

TIMOTHY ROOD

**Herodotus' Proem:  
Space, time, and the origins of international relations<sup>1</sup>**

**H**ERODOTUS starts his work by promising to display the result of his enquiries into the great and marvellous deeds performed by both Greeks and non-Greeks and in particular to relate the causes of their conflicts. He proceeds at once to offer an account allegedly told by 'learned Persians' (Περσέων ... οἱ λόγιοι): 'it was the Phoenicians who caused the conflict (αἰτίους ... τῆς διαφορῆς) ...'. The account attributed to these 'learned Persians' focuses on the successive abductions of four women. The Asiatic Phoenicians caused the conflict by seizing a Greek woman, Io. Next, the Greeks seized first one Asian woman, Europa, and then another, Medea. Finally, Paris' abduction of the Greek Helen prompted the Greeks to esca-

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1 This is a fuller version of a paper delivered at the University of Crete, Rethymnon, in April 2010; I would like to thank the audience for their comments and questions, and particularly Michael Paschalis, Athena Kavoulaki, and Melina Tamiolaki for their hospitality; and Chris Pelling, Tom Phillips, and Marek Węcowski for comments on the written version. Following Immerwahr 1956: 247, I use the term 'proem' of Hdt. 1.1-5 as a whole; the last phrase of my subtitle alludes to the tendency among modern International Relations theorists to look to Thucydides as their foundational text while ignoring Herodotus — but I do not want to suggest that Herodotus should simply replace Thucydides in this exercise in self-definition.

late the conflict by launching an expedition against Troy. Herodotus then follows this short narrative by turning to describe the actions of the man (soon identified as Croesus) ‘who, to my certain knowledge, first undertook criminal acts of aggression against the Greeks’ (1.5.3).

Herodotus’ opening sequence is the most intensively studied section of his whole work. The main areas of scholarly interest have been the following: ‘source citations’ (did Herodotus invent the attribution of the story to ‘learned Persians?’); tone (is the account a parody of Hecataean rationalism?); evidence for the written publication or at least oral dissemination of the *Histories* (does the comic account of the origins of the Peloponnesian War in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* allude to Herodotus?); temporality (does Herodotus conceive of a separation of myth from history?); and thematic links with the rest of the work, especially the ideas of reciprocity and retaliation.<sup>2</sup> Building on scholars’ analysis of Herodotus’ interest in temporality and reciprocity, this paper will offer a new way of reading Herodotus’ proem. I will argue that the ‘learned Persians’ narrative offers a subtle analysis of how ideas of spatial as well as temporal differentiation are created by a process of interaction between different human communities. This analysis, I will suggest, can be read against sophistic accounts of the origins of civilized communities: through a Persian mouthpiece, Herodotus in effect supplements the concerns of his contemporaries by offering a sophistic parable on the origins of interstate relations.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, I will suggest that the common reading of the proem as a programmatic statement of the importance of reciprocal justice is in important respects mistaken. As we shall see, Herodotus’ account exposes a progressive shift in the role of claims based on ideas of justice and reciprocity, and this shift is itself central to his

2 For recent treatments of the proem, see Pallantza 2005: 131-42 and especially Węcowski 2004, with abundant bibliography. I will discuss in my conclusion the implications of my arguments for previous analyses of the proem. Translations of Herodotus are based on Waterfield 1998; abbreviations follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

3 For Herodotus’ intellectual context, see above all Thomas 2000.

analysis of spatial and temporal differentiation and the creation of the international order.

## I. Spatial differentiation

The account of the 'learned Persians' ends with the claim that it was the Greeks' over-reaction to the abduction of Helen that led to the separation of Asia from Europe/Greece: Ἀπὸ τούτου αἰεὶ ἠγήσασθαι τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν σφίσι εἶναι πολέμιον. Τὴν γὰρ Ἀσίην καὶ τὰ ἐνοικέοντα ἔθνεα βάρβαρα οἰκηιοῦνται οἱ Πέρσαι, τὴν δὲ Εὐρώπην καὶ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἠγῆνται κεχωρίσθαι (1.4.4: 'Ever since then, the Persians have regarded the Greeks as their enemies. They think of Asia and the non-Greek people living there as their own, but regard Europe and the Greeks as separate from themselves'). Their account implies that the definition of geographical units such as 'Asia' and 'Europe' is intimately connected with politics: a series of hostile interactions between the inhabitants of these lands has embedded in the Persian consciousness the notion of their geographical distinctness.<sup>4</sup> This vision of geographical difference as created rather than natural is later supported by Herodotus himself in an extended discussion of the conventionality of continental divisions (4.36-45) — though Herodotus' focus there is the artificiality of defining continental boundaries rather than the historical processes that gave rise to those boundaries.<sup>5</sup> The Persians do, however, go beyond Herodotus in associating the separation of continents with a state of conflict.

The language of separation (κεχωρίσθαι) that Herodotus' Persians apply to Europe and Asia links their analysis of geographical differentiation with other contemporary developmental accounts. Herodotus' own account of Egypt implies that humans and animals were once undifferentiated and that this state now survives only in Egypt: Τοῖσι μὲν ἄλλοισι ἀνθρώποισι χωρὶς θηρίων ἡ διαίτα ἀποκέκρται, Αἰγυπτίοισι δὲ ὁμοῦ θηρίοισι ἡ διαίτα ἐστὶ (2.36.2: 'Everywhere

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4 Cf. Friedman 2006: 165.

5 Cf. Thomas 2000: 98-100.

else in the world people live separately from animals, but animals and humans live together in Egypt'). The adverb χωρίς ('separate') is here used with a verb (ἀποκρίνεσθαι) that Herodotus uses elsewhere in speaking of the separation of Hellenes from barbarians: ἀπεκρίθη ἐκ παλαιτέρου τοῦ βαρβάρου ἔθνους τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἔὸν καὶ δεξιώτερον καὶ εὐηθείης ἡλιθίου ἀπηλλαγμένον μᾶλλον (1.60.1: 'the Greeks had long been distinguished from barbarians by being more clever and less gullible'). Herodotus' language is similar to the vocabulary of separation of elements found in pre-socratic cosmologies, particularly in Anaxagoras.<sup>6</sup> It recalls, too, the older Hesiodic idea of the separation of heaven and earth as expressed in a fragment of Euripides' *Melanippe*: ὡς οὐρανός τε γαῖα τ' ἦν μορφή μία· / ἐπεὶ δ' ἐχωρίσθησαν ἀλλήλων δίχα ... (fr. 484: 'Heaven and Earth were once a single form, but when they were parted from each other into two ...', trans. Collard and Cropp).<sup>7</sup> These verbal parallels reinforce the notion that present-day spatial divisions are historically determined rather than essential. And just as the Persians associate the separation of Asia and Europe with conflict, so too some Greek philosophers (notably Empedocles) link the idea of division and multiplicity with strife: the summary of the 'Ionian and Sicilian muses' offered in Plato's *Sophist* alludes to Empedocles among others as claiming 'that being is one and many, and that these are held together by enmity and friendship, ever parting, ever meeting, as the severer Muses assert, while the gentler ones do not insist on the perpetual strife and peace, but admit a relaxation and alternation of them; peace and

<sup>6</sup> ἀποκρίνεσθαι is attested several times in Anaxagoras and other pre-Socratics: see the Index to DK (and cf. also διακρίνεσθαι). χωρίζεσθαι is also used by Anaxagoras, though in the extant fragments only in the negative, for a lack of separation (DK 59 B 6, 8); cf. Heraclitus DK 22 B 108 (σοφὸν ἐστὶ πάντων κεχωρισμένον); and for its use in ethnographic contexts, Hdt. 1.172.1, 3.20.2; Xen. *Anab.* 5.4.34. Note also how forms from διαφέρειν are used at Heraclitus DK 22 B 8, 10, 51, in elaborating the idea of a structural unity created through the mutual adjustment of opposites (Hussey 1972: 43-6); cf. διαφορῆς at Hdt. 1.1.1. I expand here on a point briefly made at Rood 2006: 303.

