

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NARRATIVE UNITY AND UNITS

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Introduction: 'harmonious body' versus 'the work of scissors'

In the first century BC the literary critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus enthusiastically concludes that Herodotus

τὰς πολλὰς καὶ οὐδὲν ἑοικυίας ὑποθέσεις προελομένην σύμφωνον ἔν σώμα πεποιηκέναι.

having chosen a number of subjects which are in no way alike has made them into one harmonious 'body'.¹

Some twenty centuries later the German scholar Jacoby reaches a totally different verdict:

After he had taken up the plan to write the work and had devised the structure which he wanted to impose on the material he had gathered, he apparently did not make major changes to his manuscripts, but tried to use his collection of lectures as much as possible as it stood . . . The distribution over the work of the Greek *logoi* which deal with the times before the Persian Wars also appears to be essentially the work of scissors.²

These quotations illustrate the two positions which divide the literary scholarship on Herodotus. According to some, Herodotus has managed to create a unified work regardless of the exact way in which his work came about, by piecing together old material or by gradually collecting and processing an ever-expanding body of material.³

¹ *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*, 3.

² (1913) 361: 'Offenbar hat er (Herodotus), nachdem er einmal den Gedanken an das Werk gefasst und den Plan gefunden hatte, dem er sein gesammeltes Material unterwerfen wollte, . . ., an seinen Manuskripten größere Veränderungen nicht vorgenommen, sondern sich bestrebt, seinen Bestand an Vorträgen möglichst in der vorhandenen Form zu verwerten . . . Auch die Verteilung der hellenischen Logoi, soweit sie vorpersische Geschichte gaben, über das Werk hin, erscheint wesentlich als Arbeit mit der Schere.' All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

³ For an overview of the debate on the genesis of the text, see Fornara (1971a),

According to others, he has failed and the sheer quantity of his material has got the better of him. After Jacoby's fiercely negative assessment at the beginning of this century, the pendulum has swung back again, and scholars have demonstrated Herodotus' thoughtful arrangement of his material, which has resulted in, if not 'one harmonious body', at least some form of unity. In the first part of this chapter I will give a historical overview of the ways in which scholars have defended Herodotus' unity, concentrating on formal rather than thematic arguments.⁴ In the second part I will discuss the various devices which Herodotus employs to create unity. In the last part I will show the working of such devices in a specific passage.

Before embarking on the discussion proper, I want to make one point. Many modern discussions of ancient works labour under an anachronistic, nineteenth-century, concept of unity. While I would not go as far as Heath (1989), who argues that ancient poetics and poetical practice adopt a centrifugal rather than a centripetal conception of unity, I would stress that ancient literary taste does show a greater tolerance towards—indeed an appreciation of—the episodic, ecphrastic, and digressional.⁵ It is absolutely crucial to keep this in mind when discussing the unity, or lack of it, in Herodotus' *Histories*.

Herodotus' unity: the arguments

This section must begin with Jacoby, who has set the agenda for all scholars to come. This agenda consists mainly of two items: the *Histories* lack (i) a unifying subject and (ii) a unifying structure. *Ad* (i). In his proem Herodotus announces that his subject will be the confrontation between Persians and Greeks, but this subject is virtually absent in the first four books, which deal almost exclusively with the confrontation between Persians and other barbarians ((1913) 333–41). *Ad* (ii). In the first five books the main story (the growth

who rightly stresses (pp. 6–7) that the unity or 'coherence' of a work as we have it, need not say anything about the manner of its origin.

⁴ Exponents of this second type of defence are Regenbogen (1930b) and Schadevaldt ((1934) 1960). See also Ch. 1 in this volume.

⁵ A central notion, which recurs often in ancient discussions of Herodotus, is ποικιλία, 'variation'. Cf., e.g., Dionysius, *Letter to Pompeius*, 3: ποικίλην ἐβουλήθη ποιῆσαι τὴν γραφήν. It is this variation which allows the author to insert a great deal of digressional material.

of Persian power) is continuously interrupted by *Exkurse*. This structure is a weakness: the digressions 'slow down' or 'disrupt' the main story, pop up at surprising moments, and contain material which Herodotus was not able to present at the 'right' moment ((1913) 379–92).

One of the first to defend Herodotus' unity was Aly. His interest in the folktale elements in Herodotus led him to put forward an original suggestion as to the structure of the *Histories*: the first five books are a frame narrative (*Rahmenerzählung*), a form which Herodotus derived from oriental, folktale literature.⁶ This idea even prompted the provocative thesis that, as usual, the framed narratives (Jacoby's disruptive digressions) are more important than the frame itself.

The idea of the *Histories* as a frame narrative was independently proposed by Howald, who also found evidence of this structure in the later books.⁷ There the frame is more important than (*überwuchert*) the framed narratives. This idea put forward by Aly and Howald is neither convincing⁸—in a real frame narrative, the frame is sketchy and the framed narratives are independent stories, peopled by different characters than those of the frame—nor particularly helpful. In fact, they consider it a mere expedient for the historian to incorporate as much material as possible, or, in Howald's words, as 'a loose, random frame, which is not organically related to what is recounted, in which Herodotus could place 'his manifold material' ((1923) 128). Where Jacoby saw Herodotus as a hasty and not too proficient editor of his own work, Aly and Howald present him as a naive storyteller who is carried away by his own stories.⁹

Another dubious defence of Herodotus' structure comes from Fränkel. He suggests that Herodotus' many digressions should be seen in the light of his time: early Greek man tended to look at things in isolation, and was not interested in larger causal or logical relations, but only in direct connections ((1924–60) 82–3). This mentality is reflected in the 'strung-along style' or λέξις εἰρομένη, already described by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* III.9), which, according to Fränkel, determines not only the structure of sentences but of the work as a whole:

⁶ (1921) 260–2, 297–8; (1929) 66.

⁷ (1923) 128–30; (1945) 42.

⁸ Cf. the criticism of Immerwahr (1966) 13.

⁹ See, in particular, Aly (1921) 262 and Howald (1945) 41–3.

