

Herodotus' *Histories* as 'monument'

IRENE DE JONG

Abstract

This article discusses Herodotus' ideas about the reception of his work. What was the aim of his Histories, how does he position himself vis-à-vis his most important predecessor Homer, and what do his characters think about their place in history? It deals with the Histories as 'epic', prose, 'oral' text, written text, memorial and, finally, 'monument'.

Keywords

Homer – memory – feigned orality – memorial

Introduction

The theme of this special issue of *Pharos* is the reception of Herodotus' *Histories* in European culture. Classical reception studies in general are a booming business at the moment, and Herodotus too has profited from this surge of interest.¹ My contribution will discuss Herodotus' *own* ideas about the reception of his work.² What was the aim of his *Histories*, how does he position himself vis-à-vis his most important predecessor Homer, and what do his characters think about their place in history? My argument will touch on the *Histories* as 'epic', prose, 'oral' text, written text, memorial and, finally, 'monument'.

¹ See Priestley & Zali 2016.

² To be sure, lacking ego documents we will never know what the historical Herodotus thought and aspired. What I will be discussing are the ideas of the Herodotean narrator who can be considered a – stylised and perhaps idealised – projection by the author of himself. In what follows Herodotus always means: the narrator Herodotus such as we see him in his own text.

The *Histories* as ‘epic’

Herodotus squarely announces his text as a form of epic in his preface:

Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέως ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα ἀκλεᾶ γένηται,...

This is the public display of the enquiry of Herodotus, (published) in order that human achievements would not disappear in the course of time and that the mighty and amazing works displayed by Greeks and barbarians would not be **lacking in *kleos***,...

I will have reason to come back to this proem many times, but the detail I want to focus on now is the word ‘lacking in *kleos*’ (Gr. ἀκλεᾶ). It signals that Herodotus-narrator not just sets himself the task to preserve the memory of the past but in doing so claims for himself the authority of an epic poet. For ἀκλεᾶ contains the word *kleos*, which is *the* technical term par excellence in the Homeric epics for the glory of heroes that is enshrined in epic song and hence immortal.³

To be sure, not only epic but most early Greek literary genres had a commemorative function, as has been shown by Jonas Grethlein in his study *The Greeks and Their Past: Poetry, Oratory, and History in the Fifth Century BCE*.⁴ However, of all these genres the Homeric epics clearly enjoyed the highest prestige as preserver of the past, and if a narrator wanted to claim a similar commemorative function for his own text Homer was his obvious reference point. Herodotus’ use of ἀκλεᾶ, ‘lacking in *kleos*’, acknowledges this reference point and signals his epic aspirations. The *Histories* are to become a new *kind* of epic.

Homer is Herodotus’ reference point but because of this poet’s prestige he is also his rival: Herodotus wants to do what Homer did previously. A rivalry with Homer can be clearly observed in the *Histories*. We may even speak of something like a love-hate relationship between Herodotus and Homer. The hate is on the surface in that Herodotus often explicitly criticises poets, above all Homer, for their freedom in dealing with the historical truth.⁵ The love is more implicit but unmistakable. The Homeric epic is Herodotus’ main model for his conception of history, for instance his focus on individuals,⁶ a source of vocabulary, and a treasure trove of narrative devices, such as speeches, catalogues, and prolepses of a

³ See e.g. Ford 1992, 59-67.

⁴ Grethlein 2010.

⁵ See e.g. Verdin 1977; Marincola 2006.

⁶ See Strasburger 1972; Marincola 2013.

character's fate.⁷ Most of all Homer provided him with a prototype for the structure of the *Histories*.

That prototype consists of concentrating on a relatively small timespan for the main story while important events from the past are evoked through analepses or flashbacks. Thus the *Iliad* concentrates on the 50 days of Achilles' wrath and the deaths of Patroclus and Hector in the last year of the Trojan war but includes the ten years of that war in analepses; the *Odyssey* concentrates on the last 40 days of Odysseus' return and his revenge on the suitors but also includes the ten years of his wanderings in the long analepsis told by Odysseus himself in books 9-12. In the same way, Herodotus' main story comprises some 80 years, the reigns of Croesus, Cyrus, Darius, Cambyses, and the expedition of Xerxes against Greece, while analepses fill in earlier history.⁸

All in all, we may conclude that despite Herodotus' criticism of Homer his indebtedness to this poet is clear. The situation resembles that of Plato who likewise heavily criticises Homer exactly *because* he is his main rival as 'educator of the Greeks'. Herodotus' epic aspirations can hardly be overrated. To understand why we must take a look at the *Histories* as prose.