<sup>7</sup> This passage is cited at Diod. 1.7.7, where it is claimed that Euripides was a student of Anaxagoras.

unity sometimes prevailing under the sway of Aphrodite, and then again plurality and war, by reason of a principle of strife' (242d, trans. Jowett).<sup>8</sup>

A similar link between the separation of continents and conflict is made at the start of a famous fifth-century epigram. This poem ([Simonides] XLV) is quoted by Diodorus Siculus as commemorating the battle of Eurymedon (11.62.3), though it is generally taken by modern scholars as referring to Cimon's later Cyprus campaign: ἐξ οὗ γ' Εὐρώπην Ἀσίας δίχα πόντος ἔνευε / καὶ πόλιας θνητῶν θεοῦρος Ἄρης ἐπέχει ('Since the time when the sea first separated Europe from Asia and wild Ares controlled the cities of mortals ...', trans. Campbell). The juxtaposition of 'Europe' and 'Asia' across the hexameter's strong caesura brings out how these units are conceptually equivalent but still importantly distinct; the second line then implies that the control of wild Ares is a consequence of the primal separation between the two continents. The first line of this epigram was in turn appropriated in a late-fifth-century inscription set up by the Lycian dynast Kheriga — a quotation that 'annexes the Greek conception of the separation of Europe and Asia, and turns it into an expression of Asiatic national identity'.<sup>9</sup> Herodotus may already have been inspired by the same epigram in his (presumably fictive) attribution of an Asiatic identity to the 'learned Persians'.<sup>10</sup>

The idea of geographical difference as created rather than natural is reinforced by the 'learned Persians' implicit suggestion that Hellas

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8 Cf. e.g. Empedocles DK 31 B 17. For a similar conception applied to language, cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 143 (humans originally spoke one language, but conflict originated after Hermes divided up the different languages and nations), with West 1997: 315 for Near-Eastern parallels.

9 Thonemann 2009: 191; for the epigram, see CEG 177.

10 There is no parallel in extant Achaemenid evidence for any Europe/Asia division in Persian thought; Herodotus' own ethnography of the Persians attributes to them a different conception of space (1.134.2: Persian disrespect for other people is in proportion to how far apart they live). For the Greek idea, cf. also the start of Choerilus of Samos' *Persica*: Ἦγεό μοι λόγον ἄλλον, ὅπως Ἀσίας ἀπὸ γαίης / ἦλθεν ἐς Εὐρώπην πόλεμος μέγας (fr. 1 Bernabé: 'Lead me to another tale, how from the land of Asia / a great war came to Europe').

itself is a created entity. The lack of geographical definition emerges at the start of their account when they define Argos (where the Phoenician traders who seize Io put in) as the most important city ‘in the land which is now called Hellas’ (1.1.2: ἐν τῇ νῦν Ἑλλάδι καλεομένη χώρῃ). The phrase ‘now called’ is common in other mythographic accounts: Herodotus later speaks of the Pelasgians as living in the land ‘now called’ Hellas (8.44.1), and Thucydides picks up this phrase in his own proem (1.2.1); similarly Antiochus of Syracuse wrote of the land ‘now called Italiê’ (fr. 2 Fowler), and Hellanicus of Lesbos of the land ‘now called Tyrrheniê’ (fr. 4 Fowler).<sup>11</sup> The sense of temporal distancing expressed by such phrases is particularly strong when, as in all these examples, there is no mention of any earlier name for the land in question.<sup>12</sup>

Herodotus’ account of how the Persians conceive the creation of geographical difference also involves the suppression of other ways of articulating spatial developments. Scholars have noted that there are strong elements of a deliberate selectivity in the Persians’ account. But this selectivity itself (in Carolyn Dewald’s phrase) suggests ‘presence through absence.’<sup>13</sup> That is, readers of the Persian story are primed to notice the absence of the gods<sup>14</sup> and of other glamorous and romantic elements in the traditional stories (Io’s transformation into a heifer; the golden fleece; the name of the *Argo*).<sup>15</sup> A similar ‘presence through absence’ can be suggested at the spatial level. If in some sense each abduction ‘successively fills in the blank spaces on the map of Herodotus’s world,’<sup>16</sup> the function of defining space is much more strongly expressed in traditional tellings of the women’s stories. After leaving Colchis with Medea, Jason was presented as

11 For other Herodotean examples, see 2.49.3, 5.57.1 (Cadmus coming to what is ‘now called Boeotia’). 4.8.3 (Heracles coming to the land ‘now called Scythia’), 7.94, 8.43.

12 At 2.56.1, by contrast, Herodotus speaks of what is now Hellas but was formerly Pelasgiê.

13 Dewald 1999: 226.

14 Cf. Pelling 1999: 334; 2006a: 83.

15 Cf. Węcowski 2004: 151.

16 Purves 2010: 127; cf. also Dewald 2006: 146 on the spatial range of the myths.

passing through the Planctae (*Od.* 12.69-72) or across the Ocean and then the Libyan desert (Hes. fr. 241 M-W; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.25-8, 251). Pindar also portrayed Jason's outward journey as involving founding an altar to Poseidon at the mouth of the Inhospitable (Axeinos) Sea and as putting an end to the Clashing Rocks (*Pyth.* 4.203-11). These various representations articulate a vision in which the heroic mythical journey mediates between familiar and unfamiliar space; more crudely, Euripides made Jason allude dismissively to Medea as 'living at the furthest ends of the earth' (*Med.* 540-1). Herodotus, by contrast, makes no attempt to integrate the Argonauts' journey to Colchis into a broader global geography; he merely mentions that the Greeks sailed to Colchian Aea and the Phasis River, with no detail of their route there or back.

