance.

Changing Shape and Form

When Herodotus endows Intaphrenes’ wife with powerful charisma she becomes a matrix. She develops into that which gives form and shape. Her speech, as quoted above and instilled with quasi-oracular properties, reflects the universal humanity of mankind and symbolizes its equality in abject suffering. The Greek enemy is portrayed as human. Darius, a barbarian no less, is empathetic and capable of pity.\textsuperscript{115} I argue that Herodotus is underscoring the notion that Greek and non-Greek alike are capable of sharing common ground and the wife of Intaphrenes is used to mitigate the differences between them. I contend that Herodotus demonstrates a profound discovery central to innate notions of humanity – that the self is present in the ‘other’ and the ‘other’ is present in the self - that they form an indissoluble unity.\textsuperscript{116} Herodotus defuses both centre and periphery as the Persian woman, who happens to be nameless, eases the disparity that he identifies as existing between the outsider and his central point, the Athenian audience. Greek and non-Greek have now assumed different forms as Herodotus re-assigns their roles to be no longer readily identifiable. My argument is supported by a story Herodotus later recounts to his audience that concerns Darius himself.


\textsuperscript{116} Stephen Greenblatt, \textit{Marvellous Possessions: The Wonders of the New World} (Chicago, Oxford: The University of Chicago Press and Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 127. Pelling also assumes this position and might argue that this sentiment comes as no surprise to Herodotus’ audience – ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They?’, pp. 53-66.
The Persian king is reported by Herodotus to have determined to invade Scythia in 513. This decision presents him with challenging problems. The Scythians engage in unorthodox tactics of warfare, best described as guerrilla interspersed with feinting strategies of friendship. They are unpredictable and their behaviour unreadable. Herodotus’ suggestion is that they use harassing tactics - from time to time leaving cattle behind to be tended by shepherds - which the Persians take and are much encouraged by their apparent but only momentary success. Darius never knows where his enemy is, and the Scythians, aware of his acute embarrassment take advantage of the situation. They send him their version of the tribute the Persians had requested of their own king, Idanthyrus.

In keeping with the great differences between the civilized and the barbarian Herodotus ensures that these will be no gifts of earth and water, but will comprise of a bird, a mouse, a frog and five arrows. The Persians find the message difficult to decipher. Darius felt it was an indication the Scythians expected to surrender, that these tokens were indeed a version of earth and water: ‘mice’, Herodotus tells us he reasoned, ‘live on the ground and eat the same food as men; frogs live in water; birds are much like horses; and the arrows symbolize Scythian power, which was being given into his hands’. Only an astute reading by the courtier Gobryas alerts Darius to his precarious position deep inside Scythian territory. And Gobryas’ interpretation? Something rather more menacing:

*ἐὶν μὴ ὀρνιθες γενόμενοι ἀναπτῆσθε ἐς τὸν οὐρανόν, ὦ Πέρσαι, ἢ μνὲς γενόμενοι κατὰ τῆς γῆς καταδύητε, ἢ βάτραχοι γενόμενοι ἐς τὰς λίμνας ἐσπηδήσητε, οὐκ ἀπονοστήσετε ὁπίσω ὕπο τῶν ἡπειρευμάτων βαλλόμενοι.*

118 Hdt. 4.130.
119 Hdt. 4.126.
120 Hdt. 4.127 and 4.131.
121 Hdt. 4.132.
122 Hdt. 4.132.
Unless you Persians turn into birds and fly up in the air, or into mice and burrow underground, or into frogs and jump into the lakes, you will never get home again, but will stay here in this country only to be shot by Scythian arrows.

Needless to say, Darius and his army decamp immediately.

Herodotus has earlier set up the very great contrast between barbaroi and Greek. He has his audience understand the Scythians have no history, no record of their past and no wonders to behold, either natural or man-made. In this regard they provide a unique set of opposites for the Greeks to consider and counterbalance the narrative of the known, but the Scythians also add plurality to a deceptively simple story. They leave other impressions on a Greek audience. As conquerors of Persia they are warriors par excellence and so bear similarities with the Athenians. Moreover, Scythian nomadism as an essential tactic of war reflects honourably on the Athenian decision to later make themselves inaccessible to Xerxes' attack, to abandon their city and send their families into refugee exile. Further, in delivering his audience a riddle concerning homage Herodotus cleverly entices them into momentarily making the same mistake as the Persian king. They too misread objects of threat and war as offerings of tribute and peace.

Lateiner argues that the ‘contrast of Greek and barbarian is the basic polarity and principal theme of the Histories’ but it is here contended, as with Hartog’s inference, that the gap between barbarian king and Athenian audience in this story is not as great as one expects. Herodotus can indulge in only one polarity at a time and so the Persian is moved closer to the known world to ensure the status of the Scythian remains as the outsider. I contend, as with the anecdote of Intaphrenes’ wife, that a distinct message of familiarity is alluded

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123 Lateiner, Historical Method of Herodotus, p. 156.
124 Lateiner, Historical Method of Herodotus, p. 157; Hartog, Mirror of Herodotus, pp. 49-57: Hartog is here referring to the difficulty the Persian army has in engaging the Scythian warriors in warfare – that they become ‘quasi-hoplites’ and thus Greeks. The same observation can be made with Darius and his misreading of the Scythian omens.
125 Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They?’, p. 51.
to between Darius, as a non-Greek, and Herodotus’ listeners. The latter are challenged when Herodotus has them occupy the same space as an enemy king. This is a place where they too are capable of committing an error of judgment, as is an ostensible barbarian. The equilibrium of centre and periphery becomes considerably reduced by their empathetic role. This literary ploy - this reversal of roles, this changing of shape however, is not reserved for those non-Greeks who happen to be Persian.

For example, in the first book of the *Histories* Herodotus includes the victories of the Persian king, Cyrus over the territories of Ionia, Caria, Lycia, Caunia and Babylon. It is the conquest of Lycia that concerns me here. He supplies a history of these people whose origins began on Crete and while their new territory of residence can hardly be described as distant, occupying as they did a common border with Ionia, Herodotus’ audience is nonetheless alerted to the fact that they practiced quite different tribal laws of legitimacy.126 Under Lycian custom, inheritance devolved from the matriarchal side of the family: ‘if a free woman has a child by a slave, the child is considered legitimate, but the children of a free man (no matter how distinguished he may be) and a foreign woman, have no citizen rights at all’.127 To an Athenian audience this would presumably be just another interesting observation, especially if Herodotus chose to include these remarks not long after Pericles carried a law restricting Athenian citizenship to persons born of two Athenian parents.128 However, Herodotus’ audience would be aware that Pericles lost his two legitimate sons in the plague that ravaged Athens during the first years of the Archidamean War and soon after, the Athenians were persuaded to allow him to enrol his son by his mistress as a citizen.129 With the memory of this dispensation fresh in their minds, the inclusion of the Lycian *nomos*, within a macro narrative on the life-

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126 Hdt. 1.173. Herodotus suggests the Lycians originated in Crete but were expelled and ended up in Milyan territory, which they now inhabited and which today is to be found on the extreme southwest regions of modern Turkey. For the exact location see Purvis, *Landmark Herodotus*, Map #1.173, p. 94. The Xanthus River separates Caria from Lycia.
127 Hdt. 1.173.
story of Cyrus leaves the Athenians cognizant of the fact that they were manipulated by Pericles to adopt foreign custom in order to further a personal cause.

I argue that this is a skilful prompt by Herodotus and one surely not lost on his audience. As he unfolds the story they are of course reminded of a central motif of looking to the end but the story delivers more. The Athenians understand the consequences of the Lycian stand against adoption of foreign customs that profit the individual - in their case they were the personal cause of Cyrus and, as dictated by the satrap Harpagus, annihilated. Herodotus is clever. This hidden message is one of acceptance. Unusual, outside, foreign, non-Greek customs are tolerable, and they can and should be adopted and adapted whenever circumstances necessitate.

The case studies I have used above demonstrate that non-Greeks in Herodotus’ world can assume many forms. They can be women or men, they can be noble or royal, they can be entire ethnic groups. What is important is that they are given actions within their stories to neutralize a world perceived as both distant and close. As with the nameless examined in Chapter One, Herodotus uses the outsider as a descriptive tool to emphasize one or several key points and to offset the narrative of the known. In doing so he challenges his audience. Created by notions of kinship and community and formed in direct contrast to ideas of remoteness and difference, this Greek world is significantly reduced by his treatment of the non-Greek. Ionian notions of equilibrium give form to the barbarian and by definition, a new shape to his Athenian audience. Why does he do this? I argue that in assigning new roles to both Greek and non-Greek, they become the locus of an all-defining, new core message. Herodotus adjusts his perspective in an explicit manoeuvre to enlighten his audience. Let me explain.