The *Histories* as prose

Herodotus has been hailed as the father of history but he may also be seen as the father of narrative prose. Of course, there were *oral* prose narratives before him, but since they have not been transmitted, we cannot judge their narrative style or quality. Of the prose *written* before him, by natural scientists, philosophers, and mythographers, only fragments exist, which have recently been edited magisterially by Bob Fowler.⁹ Part of these texts are of a narrative nature and we can thus form an idea ourselves about their literary quality. In a series of pioneering articles, the same Fowler has undertaken a first exploration of this topic.¹⁰ He detects numerous important differences in narrative style between Herodotus and his prose predecessors. The prose of Herodotus' predecessors was mainly in summary style, did not employ speeches or embedded focalisation (when we look at the events via the eyes of one of the characters), had only few analepses or prolepses, and above all did not feature an overt narrator like Herodotus who regularly comments on what he tells.

⁷ See e.g. Aly 1921, 263-277; Waters 1985, 61-70; Erbse 1992, 122-132; Rengakos 2001, 2016; De Jong 2004; Pelling 2006.

⁸ See De Jong 2001.

⁹ Fowler 2001; 2013.

¹⁰ Fowler 1996; 2006a; 2006b.

An impression of the narrative style of Herodotus' prose predecessors can be gleaned from the following passage from Pherecydes fr. 17, line 1-6 and 17-20 (ed. Fowler):

Ὁ δὲ ἔρχεται οὕτως ἐπὶ τὰ χρυσᾶ μήλα. Ἀφικόμενος δὲ εἰς Ταρτησσόν, πορεύεται εἰς Λιβύην, ἔνθα ἀναιρεῖ Ἀνταῖον τὸν Ποσειδῶνος, ὑβριστὴν ὄντα. Ἐῖτα ἀφικνεῖται ἐπὶ τὸν Νεῖλον εἰς Μέμφιν, παρὰ Βούσιριν τὸν Ποσειδῶνος· ὃν κτείνει, καὶ τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ Ἰφιδάμαντα, καὶ τὸν κήρυκα Χάλβην, καὶ τοὺς ὀπάοντας, πρὸς τῷ βωμῷ τοῦ Διὸς, ἔνθα ἐξενοκτόουσι. [...] Δοὺς δὲ Ἄτλας ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων Ἡρακλεῖ τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς τὰς Ἑσπερίδας, δεξάμενος παρ' αὐτῶν τὰ μήλα, ἐλθὼν τε πρὸς τὸν Ἡρακλέα, τὰ μὲν μήλα αὐτὸς φησὶν ἀποΐσειν Ἐὐρυσθεῖ, τὸν δ' οὐρανὸν ἐκέλευσεν ἐκείνῳ ἔχειν ἀντ' αὐτοῦ.

He [Heracles] thus goes in search for the golden apples. Having arrived in Tartessos he goes to Libya, where he kills Antaeus the son of Poseidon, who was a hybriatic man. Next, he arrives at the Nile in Memphis (coming) to Bousiris the son of Poseidon, whom he kills together with his son Iphidamas and the herald Chalbe and his servants near the altar of Zeus, where he [Bousiris] used to sacrifice strangers. [...] Atlas having given heaven to Heracles to carry on his shoulders and having gone to the Hesperids and having received from them the apples and having gone to Heracles says that he [Atlas] would himself bring the apples to Eurystheus, but he exhorted him [Heracles] to go on carrying heaven instead of himself.¹¹

We may contrast this dry narrative with the sparkling and refined style of Herodotus, who varies his narrative rhythm to pass over quickly what is less important or to spend more time on what is crucial, who carefully uses different tenses to structure his narrative, and who inserts prolepses to create suspense and analepses to provide relevant background information.

Herodotus' narrative artistry is very pleasant and constitutes one of the main reasons why his work is loved and read throughout the ages.¹² But it is also very important in and by itself. Putting so much effort in composing the *Histories* Herodotus raised, in the words of John Herington, 'prose from a medium of communication between specialists into a major Panhellenic art form'.¹³ One of the most important ways in which Herodotus turned prose into such a 'major Panhellenic art form' was by adopting the refined narrative devices of the Homeric epics.