Herodotus' spatial selectivity is even more pronounced in relation to Io.<sup>17</sup> He does not offer any detail about her route from Europe to Asia after she has been seized by the Phoenicians; at most, he implies that she was taken straight from Argos to Egypt.<sup>18</sup> In other accounts, she takes a much more circuitous route after she has been turned into a heifer and maddened by a gadfly: from Argos she made for the Adriatic (giving her name to the part of it known as the Ionian Sea), headed east towards the Black Sea (giving rise to the name of the Bosphorus), and then passed through Asia Minor and the Levant before arriving in Egypt. The removal of this circuitous route strips Io's travels of their significance within the Greeks' imaginative mythical geography: 'The actual centrality of Greece in the geographical space of the Mediterranean was reinforced by the various myths of wanderings, which helped to create among the Greeks a sense of bal-

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17 Cf. how Plut. *Mor.* 856d-e contrasts Herodotus' portrayal of Io with the way all Greeks suppose her 'to have received divine honours at the hands of barbarians and to have won such fame that many seas and the most famous straits were named after her and to be the source from which the most notable royal families sprang' (trans. Perrin).

18 I am not sure why Purves 2010: 126 thinks that Herodotus here 'uses the geographical model of the *periplus*': there is no suggestion of a voyage along a coast.

ance between extremes of climate, customs, and the various stages of civilization. ... Despite tribal disparity and growing geographical dispersion through colonization, all the Greek world was connected by a genealogical tree centered on Io.<sup>19</sup>

The break from this mythical geography marked by Herodotus' account is especially significant because Io's travels were an important part of the story of the demarcation of the division between Asia and Europe. This role is brought out particularly well in the account of Io's travels offered by the chorus in Aeschylus' *Supplikes*: † διχῆ † δ' ἀντίπορον / γαῖαν ἐν αἴσᾳ διατέμνουσα πόρον / κυματῖαν ὀρίζει // ἰάπτει δ' Ἀσίδος δι' αἴας (544-7: 'she cleaved the waves of the strait, in accordance with destiny, and thus defined the boundary of the land on its distant side; / and she rushed through the land of Asia', trans. Sommerstein). The textual corruption of these difficult lines makes it hard to know Aeschylus' exact meaning, but it is at least clear that he stresses the Bosphorus as a boundary and a point of division (note ἀντίπορον, διατέμνουσα, and ὀρίζει). The division between Europe and Asia seems to be bolstered by an allusion to the etymology of Bosphorus: 'By receiving a name this strait can now truly fulfil the function of delimiting Asia from Europe.'<sup>20</sup> It is further reinforced by the mention of Asia in line 547 at the start of a new stanza and by the contrast between the vague summary of Io's travels in Europe and the greater detail on her route through Asia to Egypt. The divide between Europe and Asia is again stressed in the account of Io's journey in the *Prometheus Vincitus*: an etymology of the (Cimmerian rather than Thracian) Bosphorus is offered (732-4); a breakoff comment on the Europe/Asia divide (734-5) separates different sections of Prometheus' narrative; and those sections are themselves distinct in the level of detail they offer to the geography of Europe and Asia.<sup>21</sup>

Though it is clear that Herodotus' 'learned Persians' do conceive Asia and Europe as distinct entities before the Trojan War, they nonetheless see that war rather than Io's travels as the key moment of

19 Davison 1991: 62-3.

20 Friis Johansen and Whittle 1980: ii. 425.

21 Cf. Griffith 1983: 214, 228.



differentiation between the two continents. This focus on the Trojan War is pointed in relation both to Herodotus' literary predecessors and to the war's significance in the rest of the *Histories*. Within the epic tradition, the Trojan War had been marked as a turning-point in the interaction of gods and mortals.<sup>22</sup> Herodotus' Persians give that mythical mode of differentiation a spatial twist: the war makes permanent the breach between Asia and Europe. At the same time, the implied Persian claim to all of Asia looks ahead to the concluding section of the *Histories*: Herodotus there reports how the Persian governor Artayctes defends stealing from the tomb of Protesilaus by speaking to Xerxes of 'some Greek who took part in an expedition against your land'; he then pauses to offer an explanation that forms a ring with the opening of the work ('When Artayctes said that Protesilaus had invaded the king's land, he was bearing in mind the fact that the Persians regard all Asia as belonging to them and to whoever is their king at the time', 9.116.3).<sup>23</sup> The Persians' claim to Asia is also implied in the suggestion that Xerxes' invasion of Greece was an act of revenge for the Trojan War: this motivation seems to be implied by Xerxes' visit to Troy on his way to Greece (7.43).<sup>24</sup>

Projecting the Persian claim to Asia back to the time of the Trojan Wars is shown by other portions of the *Histories* to be tendentious. The Persian claim to Asia is plausible only from the time of Cyrus — and even so the Persians' sharp demarcation of Asia and Europe leaves open the status of the Greeks who live in Asia. The Ionians in Asia are first conquered by Croesus (1.6) and then 'enslaved for the second time' under Cyrus (1.169.2). Twice, resettlement in Europe is proposed as a solution to the problem of these Asiatic Greeks: first Bias proposes that they settle in Sardinia (1.170), and after the victo-

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22 See Graziosi and Haubold 2005: 95.

23 For the ring-composition with 1.4.4, cf. Pohlenz 1937: 5; Powell 1939: 80 n. 1; Immerwahr 1966: 146; Boedeker 1988: 42-5; Nagy 1990: 272-3; Harrison 2002: 553; also Ceccarelli 1993: 51-4, who further reads the Artayctes scene (which has a fish portent at 9.120) as restoring the continental equilibrium ruptured by Cyrus' conquest of islanders (cf. Cyrus' fish parable at 1.141).

24 See Haubold 2006.

ry at Mycale the Greeks again deliberate on resettling the Ionians in Europe (9.106). Herodotus also reports some actual migrations away from Asia Minor and the islands (1.164-9: Phocaeans and Teians; 6.22-4: some Samians). The experience of the Ionians underlines the provisional nature of the Persians' early polarizing of Europe and Asia.<sup>25</sup>

The initial division into Europe and Asia is also shown to be provisional by Xerxes' desire to conquer the whole of Europe (7.8.γ). Xerxes' subsequent polarizing (7.11.3: ...ἵνα ἢ τάδε πάντα ὑπὸ Ἑλλησι ἢ ἐκεῖνα πάντα ὑπὸ Πέρσησι γένηται· τὸ γὰρ μέσον οὐδὲν τῆς ἔχθρης ἐστί ('in the end either all Persia [lit. 'this'] will be in Greek hands, or all Greece [lit. 'that'] will be in Persian hands; there is no middle ground in this war') further perverts the Persian perspective in the proem, which was that Europe and Asia were at odds with each other, not that one would inevitably subsume the other.<sup>26</sup> Xerxes seems to subscribe to an Empedoclean view of the instability generated by the separation out of opposing units.<sup>27</sup>

It has emerged, then, that the Persians' initial definition of the dichotomy of Asia and Europe makes complex use of a range of literary and philosophical antecedents. On the one hand, Herodotus implicitly sets their spatial projection against the imaginative geography embedded in traditional tellings of myth and against other

25 On Herodotus' blurring of boundaries, cf. Pelling 1997 — though his focus is on political and cultural rather than strictly geographical divisions. This is not to deny that the Europe/Asia division is important for Herodotus, especially in recounting crossings (1.103.3, 2.103.1, 4.143.1, 5.12.1, 7.20.2, 7.33.1, 7.174.1); cf. also the portent at 1.209.1.