If the people of this age really liked to see and represent things in such a way, that every element counts as complete in itself and, irrespective of its place within the structure, displays the independent value of its free and stable existence, . . . then the overall structure of the work of art must aim at the pleasure of fullness and colourfulness, quantity and variety . . .¹⁰

While this influential thesis of Herodotus' paratactic structure appears to be a step forward, in that it tries to understand the *Histories* in terms of early Greek thought and literary taste,¹¹ it still paints a picture of Herodotus randomly inserting digressions which are only superficially connected to his main story.¹²

An ambiguous contribution to the 'unity' debate comes from Focke. He vigorously denies that Herodotus was just a story-teller, whose only aim was to keep his audience amused (the position of Aly and Howald): 'he has principally nothing in common with oriental or Greek narrators' ((1927) 52). He is an historian, who employs the succession of five oriental despots as the main structure of his *Histories*. However, what Focke gives with one hand (structure), he takes with the other: 'The five great oriental kings have become the main formal carriers of all of Herodotus' material, reservoirs, into which the stuff of narrative has been poured in such quantities that it spills over on all sides.'¹³ A new metaphor, but essentially the same picture as drawn by Aly and Howald and their frame narrative.

Not until we come to Pohlenz do we see a turning point in the debate. He identifies a unifying subject (the confrontations between Greeks and barbarians), and argues that the first four books not only serve this subject (in that they set out how the main opponent of

¹⁰ 'Wenn wirklich die Menschen dieser Zeit die Dinge so zu sehen und darzustellen liebten, daß jedes für sich voll gilt und unabhängig von seiner Einordnung den eigenen Wert seines freien und festen Daseins ausstrahlt, . . . so muß der Gesamtaufbau eines Kunstwerks auf den Reiz von Fülle und Buntheit, von Masse und Wechsel gestellt sein . . .'

¹¹ Fränkel's 'the pleasure of fullness and colourfulness, quantity and variety' reflects the concept of ποικιλία (see note 5). At times, Fränkel does not entirely succeed in suppressing his own 'modern'-taste, e.g., on pp. 85, 88 ('Und doch hat auch der Herodot des grossen Perserkriegs die Darstellung gewaltiger Ereignisse mit kleinen Anekdoten in einer Weise gespickt, die uns zuwider ist und zuwider sein darf', my italics), 95.

¹² Fränkel ((1924) 1960) 86. In this context the idea of the frame narrative presents itself again, see Fränkel ((1924) 1960) 87.

¹³ (1927) 25: 'Die fünf großen Asiaten sind jetzt die formalen Hauptträger des gesamten herodotischen Materials, Sammelbecken, in die der Stoff in solchen Massen hineingeschüttet ist, daß er nach allen Seiten über ihre Ränder quillt.'

the Greeks, the Persians, attained their position of power), but also contain enough reminders to keep that subject in the forefront of the reader's mind ((1937) 9–21). He is also the first to stress that rather than drowning helplessly in his material, Herodotus consciously *selects* it, passing over what is not relevant to his subject ((1937) 29, 31).¹⁴ As for the digressions, Pohlenz argues that their purpose is to explain the main story ((1937) 39, 42), and that they are not inserted at random, but at points where the main story needs them, i.e., when a new person, people, or location has to be introduced ((1937) 68–73).

An example will illustrate the progression made by Pohlenz. At 5.55 Herodotus interrupts his tale of Aristagoras' visit to Athens, which took place in 499 and which was aimed at persuading the Athenians to join the Ionian revolt, for a 'digression' on Athenian history (chapters 55–96), which covers the years 510–499 BC. According to Jacoby ((1913) 383) and Fränkel ((1924) 1960) 86, this is a typical example of the way Herodotus uses a weak motive ('a historical meeting') in order to include thematically independent material. Pohlenz, however, contends that this is one of the places where Herodotus inserts a historical digression when the action needs it: 'in the fifth book it is logical from a historical point of view that Herodotus informs his readers about the political situation which Aristagoras finds in Athens' ((1937) 41). Indeed, by the time Herodotus picks up his main story, the digression has made it clear why the Athenians—in contrast to the Spartans—will be prepared to join the Ionians and fight the Persians ((1937) 38).

Pohlenz sums up his idea of Herodotus' narrative procedure as follows:

He is a traveller who knows exactly where he wants to go, who has exactly plotted the main stages of his voyage and keeps to them, but who also allows himself the time to look at all beautiful and interesting things which the road offers, and needs not even be afraid to make long detours to this end, because he knows that he will eventually rejoin the main road at the right point.¹⁵

¹⁴ This point is later worked out by Lateiner (1989) 59–75.

¹⁵ (1937) 43: 'Er ist der Wanderer, der genau weiß, wohin er schließlich kommen will, auch genau die Hauptstationen seines Weges vorher festgelegt hat und innehält, der sich aber dabei Zeit läßt, um alles Schöne und Interessante, das die Gegend bietet, zu betrachten, und selbst lange Seitenwege zu diesem Zwecke nicht zu scheuen braucht, da er weiß, daß er die Hauptstraße am richtigen Punkte wieder erreichen wird.'

This metaphor of Herodotus the traveller seems to do him and the *Histories* more justice than any previous label (story-teller, frame narrative) or metaphor (reservoir).

A somewhat curious interlude in the 'unity' debate is the study by Myres. In his view, Herodotus' structure is not problematic at all. The plan of the whole work is 'simple', in that the *Histories* consist of two parts: 'a narrative of the struggle between Persians and Greeks, from the Ionian Revolt to the defeat of Xerxes' invasion (5.28-9), preceded by a retrospect of the origin of the quarrel between East and West, and the Rise of the Persian empire and the leading Greek states, Athens and Sparta (1-5.27)' ((1953) 60). Within these parts two structural principles are at work: the 'antistrophic' principle, which means that we find two parallel narratives (e.g., the Athenian and Spartan histories at 1.59-64 and 65-8, or the long accounts of Scythia, 4.1-144, and Libya, 4.145-205), and the 'pedimental' principle, which means that we find a climax in the centre, preceded and followed by episodes which prepare for it and reveal its consequences (e.g., at 1.65-8, where Lycurgus' meeting with the Pythia is the prologue, the meeting between Lichas and the blacksmith of Tegea the epilogue, and the military confrontation between Sparta and Tegea the centre).¹⁶ The problem with this kind of structural analysis is that it is highly subjective. Often the structure is there only in the eye of the beholder; at 1.65-8 why not make the scene of Lichas and the blacksmith the climax?¹⁷ It is also ultimately unhelpful; in comparison with Pohlenz's analysis, the observation that 'the visits of Aristagoras to Sparta, 5.39-54, and to Athens, 5.55-97, serve as the frame for explanatory retrospects of both cities' ((1953) 78) is a regression.