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130 Evans, Herodotus, Explorer of the Past, p. 94.
131 Hdt. 1.176.
A Clearer Focus

Herodotus devotes a great deal of his Book Four to the Scythians. Hartog suggests this was because they ‘never ceased to astonish the Greeks - they had routed the army of Darius and oddest of all, they were nomads, without houses, towns or ploughed fields’.132 But as distant as they may have been to Darius, and by definition Herodotus’ audience, their remoteness and wildness once again becomes significantly less when Herodotus compares them with people even further afield and with whom they trade. The Argippaei, the Issedones, the one-eyed men of Arimaspia and the even more fantastic griffins that inhabit the true ends of the earth represent the final frontiers of Herodotus’ world.133 Further, while obviously nomadic, the vast territory of Scythian habitation is seemingly divided into districts administered by governors and ruled by kings (overtures of Persian satrapy?) and in another story they appear as settled cultivators.134

Herodotus tells his audience that two Scythians, Scylas and Anacharsis, both came to grief for consorting with Greeks, for most Scythians were loathe to adopt foreign ways.135 Clearly the point is made that xenophobia and conservatism lie both within and without Herodotus’ world. Anacharsis is reported to be of royal blood, a great traveller and a man of knowledge who adopts Greek religion and is killed by his brother for his indiscretion. Years later, Scylas who is also of royal blood, a king no less, also becomes powerfully attracted to Greek ideas.136 For months on end he consorts with the Greeks in the Milesian settlement of the Borysthenites, adopting their clothing and religion, his association so habitual he takes as his second wife a woman from these people.137 Moreover, he wishes to be initiated into the mysteries of the Dionysian cult, a shameful thing in the eyes of the Scythians.138 These perceived indiscretions of

132 Hartog, Mirror of Herodotus, p. xxiii.
133 Hdt. 4.24-29.
134 Hdt. 4.59, 66, 68, 71 and 126 for the organization of their territory and Hdt. 4.5-7 for cultivation customs.
135 Hdt. 4.76-80.
136 Hdt. 4.78.
137 For the location of these people see Purvis, Landmark Herodotus, Map #4.81, p. 316. Borysthenites is also known as Olbia and is located on the northern edges of the Black Sea. Scylas’ mother was reputedly from Histria (Istria), a little further south – see Hdt. 4.78.
138 Hdt. 4.79.
Scylas are too great and his adoption of the Greek god becomes his final undoing. His brother beheads him.\textsuperscript{139}

Why does Herodotus include these two strange tales of barbarian association with Greek culture, both ending in disaster for the proponents? Hartog suggests that by pointing up both similarities and difference between Greek and non-Greek Herodotus successfully ‘holds a mirror up to the Greeks themselves’.\textsuperscript{140} Certainly there is the implication of the importance of maintaining one’s customs and the very great danger in travelling between cultures, but this is too simplistic. There is more to be observed here.

To begin with, Herodotus vacillates. He demonstrates that the consequences of adopting foreign customs may be dire, but on the other hand, it is still eminently possible for non-Greeks to associate with Greeks and adopt their alien ways. Having established the closeness of the Scythians to his own people, Herodotus, as with the dissembled Persian wife, Darius’ misreading of portents and the example of the Lycians, again sets out to challenge his audience.

Rather than non-Greek descriptions being a matter of Greek self-definition Herodotus presents them as ‘the wonder of the different’.\textsuperscript{141} He expects his audience to be interested in the new and peculiar as he attempts to increase their understanding of how all human behaviour is moulded by culture and environment - and he has the story embrace his central theme of the undeniable consequence of fate.\textsuperscript{142} He acknowledges that the actions of the two Scythians may be unacceptable to their own people and the way of the Greeks offensive, but he also concedes that culture, environment and inexorable providence are nonexclusive. Both Scylas and Anacharsis suffer for their desire to embrace the Greek lifestyle but by recounting the tale and bringing two barbarians in from the edges of the world, so to speak, Herodotus encourages his audience to reflect on the difficulties of reading the cultural beliefs of others.\textsuperscript{143} Pelling perceptively suggests Herodotus is not just talking about his ‘Greek

\textsuperscript{139} Hdt. 4.80.
\textsuperscript{140} Hartog, \textit{Mirror of Herodotus}, p. xxiii.
\textsuperscript{141} Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They?’, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{142} Rood, ‘Herodotus and foreign lands’, p. 304.
\textsuperscript{143} Rood, \textit{ibid}. 
screen’ he is using it.\textsuperscript{144} After all, Herodotus has Anacharsis report that the Spartans were the only Greeks one could speak to and sustain a decent conversation with, and while Herodotus clearly refutes the validity of this part of the story he nonetheless links Scythian with Spartan.\textsuperscript{145} The ‘other’ is beginning to be surprisingly familiar and the ‘Greek screen’ remarkably threadbare.\textsuperscript{146}

I argue that Herodotus underlines the fundamental importance of custom in human society and then changes direction and perspective for his audience.\textsuperscript{147} He moves them from their customary chauvinistic traits and acquaints them with the xenophobic tendencies of all people, especially those occupying a greater outside world. I contend that he imparts his understanding of the importance of all conventions be they those of his world or of the ‘other’, and he confronts the Athenians with a universal conundrum – the very great difficulty of any one people to read with certainty another’s set of cultural assumptions. He emphasizes a continual theme of destiny, but he again demonstrates a profound ability to make use of the abstract to make his point, and he again calls into question the place of the Greeks within their known world and inquires into the space they believe they inhabit. As I demonstrate below, he does this in his Egyptian ethnography.

Only the Ethiopians match the Egyptians in their ability to be genuinely non-Greek, and they both are directly referred to in Herodotus’ recall of the Cambysean campaigns against each of these peoples. We know Cambyses’ intentions were successful against Egypt but resulted in failure against Ethiopia, and Herodotus uses these ethnographic struggles as preliminary observations to his central theme of conflict between east and west.\textsuperscript{148} Thus he demonstrates their significance in a constant ‘warning’ message – if Persians can fail perhaps

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\textsuperscript{144} Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They?’, p. 53. Pelling is referring to the Greek ‘screen’ of conceptualization of the ‘Other’ in terms of their difference, and suggests that Herodotus understands the ‘other’ and ‘self’ form an indissoluble unity - thus he does not talk about a Greek screen, he uses it.
\textsuperscript{145} Hdt. 4.77.
\textsuperscript{146} Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or are They?’. pp. 53-55.
\textsuperscript{147} Hdt. 3.38.
\textsuperscript{148} Lateiner, Historical Method of Herodotus, p. 147.
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so too can the Athenians. Lateiner is not alone when he suggests the principal method employed in Herodotus’ ethnological investigations is polarity, that the new and different help explain the old and familiar, and my exploration into Herodotus’ Egyptian discourse does not resile from these observations.149 I simply propose that they do not go far enough. Herodotus’ inquiry into the Egyptians offers his audience something more. He adjusts his own perspective and invites them to follow suit. Let me demonstrate.

Herodotus was much impressed by the Egyptians. He devotes an entire book to them: they were second only to the Phrygians as the oldest in antiquity, their methods of astrology were superior to that of the Greeks, the Nile ensured ease of harvest and lack of famine and reflected the great Danube in the north.150 The Egyptians civilized the Ethiopians.151 The country contained remarkable things - more monuments than any other - so amazing they belied description.152 The Egyptians originated and taught the Greeks to use ceremonial meetings, processions and processional offerings.153 They were the first to make it an offence against piety to have intercourse with women in temples, or to enter temples after intercourse without previously washing.154 To Herodotus’ knowledge cultivated Egyptians were by far the most learned of any nation and second only to the Libyans in good health.155 They were the first to assign months and days to deities and to foretell a man’s fortunes by the date of his birth.156 Herodotus particularly admired an early form of census established by Amasis

149 Lateiner, Historical Method of Herodotus, pp. 147-148. Marincola concurs and states that Herodotus uses the very great differences he sees between the Egyptians (and other ethnologies) and the Greeks ‘to help the latter define their own character and notion of themselves – see his Introduction to Hdt., p. xv.
150 For Egyptian antiquity, see Hdt. 2.2; for their superior astrology see Hdt. 2.4; for the Nile’s great abilities see Hdt. 2.13-14.
151 Hdt. 2.30.
152 Hdt. 2.35 and 2.148-150, 2.155-156 and 2.175-176.
153 Hdt. 2.58.
154 Hdt. 2.64.
155 Hdt. 2.77.
156 Hdt. 2.82.
and which Solon is reputed to have borrowed. It can clearly be safely presumed that a certain Greek familiarity with all things Egyptian existed.