26 Cf. Immerwahr 1966: 44 on 'the disregard shown by the Persian kings, in their Western attacks, of this native doctrine'; also Baragwanath 2008: 248. Romm 1998: 82 sees a temporal shift, though Herodotus uses present tenses for the Persian viewpoint at 1.4.

27 For the attempt to rule both Asia and Europe as problematic from a Greek perspective too, see Themistocles' speech at 8.109.3: while the sincerity of this analysis is undermined by Themistocles' preceding *volte face* and by his personal motivation, his claim that the gods have begrudged Xerxes rule over both continents is presumably at least meant to seem reasonable to his Athenian audience.

modes of commemorating the Persian Wars. At the same time, the Persians' account draws on the world-image expressed by a number of pre-Socratic philosophers. Through this engagement with earlier writers, Herodotus offers a necessarily partial view of the creation of a bipolar international order while also preparing the ground for the deliberations on the instability of bipolarity that he puts in Xerxes' mouth. As we shall now see, Herodotus' account of the creation of spatial difference is supplemented by an analysis of temporal differentiation that has embedded within it a complex pattern of thought about the origins of international relations.

## II. Temporal differentiation

We have noted that the idea of temporal distance is suggested within the opening section of the 'learned Persians' narrative: Argos is defined as the most powerful city in what is 'now called Hellas', and the Trojan War is highlighted as the conflict that created a divide between Europe and Asia. This idea of temporal distance is reinforced by the transition at the end of this section: τὸν δὲ οἶδα αὐτὸς πρῶτον ὑπάρξαντα ἀδίκων ἔργων ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας, τοῦτον σημήνας προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου ... Οὗτος ὁ Κροῖσος βαρβάρων πρῶτος τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν τοὺς μὲν κατεστρέψατο Ἑλλήνων ἐς φόρου ἀπαγωγὴν, τοὺς δὲ φίλους προσεποιήσατο (1.5.3, 1.6.2: 'I will talk about the man who, to my certain knowledge, first undertook criminal acts of aggression against the Greeks . . . Croesus was the first non-Greek we know of to have subjected Greeks to the payment of tribute . . .'). Herodotus' criterion for temporal differentiation here is cognitive: he shows 'a common-sense appreciation that (oral) tradition becomes increasingly unreliable the further back it stretches';<sup>28</sup> in other words, it is harder to gain knowledge about the distant past.

The idea that Croesus marks a strong temporal divide is complicated by Herodotus' (deliberate) difficulties over beginnings. First-

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28 West 2002: 38 n. 60.

ly, Herodotus implicitly defends his choice of Croesus by making a distinction between Cimmerian raiding and Lydian conquest: Πρὸ δὲ τῆς Κροίσου ἀρχῆς πάντες Ἕλληνες ἦσαν ἐλεύθεροι. Τὸ γὰρ Κιμμερίων στράτευμα τὸ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἴωνίην ἀπικόμενον, Κροίσου ἐὼν πρεσβύτερον, οὐ καταστροφή ἐγένετο τῶν πολιῶν, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς ἀρπαγῆ (1.6.3: 'Before Croesus' reign, all Greeks were free; the Cimmerian expedition which reached Ionia before Croesus' time was a raiding party, intent on pillage, and not a conquest of the communities there'). He then moves backwards by recounting the actions of Croesus' ancestors, showing how they too had been involved in conflict with Ionian Greeks (though admittedly they had not imposed tribute). Croesus marks a new beginning, but this new beginning does not emerge from nothing.<sup>29</sup>

Despite these complications over beginnings, the patterning of the narrative told by the 'learned Persians' can still be seen as a strong affirmation of the temporal distance between the time of Croesus and the period before the Trojan Wars. Some scholars have seen the story of the successive abductions of women as a parody of epic causality — not just because the abduction of a woman serves to explain a major war, but also because of the way causality is reduced to a narrative of consecutive events (note μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα and μετὰ ταῦτα, 'after this', at 1.2.1 *bis*, 1.3.1). Herodotus could be suggesting that the epistemological barrier between past and present is less important than a division in the treatment of causes — but equally he could be pointing to a contrast with the more serious modes of historical explanation that are suitable for dealing with present-day conflicts by contrast with the traditions handed down about the remote past.<sup>30</sup>

29 Cf. Rood 2007: 115-16. Powell 1939: 10, by contrast, offers a compositional explanation for the supposedly incoherent transition at 1.6.

30 Cf. Pelling 2000: 155; Węcowski 2004: 151-2, 155, citing ancient (Aristotelian) discussions of the difference between the strong causal plotting found in the *Iliad* and the linear connections typical of the epic cycle; Hornblower 2010: 12 n. 54 objects that disputes over women could arise in historical times, citing the marriage-related disputes that were part of the background to conflict between Selinus and Segesta (Thuc. 6.6.2).

Donald Lateiner has gone further by arguing that this overly simple model of causality is signalled by the repetition of the phrase *δικὰς δίδόναι* ('pay the penalty': 1.2.3, 1.3.1, 1.3.2): 'the phrase is useful for describing prehistoric and mythical conflicts in which national, political motives are overshadowed by personal and ethical considerations of primitive "repayment" and "revenge"'<sup>31</sup>

How plausible is Lateiner's claim? Most scholars have preferred to see the ideas of revenge and reciprocity as part of the programmatic force of Herodotus' proem: 'it is the fact, not the explanation, that he cannot take seriously.'<sup>32</sup> That is, Herodotus is seen as highlighting through the story told by the Persians a principle of human interaction fundamental to his understanding of history. Particular stress has been laid on the Persians' claim that 'the scores were even' after the first round of women-seizing (1.2.1: *Ταῦτα μὲν δὴ ἴσα πρὸς ἴσα σφι γενέσθαι*): perhaps inspired by Aubrey de Selincourt's rather loose Penguin translation, scholars have stressed the importance of Herodotus' initial focus on 'tit-for-tat' abductions.<sup>33</sup>

Both Lateiner's suggestion that the language of reciprocity is 'primitive' and the dominant scholarly stress on the reciprocity motif as programmatic are problematic. The problem is that these various readings fail to grasp the subtlety of the Persians' analysis. This

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31 Lateiner 1980: 30 (though he fails adequately to separate the use of this phrase in accounts of words and thoughts and in the narrative of actions).

32 Gould 1989: 64; cf. also Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 45-6 (on the Herodotean notion of *dikê* as involving a restoration of equilibrium).