The second turning point (after Pohlenz) is Immerwahr. He detects both a subject ('the history of Persian power and aggressiveness in a well-defined period in which aggression affected the Greeks') and a structure (the *Histories* consists of a series of *logoi*, narrative units which are usually demarcated by ring-composition, which vary in

¹⁶ For the 'antistrophic' principle, see Myres (1953) 62, 78; for the 'pedimental' principle (1953) 62, 81-8.

¹⁷ The following remark by Myres is in fact revealing: 'This pedimental structure, deep-seated and all-embracing though it is, has escaped the notice even of literary critics, probably because the literary skill of Herodotus has so completely united the substance of history with its form' ((1953) 86-7, my italics).

length and which may themselves consist of smaller *logoi*).¹⁸ The overall structure of the *logoi* is paratactic, yet they do form a unity in that they share narrative patterns (there are dramatic and circular *logoi*)¹⁹ and thought patterns ('thought and action', 'rise and fall of a ruler', etc.).²⁰ In Immerwahr's analysis, the paratactic style has gained in power; it is not the product of an inquisitive but unstructured mentality (Fränkel), but rather a sophisticated literary and historiographical instrument.

The years that followed saw the publication of two studies on the digressions, which both expand and refine Pohlenz's defence of these passages. The first is Bornitz, who sets out to show that the historical digressions (notably those on Greek history in Books One, Five, and Six) are closely connected to one another and to the main story. With regard to passage 5.55-97, he notes ((1968) 106-9) how it seamlessly continues the history of Athens, which was started at 1.59-64 (there we heard about Athens becoming a tyranny under Peisistratus, here Herodotus recounts how this tyranny was put to an end); how this episode marks the beginning of the rivalry and hostilities between Athens and Sparta, which will determine their behaviour in the ensuing Persian Wars; and how Athens' brief flirtation with Persia (5.73) casts a dubious light on their later pious oath that their mentality is such that they would never consider siding with the Persians (8.144).

The second study is by Cobet, who argues that the (ethnographical and geographical) digressions not only serve to explain the main story, but also enrich it, in that they contain material which is itself of interest. Herodotus simply cast his net wide, in an effort to include everything he could find about the known world:

thus Herodotus introduces the large *logoi* not only in order to make clear which people caused certain events, but much more simply, because events draw attention to something that in itself deserves our interest—because the context points to it, not because the context demands it.²¹

¹⁸ For the structure, see Immerwahr (1966) 17-45 (quotation from p. 44), for the subject (1966) 14-15.

¹⁹ Immerwahr (1966) 46-72.

²⁰ Immerwahr (1966) 72-8.

²¹ (1971) 156-7: 'Und so führt Herodot die großen Logoi nicht allein dafür ein, um verständlich zu machen, welches Volk solches Geschehen möglich machte, sondern viel einfacher lenkt das Geschehen den Blick auf etwas, das selbst Aufmerksamkeit

An entirely different direction was indicated by Waters. He stresses that the *Histories* is a narrative (which means that the historical digressions may be seen as flashbacks; an improvement over *Exkurse*) and points to the Homeric epics as an important model for Herodotus' structure:

[the *Odyssey*] presents a model of ingenious construction with its double thread and its elaborate flash-back technique. These structural methods, together with the range of the *Odyssey*, its time-span of twenty years, its geographical extent, its ethnology (e.g., Cyclops!) and gallery of *θωμαστά*, make it an obvious comparison with the history and certainly a source of suggestions as to narrative structure.²²

Although Herodotus' dependence on Homer had previously been mentioned in passing by scholars,²³ this was the first time it was used to get a better grip on Herodotus' handling of his material. Unfortunately, Waters spoils the effect of this new approach by retaining the old idea of Herodotus as the inveterate story-teller:

[The tales of Tellus and Cleobis and Biton are inserted because] Herodotus perhaps thought he could tell [them] better than the current market-place retailers. Artists tend to do what they like doing, especially if they get paid for it, and Herodotus likes to tell tales. ((1974) 6-7)

Another important contribution is a small article by Carbonell, which has not received the attention it deserves. His thesis is that the structuring principle in Herodotus is time:

It is not space which orders and organises the Histories. It is time which turns it into a rigorously chronological work, even if that rigour requires some apparent disorder.²⁴

At first glance, this is hardly a revolutionary idea,²⁵ but when we review the scholarship summarized so far, we see that it had not

beansprucht, sicherlich weil der Zusammenhang darauf führt, aber nicht, weil der Zusammenhang es verlangt.'

²² (1974) 3, and cf. (1985) 61-70.

²³ For example, Jacoby (1913) 377, 380, Aly (1921) 266, and Thomson (1935) 224-7. See also Ch. 5 in this volume.

²⁴ (1985) 145: 'Ce n'est pas l'espace qui ordonne et organise les Histoires. C'est le temps qui en fait une oeuvre rigoureusement chronologique, même si cette rigueur exige un apparent désordre.'

²⁵ Clearly, Carbonell, who does not place his own contribution within the context of the 'unity' debate, is himself unaware of the contentious nature of his thesis.

previously been proposed. Indeed, Fränkel had emphatically rejected time as a structuring principle:

As regards Herodotus, in his work time is completely lacking as a means of connecting the many things from many countries about which he has something to say. This is surprising in a historian, but as has often been observed, he simply has no interest in chronology. One could even say that he and the archaic period to which he still partly belongs has no sense at all of the ceaseless march of time... Herodotus does not hesitate to stop time: he reports on completely different things, describes, say, a country and its inhabitants in many, many pages, and only when he is quite finished will he let time roll on. Nor is he afraid of reversing the chronological order.²⁶

Elsewhere (de Jong (1999) 230-41, (2001)) I suggest that Herodotus' relative disinterest in real, extra-textual chronology may have caused scholars to close their eyes to time as an intra-textual principle. In the case of Fränkel, it also seems that his firm ideas about the mind of archaic man have determined his position. Expanding the suggestions of Waters and Carbonell, I propose to call Herodotus' structure 'anachronical': like Homer, he has restricted the time span of his main story, but has included a much larger period in the form of anachronies: analepses (flashbacks) and prolepses (flashforwards).²⁷ He has developed this technique by changing its scale and complexity. Thus he includes many more and, above all, much longer anachronies, and complicates them by putting them in the mouths of both narrator and characters (whereas in Homer they tend to be voiced only by the characters). This thesis considerably modifies the idea of Herodotus' structure being paratactic; the elements of his story do not follow each other like beads on a string but are placed in a