Moreover, Egypt was a great source of some things Greek. Her unparalleled temporal knowledge allowed Herodotus to develop his own scale of earthly time, leading him to owe them a particular personal debt in regard to preparation for his own inquiry into the human past, the Histories themselves. And speaking of debt, Herodotus is quite clear about the obligation Greeks owe the Egyptians in regard to their religion. The priests of Hephaestus at Memphis apparently told him the Egyptians were the first to bring into use the names of the twelve gods, which the Greeks then appropriated. Further, both countries shared common rituals for the festival of Dionysus, and the mysterious rites afforded Demeter were the same as those of the Greek Thesmophoria. Herodotus references the many customs that are so markedly different purely because of their foreignness, but also recounts for his audience the great many similarities. Like the Greeks the Egyptians are civilized; like the Greeks (and Scythians) they are reluctant to adopt customs from abroad. The respect that Herodotus obviously harbours towards the Egyptians demonstrates a familiarity and similarity between the two countries that lessens their diversity. Any opposition becomes surmountable. Gould suggests that Herodotus’ study of Egypt gives form to Egyptian culture and therefore perspective to the Greek.

157 Hdt. 2.177.
158 Herodotus tells us that during the reign of Cambyses a great many Greeks visited Egypt for one reason or another: to trade, be employed as mercenaries, or for simple curiosity – see Hdt. 3.139. For modern scholarship on the subject see Evans, Herodotus, Explorer of the Past – he suggests that ‘a thin but steady stream of reportage about Egypt (and the Orient’ made its way to Greece, and though much of it may have been garbled, Herodotus did not present his logoi in a vacuum’ -p. 43; For the Orient and the contact of Greeks with Persians see Margaret Miller, Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 29-133 but especially pp. 105-108; Also pertinent is John Marincola, ‘Herodotean Narrative and the Narrator’s Presence’, Arethusa, 20 (1987), p. 123.
159 Evans, Herodotus, Explorer of the Past: Three Essays, p. 141.
160 Hdt. 2.11. See also Lateiner, Historical Method of Herodotus, p. 150.
161 Hdt. 2.4 and also Marincola’s footnote to this text, #6, p.636. For reference to Demeter and the Thesmophoria see Hdt. 2.48-51.
162 See Hdt. 2.48-51 for the festival of Dionysus and Hdt. 2.171 for similarities between the rites of Demeter and the Thesmophoria.
163 Hdt. 2.35-37.
164 Hdt. 2.79.
165 Gould, Herodotus, p. 97. These are observations made prior to those of Lateiner and Marincola referred to in the first paragraph of this sub-chapter.
True. Herodotus masterfully highlights Greek provincialism by highlighting their failure to see Egypt as any larger than the Delta, and of that, only the part to which they sail, and he deftly exposes Greek ignorance of the nature and customs of the country. But in fact, by offering the Egyptians in equal measure as peculiar and appealing, Herodotus implies much more.

I argue that Herodotus is reversing, if you will, the notion of non-Greek for his audience. Not in quite the same way as he did with the Scythians, Anacharsis and Scylas, but rather to emphasize that to be Greek can also be seen as wanting. The strange and the exotic are to be pursued, the different becomes the covetable, the unfamiliar the desired. Herodotus does this earlier in his Histories when he considers the customs of the Babylonians. He takes the position that their best custom is that of their marriage traditions and the second best their treatment of disease. I contend that Herodotus’ Egyptian ethnographies at once offer his Greek audience constructive criticism. Again, he assigns both outsider and audience entirely new functions within a story ostensibly designed to explain the old and familiar. He asks the Athenians to amend their points of view and determines for them that Greek traditions and rituals may not always be the best or the most desirable to preserve or adopt. Difficulties may arise in reading the cultural beliefs of others, but the wonder of the ‘different’ is all encompassing. My argument is supported by Herodotus’ convoluted story concerning the Greek colony of Cyrene - situated in a non-Greek land.

Different texts scattered throughout the Histories illustrate Herodotus’ use of Cyrene as a model demonstrating the qualities of amalgamation. The colony is a mixture of at least four different ethnicities - Greek, Egyptian, Libyan and Scythian, and Herodotus gives his listeners an ancient kindred history

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166 Hdt. 2.5, 2.6, 2.15 and 2.45.
167 Hdt. 1.196-197.
168 Pelling, ‘East is East and West is West – Or Are They?’, p. 54.
169 Cyrene first appears in the Histories in Herodotus’ digression on the source and course of the Nile and the acquaintance of a people known as the Nasamonians with a pygmy tribe deep within Africa – see Hdt. 2.31-32. For the location of the Nasamonians see Purvis, Landmark Herodotus, Map #2.31, p. 131. These people inhabited territory around the Gulf of Syrtis, west of the Greek settlement of Cyrene and were therefore clearly known to the Cyrenians. The distance between the Gulf of Syrtis and the most remote parts of Africa must have provided a profound polarity for Herodotus’ audience.
lesson. Using information at his disposal he reconstructs the past so that it appears more detailed and coherent.\textsuperscript{170}

- Greek: the ancestors of Cyrene’s founders were descendants of Jason’s companions who sailed to Colchis.\textsuperscript{171}
- Egyptian: Colchis was originally an Egyptian city on the eastern shore of the Black Sea.\textsuperscript{172}
- Libyan: Jason himself was said to have been carried off course to Libya.\textsuperscript{173}
- Scythian: The third generation of the Argonauts who settled on the island of Lemnos were expelled by the Pelasgians who later abducted Athenian women from Brauron.\textsuperscript{174} This is where the cult of Artemis-Iphigenia was practiced and is the same cult as that of the Taurians in the Crimea.\textsuperscript{175}

The instruction continues. Herodotus tells his audience that Pharaoh Amasis concluded an alliance with Cyrene, but unlike his fellow Egyptians or the Scythians, who reputedly eschew all things Greek, takes as a token of goodwill a Greek woman as his wife.\textsuperscript{176}

In a wonderful illustration of things going awry in a Greek/non-Greek consortium, Herodotus tells his listeners the marriage was unconsummated. The husband suspects his new Cyrenean/Greek wife of witchcraft and a miserable death will be her only escape. A secret vow to Aphrodite by Ladice, the Greek bride, pleading for a reversal of the situation and promising the presentation of a

\textsuperscript{171} Hdt. 7.193.
\textsuperscript{172} Hdt. 2.104.
\textsuperscript{173} Hdt. 4.179.
\textsuperscript{174} Hdt. 4.145, 6.138. In Hdt. 1.57 we are told the Athenians, being Pelasgian, changed their language when they were absorbed into the Greek family of nations. If this is the case, over the years Greeks from Attica expelled other Greeks occupying the island of Lemnos and abducted back their own Attic women.
\textsuperscript{175} Hdt. 4.99-103. Herodotus says the Tauri are a Scythian tribe who inhabit a promontory in the Black Sea – see Purvis, \textit{Landmark Herodotus}, Map #4.110, p. 325.
\textsuperscript{176} Hdt. 2.181.
statue of said goddess to the temple in Cyrene, sets things to right, and the Egyptian Amasis comes to love his wife deeply.

I contend that Herodotus uses the Cyreneans, as Greeks dwelling on a barbarian edge, to act as a conundrum for his audience – they are Greek, yet one of them marries an Egyptian. He is a pharaoh yet they pay tribute to a Persian king. Herodotus ignores his most basic principle theme of polarity between Greek and non-Greek and attempts to uncover the universal in the particular. The Greek Ladice makes libations to a Greek goddess for deliverance from the wrath of an Egyptian husband. The Greek goddess obliges, the Egyptian husband is rewarded, and there is a happy end. Herodotus portrays the Cyreneans as a collective inhabiting a specific, balancing on the edge of the known world. As with the world of Scylas and Anacharsis, and that of the Egyptians, this is a recognizable and familiar place that significantly neutralizes the curious and peculiar, and a space I argue, that is remarkably close to Herodotus himself – as I now demonstrate.

To the ends of the World

The advice of the Delphic Oracle to the Athenians in 480 on the eve of battle with Persia appears alarming to say the least. When the Pythia engaged in metaphor and told the envoys they were doomed and should ‘fly to the world’s end’, panic was the prevailing reaction. Made of sterner stuff the suppliants sought a second prophecy that proved less menacing to the Athenians. The ends of the world would have corresponded to Ethiopia in the southwest, Arabia in the south and India far to the east. Very great distances indeed, but I argue that Herodotus does not share the purported apprehension of the Athenians. He may

177 Hdt. ibid.
178 Hdt. 3.91.
179 Marincola, Greek Historians, p. 52.
180 Hdt. 7.140.
181 Hdt. 2.29-30, 3.98 and 3.107.
see things from an Athenian point of view but the ends of the world, while amazing him, do not necessarily alarm him. Let me explain.