So now we are ready to understand why Herodotus signals his epic aspirations in his preface. If he wanted to enter into a competition with epic poets as commemorator of the past he must beat that venerable genre with its own weapons.

¹¹ I draw attention to the use of the 'synoptic' present tense which is common in summary narratives, see Stanzel 1984, 22-24.

¹² I am engaged at the moment in writing a narratological commentary on selections from the *Histories* which is especially geared towards laying bare Herodotus' narrative artistry.

¹³ Herington 1991, 15. See also Fowler 1996; 2006a.

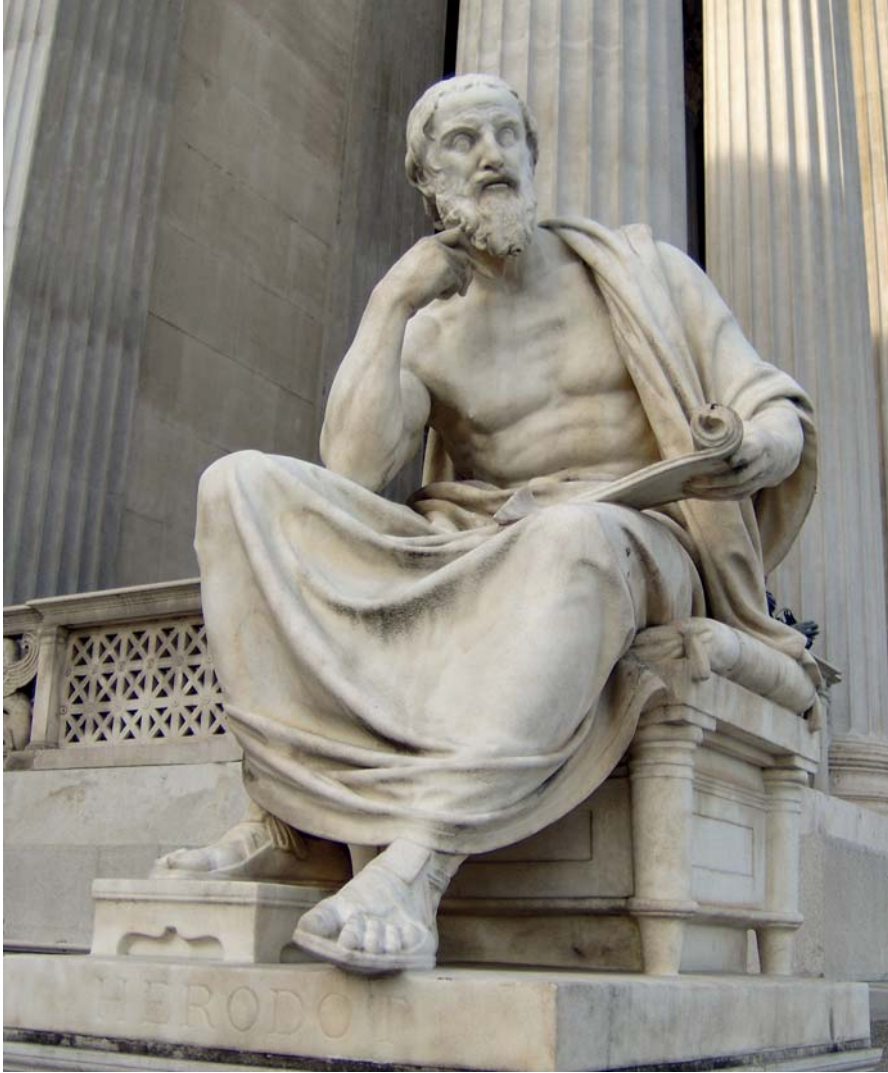


Figure 1. Statue of Herodotus in front of the Parliament Building in Vienna, Austria. Karl Schwanzer (1848-1918). Parliament Building, Vienna (Public Domain, source: Wikimedia Commons – user Pe-Jo).

He must not only replace the Muses by his own research or *historiē* but he must also make prose just as established and authoritative a genre as epic. He must replace the solemnity of the hexameter and the elevation of the Homeric *Kunst-sprache* with narrative prose that is just as artful and impressive. Thus, Herodotus' adoption of epic narrative art is not merely a matter of aesthetics but also of

rhetoric. It is his method of winning authority for the new genre of historiography. I am sure that Herodotus would have been very pleased to see himself referred to in an inscription (dated in the 1st or 2nd century AD) found in his own home city Halicarnassus as ‘the prose Homer’ (τὸν πεζὸν . . . Ὀμηρον).¹⁴ That was exactly what he had aspired to be.