²⁶ ((1924) 1960) 85: 'Was zunächst Herodot betrifft, so fehlt bei ihm fast ganz, als Bindemittel zwischen den vielen Dingen die er aus vielen Ländern zu berichten weiß, die Zeit. Bei einem Historiker nimmt das wunder; aber er hat nun einmal für Chronologie, wie das schon oft ausgesprochen ist, kein Interesse. Man kann sogar sagen, daß ihm, und der archaischen Epoche zu der er halb noch gehört, der Sinn für die rastlos fortschreitende Zeit überhaupt abgeht... Es kostet Herodot keine Überwindung die Zeit anzuhalten: er berichtet von ganz anderen Dingen, schildert z.B. ein Land und seine Geschichte auf vielen, vielen Seiten unserer Bücher, und erst wenn er damit fertig ist, läßt er sie weiterrollen. Und er kennt auch keine Scheu vor der Umkehrung der Zeitenfolge.' Cf. also Lateiner (1989) 114.

²⁷ The term 'anachronies' derives from Genette (1980) 35-6: 'the various types of discordance between the two orderings of story [= the events in their chronological order] and narrative [= the events in the order we read them in the text]'.
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temporal perspective, the past and future illuminating the present.²⁸

The concept of 'anachronical structure' only accounts for the historical digressions. What about the ethnographical and geographical ones? Once again, the fact that the *Histories* is a narrative and is modelled on the Homeric epics is of prime importance. All narratives contain descriptions, even though, as Hamon ((1993) 9–36) shows, literary critics have always had a problem with this 'strange' element. In fact, Hamon's characterization of the typical *descripteur*, suits Herodotus perfectly:

He is a voyager, a tourist, an explorer, someone with a scientific mission or who travels in order to learn or to fill in a gap in institutionalized knowledge.²⁹

Specifically, there is the precedent of descriptions in Homer (e.g., Achilles' shield in *Il.* 18.478–608, or Calypso's cave in *Od.* 5.63–75). Erbse (1992: 157–79) suggests—convincingly—that Herodotus 'derived from the Homeric ekphraseis the right to discuss geographical questions in the context of a narrative, that is to say of a historical narrative' ((1992) 157).³⁰ He also shows how in most cases the information of a geographical or ethnographical description is relevant to what follows. Thus the lengthy description of Scythia (4.5–31) will allow the narratees to understand why Darius' expedition against this people fails.

I conclude that approaching the *Histories* as a narrative and looking at the Homeric epics as a model has much enhanced our appreciation of its structure. Herodotus has adopted the model of a main story expanded by analepses, prolepses, and descriptions, and enlarged its scale. The analepses and prolepses introduce the necessary background information on people and places, while the descriptions set the stage on which the events of the main story will be played out or provide the narratees with the information which they need to appreciate what follows.

Before turning to the next part—and in the spirit of Herodotus himself—I would like to insert a digression on the terms adopted by scholars when talking about narrative units within the *Histories*.

²⁸ For further examples, see Ch. 22, pp. 501–4 in this volume.

²⁹ (1993) 38: 'c'est un voyageur, un touriste, un explorateur, quelqu'un d'investi d'une mission scientifique ou qui voyage pour apprendre ou pour combler une case vide du savoir institutionnalisé.'

³⁰ See also Ch. 18, pp. 415–16 in this volume.

Narrative units: the terminology

There are three terms which are regularly used in the scholarship on Herodotus to refer to narrative units within the *Histories*: *logos*, digression (*Exkurs*), and novella. And yet each of the three terms is problematic.

In the case of *logos*, we must distinguish between the use of the term by Herodotus (a section in his work which may be of varying length) and by scholars themselves, who often fail to mark the distinction: the independent texts which Herodotus pasted together to form the *Histories* (Jacoby (1913) 282), folktales in prose (Aly (1921) 18, Thomson (1935) 32); prose texts which collect and combine material according to rational criteria (Pohlenz (1937) 54–5); 'prose texts which attempt to describe and explain the natural world or some aspect of it. They may be ritual or religious myths, historical legends about particular persons or occasions, fables . . . or mere folktales' (Myres (1953) 70–3); 'a series of items, which are themselves smaller *logoi*, held together by certain formal elements signifying in turn a selection (but never the totality) of unifying themes beside which other elements are left intact' (Immerwahr (1966) 14–15); or indirect and direct speeches by characters (as opposed to *erga*, the events as recounted by the narrator) (Hunter (1982) *passim*).³¹ Faced with this bewildering series, I can only conclude that an in-depth study of the term *logos*, both inside the *Histories* and in the literature of his time is a desideratum.

At first glance, the use of the term digressions or *Exkurse* seems warranted by the fact that Herodotus himself occasionally speaks of *προσθήκη*, 'addition' (4.30), and *παρενθήκη*, 'insertion' (7.171). But at least from Jacoby onwards, the concept of the Herodotean *Exkurs* began to live a life of its own. Jacoby himself lists no fewer than three types of *Exkurse*: (1) not real ones: 'those which clearly only serve to insert material that could not be placed somewhere in the main story' ((1913) 381), (2) real ones: 'short digressions, which can easily be missed and which cause no or hardly any disruption' ((1913) 384), and those which (3) 'afterwards add important, very important

³¹ Immerwahr explicitly states that his *logoi* do not necessarily coincide with those of Herodotus. For one thing, Herodotus does not systematically label parts of his work a *logos*, whereas Immerwahr's analysis of the *Histories* in *logoi* ((1966) 79–147) covers the whole text.

material which Herodotus could not present in their proper place' (386). It is clear from his analysis of the structure of the *Histories* ((1913) 283–326) that, in his view, this work consists mainly of *Exkurse* and *Exkurse* within *Exkurse*. Jacoby's great opponent Pohlenz, not only demonstrates the explanatory function of many digressions (see the above section), but also contends that certain passages should not be considered digressions at all:

[The *logoi* on Greek history] were for him a necessary part of his subject matter, whether they paint the political situation of the motherland in a certain period or recount events which are either relevant to the Asiatic situation of the moment or will become important later on.³²

Immerwahr opts for a more radical approach, rejecting the notion of digression altogether: '... contrary to many scholars, I believe that the few places where Herodotus speaks of additions to his work are not of any real importance for the understanding of its structure' ((1966) 14, n. 34). As we have seen in the previous section, he prefers to see the *Histories* as a series of *logoi*. His suggestion that it would be better to abolish the term digression has not been followed by Cobet, who insists on using the word *Exkurs*, although he is well aware that it is not exactly the same as Herodotus' *προσθήκη* and *παρενθήκη* or *logoi*:

the term 'Exkurs' is entirely a construction of and for ourselves, which covers everything that in our view seems to lead away from the main context. ((1971) 82)

He distinguishes three types of *Exkurse*: (1) ethnographical and geographical digressions, (2) novellas, and (3) places where Herodotus goes beyond the temporal boundaries of his story by relating events which took place after 479 BC. As we saw in the previous section, Cobet in fact manages to make clear the function of most of these *Exkurse*, and for this reason it is all the more regrettable that he did not choose another term, which does not have the connotation of disconnectedness.

³² (1937) 42: '[Die *logoi* über die griechische Geschichte] gehören für ihn notwendig zur Sache, mögen sie nun die politische Lage des Mutterlandes in einer bestimmten Zeit schildern oder Ereignisse erzählen, die entweder gegenwärtig mit der asiatischen Handlung in Zusammenhang stehen oder für die spätere Entwicklung Bedeutung gewinnen.'

The suggestion to give up the notion of digression can also be read between the lines in Hartog:

What I would question are the grounds for making a separation between one Herodotus, who is the historian of the Persian wars, and another or, rather Herodotus' other self. It is perfectly possible to see the 'ethnographic' part and the 'historical' part with the same eye and to read both with the same voice... To separate one from the other, making one come before the other, or hiding one behind the other, is after all to fall victim to Thucydides... ((1980) 319; I quote the translation by Janet Lloyd)

After Immerwahr disposed of the notion of digression/*Exkurs* for the Anglo-Saxon scholars, Hartog for the French, it is a pity that Erbse did not do the same for the German one, especially since he comes so close. In his introduction he speaks of *sogenannte Exkursen* and at the opening of his section on *Exkurse* he states that

the common term 'Exkurs' as a reservoir of random, not seldom fabulous notes is not of great use for the interpretation of Herodotus, indeed perhaps misleading. ((1992) 121)

As we have seen, Erbse rightly linked the ethnographical and geographical digressions to Homeric descriptions. In his analyses he consistently speaks of *Beschreibungen* or *Beobachtungen* (instead of *Exkurse*), yet he has not taken the final—in my view, necessary—step, of dropping the word *Exkurs* altogether.

Perhaps the most enigmatic type of narrative unit is the novella. Here we are on even thinner ice than in the previous two cases, since the word is not used by Herodotus. Indeed, it was only coined in fourteenth-century Italy. But even if we accept the use of such a modern term to refer to ancient texts—after all, we do the same in the case of the ancient novel—there remain two problems: (1) whether there were 'novellae' in the time of Herodotus, and (2) whether his *Histories* contain such 'novellae' (or in any case the vestiges of this genre). Most German Herodotusscholars agree that the answer to both questions is 'yes'. Aly, Regenbogen, Heni, Cobet, and Erbse all confidently refer *passim* to the typically Ionian genre of novellae: short and entertaining stories about real people, situated in a certain place and at a certain time (in contrast to the folktales), and including a great deal of direct speech.³³

³³ There is one non-German adherent to the novella theory: Trenkner (1958) 24.

The ultimate source of this theory on the Ionian novella is Erdmannsdörffer (1870). In a brochure, entitled 'Die Zeitalter der Novelle in Hellas', this scholar claims that in many respects the period of the tyrants in Greece resembles the fourteenth-century Italy of Boccaccio (the inventor of the novella), and that hence we may postulate the existence of this genre in Greece as well. Unfortunately, no one has yet been able to produce a specimen of such a novella. Aly's argument that we are dealing with unwritten literature and that hence *by definition* no specimen is left ((1921) 5-6) is clever but in the end *e silentio*. Of course, there will have been short oral prose narratives (alongside the long poetic ones of epic), but I do not think that these were an exclusively Ionian affair, or that in the absence of any specimina, it is sound to posit a specific genre of novellae.

So much for point 1. Even assuming that there were such Ionian novellae, there is still the problem of identifying them in the *Histories*. If we take Cobet ((1971) 140-57) or Erbse (1992), for example, we see that they simply call every passage with anecdotal or folktale content and a great deal of speech a novella: not only the 'Gyges and Candaules' story at 1.8-13, but also Xerxes' decision to attack Greece at 7.5-19, and the 'False Smerdis' story at 3.30-66. In essence, however, these passages do not differ from the rest of the *Histories*; they are all examples of the same narrative art. In my view, we would do better to get rid of the term novella and instead call the passages which have been labelled as such 'scenes' (in the narratological sense of the word).³⁴ Like any narrator, Herodotus has the possibility to present his story as a series of events and actions (e.g., Alyattes' war against Thrasybulus and the Milesians at 1.17-22) or as a scene, which means that he slows down the pace of narration, so as to approach the length of time of the events and actions, giving us details about scenery or the characters (their gestures, facial expressions, etc.) and quoting their words.

The fact that her book is based on a Polish dissertation may be relevant here. Thus the secondary literature listed by her is almost exclusively German.

³⁴ See Genette (1980) 95, 109-12 and Bal (1985) 71, 73-5.

Herodotus' unity: the means

In this section I will discuss the narrative devices which the Herodotean narrator employs to create unity, on the level of the parts of his work as well as on that of the work as a whole.³⁵ I will proceed from small to large and from explicit to implicit.

