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Herodotus and the Greek Identity

Joseph Roberts

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, J1ROBERTS@CSBSJU.EDU

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Joe Roberts

Scott Richardson

Capstone

Herodotus' *Histories* and the Greek Identity

Herodotus has long been hailed as the “Father of history” for his detailed *Histories*. His work seems to recount the history of Greece from the initial conflict between the Greeks and Persians to the Greco-Persian wars. His narrative style, however, and the stories themselves seem to suggest a more profound subject matter than just the history of Greece. Herodotus' *Histories*, coming from the Greek word “ἱστορία,” meaning “an inquiry,” is more-so a literal inquiry into Greece herself. That is, in his work, Herodotus aims to showcase what the Greek Identity is (its culture, its behavior, etc.) by utilizing the past in an almost Aesopian way.

Before I delve into the ways in which Herodotus attempts to identify the Greek Identity in his *Histories*, I would like to discuss how his narrative helps us understand some of the lessons he seems to have intended. Because Herodotus' work is interpreted as a historical account rather than, as I see it, a celebration of what it means to be a Greek, many scholars have taken issue with Herodotus' methods of narration and his use of sources. J. A. S. Evans particularly lambasts Herodotus in his article “Father of History or Father of Lies.” Evans claims that Herodotus was guilty of several fabrications and was harshly critiqued by subsequent historians; because of these fabrications and the harsh reviews from his peers, Evans feels as though Herodotus' title of “Father of History” is unmerited.¹ Another scholar,

¹ Evans, J. A. S. "Father of History or Father of Lies; The Reputation of Herodotus." *The Classical Journal* 64, no. 1 (October 1968): 12.

O. Kimball Armayor, even calls into question the validity of Herodotus' sources in the article "Did Herodotus Ever Go to Egypt." His conclusion is especially damning, as he states that "Herodotus may indeed have gone to Egypt, but his narrative bears little or no relation to whatever his travels may have been on the basis of archaeological evidence."² Both authors take the stance that Herodotus' methods of gathering information are, at best, lacklustre and substandard for a historian.

Between these two authors we have valid doubts as to the validity of Herodotus, but they are only valid if we assume Herodotus is concerned primarily with preserving the history of Greece and her neighbours. My argument, however, is that Herodotus is largely concerned with the preservation of the Greek Identity. Indeed, even Evans brings up the issue of "ἱστορίᾳ" saying that "*Historia* in Herodotus... meant 'inquiries' or 'investigation,' not 'history.'"³ Evans goes on to declare that Herodotus' work "ἱστορίᾳ" *does* mean "researches", but, over time, it gathered the "connotation of history"⁴. Evans, justly, lays the blame on Herodotus as, whether his account was accurate or not, Herodotus "did write history, no matter what he called it."⁵ Additionally, as Armayor posited, there is strong doubt as to whether or not Herodotus himself did any thorough research into the Egyptian culture. Thus, these two authors seem to be at odds with one another: Armayor suggests that Herodotus did little to no research (specifically on his Egypt chapter) and Evans asserts that Herodotus uses "ἱστορίᾳ" specifically as "researches" or "investigations"; they are both right for the wrong reasons. Armayor is right in calling out his lack of legitimate facts and evidence, and Evans is right in asserting that "ἱστορίᾳ" means researches. Where they make a mistake is that they have misinterpreted his intent. Herodotus is concerned with the past of

² Armayor, O. Kimball. "Did Herodotus Ever Go to Egypt." *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 15 (1978): 59-73

³ Evans, J. A. S. 12.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

Greece (and to some extent, Her neighbors), but he allows himself the privilege of tweaking certain events and adding certain elements that add a deeper level of meaning to his work. Furthermore, Herodotus would not claim to have done research only to tell blatant lies about places and people that could easily be disproven; so his use of “ἱστορίᾳ” here may mean “research,” but only insofar as it’s a research into the Greek Identity.

Herodotus is concerned with the Greek interpretation of Egypt, and therefore is uninterested in getting his facts culturally accurate; rather, he is interested in interpreting other cultures in the context of the Greek culture, not as propaganda but more as a mirror that reflects the culture of the Greeks. Evans recalls that Cicero himself in his work *Laws*⁶, who claimed Herodotus as the “Father of History”, said that in Herodotus’ *Histories* “There are a countless number of legends.”⁷ If Cicero himself, who earlier in the work claimed that “in history everything should lead to the truth”⁸, can acknowledge that there are numerous legends in Herodotus’ *Histories*, should we not conclude that Cicero understands Herodotus’ intent to celebrate the myths and legends of the Greeks?