The *Histories* as ‘oral’ text

The Herodotean narrator is an overt narrator who often refers to himself and his activities as researcher, organiser and presenter of his text.¹⁵ If one looks at these Herodotean self-references it is remarkable to see that most of the time he presents himself as a speaker, using the verb ‘to speak’ (Gr. λέγειν), rather than a writer, using the verb ‘to write’ (γράφειν), although he definitely wrote down his own text (see Figure 1 for a 19th-century visualisation of Herodotus presenting his work). His style also displays many linguistic features that belong to an oral rather than a written style.¹⁶

Scholars have traditionally connected these signs of orality with the ancient tradition that Herodotus’ *Histories* were based on a series of public lectures, in which he presented or tried out parts of his research.¹⁷ Such public lectures were a well-known communication channel in Herodotus’ time, when books and libraries were still a rare thing. In the *Histories*, too, writing and reading is not mentioned much: writing is largely confined to inscriptions and letters, and the one reference to a book, or rather a papyrus roll, significantly, occurs in an Egyptian context.¹⁸ Literary texts were mainly consumed through readings aloud by the author or after his death by others. This applies not only to poets but also to the scientists of Herodotus’ time, the doctors and philosophers, who mainly divulged their ideas via public or epideictic lectures.¹⁹ And Rosalind Thomas has suggested to connect the word for ‘display’ in Herodotus’ preface, ἀπόδειξις, with such epideictic lectures. I will return to this word shortly.

¹⁴ See discussion of the Salmakis inscription in Priestley 2014, 187-189.

¹⁵ For discussions see e.g. Dewald 1987; Marincola 1987; Munson 2001, 32-44, 134-141; Brock 2003; De Jong 2004, 13-24; Baragwanath 2008, 55-81.

¹⁶ See Slings 2002; Allan 2006.

¹⁷ See e.g. Johnson 1994. This was still the case in Hellenistic times, see Priestley 2014, 40-42.

¹⁸ Hdt. 2.100.5. See also Steiner 1994.

¹⁹ Just as the singers Phemius and Demodocus are alter egos of the Homeric narrator and their songs a kind of mise en abyme of his poems, a long narrative discourse like that of Socles in *Histories* 5.92 may be seen as a mise en abyme of Herodotus’ work.

I certainly think it likely that Herodotus gave public lectures in which he presented parts of his *Histories* and this may partly account for the signs of orality. But since he also wrote down his text we may ask ourselves why he refers to himself more as a speaker than as a writer. One generation later a historian like Thucydides would stress his own activity of writing. My suggestion would be to see Herodotus' self-presentation as a speaker in terms of feigned orality. Both literary historians and linguists have been interested in the phenomenon of writers who, though obviously writing, pose as speakers. Literary historians call this phenomenon feigned orality, *fingierte Mündlichkeit* or secondary orality.²⁰ We may think here of Virgil who opens his *Aeneid* with *arma virum cano*, 'I sing about the arms and the man', though he obviously is not singing but writing his epic. In the same way linguists like Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher have argued that the dichotomy between an oral and written text is not absolute but gradual and that every writer or speaker may actually choose whether to adopt the language of immediacy or the language of distance. The language of immediacy is characterised by a simple and intimate style with short sentences, parataxis and many references to speaker and addressee, while the language of distance entails a more complex and impersonal style, with long sentences and hypotaxis.²¹ In principle an oral text will employ the language of immediacy, a written text the language of distance. But even a writing author may adopt the language of immediacy and this, I think, is exactly what we observe Herodotus doing. Even in the written, final form of his text he deliberately keeps his style simple and accessible in order to reach as large a readership as possible, both in the present and in the future.

A parallel from more modern times is the novelist Charles Dickens, who also wrote in a very accessible style since he knew that his novels would be primarily consumed by being read aloud. A study by Tammy Ho Laing-Ming shows in detail how Dickens carefully adapted his style of writing, especially of the speeches in his novels, so as to be all the more effective when read aloud.²²

I conclude that the Herodotean narrator poses as a speaker rather than a writer and adopts the language of immediacy. At the same time, however, Herodotus presents *the result* of his narration as a written text. And this leads us to the *Histories* as written text.