(1) Repetition of words. In the course of a story or section the narrator repeats a word which is central to that story or section. An example is the root *συμφορ-* in the 'Adrastus' story at 1.34-45, which recurs in 35.1.4, 41.1, 42.1, and 45.3.³⁶ Of course, not every recurring word is an example of significant word repetition. Long (1987), who pays much attention to word repetition in his analysis of Herodotus' short stories, is, in my view, much too ready to designate a repetition as significant. Thus in that same 'Adrastus' story, I take issue with him for giving so much weight to the repetition of *μεγάλη* (34.1), *μέγα* (36.1), and *μέγιστος* (36.2). A detailed study of word repetition in the *Histories*, including a thorough theoretical discussion of what makes a repetition significant, is a desideratum.³⁷

(2) Presentation markers of the type 'as follows' (pointing forward)³⁸ and 'thus' (pointing backward),³⁹ for example:

Κατ' αὐτὸν δὲ Κροῖσον τὰδε ἐγένετο. (1.85)

With Croesus himself the following happened.

κατὰ μὲν νῦν τὸν κρητῆρα οὕτω ἔσχε. (1.70.1)

This was what happened to the bowl.

Presentation markers often occur as part of headlines (see below 3) or ring-compositions (see below 4).

(3) Headlines and conclusions. The narrator announces beforehand what a story or section will be about or concludes afterwards what it has been about,⁴⁰ for example:

³⁵ As in section 1, I concentrate on the formal devices, leaving out of account the motifs and story patterns, which on the level of the content lend unity. I also leave aside linguistic devices, such as the use of tenses, for which see Rijksbaron (1988).

³⁶ For other examples, see van der Veen (1996) 6-22.

³⁷ Fehling's study on figures of repetition (1969) contains a great deal of material, but provides no interpretative evaluation of that material.

³⁸ See also Ch. 1, pp. 19-20 on *hēde* in the poem.

³⁹ Fränkel ((1924) 1960) 65-6, Pohlenz (1937) 87, Immerwahr (1966) 52-3, and Müller (1980) 51-8, 69-70.

⁴⁰ Immerwahr (1966) 53 and Lang (1984) 2-5.

τῷ δὴ λέγουσι Κορίνθιοι . . . θῶμα μέγιστον παραστήναι, Ἀρίονα τὸν Μηθυμναῖον ἐπὶ δελφίνος ἐξενειχθέντα ἐπὶ Ταΐναρον. (1.23)

The Corinthians tell that there happened to him [Periander] a very great marvel, the transport of Arion of Methymna to Tainarus on a dolphin.

Headlines and conclusions can also be expanded into narratorial interventions, i.e., with the narrator referring to his own activity, for example:

Ἐπιδίξεται δὲ δὴ τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τὸν τε Κῦρον ὅστις ἐὼν τὴν Κροΐσου ἀρχὴν κατέειλε, καὶ τοὺς Πέρσας ὅτεω τρόπῳ ἠγήσαντο τῆς Ἀσίας. (1.95)

But it is next the business of my history to set out who this Cyrus was who brought down the power of Croesus and how the Persians came to be rulers of Asia.

(4) Ring-composition. At the end of a section the narrator repeats the words with which he began,⁴¹ for example:

... τὸ μὲν Ἀττικὸν κατεχόμενόν τε καὶ διεσπασμένον ἐπυθάνετο ὁ Κροῖσος ὑπὸ Πεισιστράτου τοῦ Ἰπποκράτους τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον τυραννεύοντος Ἀθηναίων. (1.59)

... Croesus learnt that the Attic people was held in subjection and divided into factions by Peisistratus, son of Hippocrates, who at that time was tyrant of Athens.

Τοὺς μὲν νῦν Ἀθηναίους τοιαῦτα τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον ἐπυθάνετο ὁ Κροῖσος κατέχοντα . . . (1.65)

About the Athenians Croesus learnt that at that time such things were occupying them . . .

This device marks off analepses, prolepses, and descriptions, but also sections of the main story. The element which is repeated signals either the end of the analepsis, etc., or the resumption of the main story. In the latter case, the ring-composition can also be described in terms of an epanalepsis. Ring-compositions often consist of a combination of headline and conclusion, and contain presentation-markers, for example:

⁴¹ Fränkel ((1924)1960) 71-2, Immerwahr (1966) 12, 54-8, Pohlenz (1937) 63, Beck (1971), Lang (1984) 5-6, and Bakker (1997a) 115-21. See also Ch. 3, p. 000 (nu 16 ff.) in this volume.

Σάρδιες δὲ ἤλωσαν ὧδε . . . οὕτω δὴ Σάρδιές τε ἠλώκεσαν καὶ πᾶν τὸ ἄστυ ἐπορθέετο. (1.84.1, 5)

Sardes was taken in the following way . . . Thus Sardes had been taken and the whole city was being destroyed.

(5) Cross-references. The narrator remarks that he has already recounted something earlier in his work or will do so later,⁴² for example:

Τοῦτον δὴ ὦν τὸν Ἀστυάγεα Κῦρος εὐντα ἐαυτοῦ μητροπάτορα καταστρεψάμενος ἔσχε δι' αἰτίην τὴν ἐγὼ ἐν τοῖσι ὀπίσω λόγοισι σημανέω. (1.75.1, the narrator will fulfill his promise at 1.124)

This Astyages then was Cyrus' mother's father, and was made subject to him for a reason which I will set out in a later section.

... Κροῖσον ὕστερον τούτων ἄρξαντα ἀδικίης κατεστρέψατο, ὡς εἴρηται μοι πρότερον. (1.130.3, the narrator refers back to 1.79-85)

... later he subdued Croesus, who had started being unjust, as I have already told before.

(6) Repeating prolepses and analepses. Instead of making an explicit cross-reference (as in 5), the narrator merely repeats something he has already related or reveals something he will later recount in full, for example:

... Ἄρπαγος κατέβη διάδοχος τῆς στρατηγίας, . . . τὸν ὁ Μήδων βασιλεὺς Ἀστυάγης ἀνόμῳ τραπέζῃ ἔδαισε, ὁ τῷ Κύρῳ τὴν βασιλιήν συγκατεργασάμενος (1.162.1, analepsis of 119, 123-9)

.. Harpagus came to succeed him as commander, . . . the same whom Astyages, king of the Medes, had entertained with an unholy meal, and who had helped Cyrus to get the kingship.

... τὸ σκηπτόμενοι οἱ Πέρσαι ὕστερον ἀντενεπίμψασαν τὰ ἐν Ἑλλήσι ἱρά.