Far to the south of Athens, the southern Ethiopians impress him.\textsuperscript{182} Way to the east in India he accepts all surprises on offer - the wild animals, except horses, are bigger and, as with Ethiopia, quantities of gold abound and strange trees bear wool finer than that of any sheep.\textsuperscript{183} South is Arabia, also blessed, but this time with wonderful perfumes and spices that are gathered in astonishing ways.\textsuperscript{184} There are flying snakes, bat-like creatures that attack the eyes of men, and great birds that make their nests out of cinnamon sticks. Perhaps most notable are the strange sheep with long tails whose shepherds construct carts in which the animals transport their extreme appendages.\textsuperscript{185} None of this causes Herodotus any anxiety, just wonder. He is not frightened by the possibility of one-eyed men. In fact he refuses to believe that story holds true.\textsuperscript{186}

Building on Purves’ scholarship that suggests ‘Herodotean wonders typically appear in the ethnographical sections of the Histories and can be described as pauses’, I propose that they do so and can be for a reason.\textsuperscript{187} Herodotus appears more than ready to accept the notion that countries on the circumference of his inhabited world produce those things to be not only the most peculiar, but also the most attractive. In a speech Herodotus may well have heard, Thucydides has Pericles suggest that Greeks do not follow the customs of their neighbours. Rather they constitute as an example to the outsider, not the reverse.\textsuperscript{188} While Pericles is here referring to the tradition of democracy his stance is understood to be the prevailing attitude of the Athenians – and it is, according to Herodotus, also the established position of Egyptians and Scythians.

\textsuperscript{182} Herodotus says the southern Ethiopians consider bronze their most precious metal, see Hdt. 3.23; they possess gold in abundance, see Hdt. 3.114; great elephants, see Hdt. 3.97 and 3.114, and they are the tallest men in the world, the most handsome and the longest-lived – see Hdt. 3.17, 3.20 and 3.23; their king is smart and a ready foil to Cambyses’ ill-conceived notions of invasion.
\textsuperscript{183} Hdt. 3.98 and 3.106.
\textsuperscript{184} Hdt. 3.107.
\textsuperscript{185} Hdt. 3.111 and 3.113.
\textsuperscript{186} Hdt. 3.116.
\textsuperscript{187} Purves, Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative, p. 143.
I argue however, that it is not the opinion of Herodotus. Herodotus was an aristocrat and reflected aristocratic views but he was not Pericles’ man.\textsuperscript{189} Herodotus mingled with the Athenian right and therefore the Alkmaeonid, which Pericles did not. Only one short generation after Herodotus’ death Xenophon will suggest that where the Greeks tended to use their own manner of speech, lifestyle and dress, the Athenians used a mixture from all Greeks – \textit{and barbarians}.\textsuperscript{190} I suggest that were I to consider Xenophon’s observations reasonable, Herodotus’ audience must have finally attained the same progressiveness I have attached to him. His methods of persuasion employed throughout his stories concerning outsiders should be regarded as successful in the extreme. That History of course records a somewhat different outcome is self-evident. Nonetheless, the treatment that Herodotus assigns the outsider manifests in empathetic approval and remarkable acceptability, a reversal of the traditional function of the non-Greek and, I offer, evidence of Herodotus’ innate liberalism.

Conclusions

Herodotus’ acceptance of the outsider is clearly evident in his recognition that the traditions of one culture should not to be used as the basis for dismissing those of another.\textsuperscript{191} This he demonstrates in his refusal to discuss the religious traditions of Egypt.\textsuperscript{192} Throughout his \textit{Histories} Herodotus shows transparent unwillingness to demonize Greek opponents. Instead he readily ‘represents them as multifaceted individuals with both admirable and repellent characteristics’.\textsuperscript{193} Such partiality of course serves to reinforce later charges of ‘barbarophile’ as throughout his work there is a ‘constant stream of criticism of Greek ways and

\textsuperscript{189} William George Grieve Forrest, ‘Herodotos and Athens’, \textit{Phoenix}, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 1984), pp. 3-4. Forrest suggests that Herodotus felt Pericles was not a man to be tangled with and that his mother was an Alkmaeonid but his father was not – see especially pp. 4 and 10.


\textsuperscript{191} Gould, \textit{Herodotus}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{192} Hdt. 2.3.

\textsuperscript{193} Marincola, \textit{Greek Historians}, p. 53.
institutions’. Nonetheless Herodotus’ innate flexibility allows his outsider to communicate an entirely new message than that of simple caution or illustration that Gould or Lateiner might suggest.

For example, as referenced earlier, Lateiner posits that a principle theme and basic polarity in the Histories is the contrast between Greek and non-Greek yet Herodotus’ treatment of difference and divergence is decidedly compliant. In part of course this stems from the fact that his primary task is to present the non-Greek world in terms his audience can understand, and thus the world of the strange and exotic counterbalances that of the known and familiar. Yet, as I have demonstrated Herodotus imbues the undesirable with specific shape, his quite apparent open-mindedness neutralizing notions of both proximity and distance, of both centre and periphery. His borders and hub are decidedly indistinct and unclear. His liberalism, I suspect, stems in part from his Ionian roots and that as a consequence he is relatively free of overt chauvinism detectable in other parts of Greece, and from the repressiveness of many Dorian social institutions.

Other scholars suggest Herodotus’ treatment of the outsider reflects a moralistic approach on his part – that he condemns the restless ambition of the Athenians in their pursuit of empire and denounces the resultant outbreak of the Archidamean War; or, equally, that the ‘others’ he cites had once united in different ways with Greece against the barbarian of the Persian Wars and that this unity and accord is now under threat. Certainly his speech locating Greek

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194 Marincola, ibid. Also, Jonathan Hall, Hellenicity, pp. 180-182.
196 Walter Robert Connor, ‘The Ionian Era of Athenian Civic Identity’, Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 137, No. 2 (June, 1993), p. 200. Connor goes on to note that the Ionians were open to outside influences and more than any other Greeks were in contact with other peoples of the ancient Mediterranean world.
197 For scholarship detailing Herodotus’ position on Athenian imperialism see: Marincola, Greek Historians, especially pp. 24-25 and relevant footnote #23. Marincola is of the opinion that Herodotus’ work was composed between the 450s and 420s; a time coinciding with open hostility between Athens and Sparta and thus the early years of the Peloponnesian War must have had a formative influence on Herodotus. Kurt Raaflaub’s erudite essay, ‘Herodotus, Political Thought, and the Meaning of History’, Arthusa 20 (1987), pp. 221-248 is of particular interest, especially his observation that Herodotus has ‘imperialism shed its cloak of justification and appear in undisguised form – a purpose unto itself’, p. 244; Moles, ‘Herodotus Warns the Athenians’, pp. 259-284 is particularly useful. Also of interest is Pelling’s questioning of the argument that Herodotus implies moralistic overtones in his work and attempts to teach his audience to learn from experience; Pelling contends that wisdom is elusive, one needs to know
brotherhood might attest to this. Yet he understands that the Scythians and Ethiopians represent the limits of aggression and expansion of the Persians - giving him notice that all things are finite.

These pluralities in his discourse regarding the outsider are all acceptable considerations, and I do not resile from any of them. My argument is precisely that they demonstrate his changing perspective, that they disclose an entirely separate meaning for the non-Greek in his world - one of accommodation and adjustment. Non-Greeks are no longer remote. In fact they appear nearer than ever. Herodotus may consider them the quintessential ‘other’ in terms of their polarity to his audience but he nonetheless portrays them as recognizable and negotiable.

I have demonstrated that Herodotus’ outsider offers in equal measure peculiarity and appeal: an inconsolable non-Greek wife offers a powerful message of equality in abject suffering, along with the profound knowledge that Greeks and non-Greeks reside in each other; a great king of Persia is as capable and culpable of error as a lowborn Athenian; two noble Scythians can enunciate that the universality of human behaviour is moulded by culture, environment and inescapable fate; Egyptian difference highlights Greek provincialism and prefaces self-criticism; a Greek city in a foreign land becomes a microcosm of a larger world familiar and at ease with the strange and exotic. To greater and lesser degrees they emphasize Herodotus’ core messages and motifs and counterbalance his narrative of the known and familiar, but overall, Herodotus’ non-Greek outsider demonstrates that notions of distance and proximity can be rendered ineffective.

I argue that the non-Greeks in Herodotus’ Histories carry great value as essential components of the ‘spatial’ strategies he engages within his storytelling.

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198 Hdt. 8.144.
200 Hartog, Mirror of Herodotus, p. 14. Hartog writes explicitly of Scythia and observes that the wildness of that region becomes relatively less for Herodotus as other areas become more so. See also Hdt. 4.25 for the region beyond the Argippaei for which no man can give an accurate account and where men are reputed to sleep for six months of the year.
They become his indispensable messengers of the familiar and rather than manifestations of apprehension or oddity they are assigned new positions as agents of neutralization. Herodotus moves them from the peripheries of his world to inner central points within his stories, and their very great attraction reflects and highlights his personal predisposition to acceptance and tolerance - decidedly different attitudes, we are led to believe, than are present within his audience.  