²⁰ See e.g. Ong 1982; Goetsch 1985.

²¹ Koch & Oesterreicher 1985.

²² Laing Ming 2008, esp. 196: '[s]ince Dickens was writing at a time when the practice of reading aloud was pervasive, his texts exhibit the imprint of that practice. [...] the fact that oral-aural features appear again and again in Dickens' work reflects the writer's expectations of having his writings read aloud and listened to'. Dickens himself also often gave public readings of his work.

The *Histories* as written text

Although the Herodotean narrator poses as a speaker, he did write down his text, as becomes clear e.g. from *Histories* 2.123.1:

ἐμοὶ δὲ παρὰ πάντα [τὸν] λόγον ἔποκειται ὅτι τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπ' ἐκάστων ἀκοῆ
γράφω.

Throughout my entire logos I act on the principle that I write down whatever is told me as I have heard it.

There are two more indications that show how Herodotus qualifies his text as a written text meant to be read by readers in the future. First, there is the reference to himself in the preface using the third person and with his name rather than with the 'I' of the oral poet who is standing in front of his audience: 'this is the display of the enquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassus' rather than 'Muse tell me about the man' of *Odyssey* 1.1. Inserting his name in the text Herodotus ensures that later readers know who has written it.

Second, there is Herodotus' use throughout the *Histories* of the so-called 'prospective imperfect', e.g. in *Histories* 1.5:

Τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν σμικρὰ γέγονε· τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμέο ἦν
μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρά.

For what was big in the past, much of that is now small. And what was big in my time, was small before.

The Herodotean narrator uses a past tense in connection with his own present ('in my time'). This suggests that he projects himself into the time of future readers for whom his present has become the past.²³

In sum, Herodotus, while posing as a speaker, at the same time makes very clear that his text is a written text and as such can and should be read also by future readers. The next question to be asked is why Herodotus presents his text as a written text. For this we must turn to the *Histories* as memorial.

The *Histories* as memorial

In his proem Herodotus announces that he has written his *Histories* 'in order that human achievements **would not disappear in the course of time** and that the mighty and amazing works displayed by Greeks and barbarians **would not be**

²³ The prospective imperfect is discussed by Naiden (1999) and Rösler (2002, esp. 92): 'the writer's glance back at himself coincides with the perspective of the future reader, whose perception of the *Histories* as a work from the past is anticipated in the text'.

lacking in *kleos*'. In other words, he very emphatically advertises the main function of his text to be that of preservation of the memory of the past.

The idea that the past is worth being remembered is of course again an epic heritage: for the Homeric heroes, eternal glory was the only consolation for their mortality and it was the task of the singer to ensure that glory through his song. Herodotus likewise promises to preserve the glory of 'mighty and amazing deeds'.

Just as Homeric heroes are interested in or, one might even say, obsessed with their glory, Herodotus too presents his characters as being highly interested in their place in history. Let us take a look at two examples:

Histories 6.109.3 (on the eve of the battle of Marathon Miltiades exhorts one of his fellow Athenian generals to stay and fight against the Persians, even though they are much outnumbered by them):

Ἐν σοὶ νῦν, Καλλίμαχε, ἐστὶ ἢ καταδουλώσαι Ἀθήνας ἢ ἐλευθέρας ποιήσαντα μνημόσυνα λιπέσθαι ἐς τὸν ἅπαντα ἀνθρώπων βίον οἷα οὐδὲ Ἀρμόδιός τε καὶ Ἀριστογείτων λείπουσι.

It now lies in your hands, Callimachus, whether you allow Athens to be enslaved or whether having won her freedom you will leave behind a **memorial** for as long as there will live people, such as even Harmodius and Aristogeiton do not leave behind.

and 7.220 (the Greeks assembled in the pass of Thermopylae have discovered that they are surrounded by the Persians and Leonidas decides that the Spartans will make a last stand):

μένοντι δὲ αὐτοῦ κλέος μέγα ἐλείπετο... Ταῦτά τε δὴ ἐπιλεγόμενον Λεωνίδην καὶ βουλόμενον κλέος καταθέσθαι μόνων Σπαρτητέων...

When he [Leonidas] would stay [in Thermopylae] great *kleos* would be left behind by him ... Leonidas, considering those things and wanting to store *kleos* for the Spartans only...