A man of literary renown himself, Cicero would most likely be able to intuit the nuances of Herodotus’ narrative strategy, since he must have also picked up on the literary devices employed in Herodotus’ *Histories*. Indeed Cicero was most likely aware of the fabrications within the work and the narrative style that, as Geoffrey de Ste. Croix thought centuries later, closely resembles folklore or fables.⁹ If we see these folkloric elements within Herodotus’ work, it does not make sense to critique it in a strictly historic light. Folklores usually convey morals and lessons for the intended audience, and therefore require literary analysis as well as historical analysis. Now, in order for me to assert that Herodotus is

⁶ Evans, J. A. S. 11

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Cartledge, P. (2009). Taking Herodotus Personally. *The Classical World*, 102(4), 374.

intending his work to be read as a series of moralistic stories and allegories, in addition to being read as a semi-accurate account of Greece's past, there must be literary elements within the work itself; for example: symbolism, foreshadowing, and dramatic irony.

To start let us take the story of Arion (Book 1, Chapters 23-24) and see what Herodotus intends to convey about the Greek Identity through his retelling of a legend. Arion was among the most proficient musicians in the known world and was the first to write and perform the dithyramb and also the first to teach it in Corinth. Herodotus tells that Arion and Periander, the king of Corinth, used to spend their time together. During one of their meetings, Periander inspired Arion to take up traveling. On his return voyage to Corinth, he enlisted a ship manned by Corinthian men, only to be robbed and thrown overboard, then carried to shore by dolphins. Arion made his way all the way back to Corinth and, to Periander's disbelief, related to him the wicked actions of the sailors. Ultimately, Periander questions the crewmates about Arion's whereabouts, only to reveal him to them after they had lied about leaving him in some far off land to teach music.

In his retelling, Herodotus seems to employ two symbols: the first, Arion himself representing art; the second, the dolphin that saves him representing the gods. Arion is a symbol for art because Herodotus makes it a point to distinguish him as the inventor and teacher of the dithyramb and the sailors themselves reinforce this by saying they left him at some port to teach his music. The dolphin symbol comes from an earlier myth that describes an interaction between a young Dionysus and a crew of pirates: the pirates decide to kidnap the young god, except for one of the crew who recognizes the boy as Dionysus and refuses to partake in the attack. Ultimately, the whole crew, including the man who recognized Dionysus, are transformed into dolphins and abandon their days on ships to become

companions to Dionysus.¹⁰ Therefore, Arion, the symbol for art, having celebrated and pleased the gods with his craft, is saved from drowning by a dolphin, a symbol for the gods, or more specifically, for Dionysus. His account is supported by an actual statue dedicated to Arion, meaning this was a well-known story that, although obviously embellished, was repeated most likely to instill the doctrine of “do your duty to the Gods and they shall reward you.” As Arion performed his dithyramb he pleased the gods and won their favor, in this way Herodotus emphasizes the way in which the Greeks celebrate the gods through their arts and festivities. Furthermore, as I will argue later, the usage of the dolphin as a symbol for the divine also conveys the respect and the admiration the Greeks held towards nature.

As for foreshadowing, elements of that nature can be seen in the story of Amasis and Polycrates (Book 3, chapters 40-43). In this story, Amasis the pharaoh of Egypt breaks off diplomatic relations with Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos. Amasis declares that Polycrates’ good fortune will only cause him great disaster in the future, because, as Herodotus quotes Amasis, “the Gods are jealous of success.”¹¹ In response, Polycrates hurls a piece of jewellery into the sea only to have it returned to him a few days later in the belly of the fish. I use this story as an example of foreshadowing because, as it turns out, Amasis was right. Later on, Polycrates is murdered by a Persian named Oroetes, the governor of Sardis, and his body is then crucified (Book 3, chapter 125). Additionally this story is also an example of dramatic irony, another literary element, because Greek readers would themselves be aware of Polycrates’ tragic fate. This use of foreshadowing tells us, as other scholars have inferred, the stance that Herodotus takes on tyranny. The scholar H. Berve asserts that throughout his *Histories* “Herodotus staunchly defends freedom and abhors tyranny.”¹² Perhaps this is

¹⁰ Marie-Claire Beaulieu, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 123.

¹¹ Hdt. 1. 40

¹² Gammie, J. (1986). Herodotus on Kings and Tyrants: Objective Historiography or Conventional Portraiture? *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 45(3), 173.

another one of those instances; Herodotus uses that idea that “the gods are jealous of success” to show that, not only is Polycrates doomed, but his doom is attributed to his status as a tyrant. Herodotus emphasizes the misfortune in Polycrates’ account in order to convey a negative connotation with tyranny. But this is far from the only instance of foreshadowing; in fact, the very beginning of Herodotus’ *Histories* could be considered foreshadowing, as it begins with the root cause of the conflict between the Greeks and the Persians and ends with the Greco-Persian wars.