201 Hdt. 8.143 and 8.144.
Chapter Three

Matters of Principle
Chapter Three

- Matters of Principle

The previous two chapters have demonstrated how Herodotus employs strategies of space within his storytelling to add importance to his various motifs and messages: that the nameless in the Histories, necessarily cast in minor roles by their anonymity, can be considered competent literary devices as much as those who are named, that quasi-oracular skills add to their influence and that the concept of namelessness is developed by Herodotus as an essential tool of literary inquiry. Further, the non-Greek, abiding literally on the edges of Herodotus’ world, carries great value in his many forms and in his role as indispensable messenger of the familiar and agent of neutralization. This chapter builds on the above but concentrates on the world of morality in Herodotus’ Histories and examines the role of the transgressor abiding therein. For the purposes of this argument, ‘centre’ will manifest in moderation, and ‘periphery’ in excess. Here I specifically investigate those people whose behaviour I argue, dictates that they reside on the margins of this world of ethics but who nonetheless are central and elaborate characters within their stories. I demonstrate that their use, as models upon which Herodotus explains core morality themes, offsets Herodotean narratives of principled behaviour and adds significantly to his ‘spatial’ strategies of storytelling.

I suggest that very early in his Histories Herodotus illustrates notions of Greek morality for his audience. For instance, in his story concerning Solon and Croesus he highlights the balance between luxury and austerity, and the uncertainty of human life pitted against unpredictability - as served up by the gods. Herodotus will use this theme time and again, either to render judgment himself or to encourage his audience to do so – it becomes his central premise in Solon’s advice to the Lydian king to look to the end before passing judgment on a man’s life well lived – that the gods would offer a glimpse of human happiness
but then tender ruin. I offer further however that rather subtler in the story is Herodotus’ tacit hint that those aware of the equilibrium between mortal uncertainty and divine unpredictability, the centre as defined above, are finely balanced against those who are not, the periphery, and it quickly becomes obvious that these individuals are often the rich or powerful. Thus, in an obvious reversal of the undisclosed abiding in the margins of his stories, Herodotus sees transgression of principled behaviour to be onerous enough to warrant disclosure of the perpetrator. While he marginalizes his moral judgment and preserves it and the discretion itself in secondary form within his narrative, the ‘guilty parties’ so to speak, are easily recognized. Herodotus names them. They are great kings and queens, or advisors, courtiers or generals, or even entire city-states and ethnic groups. The audience is rarely left in doubt as to their identification, and, as I demonstrate, they are of fundamental importance to the development of Herodotean core themes of probity. In the first examples chosen to augment my argument Ionian notions of equilibrium – of self-indulgence and restraint – are emphasized but messages of even greater importance are delivered. Actions appear to speak louder than words but they ultimately hide the deeper characteristics of *hybris* and *nemesis*. For example:

**Crossing the Line**

Herodotus begins his *Histories* with the stories of Croesus of the Lydians. This king is the first man he understands to have committed unrighteous acts against the Greeks, to be guilty of aggressive expansion. Herodotus reverts to traditional tragic patterns of history to explain, in terms wholly acceptable and familiar to his listening audience, how blame for the much later invasion of Greece by Xerxes should be apportioned. He gives as the ancient reason for Croesus’ fall from grace, a crossing of the line of principled behaviour by an

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202 Hdt. 1.30-32.
203 Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, p. 309.
ancestor, Candaules who resolved to display his naked wife to a servant. From here a chain of cause and effect leads to Croesus’ final atonement of his ancient relative’s indiscretion. Crossing lines of acceptable behaviour and indeed natural barriers, are important Herodotean motifs and Croesus is given two to contend with – the abovementioned of his ancient ancestor Candaules, and his own crossing of the river Halys to invade Persia. The context of ‘limit’ is a major concern in Herodotus’ notions of morality, and the act of crossing water almost always represents *hybris* the dishonouring aggression committed by men who overstretch natural borders imposed by gods.

Croesus is not alone. Other kings transgress and cross other lines. Cyrus, considering himself superhuman and insuperable, crosses the Araxes to wage war on Tomyris of the Massagetae. This action immediately flags for Herodotus’ audience the possibility of *hybris* attracting *nemesis* – here there is the counterbalance of excessive aggression against a small nomadic tribe, and the prospect of very real retribution. It happens. Cyrus ends up with his head in a basket. His son, Cambyses also exhibits the same disposition. He also desires to invade, not the Massagetae, but the land of Egypt – and as if to stress the occasion, Herodotus cites two different versions for the decision, one Persian and the other Egyptian. As with his father before him, Cambyses crosses a natural barrier – this time not a river but a desert, and Herodotus is not long in making the first signs of deterioration in the king’s character apparent.

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204 Hdt. 1.8-13 for the story of Candaules and Hdt. 7.138 for the purpose of Xerxes’ expedition into Europe. James Evans suggests Herodotus shared the Greek attraction of tragic patterns of history – see Herodotus, Explorer of the Past, pp. 32-33.

205 Hdt. 1.75. See also Marincola’s explanatory note on p. 629 relating to his footnote #35.

206 Hdt. 1.204-214 and see Purvis, Landmark Herodotus, Map #1.199, p. 108 and Map #2.204, p. 110 for the location of the Massagetae.

207 Hdt. 3.1-3. The Persian version carries back to Cyrus who requests an eye doctor of the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis. This doctor later maliciously advises Cambyses to have Amasis send him his daughter. Amasis resorts to trickery and sends Nitetis, the daughter of Apries whom he earlier overthrew – thus the Persians might interpret Cambyses’ decision as a war of revenge rather than of conquest. The Egyptian version has Cambyses as the son of an Egyptian woman, again named Nitetis. In this version Cyrus asks for Amasis’ daughter and receives the daughter of Apries instead. This latter version Herodotus rejects.
Cambyses, as alluded to in Chapter One, is depicted by Herodotus as a foil to the good sense and moderation of the anonymous king of Ethiopia. His actions (understood to mean compulsion), arising from the connotations of madness I argue, are highlighted by Herodotus to give his audience cause for reflection, to cast doubt upon their own state of morality. Cambyses’ behaviour breaches appropriate limits and once more Herodotus signifies the precedents that are set to illustrate punishment of overly aggressive behaviour. A later Persian king, Darius, not only crosses the greatest boundary of all, the Hellespont separating Europe from Asia, but also bridges it. He was rewarded with defeat in the battle of Marathon. But it is Xerxes’ conduct that Herodotus recounts as outstripping all. In these stories, the same notions so fundamental to Herodotus’ political and moral thought - of the natural boundaries between land and sea - are again cited. Like Darius before him, Xerxes again tackles the greatest natural boundary available, and as a side measure, causes a canal to be built at Athos to facilitate movement of materiel and troops. Obviously he oversteps natural geographic limits and must fall victim to his own hybris and, interestingly, it is he who designates his great general Mardonius to give retribution for the death of the hero of Thermopylae.

It is not only kings who cross barriers and tempt gods, who commit hybris that ends in nemesis. Herodotus recounts for his audience the story of the Cnidians who occupied a peninsula in the Ceramic gulf and who began to dig through the narrow neck with the intention of turning their territory into an

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208 Hdt. 3.33 for Herodotus’ explicit statement on the condition of Cambyses’ mind. See also Alan Griffiths suggestion that ancient texts are often not closed and final, but rather should be considered as starting points for reflection, for work which the original audience, and later the reader, are required to complete - see his ‘Kissing Cousins’, especially pp. 173ff. All translations of Greek to English are gathered from James Morwood and John Taylor, eds., the Pocket Oxford Classical Greek Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

209 Moles, Herodotus Warns the Athenians, p. 261.

210 Hdt. 7.33-37. Clearly however, some tampering with nature is acceptable – Herodotus writes in 2.99 of the dam constructed by Pharaoh Min, which diverts the Nile; in 2.101 and 2.149 of the artificial lake built by Pharaoh Moeris; in 2.108 of the numerous Egyptian dykes, which divide the country; in 2.158 of the canal built by Pharaoh Necos, which is four day’s journey in length; and in 3.60 of the tunnel built by Eupalinus on Samos through which water feeds the town and of the artificial harbour enclosed by a breakwater. All these human creations are built to improve the lot of man. Raaflaub, in Herodotus, Political Thought, and the Meaning of History specifically cites Croesus’ crossing of the Halys, Cyrus’ crossing of the Araxes, Cambyses’ crossing of the desert and Darius’ crossing of the Hellespont, pp. 242-243.

211 Hdt. 8.114 and Hdt. 9.64.
island in order to escape inevitable conquest by the Persian general Harpagus. Their plan is of course to no avail. Splinters of stone, more often than not impeding vision, hurt the labourers carrying out the work and explanation is sought from the gods:

\[ \text{ίσθμόν δὲ μὴ πυργοῦτε μηδὲ ὄροσσετε:} \]
\[ \text{Ζεὺς γὰρ κ᾽ ἔθηκε νῆσον, εἰ κ᾽ ἐβουλεύτο.} \]

Do not fence off the isthmus, do not dig. Zeus would have made an island, had he willed it.

The divine is directly implicated in this story to emphasize Herodotus' key message of the dangers of crossing god-set limits, but it is not just breached natural borders that indicate transgression and *hybris*. Boundaries are also crossed and gods also invoked when revenge is exacted with excess.