Using this [the burning of Sardes by the Greeks] as a pretext, they later set fire to temples in Greece. (5.102.1, prolepsis of 6.19, 96, 101; 8.33, 53)

(7) Interaction of speech and narrator-text.⁴³ This interaction can take different forms. The narrator can prepare for a speech, for example: Coes' speech about the Scythians (4.97), in which he warns Darius that he is about to 'march against a country where you will

⁴² Jacoby (1913) 282, 327 and Pohlenz (1937) 87.

⁴³ For more examples, see de Jong (1999) 254-8.

find neither tilled lands nor inhabited cities', is prepared for at 4.46.2-3, where the narrator tells the narratees that the Scythians 'have no established cities . . . and live not by tilling the soil . . .':

The narrator can react to a speech, for example: at 1.209.3-5 Cyrus sets out an interpretation of his dream, which is corrected by the narrator at 210.1.

Some speeches contain analepses of events already recounted by the narrator. Thus at 7.10.α.2 Artabanus uses the example of Darius' unsuccessful expedition against the Scythians, recounted by the narrator at 4.83-144, in an attempt to dissuade Xerxes from marching against the Greeks. The frequency with which characters use the past as an argument in their speeches lends the device of the actorial analepsis⁴⁴ an extra, thematic function, in addition to its formal, unifying function: it shows the narratees that history is not only about preserving the *kleos* of great deeds and men from the *past*, but also about dealing with one's own *present* situation.

There are also speeches that contain prolepses of events to be later recounted by the narrator.⁴⁵ Croesus at 1.207 advises Cyrus to cross the Araxes, march into the territory of the Massagetae, prepare a festive meal, and then withdraw to the river again. He anticipates that the Massagetae will start feasting and thereby become easy prey for the Persian army. Cyrus follows his advice and everything happens exactly as foreseen (1.211). Much more often, however, events evolve very differently from the way in which the characters had foreseen, hoped, or feared. One need only think of Darius' and Xerxes' oft-expressed intentions of conquering Greece. Actorial prolepses, in which the *Histories* abound, thereby, like the actorial analepses, acquire an extra, thematic function: they allow the narratees to distinguish between wise characters, who are able to foresee the future, and blind characters (the majority), who overestimate their own possibilities, forget their limits as mortals and, above all, do not take to heart the Herodotean motto that 'human prosperity is never stable' (1.5).

(8) Narrative integration of descriptions. This can be achieved by having a character look at scenery (e.g., 4.85-6, where Darius looks at the Pontus), visit sites (e.g., Xerxes at 7.26, 30, 43, 59, 108, 109,

⁴⁴ An actorial analepsis is one made by a character, while a narratorial analepsis is one made by the narrator.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hunter (1982) 190-6.

197), or inform another character about a country (e.g., 7.130, where Greek guides inform Xerxes about Thessaly).⁴⁶

By way of conclusion I would like to note that as regards techniques 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8, Herodotus once again had Homer as his model.

Narrative unity: an example

To show the working of some of the narrative devices listed in the previous section, I will analyse in detail the passage 5.55-97, which has already featured several times in the historical overview presented in the first part of this chapter.

55-96.2: a chunk of Athenian history (514-499 BC). This narratorial analepsis as a whole is enclosed by ring-composition: 'Being compelled to leave Sparta, Aristagoras went to Athens' (55) ≈ . . . at this moment, Aristagoras the Milesian, driven from Sparta, . . . came to Athens' (97.1).

55-65.5: Athens frees itself from its tyrants Hipparchus (514 BC) and Hippias (510 BC). This section is marked off by ring-composition, which is a combination of a headline and a conclusion, both of which contain presentation markers: '(Athens) which had been freed from its ruling despots in the following manner' (55) ≈ 'Thus the Athenians got rid of their tyrants' (65.5).

56: Hipparchus has a dream before he is murdered (514 BC). This narratorial analepsis is triggered by 'When Hipparchus had been slain . . . after seeing in a dream a very clear picture of the evil that befell him' (55). It is introduced by a headline, which contains a presentation marker: 'The dream of Hipparchus was as follows'.

57-61: the Gephyrean clan comes from Phoenicia to Boeotia to Athens (c. 1200-1100 BC).⁴⁷ This narratorial analepsis is triggered by 'When Hipparchus . . . had been slain . . . by Aristogeiton and Harmodius, men of Gephyrean descent . . .' (55).

⁴⁶ Jacoby (1913) 383, 390; he regards these forms of integration as 'artificial'.

⁴⁷ This date and the others which follow make no claims to exact accuracy; they will merely serve to place the analepses in some form of chronological order.

62.1: a narratorial intervention, which caps the analepses of 56 and 57-61 and announces in the form of a renewed headline the continuation of the section 55-65: 'I have shown what was the vision of Hipparchus' dream and what the first origin of the Gephyreans, of whom were the slayers of Hipparchus; now I must go further and return to the story which I began to tell, namely how the Athenians were freed from their tyrants.'

62.2-65.5: Athens frees itself from its tyrants (cont.).

65.5-96.2: history of Athens after it has freed itself (510-499 BC). This section is introduced by a headline in the form of a narratorial intervention: 'All the noteworthy things that they did or endured, after they were freed and before Ionia revolted against Darius and Aristagoras of Miletus came to Athens to ask the help of its people, these I will now first relate' (65.5).

67.1-69.1: Cleisthenes rules Sicyon (600-570 BC). This narratorial analepsis is marked off by ring-composition: 'In this respect, it seems to me, this Cleisthenes imitated his own mother's father, Cleisthenes the despot of Sicyon.' (67.1) ≈ '... and the Athenian Cleisthenes, who was the son of that Sicyonian's daughter and bore his name, did to my thinking imitate his namesake...' (69.1).

71: the Accursed get their name (c. 630 BC). This narratorial analepsis is triggered by 'Cleomenes demanded the banishment of Cleisthenes and many other Athenians, *the Accursed, as he called them*' (70), and is introduced by a headline, which contains a presentation marker: 'The Accursed got their name as follows.'

76: the four Dorian invasions of Attica (c. 1200-505 BC). This narratorial analepsis is marked off by ring-composition, which combines a headline and conclusion, which contains a presentation marker: 'This was the fourth time that Dorians had come into Attica' ≈ 'thus this was the fourth Dorian invasion of Athens'.