These two passages show how Herodotus' characters are eager to be remembered and to attain glory. In presenting his characters as cherishing such ambitions Herodotus no doubt was realistic and portraying people as they were and still are. But I would suggest looking at passages like these also from a metanarrative perspective and to consider them as reflections by Herodotus on the function of his own text, indeed as a subtle form of self-advertisement. In his preface he announces that the aim of his *Histories* is to preserve the memory of great deeds. When he next portrays famous people from the past as being eager to be remembered, he cleverly presents his text, the *Histories*, as the fulfilment of those wishes. His *Histories* is exactly the memorial that a famous person like Miltiades, one of the heroes of Marathon, wishes to leave behind and it brings Leonidas the *kleos* he hopes for.

In the same vein, the narrator throughout the *Histories* marks events as ‘worth remembering’ or ‘worth recording’, e.g. *Histories* 8.91 (in the aftermath of the battle of Salamis the Aeginetans play an important role):

Τῶν δὲ βαρβάρων ἐς φυγὴν τροπομένων καὶ ἐκπλέοντων πρὸς τὸ Φάληρον Αἰγινῆται ὑποστάντες ἐν τῷ πορθμῷ ἔργα ἀπεδέξαντο λόγου ἄξια. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ Ἀθηναῖοι ἐν τῷ θορόβῳ ἐκεράϊζον τὰς τε ἀντισταμένας καὶ τὰς φευγούσας τῶν νεῶν, οἱ δὲ Αἰγινῆται τὰς ἐκπλεούσας· ὅπως δὲ τινες τοὺς Ἀθηναίους διαφύγοιεν, φερόμενοι ἐσέπιπτον ἐς τοὺς Αἰγινήτας.

While the barbarians were being put to flight and were trying to sail out to Phalerum the Aeginetans lay in wait for them in the passage and **displayed works worth to be recorded**. The Athenians destroyed ships that would resist or try to flee in the thick of battle, while the Aeginetans destroyed the ships that were trying to sail out. And if a Persian ship would escape the Athenians, it fell in the hands of the Aeginetans.

The deeds of the Aeginetans were ‘worth recording’ . . . and the *Histories* of Herodotus records them! Herodotus subtly or perhaps not so subtly plugs his own activity as a historian. And using the expression ‘displayed works’, *ἔργα ἀπεδέξαντο*, for the acts of the Aeginetans he recalls the promise of his preface to preserve the memory of ‘works displayed’, *ἔργα ... ἀποδεχθέντα*. Thus, when Herodotus notes that actions are worth recording he not only confers glory on historical persons from the past but also advertises his own crucial role as the one to bestow that glory.

Perhaps we can go one step further. It has been pointed out by Carolyn Dewald that one of the reasons why Herodotus is such an overt narrator is because he wants to make clear the effort he has put in collecting and researching his material. His work as a historian is a ‘mighty and amazing deed’ itself, to be put on a par with the mighty and amazing deeds performed by his characters.²⁴ This is the moment to return to the word *ἀπόδεξις* in the preface.

While Thomas suggests connecting this word to the genre of the epideictic speech,²⁵ another interpretation has been proposed by Hartmut Erbse and Egbert Bakker:²⁶ they both link *ἀπόδεξις* to the verb *ἀποδείκνυμαι*, which we also find in the preface: ‘this is the public *display* of the enquiry by Herodotus of mighty and amazing deeds *displayed* by Greeks and Persians’. Using the word *ἀπόδεξις* in connection with his own activity as a historian Herodotus underscores that his work is an amazing feat too. His aim is to preserve the fame of his characters but also to preserve his own fame. His *Histories* are a memorial for his characters but also a memorial for himself.

This is the moment to turn to my last topic, which was announced in the title of this article: the *Histories* as ‘monument’.

²⁴ See esp. Dewald 1987.

²⁵ Thomas 2000, 49-69.

²⁶ Bakker 2002, 20-32.

The *Histories* as 'monument'

Returning one last time to the preface we may note a detail that suggests that Herodotus metaphorically presents his text as a kind of monument, not of stone but of words:

Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησσεός ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα ἀκλεῖα γένηται,...

This is the public display of the enquiry of Herodotus, (published) in order that human achievements would not disappear in the course of time and that the mighty and amazing works displayed by Greeks and barbarians would not be lacking in *kleos*,...