Pheretima, the Battiad queen of Cyrene shows no mercy to the people of Barca for killing her son Arcesilaus when the Persians deliver them into her hands. Due retribution however is dispensed with according to Herodotus, because ‘all excess in revenge draws down upon men the anger of the gods’ – she is consumed by worms. However, if justice is fair, the anger of the gods is not conjured up. The settling of scores by the slave eunuch Hermotimus of Chios is deemed reasonable – he has his emasculator punished in the same way he suffered, but this time the slaver’s four sons administer the injury by force and he is then obliged to mete out the same punishment on his children.

Herodotus also implies that excessive luxury is a crossed line that leads to retribution. His concluding story of the *Histories* is suggestive of morality when he has Cyrus warn that soft lands breed soft men, that good warriors do not arise

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212 Hdt. 1.174.
213 Hdt. 1.174.
215 Hdt. 4.205.
216 Hdt. 8.104-107. Herodotus suggests that he knows no other case where a man takes a more fearful revenge for injury than this one.
out of rich soil.\textsuperscript{217} This tale and his earlier use of Themistocles, that clever and most morally ambiguous of all his Greek characters, to describe Greek victory over Xerxes serve to remind the Athenians of imperial limits dangerously close to compromise.\textsuperscript{218} Themistocles explains victory in terms of Persian imperialist aggression and enemy scorn, but Herodotus subtly and simultaneously hints that such moral and political contrasts are as likely to change as human prosperity that never stays long in the same place.\textsuperscript{219} At first glance Themistocles’ speech appears to be a paean to Greek pride but it is also serves as a warning to the victor – imperial aggression is made all the more conspicuous as the ultimate transgressor in Herodotus’ eyes.\textsuperscript{220}

The transgressors in these case studies are employed by Herodotus to identify key messages of morality and emphasize motifs that recall the dangers inherent in crossing god-set limits, and the inevitable results of hubris and nemesis. But, as I now demonstrate the wrongdoer, whether depicted as an individual or as a collective, has other tasks as a literary tool in Herodotus’ ‘spatial’ strategies of storytelling. He offsets Herodotus’ morality narrative and provides a pattern upon which notions of excess and moderation are explained.

**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

When Herodotus recounts his stories concerning Croesus he creates just the sort of template of moderation and excess Herodotus’ audience expects. The king’s actions in invading Ionian Greece and demanding tribute is considered by Herodotus to be an act of excess and when he later reconstructs the story of Persian expansion into Europe, the same implication – that a transgressor is to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{217} Hdt. 9.122.
\textsuperscript{219} Hdt. 1.5.
\textsuperscript{220} Evans, James Stewart Allan, *Herodotus, Explorer of the Past*, p. 63.
\end{footnotesize}
blame for aggression – is again applied. As a model it is entirely familiar to an Athenian as it mirrors notions presented in both theatre and the law courts’.  

In Herodotus’ story of Cyrus and Tomyris, Ionian ideas of the nature of imbalance are brought out. The latter’s people and territories are remote, small in number and obviously led by a woman. An omnipresent king, ruling over vast territories and capable of mustering a huge army represents the former. Here Herodotus has a tyrannical and luxurious Persian pitted against a leaner, smaller non-Greek and I argue he does it for a reason. Cyrus develops an oriental despot’s persona in order to emphasize his contempt for the Greek way of life. Herodotus has told his audience how Cyrus scoffed at the notion of the agora as a symbol of free political and economic life. As a consequence and as a counterbalance to such immoderation, Tomyris’ bloody vengeance is acceptable when balanced against this insult, and the greater unfair advantage of the Persians and the aggressive behaviour of their king. Cyrus offsets Herodotus’ narrative of morality: saved from death as an infant at the hands of a murderous grandfather, he is marked to become king, but once lord of Asia his expansionism acquires a momentum of its own and his behaviour quickly becomes unacceptable and improper. Herodotus’ analysis of the moralities of Cyrus and Tomyris is one of excess and moderation and the story would lose all meaning without the contrasting characterizations of the two main protagonists. Each fulfils his assigned role and an interconnected narrative of principled and unprincipled behaviour succinctly conveys the Herodotean key theme of constraint. The moral polarity of Cyrus and Tomyris provides Herodotus with a template that binds together the many threads that make up a story of perceived good and bad behaviour and inevitable vengeance.

221 Evans, James Stewart Allan, Herodotus, Explorer of the Past, p. 33. I have indicated Herodotus’ knowledge of Greek theatre earlier: in Chapter One regarding Euripides’ naming of Ion’s mother, see footnote #57 and in Chapter Two regarding the similarity between Intaphrenes’ wife and Sophocles’ Antigone, see footnote #64.

222 For the location of the Massagetae see Purvis, Landmark Herodotus, Map #1.199, p. 108 and Map #2.204, p. 110. For the first mention of queen Tomyris see Hdt. 1.205.

223 Hdt. 1.201 and 1.204.

224 Hdt. 1.153.
Herodotus' notions of morality relate closely to those of religion, and politics, and the same pattern of moderation and excess is applied to the actions of Cambyses. In contrast to Herodotus’ usual treatment of transgression Cambyses’ act of tomb and body desecration is here rendered fully transparent and acknowledged as being totally at odds with both Egyptian and Persian custom. Again I suggest that Herodotus emphasizes the position of transgressor and transgressed in order to leave his audience in no doubt that the orders issued by Cambyses run entirely counter to the religious beliefs of both Egyptians and Persians alike. They offset Herodotus’ narrative of morality as does Cambyses’ next acts of overwhelming ἕβρις – plans are made for not one but three separate military ventures: against the Carthaginians, the Ammonians and the long-lived Ethiopians. Herodotus represents all three as failures and Cambyses’ excesses intensify. These military catastrophes, these punishments by the gods deserve punishment of the gods in Cambyses eyes and his execution of officers in charge of the festival of the Apis bull and the death of the bull itself are outrages deserving of unusual retribution. Subsequent offences by the Persian king leave Herodotus clear in his opinion: he considers the murders of Cambyses’ siblings to be crimes – ‘two crimes’ he says, ‘committed against his own kin; both the acts of a madman.

To commit a crime is to violate a law and to cause a crime is to be guilty of it - Herodotus has Cambyses demonstrate that such excess must be tempered by

225 Nick Fisher is of the opinion that the moral, religious and political in the Histories are constantly and inextricably intertwined – see his chapter ‘Popular Morality in Herodotus’, pp. 199-224, esp. p. 217.
226 Hdt. 3.16. It is worth commenting that the very great unpopularity of Cambyses in the Histories may be traced back to the so-called Samian tradition, which has at its base the friendship between Pharaoh Amasis and the Greeks – and the former's gifts to the Greek temples in Cyrene, Lindos and Samos. Conquest of Egypt by the Persians would then necessarily adversely affect this relationship. For further scholarship see Truesdell Brown, 'Herodotus’ Portrait of Cambyses', Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte, Bd. 31, H. 4 (4th Qtr, 1982), esp. pp. 393-394 and footnote #19. Marincola suggests that Herodotus' portrait of Cambyses was influenced by the anti-Persian bias of the priestly class in Egypt – see Greek Historians, footnote #119 on p. 46.
227 Hdt. 3.16.
228 Hdt. 3.17.
229 Hdt. 3.19, 3.25 and 3. 26 respectively.
230 Hdt. 3.27-30.
231 Hdt. 3.30-33. Cambyses murders a brother and against the customs of his people marries two sisters, one of whom accompanies him to Egypt and who he also kills.
moderation. He continues the king’s story but has it change pace. He has Cambyses’ excesses curbed by atonement as the king recognizes the errors of his ways and his own impending death. His addled senses are regained when he learns of Magi usurpation of his throne and the murder of a brother was for nothing.\textsuperscript{232} His bitter lamentation coupled with the sympathy of courtiers add to Herodotus’ message of atonement and while he operates at several removes from the point where cause and effect cohere, Herodotus has Cambyses’ overindulgence tempered by expiation. His narrative of morality and immorality are counterbalanced in the stories of Cambyses’ excess and moderation. This is also the case with the unprincipled behaviour of Xerxes. As with Cambyses, the pattern that this king offers is as multifariously as his contradictory character.