82.1-89.1: the origin of the Aeginetans' long-standing hatred of the Athenians (c. 700-500 BC). This narratorial analepsis is triggered by 'But the Aeginetans... had in mind *an ancient feud with Athens*' (81.2) and is marked off by a ring-composition, which combines a headline, which contains a presentation marker, and a conclusion, which takes the form of a narratorial intervention: 'Now this was the beginning of the Aeginetans' long-standing enmity against the Athenians' (82.1) ≈ 'and the enmity of

the Athenians against the Aeginetans began as I have told' (89.1). 92.β.1-γ.4: tyrants rule Corinth (c. 650-585 BC). This actorial analepsis is triggered by 'you prepare to introduce *tyrannism* in the cities, the most unrighteous and bloody institution there is' (92.α.1).

94.1-95.2: Sigeum comes under Athenian rule (600 BC). The narratorial analepsis is triggered by 'Hippias withdrew to *Sigeum*'. It is capped by a conclusion, which contains a presentation marker: 'thus then Sigeum came to be under Athenian rule' (95.2).

What I hope this analysis has made clear is that, yes, at first sight Herodotus' narrative, with its repeated interruptions of the story line, seems to be a muddle. However, if we would place the analepses in their chronological order, the following picture would emerge: the four Dorian invasions of Attica—the Gephyrean clan comes from Phoenicia to Boeotia to Athens—the origin of the enmity between the Aeginetans and the Athenians—the tyrants rule Corinth—the Accursed get their name—Sigeum comes under Athenian rule—Cleisthenes rules Sicyon—Hipparchus has a dream before he is murdered. In other words, this would result in the random historiography which Aristotle—disparagingly—describes in his *Poetics*: historiography which lumps together 'events that have a merely casual relation to each other' (23, cf. 9). When we return to Herodotus' anachronical structure and examine it more closely, we discover it to be highly effective. The analepses are clearly marked off, triggered by an earlier element in the text, and are usually relevant to the context.⁴⁸ In some cases, they motivate an action by characters (the Aeginetans' hatred of the Athenians explains why they do not help them; the story about the tyrants who ruled Corinth is designed to dissuade the Athenians from recalling Hippias;⁴⁹ the Athenian rule of Sigeum explains why Hippias goes there instead of accepting the hospitality offered to him in Macedonia or Thessaly; the whole analepsis on

⁴⁸ For a—largely convincing—analysis of 5.55-97 in these terms, see Legrand (1942) 43-9.

⁴⁹ Here I disagree with Legrand, who claims that the story of Cypselus' childhood has no argumentative function and is merely inserted by Herodotus here because he could find no better place and did not want to leave a good story untold ((1942) 48). For the relevance of the passage, see van der Veen (1996) 86-9.

Athenian history explains both why the Athenians are prepared to join the Ionians against the Persians and why Aristagoras comes to Athens in the first place). In other cases, they provide the narratees with background information which a modern text would give in a footnote (the explanation of the nickname 'Accursed', the four invasions of the Dorians). In yet other cases, they enrich the context (Cleisthenes' reforms in Corinth provide an interesting parallel to those of Cleisthenes in Athens;⁵⁰ the story of Hipparchus' dream makes clear how Hipparchus chooses not to heed this warning, a favourite Herodotean motif).⁵¹ Only in the case of the analepsis on the Gephyrean clan, which is in fact a vehicle for a section on the Phoenician alphabet, I am forced to admit that I can find no direct contextual relevance.⁵²

I conclude that, in the hands of Herodotus, the age-old storyteller's device of the flashback or analepsis has become a powerful instrument of historical narration.⁵³

⁵⁰ Here I again disagree with Legrand, who finds the parallel superficial, introduced by Herodotus in order to make a transition to information he wanted to include ((1942) 47).

⁵¹ Legrand's qualification of this analepsis as an 'hors-d'œuvre' ((1942) 47) does not do justice to its relevance.

⁵² For a suggestion, see Ch. 14, p. 326.

⁵³ I wish to thank the members of the Hellenistenclub for their comments, Mrs B. Fasting for her correction of my English, Hans van Wees for invaluable help with the—last minute—translation of the many German quotations in my text.

CHAPTER TWELVE

'I DIDN'T GIVE MY OWN GENEALOGY': HERODOTUS AND THE AUTHORIAL PERSONA

Carolyn Dewald

In the course of Book Two, where Herodotus is somewhat more forthcoming than usual about his own investigatory practices, he mentions that he repeated the visit that Hecataeus had made several generations earlier, to see the priests lined up in their austere rows in the temple of Amon-re at Karnak (Thebes). He comments that Hecataeus had told the Egyptians that he was the sixteenth-generation descendant of a god, and that the priests in response had shown Hecataeus 345 statues, lined up in a row, of priests descended from earlier priests—each of them a *pirōmis*, Egyptian for something like noble man, but hardly a god. Then Herodotus, in one of the most spontaneous moments of self-expression in the whole *Histories*, says, 'and they showed the same thing to me, *emoi ou geneēlogēsanti emēdūton*, although I didn't give my own genealogy' (2.143.1).

Indeed, he does not. Although his authorial, first-person voice plays a prominent part in the *Histories*, Herodotus does not tell us anything about his family or his ethnic affiliations.¹ Armed with scraps of ancient gossip, we can choose to interpret as significant our impression that Herodotus himself is less than dazzled by most of the Ionians (except possibly the Samians), that he is interested in and respectful of Carian accomplishment, that he has a soft spot for the valiant Halicarnassian queen Artemisia, and that he certainly seems to know a lot of local details from the area of the Aegean coast around Halicarnassus.² But he does not encourage us to draw con-

¹ If Jacoby (1956) 225 is right, that Herodotus wrote 'Herodotus of Thurii' in his first sentence (Aristotle's version of the proem, *Rhet.* 1409a), nothing in the text would make explicit that he was a Dorian from Halicarnassus. For a discussion of 2.143 in terms of Herodotus' possible dependence on Hecataeus, see Lloyd (1988a) 107–8; cf. the scepticism of West (1991) 147–51.

² E.g., Ionians: 1.143, 4.142, 5.69, 5.97, 6.13; Samians: 3.60, but see 6.13; Carians and Pedasa: 1.171.1, 1.175–6, 2.152, 5.118–19, 6.20, 8.104–5; Artemisia: 7.99, 8.68,