33 Selincourt 1996: 3: 'some Greeks, whose name the Persians fail to record —they were probably Cretans— put into the Phoenician port of Tyre and carried off the king's daughter Europa, thus giving them tit for tat.' Note that in Herodotus' Greek, the clause 'they were probably Cretans' is a separate sentence that cuts off the clause translated by Waterfield as 'so far the scores were even' from the preceding narrative of the abduction. 'Tit-for-tat' is used by non-classicists such as Pagden 2008: 2; Maguire 2010: 86; also by e.g. Dewald 2006: 146 ('an arms race of sorts', with the Greeks 'repaying the easterners tit for tat for the abduction of Io'); Pelling 2006b: 155 (though he also stresses that 'that initial picture of reciprocity and vengeance is supplemented by other patterns of explanation'); Sternberg 2006: 47; Morales 2007: 87.

subtlety is expressed through a key development in the proem that can be grasped only if one separates the two pairs of abductions. In the Io/Europa stage, the idea of reciprocity appears only in the Persians' claim that the abduction of Europa has made the scores even after Io's abduction. The Greeks (identified by the narrator as Cretans) who actually seized Europa were not retaliating for the seizure of Io: why would Cretans (renowned for piracy) be concerned to avenge the Argive Io's abduction? It is the 'learned Persians' who are in retrospect imposing the principle of tit-for-tat on two utterly unconnected events.<sup>34</sup> In the Medea/Helen stage, by contrast, the language of reciprocal justice is uttered by characters rather than by the 'learned Persians'. First, after the abduction of Medea, the king of Colchis sends a herald to Greece 'to ask for compensation for the abduction and to demand his daughter back', and the Greeks reply that they (i.e. the Asiatics) did not pay compensation for the abduction of Io (1.2.3). Then, after the abduction of Helen, the Greeks' initial reaction is 'to send men to demand Helen's return and to ask for compensation for her abduction'; in response, 'the others brought up the abduction of Medea and asked whether they expected compensation from others when they paid none and did not return Medea when asked' (1.3.2). The sequence of claim and counterclaim is clarified by verbal repetition; and the shift in the use of language is reinforced by a move towards greater abstraction (verbs are used for all four abductions, but the abstract ἀρπαγή is now used in the representation of characters' thought and speech).<sup>35</sup>

34 Contrast how the abductions are portrayed as reprisals by e.g. Wardman 1961: 134; Jones 1999: 56; Pelling 2000: 154 (qualified at 155 and 287 n. 51: 'even in those initial exchanges the rhetoric of revenge becomes a matter of excuse and opportunity as much as motivation'); Gould 2001: 301; Purves 2010: 127. Others speak more broadly of reciprocity or reciprocal justice, without explicitly making the crucial distinction between the Persians' interpretation and the characters' motivation: Lloyd-Jones 1971: 50; S. West 2002: 11-12; Whitmarsh 2004: 112.

35 Verbal repetition: in 1.2.3-3.2, note (in addition to the repetition of ἀρπαγή-roots, carried over from the first pair of abductions), πέμψαντα, αἰτέειν τε δίκας τῆς ἀρπαγῆς ... ἀπαιτέειν, ἔδοσαν ... δίκας τῆς ἀρπαγῆς, δώσειν, οὐ δώσει δίκας,

It is not that the characters who abduct Medea and Helen are motivated by revenge. Retaliation was no more an issue in the abduction of Medea than it was in the abduction of Europa: even the 'learned Persians' stress that the Greeks were now taking the initiative in wrongdoing. And when Paris decides to steal a Greek wife, it is not to punish the Greeks for the abduction of Medea, but because 'he was absolutely certain that he would get away with it, unpunished' (1.3.1). That is, it is because there has been no retaliation that Paris abducts Helen.<sup>36</sup> The very absence of tit-for-tat retaliation in the past leads him to draw a false inference about the future: as the Greeks had not had to give up Medea, he would not have to give up his Greek wife.

The language of reciprocal justice used by characters in the Medea/Helen stage is itself tendentious. When the Greeks justify their refusal to respond to the Colchian claims for justice by citing the precedent of the lack of response to the seizure of Io, they agree with the 'learned Persians' in casting initial blame on the Asiatics (Phoenicians). But they ignore firstly the fact that the Greeks had not asked for compensation and secondly the fact that a position of equality had been restored (on the Persian reading at least) by the abduction of Europa.<sup>37</sup> Their refusal to give up Medea in turn provides a precedent for the Trojans' refusal to give up Helen. The pattern of tendentious rhetoric (with one piece of self-interested speech-making preparing the ground for another) itself leads to an escalation of conflict: justifications by appeal to one-sided readings of the past together with Paris' misguided inference from the past cause a repetition of

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διδόναι, πέμψαντας, ἀπαιτέειν ... δίκας τῆς ἀρπαγῆς αἰτέειν (forming a chiasmus), ὡς οὐ δόντες αὐτοὶ δίκας, ἀπαιτούντων, δίκας. For the phrase δίκας τῆς ἀρπαγῆς (1.2.3, 1.3.2), cf. Aesch. *Agam.* 534 ὀφλῶν γὰρ ἀρπαγῆς τε καὶ κλοπῆς δίκην, with Fraenkel 1950 ad loc; Ghali-Kahil 1955: 125; Turasiewicz 1981: 151; and more generally Haubold 2006: 50, comparing Attic tragedians' application of fifth-century legal conceptions to the epic past.

36 Rightly Pelling 2000: 269 n. 26; Hutton 1911: 36, by contrast, speaks of Paris seizing Helen 'to equalize matters'.

37 Cf. Maguire 2009: 86 on their sophistry.

the pattern — except now the woman seized is no longer defined as ‘daughter of the king’ (1.1.3, 2.1, 2.2), but only by her name, Helen.<sup>38</sup> The change is perhaps a hint that the subsequent escalation is caused in part by the fact that, unlike the earlier women, she is married.

The striking imbalance between the two pairs of abductions highlights a historical development that has resulted from increasing contact between the inhabitants of the two continents. The equivalence that the Persians see between the abductions of Io and Europa is the product of their own interpretation, not inherent in the motivation of the characters. With Medea and Helen, by contrast, the characters begin interpreting the new abductions in the light of earlier instances, making competing claims for compensation and justice. The language of reciprocity now happens by design — but it is never a simple balance, never as simple as tit-for-tat, ἴσα πρὸς ἴσα.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the appearance of such language also points up its absence in the first part of the Persians’ narrative. Io and Europa are in effect defined as living in an era before the creation of the framework of interstate interaction that appears after Medea’s abduction.

The abductions as a group are themselves marked as chronologically prior. It is not just that the final abduction leads to the Trojan War, which (on the Persian reading) creates a lasting state of hostility between Europe and Asia. It is also that the word used for the abductions (ἀρπαγή) itself could have connotations of primitivism. Many practices in Sparta and Crete were seen by other Greeks as old-fashioned, and it is notable that the language of ἀρπαγή was applied both to the seizure of women in the Spartan marriage ritual (Plut. *Lyc.* 15.3-4, cf. Hdt. 6.65.2) and to the seizure of youths in a Cretan pederastic ritual (Strabo 10.4.21 = Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F 149).<sup>40</sup> Thucy-

38 Cf. Walcot 1978: 139; Long 1987: 48 (with 39-49 on the broader use of repetition in this section).

39 The most similar formulation in the *Histories* is in the Persian challenge to the Spartans to a fight at Plataea, ἴσοι πρὸς ἴσους (9.48.4) — a challenge the Spartans meet with silence. Cf. more broadly Braund 1998 on Herodotus’ work as an enquiry into the problematic of reciprocity.