The deictic pronoun ἦδε 'this' refers to the book-roll readers are holding in their hands. This way of self-reference by an object recalls the way inscriptions refer to the stone on which they are inscribed, e.g. *IG IV 358*:

Δφενία τόδε σᾶμα, τὸν ὤλεσε πόντος ἄναιδής.

This is the tomb of Deinias, whom the cruel sea swallowed.²⁷

Why would Herodotus choose the model of the monument?

In the wake of Pierre Nora's concept of *lieu de mémoire* we have become aware how all kinds of objects and even landscapes can be bearers of collective memory. But traditionally texts and monuments are of course the standard means by which societies preserve their collective memory. In early Greek culture, too, monuments and texts are *the* forms of commemoration, often in combination. A good example can be found in the *Iliad* 7.81-7.91. Hector, when discussing the details of a duel between himself and Ajax, envisions the following procedure should he kill his opponent:

*εἰ δέ κ' ἐγὼ τὸν ἔλω, δῶη δέ μοι εἴχος Ἀπόλλων,
τεύχεα σύλησας οἴσω προτὶ Ἰλιον ἱήν,
καὶ κρεμόω προτὶ νηὸν Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο,
τὸν δὲ νέκυν ἐπὶ νῆας εὖσσέλυμος ἀποδώσω,
ᾧφρα ἔταρχύσωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί,
σημά τέ οἱ χεύσωσι ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ.
καὶ ποτέ τις εἴπησι καὶ ὀφρυγόνων ἀνθρώπων
νηῖ πολυκλήϊδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον·
"ἀνδρὸς μὲν τότε σῆμα πάλαι καταεθνηῶτος,
ὄν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ."
ὡς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται.*

²⁷ For such deictic pronouns in inscriptions, see Svenbro 1988, 38-52. See also Moles 1999.

But if I slay him, and Apollo gives me glory, I will strip him of his armor and carry it to sacred Troy and hang it in dedication at the temple of Apollo the far-shooter, but his corpse I will give back to the well-benched ships, so that the long-haired Achaeans can bury him and heap a mound for him by the broad Hellespont. And people will say, even of generations still to be born, as they sail by in their many-benched ship over the wine-dark sea: “This is the mound of a man who died long ago, whom once glorious Hector slew.” That is what they will say, and my fame [*kleos*] will never die.

Hector here talks about a physical monument (a burial mound), but at the same time also envisions what people who see the mound will say. He expects that passers-by, including future ones, will remember the event connected with the burial mound and voice a kind of oral epitaph:²⁸ ‘[τ]his (τόδε) is the mound of a man who died long ago, whom once glorious Hector slew’. This oral epitaph resembles the texts that later will be inscribed on grave monuments of which I quoted an example in the previous section (‘this is the tomb of Deinias, whom the cruel sea swallowed’). The monument triggers a text and, vice versa, the text identifies the monument and links it to Hector. Between them, monument and text ensure that Hector’s *kleos* will never die.

If in Homer monument and text are thus seen as mutually reinforcing each other, a poet like Pindar introduces a hint of rivalry or ‘paragone’ between the two forms of commemoration, for instance in *Pythian* 6.7-6.14 (the poet speaks about his own poem which was performed in Delphi):

ἔτοῖμος ὕμνων θησαυρός ἐν πολυχρόσῳ
Ἀπολλωνία τετείχισται νάπα·

τὸν οὔτε χειμέριος ὕμβρος, ἐπακτὸς ἐλθῶν
ἔριβρόμου νεφέλας
στρατὸς ἀμείλιχος, οὔτ’ ἀνεμος ἐς μυχούς
ἄλῶς ἄξιοισι παμφόρῳ χεράδει
τυπτόμενον.

where a **treasure house of hymns** has been built in Apollo’s valley rich in gold, one which neither winter rain, coming from abroad as a relentless army from a loudly rumbling cloud, nor wind shall buffet and with their deluge of silt carry into the depths of the sea.

Pindar metaphorically presents his text as a monument, calling it ‘a treasure house of hymns’. Since this is a verbal monument it cannot, like physical monuments, be destroyed by natural elements. The message which Pindar here sends is unmistakable: texts are more durable than monuments and hence a better investment of Greek aristocrats who want to see their fame eternalised.

²⁸ See De Jong 1987; Scodel 1992.