Xerxes is portrayed as the epitome of excess and moderation: he can be moved by the devotion of his subjects yet punish them mercilessly; he can brand and whip the Hellespont yet piously pour libations into it; he can reward and behead with impunity; he can destroy Athenian temples yet sacrifice to the heroes of Troy, and he can treat individuals with equal contempt and disdain yet weep for the general condition of humanity.\textsuperscript{233} His character is so all encompassing and omnipresent that he symbolizes appearance for appearance’s sake. As Purves reminds us, he ‘reshapes’ even the landscape as his expedition moves through it.\textsuperscript{234}

Herodotus, in keeping with notions of equilibrium and polarity, balances the king’s opposing features – for a reason. I suggest Herodotus offsets his magnificence by weakness and his courage by fear to simply illustrate the extremes of Xerxes’ nobility and ignobility. He has for example, the Spartan Pausanius as the spokesman for moderation when he demonstrates the excessive nature of the king in a tableau staged after the battle of Plataea – a simple meal counterbalanced by a Persian banquet.\textsuperscript{235} Then, while Herodotus

\textsuperscript{232} Hdt. 3.64-65. 
\textsuperscript{233} In sequence – see Hdt. 7.28-29 and 7.38-39; Hdt. 7.35 and 7.54; Hdt. 8.103 and 8.90; Hdt. 8.53-54 and 7.43; and Hdt. 9.108 and 7.45-46. See also Marincola, Greek Historians, p. 47. 
\textsuperscript{234} Hdt. 7.21 and Purves, Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative, p. 149. 
\textsuperscript{235} Hdt. 9.82.
seemingly has all the king’s dishonourable qualities conspire to destroy him, he enlightens his audience by what eventually does – the gods.\textsuperscript{236}

As noted earlier, Herodotus has Themistocles clarify the position:

\begin{quote}
tάδε γάρ οὐκ ἡμεῖς κατεργασάμεθα, ἀλλὰ θεοὶ τε καὶ ἡρωες, οἱ ἐφθόνησαν ἄνδρα ἕνα τῆς Ἀσίης καὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης βασιλεύσαι ἐόντα ἄνοσιόν τε καὶ ἀτάσθαλον: ὃς τὰ τε ἵρα καὶ τὰ ἱδιά ἐν ὁμοίῳ ἐποιεύτο, ἐμπιπτάσθαι τε καὶ καταβάλλειν τῶν θεῶν τὰ ἀγάλματα: ὃς καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἀπεμαστίγωσε πέδας τε κατῆκε.\textsuperscript{237}
\end{quote}

It was not we who performed this exploit (defeating the Persian army); it was the gods and heroes, who were jealous that one man in his godless pride should be king of Asia and of Europe too – a man who does not know the difference between sacred and profane, who burns and destroys the statues of the gods, and dared to lash the sea with whips and bind it with fetters.

The intemperance of Xerxes is used to counterbalance Herodotus’ narrative of morality and provides a template of excess and moderation. The king’s crimes are so immoderate as to incur the wrath and envy of the divine and so excessive as to be beyond punishment by mortal man, but, as demonstrated earlier, overindulgence and dissipation do not necessarily lie with their most obvious owner.

I have thus far demonstrated that Herodotus’ stories of people exhibiting unprincipled behaviour are used to emphasize his key messages of morality such as the consequences of crossing limits set by the divine or engaging in excessive

\textsuperscript{236} Several times Herodotus comments on the envy of the gods – Solon to Croesus in Hdt. 1.32; Amasis to Polycrates in Hdt. 3.40; Artabanus’ advice to Xerxes in Hdt. 7.10\textsuperscript{e} and Hdt. 7.46 and in Themistocles’ clarification of the reasons for Greek victory in Hdt. 8.109. Immerwahr’s scholarship is invaluable here – he suggests the divine is responsible for maintaining the overall pattern of history, and local gods exhibit great partiality in their interference of human behaviour – it is only when the order of nature as a whole is disturbed do all the gods act in concert. The order of nature was mightily disturbed when Xerxes crossed the Hellespont and the notion of divine envy, which can only be applied to great kings and tyrants, is thus aligned with Xerxes’ transgressions of men and nature – see Form and Thought, pp. 308-315.

\textsuperscript{237} Hdt. 8.109.
aggression, and also that the transgressor is significant in offsetting Herodotus’ narrative of ethics and provides him with patterns of excess and moderation with which to work. There is more however to those who do wrong and more as to how they contribute to Herodotean spatial strategies of storytelling. While the kings I have chosen as case studies are necessarily elaborate characters of central importance in their stories, I now demonstrate how they become marginalized by their unprincipled and unethical behaviour.

Noli me tangere

In order that Herodotus’ portraits of Cyrus, Cambyses and Xerxes appear credible, it is important that he draws on an archetype already known to his audience. For example, in his story of the death of Cyrus Herodotus treats his audience to an addendum to the river-crossing motif and tells them this account is only one of many circulating at the time. He chose this one, he says, because it appeared the most plausible. I argue that it is also the most useful. While the inclusion of Croesus in the story immediately signals an imminent fall due to unjustified hybris and is well known to Herodotus’ audience, there is more to the story and it is delivered in discreet and cautious manner. Herodotus’ audience knows that Croesus, as a bad man made good, was granted a reprieve and employed by Cyrus as his wise advisor. Herodotus has him diligent in the execution of his task: he refuses to give counsel as to whether Cyrus will be successful, but advises on crossing the Araxes even though such action had previously led to his own denouement. Unlike his own case, Croesus knows that in this instance a river crossed will save an empire should a king be defeated – Herodotus knows there can be no history without myth. He has Cyrus accept

238 Evans, James Stewart Allan, Herodotus, Explorer of the Past, p. 43.
239 Hdt. 1.214.
240 Hdt. 1.207. See also Immerwahr, Form and Thought in Herodotus - he is exceedingly helpful in his discussions on river motifs, see in particular pp. 75, 84, 91-94, 130-132 and 166-167. His footnote #81 on p. 75 suggests Croesus is not responsible for Cyrus' defeat nor has he lost his capacity for wisdom. I question this position as Herodotus in Hdt. 3.36 clearly has Cambyses accusing Croesus of ruining Cyrus because the latter took the former's advice. Also of help is
the advice and Croesus is forgiven for a second time and sent home, out of harm’s way, along with prince Cambyses. The river is crossed but there will be no expiation for Cyrus, no pardon, let alone two, only retribution and revenge. Herodotus marginalizes Cyrus for his immoderate behaviour. So too does he with Cambyses.

Herodotus has the elaborate character of Cambyses occupy an entirely irresolute position. He may be the stereotypical Persian tyrant but this ambivalence is created to be wholly reminiscent of a transgressor. He may be central, recognizable and knowable but his unlawful actions at once make him marginal, unfamiliar and beyond the bounds of principled behaviour.

Significantly, Herodotus’ second most stereotypical character also displays madness as the dominating trait - madness brought on by overwhelming sins of vanity, self-confidence and delusion. Immerwahr posits that Herodotus’ portraits of all previous kings act as preparation for his development of Xerxes, the last Persian king discussed in any detail in the Histories. Clearly then, Xerxes can hardly be described as a marginal character. As a focal point and centre stage in Books 7 and 8 he is fundamental to the developing macro-narrative of the Persian Wars. What is more, Xerxes’ most outstanding characteristic of pride in his own magnificence is reminiscent of that of Cyrus, the unbeatable. Herodotus says Xerxes’ splendour is so great he rides with the holy chariot of Zeus for company. The royal personage itself is equated with the Persian Empire. His self-possession and certainty are so assured as to render defeat at the hands of the Greeks utterly dismissible. I suggest that these vanities lie outside the scope and sensibilities of a Greek audience and argue that Herodotus uses them as a literary tool to subtly merge


Immerwahr, Form and Thought in Herodotus, p. 176.

Hdt. 7.40.

Immerwahr, Form and Thought in Herodotus, p. 180.

Hdt. 7.103.
the king’s belligerence and magnificence to the constant motifs of the rise and decline of great powers and powerful leaders. He attaches them to instability in human success and happiness and connects them to injustice and dishonourable aggression.

What is more, although Herodotus has Xerxes occupy centre stage in his stories of the second Persian War, I argue that the king’s unethical behaviour, his *hybris* and reckless delusion guarantee his residence outside the bounds of common Greek tolerance. Aggression and blindness indicate his extremes of pride and, as with those of Darius before him, his transgressions are considered beyond acceptable behaviour, and therefore he with them. Herodotus portrays him as an entirely unsuitable being. Like Cambyses, he is complex in both emotion and ambition and he too oversteps his boundaries, but unlike Cambyses, Xerxes is punished on the ubiquitous grand and small scale that weaves throughout Herodotus’ work. He is perhaps the most significant and elaborate character in the *Histories* but he is also the one who is at first burdened and then later sidelined by the depth and breadth of his transgressions.245 Does Herodotus condemn him and pass judgment on his decisions? I suggest he does, and offer that the evidence lies in Herodotus’ placement of sub-stories concerning this king and in the oblique messages lying within them.

As for examples: Herodotus has Demaratus, the exiled king of Sparta, advise Xerxes on the problems of Persian succession.246 The parentage of Demaratus has earlier been under question and is discussed in Chapter One. By inference Herodotus casts aspersions on the birthright of Xerxes. Again, after

245 Hdt. 7.45-49 for the burdens of Xerxes and Hdt. 8.114 and 8.117 for his ignominious withdrawal from Europe and exit from the Herodotean account. Symbolic of a court embroiled in familial immorality is the story of Xerxes and his wife Amestris, and the king’s lover/niece Artaïnté – behaviour any dynasty would surely find difficult to recover from – see Hdt. 9.108-113. It is useful to remember the Persian Wars against Greece led to the first serious contraction of the Persian Empire and following his exit from Europe Xerxes is reputed to have retired to the heart of his empire, where he reigned for a further 14 years, only to be assassinated by his son. Xerxes never lived up to his early promise and never became the great king his father had been. He did however embark on a royal building program without equal (Persepolis) and completed and increased constructions begun by Darius before him. For further information see T. Cuyler Young, Jr., ‘Chapter 2, The Consolidation of the Empire and its Limits of Growth under Darius and Xerxes’, in John Boardman, ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 4: Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean, C. 525 to 479* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 76-78.