40 For the Cretan and Spartan constitutions as old-fashioned, cf. Arist. *Pol.*



dides in his *Archaeology* (an account of the development of Greece) applies the term to raids on unwalled cities and villages in early days of seafaring (1.5.1). Within Herodotus, the distinction between women-seizing and the Trojan War is repeated, as we have seen, in the contrast between the Cimmerian raid and Croesus' subjection of the Ionians: the implication is that the Cimmerian raid in some sense represents a more primitive mode of oppression than Croesus' exaction of tribute. The term ἀρπαγή is also found in Herodotus' account of the origins of Deioces' tyranny in Media (1.96-8), a section heavily influenced by sophistic accounts of human development. Herodotus starts by telling how Deioces 'had designs on becoming a tyrant. ... he began to practise integrity in a more wholehearted and thorough fashion ... even though there was at the time considerable lawlessness (εὐούσης ἀνομίης πολλῆς) throughout Media, because he was well aware of the incompatibility of lawlessness and justice.'<sup>41</sup> Appointed as a judge, Deioces began to earn a good reputation for justice. This reputation spread to other villages, and he was invited to judge more and more cases — until he refused. And then, 'when theft and lawlessness (ἀρπαγῆς καὶ ἀνομίης) returned to the villages, and on a far greater scale than before, the Medes met and considered what action to take'. They duly decided to make Deioces their king, and 'once power was in his hands, Deioces insisted that the Medes build a single city and maintain this one place'. Just as Deioces' building of Ecbatana marks a move away from the Medes' (old-fashioned) life in scattered settlements, so too his institution of justice marks a move from the primitive state of negation implied by ἀρπαγή and lawlessness. The Deioces narrative as a whole confirms that the proem can be read as depicting an early state of lawlessness in interstate relations.<sup>42</sup>

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1271b21-4; for the perception of links between them, see Walbank 1957-79: i. 726-7; on the Cretan ritual, see Davidson 2007: 300-15.

41 Literally 'the unjust is hostile to the just' (τῷ δίκαιῳ τὸ ἄδικοιον πολέμιον ἐστὶ); for this principle of opposites as hostile, cf. τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν σφίσι ... πολέμιον at 1.4.4.

42 ἀρπαγή is also picked up in Herodotus in the name of Harpagus, who is sub-

Herodotus' presentation of the abductions of Io and the other women as belonging to a time of primitive lawlessness rests on a selective use of the Greek mythographic tradition as we saw in his construction of the spatial division of Asia and Europe. In particular, the contrast between the two pairs of abductions ignores stories that suggest that the seizure of Io and Europa was not taken as lightly as the proem implies.<sup>43</sup> A concerted search for Io is mentioned in various sources: Diodorus Siculus tells how Cyrnus was sent out by Inachus to find Io with instructions not to come back until he found her, and then after wide travels founded Cyrnus (5.60.4-5); Strabo mentions a search by Triptolemus, again in connection with city-foundations (16.2.5: some of his companions founded Tarsus and his descendants settled at Antiocheia); while Parthenius tells of a fruitless search by Lyrus which led to his settling at Caunus (*Amat. narr.* 1, drawing on Nicaenetus, *Lyrus*, and Apollonius of Rhodes, *Foundation of Caunus*). While these stories are first attested only after Herodotus' time, the historian was certainly aware of stories about the search for Europa: he later mentions that Cadmus left some Phoenicians on 'the island which is now called Thera' during his search for Europa (4.147.4-5). Further elements in the tradition appear in Diodorus Siculus, who reports that Cadmus came to Samothrace during his search for Europa and married Harmonia there (5.48.5), and Apollodorus, who mentions settlements founded by those sent to search for Europa (3.1.1: by Phoenix in Phoenicia, Cilix in Cilicia, Thasus on the island off Thrace, Cadmus and his mother Telephassa in Thrace (from where Cadmus later settled in Boeotia, 3.4.1)).<sup>44</sup>

By neglecting stories about the search for Io and Europa, Herodotus ensures that the story the Persians tell in the proem stages a process of historical differentiation: the interaction between differ-

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jected to a cannibalistic feast and then gains revenge by betrayal (cf. Burkert 1983: 108-9). While the term does of course occur in contemporary contexts, it is often applied to raids by non-Greeks.

43 Cf. the Egyptians' story about their search for priestesses seized by Phoenicians (Hdt. 2.54).

44 Cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 178; West 1985: 83 n. 114.

ent peoples moves from being (implicitly) free from appeals to justice to being marked by disputes over justice and claims for compensation.<sup>45</sup> This change in relations between different peoples can be paralleled in contemporary accounts of the origins of law within the state. Evolutionary models of the formation of human society often defined the earliest human period in terms of negation,<sup>46</sup> and revealed the gradual creation of moral conceptions: in the famous story told by Plato's Protagoras, for instance, humans at first moved from scattered settlements into communities for the sake of mutual aid, but they lived without justice until Zeus endowed humans with the concept of *dikê* (*Prt.* 320c8-323e4); this story also shares some common features with Herodotus' account of Deioces.<sup>47</sup> Such fables about the internal organisation of states are matched by the focus

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45 The image of hostility resulting from clashing attitudes contrasts with the society created by the union of the Amazons and Scythians (4.110-17), which is marked by a process of gradual adaptation. Cf., from a slightly different perspective, Dewald 1981: 120-1 n. 27: 'It is the act of exchanging women back and forth that causes East and West to define themselves, and to define their differences with each other'; Dewald's approach is interestingly developed by Bergren 1983: 75-8.

46 For negation in accounts of early cosmic and human life, cf. Davies 1988; the negative figuration is only implicit in Herodotus' proem.

47 Ubsdell 1983: 118-21 and Arieti 1995: 120 draw links between these two accounts; note also Pelling 2007: 30 on 'this couching of political thought in narrative form, in a way that need not be conceived as literal truth but rather as a modelling of the human interaction that underlies the growth of a community' — an insightful remark that could be transferred to my analysis of the proem as a modelling of interstate interaction. For the gradual emergence of laws and justice, cf. also Archelaus, DK 60 A 1, 4; Critias, DK 88 B 25.1-8 (the famous *Sisyphus* fragment also attributed to Euripides); golden age accounts by contrast portray the distant past as an era of now-lost justice (e.g. Aratus, *Phaen.* 100-36 portrays Dike mingling with humans in the golden age, but progressively becoming more distant). Polybius' account of the origins of justice (6.5.10-6.9) offers an especially interesting contrast to Herodotus because ethical ideas arise from self-interested attempts to stop the neglect of reciprocal obligations after the formation of human communities; if (as is possible but by no means certain) there were fifth-century precedents for this idea, Herodotus' proem could be read as implicitly highlighting the difference in the role of justice in intra- and inter-state relations.

in Herodotus' proem on changing interactions between states. In Herodotus' proem, however, *dikê* does not ensure respect between different peoples: rather the concept of justice in relations between states is a creation of self-defeating rhetoric that does nothing to contain, and may even encourage, the spread of conflict. The 'learned Persians' image of exchange leading to an escalation of conflict also contrasts with the much more positive models of exchange offered by some contemporary Greek sources: Theseus' developmental account in Euripides' *Supplikes*, for instance, claims that sea voyages enabled people to gain through exchange what their own lands lacked (209-10), while the author of the *Anonymus Iamblichi* suggests that mutual trust encouraged the circulation of goods (DK 89 F 7.1).<sup>48</sup> Herodotus' Persians offer a constructivist account of how the language of justice comes to be applied to interstate disputes; underlying it is a realistic awareness that such language tends to mask self-interested motives while failing to halt the escalation of conflict.