We can see dramatic irony prevalently throughout Herodotus’ *Histories* as the reader is aware of the outcome of these stories, but the characters themselves are not. For an example I turn to the story of Solon and Croesus. In the story, Solon, an esteemed lawmaker from Athens, comes to Croesus, king of Lydia, as a guest. Croesus, having knowledge of Solon’s reputation as one of the wisest men of Athens, shows him around his palace and shows him his many treasures and great wealth. After he shows Solon all these things, Croesus asks him who he thinks the happiest man in the world is. Despite having been show Croesus’s wealth, Solon, answers that the most blessed and happy man on earth is a common man by the name of Tellus who lived a long life with many living children and grandchildren and was still in good-standing when he died honourably on the battle-field.

Croesus is outraged. Again he asks Solon who he thinks the second most blessed and happy man on earth is. This time, Solon replies it is the twin brothers, Cleobis and Bito, who carried their mother upon a cart to the festival of Juno and, after their mother had entreated the goddess to give her children “whatever it is best for a human being to have,” the two brothers lay down and died.¹³ Croesus is again insulted and asks Solon what he means to say of Croesus’ life if it is apparently not as blessed and happy as the life of commoners, to which

¹³ Hdt 1. 31

Solon replies that the gods are jealous and that no good fortune is destined, nor obligated, to last forever. These words do nothing to soothe Croesus' anger and he sends Solon away, believing him to be an "ignoramus."¹⁴

Croesus is too blinded by his rage to actually heed the words that Solon tells him, but if he had, he would know what the reader and Solon knows: That it is impossible to judge the life of a man until he is dead, for the gods can change any aspect of that man's life at any time. Tellus was the most happy for he had many children and grandchildren and had a glorious and respectable death on the battle-field. Cleobis and Bito were in second place because they honoured their mother by performing this difficult task for them and were blessed with death as a gift from the Goddess Hera herself. The dramatic irony here is that Croesus does not understand that in order for Solon to deem his life as happy or unfortunate, Croesus must first "accomplish" his life or, in other words, die.

Having discussed Herodotus' narrative strategy and having given, what I hope is, sufficient evidence for literary elements, I would now like to address the question "how does Herodotus exhibit the Greek identity in his Histories?" While there are several answers to this question, I have chosen to focus on just one for my paper: Nature. Even an individual with only a cursory knowledge of Greek myths, arguably the Greeks' most popular contribution, could understand that the Greeks had a strong connection to the elements around them; two of the three "main" gods (Zeus and Poseidon) specifically govern over two of the elements (air and water, respectively). Furthermore, it wasn't out of the ordinary for people to pray to a specific god for a favour within their realm of nature; for example, when Achilles says "εἰ δέ κεν εὐπλοίην δώῃ κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος"¹⁵ he is implying that Poseidon is responsible for

¹⁴ Hdt 1. 33

¹⁵ Homerus, Thomas W. Allen, and David B. Monro. *Homeri Opera*. Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1920. Book 9, Line 362

whether or not his voyage would be pleasant. However, Herodotus removes the divine element from the relationship between Greek and Nature, showing, it seems, that undying respect is due to Nature. Thus, Herodotus here demonstrates his view of the Greek Identity by way of the importance that the Greeks placed on nature by connecting it to the divine

For evidence of this I again turn to Herodotus' story of Arion (Book 1 Chapters 23-24), the talented inventor of the dithyramb who was in the habit of visiting the king of Corinth, Periander. Having completed his adventures, Arion employs a crew of men to take him back to Corinth, only to be robbed and thrown overboard by them. Before he is cast into the sea, he requests, and is granted, that he may sing one last song, a high-pitched or "ὄρθρον" dirge. The significance of Herodotus' clarification of the dirge being 'high-pitched' is, again, related to the literary elements above: it foreshadows the next twist the story takes. As he plunges into the sea, after singing his song, Arion is rescued and carried to shore by dolphins. On the surface, this is clearly a myth; the possibility that Arion's song could summon a dolphin to carry him safely to shore is fanciful. The true purpose of this story is to give an insight into the Greek Mythos.

Arion is described as the inventor of the dithyramb, which A. W. Pickard-Cambridge describes as an ode to the divine or the heroic that maintains a "particular connexion with Dionysus, who is celebrated, apparently at or near the opening of the song, whatever its subject."¹⁶ Thus, by introducing Arion as the inventor, and even the teacher, of dithyrambs, Herodotus establishes his own connection between Arion and Dionysus without ever using the god's name. This is important because the creature that saves Arion, the dolphin, is itself also strongly connected to Dionysus.