The idea of texts being more durable than physical monuments will of course become a *topos* in ancient literature²⁹ and the best-known instance is Horace *Ode* 3.30:

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius
regalique situ pyramidum altius,
quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
possit diruere aut innumerabilis
annorum series et fuga temporum.*

I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze, more lofty than the regal structure of the pyramids, one which neither corroding rain nor the ungovernable North Wind can ever destroy, nor the countless series of the years, nor the flight of time.

Let us now, with the crucial link between monument and text in the back of our minds, return to Herodotus. Zooming in one last time on the preface, I draw attention to the word *ἔργα*: '[t]his is the public display of the enquiry of Herodotus, (published) in order that ... the mighty and amazing **works** displayed by Greeks and barbarians would not be lacking in *kleos*'. As has been well argued by Henry Immerwahr, *ἔργα* refers both to deeds and to monuments in Herodotus.³⁰ Two examples are provided here:

Histories 8.88.2:

καὶ τὸν ἐπειρέσθαι εἰ ἀληθῆως ἐστὶ Ἀρτεμισίης τὸ ἔργον, ...

and he [Xerxes] asked whether **the deed** [sinking an enemy ship] really had been that of Artemisia

and 1.93:

ἐν δὲ ἔργον πολλὸν μέγιστον παρέχεται χωρὶς τῶν τε Αἰγυπτίων ἔργων καὶ τῶν Βαβυλωνίων.

Lydia has one **monument** that is by far the most impressive except for the **monuments** of Egypt and Babylon [sc. the tomb of Alyattes, the father of Croesus].

Both deeds and monuments allow a person to leave behind a memorial (*μνημόσυνον/-α*), and as we saw in section 5, this is, according to Herodotus, what people are eager to do.

Turning from 'the works' of his characters to Herodotus's own work, the *Histories*, I contend that presenting his text as a metaphorical monument, a monument of

²⁹ For discussion, see e.g. Porter 2010, 453-523.

³⁰ Immerwahr 1966.

words, was a logical choice: if his characters want to leave behind a memorial, then a ‘monument’ like Herodotus’ written text is the best choice they can make.

Herodotus’ declared interest in the monumentalisation of the past is also very understandable against the background of the central theme of his work: the mutability of human fate and the transience of human existence. Herodotus is obsessed with the idea that things never stay the way they are: large cities can become small and vice versa, and great luck and riches can come to an end as Croesus famously exemplifies. Against the background of this preoccupation with the fragility of human existence the preservation of the memory of human works becomes a matter of crucial importance.

Rather like Pindar and Horace, Herodotus even seems to suggest that his verbal monument is more durable than a bronze one. This is of course large-scale bluff or wishful thinking. Innumerable ancient authors will have made similar claims about conferring eternal glory, but their works nevertheless did not withstand the ravages of time or survive the contingencies of manuscript tradition. In the case of Herodotus, however, his promise to erect a durable ‘monument’ has become true. He *has* given fame to his characters and he *has* fulfilled Miltiades’ promise that the battle of Marathon would be ‘a memorial for as long as there will live people’.³¹

But he has also brought fame to himself and his home-city, as is expressed by epigram *IG XII 1, 145* = *SEG* 36, no. 975,³² ascribed to Antipater of Sidon, who lived in the 2nd century BC:

Assyria has the stone mound of Semiramis,
but the city of Niniveh did not raise an Andron, nor did
 an offspring of the Muses shoot forth among the Indians,
nor did primeval Babylon nourish a tongue sweeter than Herodotus’
 or raise Panyassis [with his sweet words]; but the rugged earth of
Halicarnassus did. Through their songs
 does she enjoy renown among the cities of the Hellenes.

Antipater here refers to some of the most famous monuments in antiquity, and states that the rugged city of Halicarnassus (which clearly cannot boast of being host to such monuments) did bring forth three famous authors: the historian Andron, the epic poet Panyassis and the historian Herodotus.

³¹ For the long reception of the battle of Marathon up to the present day, see e.g. Jung 2006; Bridges-Hall-Rhodes 2007.

³² I quote the translation of Priestley 2014, 200.

If the *Histories* are a verbal monument 'more durable than bronze' erected to keep alive the glory of the Greek past and that of Herodotus' own achievement in researching it, the present volume, which sets out to trace aspects of its reception in European culture, is a fitting tribute.

I.J.F. DE JONG
University of Amsterdam
i.j.f.dejong@uva.nl

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