It remains to consider the implications of my analysis for previous scholarly approaches to Herodotus' proem. I have suggested that the idea that the Persians depict a series of tit-for-tat retaliations is in important respects wrong: the only act of retaliation recounted by the Persians is the Greek attack on Troy — and (as the Persians make a point of complaining<sup>49</sup>) this was not a tit-for-tat attack. As for the abduction of Europa, the point is not just that it was not an act of

48 Cf. also (with Guthrie 1971: 81 n. 1) Isoc. *Paneg.* 42 on how trade through the Piraeus makes up for the shortcomings of individual places.

49 1.4.2-3: 'Although the Persians regard the abduction of women as a criminal act, they also claim that it is stupid to get worked up about it and seek revenge for the women once they have been abducted ... The Persians claim that whereas they, on the Asian side, did not count the abduction of women as at all important, the Greeks raised a mighty army because of a woman from Lacedaemon, and then invaded Asia and destroyed Priam and his forces.' For parallel denunciations of fighting for Helen alone, cf. Groten 1963: 83 n. 4; also the implications of Herodotus' own reasoning at 2.120.2-3.

retaliation for Io's seizure, but that it could not have been: the political conditions were not at that time in place for Cretans to have any concern for avenging the abduction of an Argive woman.

My suggestion that the proem can be read as a sophistic experiment may seem to support the view (associated with Fehling) that Herodotus' 'source citations' are a fictional device.<sup>50</sup> This is not to say, however, that Herodotus attributes the story to the Persians in order to make his invention credible: the reader is clearly meant to see that the Persians tell a story that puts the Greeks in a bad light (and Herodotus makes the point even clearer by mentioning the Phoenicians' own version, which exculpates them from responsibility for Io's abduction (1.5.2)).<sup>51</sup> Rather, the beginning of the work involves (in Carolyn Dewald's words) 'the creation of an initial binary division between two different voices': through his own firm narratorial positioning, Herodotus exposes the partiality and limitations of Persian (and by implication other Greek) stories.<sup>52</sup>

Reading the proem as a sophistic treatise may, conversely, seem to run counter to the idea that it is a parody. The idea that it was Hecataean rationalism that Herodotus was parodying was never that plausible anyway: the method employed by Hecataeus and other rationalizing mythographers was to replace the fantastic with a less fantastic equivalent, not to omit it altogether, as Herodotus' Persians do.<sup>53</sup> At most, then, the proem can be read as a parody of simplistic epic causality — and even then the parody should be taken not as 'a sheer deflating technique, but rather as a provision of a model to build on and refer to'.<sup>54</sup> As regards the abduction of women, however,

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50 Fehling 1989: 50-7.

51 For a critique of Fehling, see Luraghi 2001. My analysis may also, as Marek Węcowski suggests, sharpen the contrast between the method of citation employed at 1.1 and that employed later in the *Histories*.

52 Dewald 2002: 271; cf. Dewald 1987: 168; 1999: 228-33. The construction of these voices (together with the challenge to interpret narrative absences) can also be seen as one of the ways in which Herodotus' techniques train the reader (see more broadly Baragwanath 2008).

53 Rightly Węcowski 2004: 151; contrast e.g. Flory 1987: 25; Lateiner 1989: 38.

54 Pelling 2000: 155.

it must also be stressed that the insignificance of women as a cause of war is overtly thematized by the Persians themselves in their criticism of the Greeks for launching the Trojan War simply to recover Helen (1.4.2-3: see note 49). The seriousness of the Persians' objection makes the parody, if parody it is, seem rather heavy-handed. In any case, the motif of abduction in itself can be read, I have suggested, in the light of contemporary developmental accounts of human origins.<sup>55</sup>

It has also often been claimed that Herodotus' proem is itself parodied in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (produced at the Lenaea in 425 BC).<sup>56</sup> The alleged parody occurs in a speech where Dicaeopolis denounces the Peloponnesian War by offering a comic account of its origins:

It was men of ours ... some bent, ill-struck pieces of humanity, worthless counterfeit foreign stuff, who began denouncing the Megarians' little woollen cloaks, and if they saw anywhere a cucumber or a young hare, or a piglet, or some garlic or lump-salt, it was declared Megarian and sold up the same day. Now that, to be sure, was trivial and purely local; but then some cottabus-playing young rakes went to Megara and stole a whore called Simaetha. After that the Megarians, garlic-stung by the smart, stole two whores of Aspasia's in retaliation. And from that broke forth the origin of the war upon all the Greeks: from three prostitutes. (515-29, trans. Sommerstein)

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55 My sophistic reading still leaves open the possibility that the proem may be found humorous in itself even if it is not narrowly parodic.

56 See e.g. Forrest 1963: 8; Dover 1972: 87; Cobet 1977: 10-12. Against the allusion, see Fornara 1971: 28, 1981: 153-4; MacDowell 1983: 151; Thomas 2000: 20 n. 59 and Asheri 2007: 51 are uncertain. Some scholars see both Herodotus and Aristophanes as parodying the same type of explanation (Drews 1973: 90; Pelling 2000: 154-5), while Lang 1972: 412 sees Aristophanes as consciously parodying a parody.

Dicaeopolis' account, like Herodotus', focuses on the seizure of women. It also uses a similar transitional phrase (ταῦτα μὲν δὴ σμικρὰ κἀπιχώρια (523) ~ Ταῦτα μὲν δὴ ἴσα πρὸς ἴσα (1.2.1)).<sup>57</sup> There are, however, notable differences in the way the two ταῦτα μὲν δὴ-clauses operate. In Herodotus the phrase introduces a contrast between the first and second rounds of abductions; in Aristophanes it introduces a contrast between stealing food and abducting women. And while it is true that in both authors the abduction of women is capped by the move to war, the two accounts do not have the same rhythm: in Herodotus the seizing of one woman is followed by the seizing of another; in Aristophanes there is an escalation (two prostitutes are stolen for one). Still more importantly, while the women in Aristophanes are stolen in retaliation, I have suggested that this is not the case with Herodotus' women. So if Aristophanes' account was glancing towards Herodotus, he was initiating a long history of misreading.