246 Hdt. 7.3.
Salamis, Xerxes rewards Artemisia for her sound advice on his withdrawal from Europe and dispatches her to the safety of Ephesus with his sons and their tutor. But this teacher comes with a fearful reputation. He is the same aforementioned eunuch who forced his tormenter to castrate his own children and they their father.\[247\] Placed alongside the heroine Artemisia, Hermotimus can only be seen as a more than dubious role model for the young Persian princes. Further, Herodotus secures his first story of dishonour, that of Candaules and Gyges, to his final sorry tale of Xerxes’ lasciviousness amongst his own kin.\[248\] Clearly Herodotus makes manifest the end to the Achaemenid line in that of the Mermnadae. Thus I propose that, although Xerxes is a central, significant and overwhelming character in the *Histories*, his approval as an acceptable human is rendered marginal by Herodotus and follows the characterization imputed in *Aeschylus’ Persians*:\[249\] Made all the more persuasive by its discreet and cautious delivery Herodotus’ message of unacceptability passes a final and personal judgment on Xerxes’ conduct, his stories remaining without peer in the Herodotean cosmos as a template for the divine punishment of misbegotten deeds by men.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have built on my earlier investigations into the significance of the nameless and the non-Greek as literary tools in Herodotus’ ‘spatial’ strategies of storytelling, and concerned myself with his treatment of morality and ethics: those of his own, with inference to his audience, and those of the non-Greek. As with the nameless and the outsider I have demonstrated that transgressors of what Herodotus deems acceptable behaviour are portrayed as

\[247\] Hdt. 8.102-106.
\[248\] Hdt. 1.8-13 and Hdt. 9.108-113. Griffiths’ scholarship is invaluable here, especially the notion that meaning within the *Histories* requires excavation and deduction – see ‘Kissing Cousins’, pp. 161-178.
important central characters who are given action and voice in order to emphasize core themes and motifs and further, that they offset the Herodotean narrative of moderation and provide the means by which Ionian notions of balance and imbalance are imparted to Herodotus’ Greek audience in terms of ethics.

In addition, I have contended and proved that, while Herodotean ‘transgressor’ characters remain crucially central to their stories, their marginalization is ensured by the understated and adaptable set of interrelated themes, hints and explanations that clarify Herodotus' belief that a moral message, delivered with tact and goodwill, is rather more convincing than that conveyed with less discretion. Herodotus offers no simple or consistent message for principled behaviour as he inquires into those things that divide his moral world, but his transgressors, of fundamental importance to the development of his own core themes of probity, are nonetheless relegated to an offensive position within the Histories.

On matters of principle Herodotus continually draws upon traditional moral justifications and the problems concerning revenge, and he has two reasons for doing so. He highlights Persian and other barbarian cruelties, and he questions any easy confidence or over self-assurance, displayed by the Greeks, that indicate their superiority. As with the non-Greek dwelling on the edges of his world and the nameless individual residing in the margins of his stories, Herodotus hides order behind irregularity when dealing with transgression. In this chapter, the tensions between moderation and excess are used to deliver subtle messages of matters of principle to a listening audience and, as I demonstrate, to underscore the significance of the transgressor as a resident abiding outside the bonds of common Greek tolerance.

Conclusion
Conclusion

I began this thesis by suggesting that Herodotus inhabits and indeed shapes, a vast universe of intellectuality and learning and that, as the information he divulges can be perceived as both real and mythical, the *Histories* deserves the closest scrutiny. As a consequence, I have set out to identify what I suggest, are the ‘spatial’ strategies of storytelling adopted by him, and to demonstrate their significance in the organization of his ‘inquiry’ into a single interconnected unit.

A rewarding result of my examination has been the way in which Herodotus develops his characters without name from those of earlier works such as the Akkadian epic *Gilgamesh*, Old Testament texts or the poems of Homer. This has enabled me to demonstrate how they are first used to assist in constructing his stories, then how they become essential as ‘reminder tools’, providing him with crucial links both within and between his plots, and finally how they become messengers of the covert and subtle. Herodotus’ use of undisclosed individuals as literary devices that add weight to various core motifs and messages becomes axiomatic when they are proved as proficient in achieving this result as any that he names. In exploring Herodotus’ undisclosed characters it quickly becomes apparent that his employment of literary mechanisms, in this case his use of quasi-oracular qualities, lifts them figuratively from a perceived place of irrelevance in the margins of their story to a central space of some significance.

However, perhaps the most significant aspect of Chapter One has been the discovery that the nameless are always blameless, and those characters whose names are disclosed, remain in some way ever the transgressors. Intaphrenes’ wife and her husband and Darius are all outsiders but she is nameless and blameless, while they are transgressors by repute. The same conclusion is arrived at when applied to Demaratus and his mother, to Psammetichus and his children, Croesus and his mute son, Artayctes and his boy, and to Polycrates and
the hapless fisherman. I argue that this is part of an Herodotean ploy of inviting his listening audience to engage in and respond to his work, and to contribute to it in a very genuine way in order to impute greater meaning into it. He encourages his audience to come out from its own centre, as it were, and to engage with a ‘periphery’ in a very real manner.

Against the background of the nameless character I next investigated the non-Greek abiding literally on the edges of Herodotus’ world and developed my argument to embrace the diverse world of the familiar and the unknowable. I contended that Herodotus’ use of spatial strategies of storytelling within this interpretation revealed an innate quality of flexibility that informed his messages of perceived polarity with an entirely fresh and innovative composition. This allowed me to demonstrate that the non-Greek in Herodotus’ universe offered in equal measure, peculiarity and appeal to his Greek audience, and that by assuming different form, they neutralize Ionian notions of distance and proximity. Rather than manifestations of apprehension or oddity, the outsider becomes a source of wonder and by definition is made an indispensable messenger of the familiar. I showed that Herodotus moves both non-Greek and Greek alike from their traditional spaces to occupy new places within a challenging and changing world.

Building on my first two chapters I then considered the transgressor in Herodotus’ world. I argued that this character is also essential in explaining core Herodotean themes and that his presence offsets a narrative of principled and unprincipled behaviour. Further, I demonstrated that the wrongdoer in Herodotus’ Histories gives action and voice to Ionian notions of balance and imbalance, but that his immoderation eventually relegates him to a peripheral position, that although depicted as an elaborate and central figure in his stories, his excessive behaviour nonetheless marginalizes him.

I contended that Herodotus employs strategies of space within his storytelling to add importance to his various motifs and messages and suggest that this manoeuvre allows him to move effortlessly between the periphery of his narrative and points at its centre. It permits him to counterbalance the
named with the nameless, the Greek with the non-Greek and the transgressor against those more conducive to moderate behaviour. The nameless king of Ethiopia, the barbarian outsider Scylas and the immoderate king Xerxes advance Herodotean notions of centre and periphery. Given quasi-oracular skills they are brought in from their respective marginal status to emphasize core messages and to offset narratives of the known, familiar and principled with discreet and cautious delivery. Thus I argue that Herodotus’ use of spatial strategies of storytelling greatly assists him in organizing his Histories into a single cohesive unit. Those abiding on the edges of his ‘universe’ - the undisclosed, the outsider and the transgressor deliver his understated messages in a way that readily allows him to impart new and covert knowledge with prudence and careful persuasion. His listening audience, cognizant of the responsibilities of democracy, is encouraged to weigh its own evidence and to reach its own conclusions.

I believe my approach to examining the Histories helps us gain a new perspective on the way in which Herodotus imparts his information, and that my interpretation of his strategies of space provide us with a key to not only better understanding his storytelling techniques but also his implementation of them. Our appreciation of how he coalesces the peripheries of the world of his Histories into central points and how he merges his work into one integrated amalgamated whole is significantly improved.

Overall therefore, this thesis contributes to current interpretations of Herodotean methods of critical inquiry and narrative structure and potentially opens up new areas of exploration within this field of research. By assessing the Histories through such a lens, I have suggested that it becomes obvious Herodotus successfully coalesces the peripheries and central points of his universe into one cohesive whole. In developing the more recent debate on storytelling such as that offered by Griffiths or Pelling I have demonstrated that Herodotus, rather than producing a detachment of stories or exhibiting a propensity for easy distraction, as older scholars like Kurt von Fritz might have
argued, the *Histories* establishes itself as a single interconnected unit.\(^{252}\) Ionian notions of symmetry and asymmetry may also be those of Herodotus, but his treatment of the named and nameless, of Greek and non-Greek, of moderation and excess, are entirely his own. It is these ideas that I have examined and expanded upon here.

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