What of the distinction between myth and history? Herodotus' confident transition to Croesus at the end of the Persians' story has often been taken as heralding a separation between mythical and historical time.<sup>58</sup> Herodotus himself, however, did not conceptualize the break between the Trojan War and the time of Croesus in terms of myth and history. Indeed, it is notable that in the proem he separates himself from the epic tradition (where the superior strength and divine descent of some of the heroes is stressed) by making no qualitative difference in the nature of humans involved and by stripping away any divine role. We have also seen that Herodotus adopted a common-sense approach to the difficulty of gaining accurate knowledge about the past, and part of his common sense lay in his recognition that the difficulty will vary according to the type of knowledge

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57 The use of ταῦτα μὲν δὴ is stressed by Powell 1939: 77; Sansone 1985: 6-7.

58 For the idea that Herodotus separates mythical and historical time, see e.g. Pohlenz 1937: 5-6; against, see esp. Hunter 1982: 93-107; Evans 1991: 105-6; Harrison 2000: 196-207; Feeney 2007: 72-6; for the importance of not minimizing the move at 1.5.3, Fowler 1996: 83-6 (against Fehling 1989: 58-9). Vannicelli 2001: 213-14 compares the shift at the start of Book 2; cf. more broadly Pelliccia 1992 for the form of the proem.

involved.<sup>59</sup> His flexibility is further shown by the fact that he is later prepared to accept without overt questioning parts of the story told by the ‘learned Persians.’<sup>60</sup> His interest in questioning the accuracy of traditions about the past depends in part on the use that is being made of those traditions in his own present.

Herodotus’ initial temporal differentiation between the Trojan War and the time of Croesus is also subjected to the same blurring that we saw with the Persians’ spatial division between Europe and Asia. Herodotus later shows how claims about justice and leadership are still made on the basis of the distant past: the very fact that the Persians bolster their own standing by attributing blame for the escalation of the conflict to the Greeks illustrates how the time of Herodotus’ present is shaped by beliefs about earlier eras. Later Herodotus exposes the exploitation of the Trojan War by Greeks: the Athenian participation is invoked in a dispute over their claim to Sigeum (5.94.2), and the war is evoked in disputes over the leadership or formation of the Greek alliance against Persia (7.159, 7.161, 7.169, 7.171).<sup>61</sup> At the same time, Herodotus’ own implied comment in the proem on the difficulty of knowledge about the Trojan War may seem to undermine such claims: he is careful to add a strong note of caution (κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα, 7.20.2) when he himself makes a claim for the greatness of Xerxes’ expedition by contrasting it with (among others) the Trojan War.<sup>62</sup>

Herodotus also complicates the cognitive contrast between the recent and distant past by showing how events he himself relates begin to be exploited and manipulated by speakers within the *Histo-*

59 See Herodotus’ treatment of the evidence provided by Egyptian priests in book 2 and especially the reconstruction (partly with the help of Homeric epic) of Helen’s role in the Trojan War at 2.112-20.

60 Cf. Flory 1987: 166 n. 3.

61 On the Trojan Wars in Herodotus, see Neville 1977; also Bowie 2001: 65, who suggests that Simonides’ use of the Trojan War/Persian Wars parallel in his Plataea poem may explain the prominence of the Trojan War in Herodotus’ proem.

62 Cf. Immerwahr 1956: 249 n. 12, who notes that the Trojan War is also covered by ἴδμεν (‘we know’); Cobet 2002: 408, who notes Herodotus’ less emphatic distancing at 7.20 as opposed to the proem.



ries. The story of Harmodius and Aristogiton is invoked in Miltiades' appeal to Callimachus before the battle of Marathon (6.109.3, with a self-conscious allusion to memorialization) even though Herodotus' own account brings out that their actions, far from bringing an end to the tyranny, in fact made it worse (5.55, 62.2). Later, the battle of Marathon is itself invoked as a solo Athenian victory by Athenian speakers (9.27.5-6) in a way which recalls the tradition of Athenian patriotic oratory, yet runs counter to Herodotus' own account, which has mentioned the Plataeans' presence.<sup>63</sup> The *Histories* as a whole are shaped by an awareness of the manipulation of the past: the tendency to base claims on the distant past (the Trojan War) comes to be replaced by claims made on the more recent past — and the more recent past is itself distorted.

Herodotus' narratorial stance in the proem, then, is complex in its own right and made more complicated still by the proem's interaction with later sections of the work. John Moles has eloquently expressed that complexity by explaining how 'Herodotus has it all possible ways': 'he uses the sandwiched material to begin his work in great style, to maintain the association between that work and Homer's *Iliad*, to entertain his readers, to suggest ideas dear to himself — yet he also distances himself from it and makes a distinction between myth and solid, verifiable history.'<sup>64</sup> My own analysis has also suggested that Herodotus has it all possible ways — but in some significantly different ways. In particular, I have pointed to an even broader range of intertexts: through the story he puts in the mouth of the 'learned Persians', Herodotus defines his own project and the world his work creates against spatial and temporal configurations expressed in epic and tragedy as well as in earlier cosmological and contemporary anthropological speculation. He abducts whatever

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63 Note also that the Athenians' closing comment ('this is hardly the time and place for us to be quarrelling about what station we are to hold') hints at the later Greek quarrel over leadership, picking up the explicit prolepsis at 8.3 (cf. also 6.98).

64 Moles 1993: 96.

takes his fancy from his literary predecessors the better to prepare the ground for his own radically new creation.<sup>65</sup>



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65 Cf. Herodotus' use of the verb ἀρπάζειν of literary theft at 2.156.6: a hint that the poem's (or indeed any) narrative of the theft of Helen is always already a form of literary theft.

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Το προοίμιο του Ηροδότου :  
Χώρος, χρόνος και οι απαρχές των διεθνών σχέσεων

TIMOTHY ROOD

*Περίληψη*

**Α**ΝΤΙΚΕΙΜΕΝΟ της προκείμενης εργασίας αποτελεί η ηροδότεια αφήγηση της απαγωγής γυναικών, που αποδίδεται από τον έλληνα ιστορικό σε ‘μορφωμένους Πέρσες’, ως ερμηνεία της εχθρότητας μεταξύ Ελλήνων και Ασιατών. Υποστηρίζεται ότι η αφήγηση αυτή μπορεί να κατανοηθεί σε συσχετισμό με σοφιστικές περιγραφές των απαρχών των πολιτισμένων κοινοτήτων: ουσιαστικά, όμως, αυτό που ο Ηρόδοτος καταφέρει και προσφέρει μέσω μιας διαδικασίας χωρικής και χρονικής διαφοροποίησης είναι μια σοφιστική παραβολή πάνω στην ανάπτυξη και διαμόρφωση διακρατικών σχέσεων. Σε αντίθεση προς τη συνήθη ‘ανάγνωση’ του προοιμίου ως προγραμματικής δήλωσης της σπουδαιότητας της ανταποδοτικής δικαιοσύνης, η εργασία αυτή υποστηρίζει πως η ηροδότεια αφήγηση αποκαλύπτει μια προοδευτική μεταβολή του ρόλου των απαιτήσεων που βασίζονται στην ιδέα της ανταπόδοσης και της δικαιοσύνης.