¹⁶ A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*, revised by T. B. L. Webster (Oxford 1962) 24 f.

Therefore, to modern readers of Herodotus, the cultural background of this story requires additional levels of research to understand; those reading this story during the time of Herodotus, however, would be able to see the connection between Arion and Dionysus, despite there being no clear, and even literary, linking between the two. Thusly, this story seems to be more of a celebration of Nature's inherent divinity than an important historical event during the time of Periander. The Greeks would have read this account and inferred that Dionysus himself had a hand in saving Arion, but they also would have appreciated the emphasis being placed on Nature itself rather than divine intervention. The dolphin arrives to rescue Arion, thus reaffirming that Nature is inherently divine. As I said before, Arion is also a symbol for art as well as being strongly connected to Dionysus himself, this is an example of Herodotus portraying the importance of the arts in the Greek Identity.

This 'Nature theme' is prevalent throughout Herodotus' *Histories* and in some scenes we can see that it is linked not only to the divine, but also to fate itself. Take for example the story of Amasis and Polycrates (Book 3 chapters 40-43); in this tale Herodotus claims that Amasis broke off diplomatic ties with Polycrates on the basis that he was too fortunate and that bad fortune is surely fated to befall a man too fortunate. The story goes that Polycrates attempted to sacrifice his fortune by throwing a ring into the sea; unfortunately, the ring was eaten by a fish which was then caught and sent to be prepared for Polycrates' dinner, restoring the ring to him.

In the tale of Arion, we saw how Herodotus reaffirmed Nature's connection with divinity by emphasizing the symbols already found in nature (i.e. the dolphins being a symbol of Dionysus), but now, in the story of Polycrates, we see how Herodotus links Nature to fate itself. Amasis declares that Polycrates is cursed to suffer misfortune due to his overwhelming good fortune. In defiance, Polycrates casts his jewellery, a symbol itself of his vast fortune, into the sea, only to have it returned to him. Now, although the fates may be the ones

responsible for returning the ring back to Polycrates, and thus ensuring his cursed fortune, the method of delivery is what is important in this story. Instead of delivering the ring themselves, the Fates send it back in the stomach of a fish.

In Arion's story, it is clear why Herodotus sends dolphins to rescue him from the sea: As Herodotus ends the tale, there was already a bronze statuette of Arion riding dolphins in Taenarum. Thus, because the myth was already established, Herodotus had no reason to change it, rather it was best for him to include the tale and add his own twist on the story by adding some narrative elements that I will explain further later on. As for the story of Amasis and Polycrates, however, Herodotus' account is surrounded by suspicion. In the eyes of Geoffrey de Ste. Croix, writes P. A. Cartledge, Herodotus' account is merely a "miserable attempt to fabricate pseudo-history out of a widespread folkloric tale."¹⁷ Ste. Croix asserts that not only is the entire story fabricated to showcase the "wholly Greek doctrine of 'nothing to excess'", which therefore has no place in the mentality of an Egyptian pharaoh, but also that Herodotus jumbles the actual sequence of historical events.¹⁸ The actual course of events, in Ste. Croix's understanding, was that Polycrates broke off diplomatic relations with Amasis in order to show the oncoming Persian army that Greece was of no concern.¹⁹

Working under the assumption that Ste. Croix is correct, a safe assumption as the Egyptians had a homogenous culture in which they insisted on "holding on to their own ancestral customs, adding nothing from the outside,"²⁰ we can therefore assume that Herodotus, having access to the ancient Egyptians, would have been aware of the Egyptians' refusal of external cultural influences and therefore would have known that Amasis would not prescribe to that "wholly Greek doctrine of 'nothing to excess.'"²¹ Thus this

¹⁷ Cartledge, P. A. (2009). "Taking Herodotus Personally." *Classical World*,102(4): 371-382.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ G. E. M. De Ste. Croix. (1977). Herodotus. *Greece & Rome*, 24(2), 146.

²⁰ Gruen, Erich. S. (2012). *Rethinking the other in antiquity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

²¹ Cartledge, P. A. (2009). Taking Herodotus Personally. *Classical World*,102(4), 371-382.

“fabrication,” as Ste. Croix describes it, serves as an exemplification of the Greek Identity in two ways: it reinforces the Greek belief of “nothing to excess”, a wholly different category of the Greek Identity than nature, which this paper focuses on;²² and it also reinforces the importance of Nature to the Greeks as the fish, an element of nature, was chosen to be the messenger between fate and mortals.

As the story most likely did not occur, everything within Herodotus’ account should be viewed as literary devices or deliberate narrative decisions designed to relay the author’s perspective of the Greek identity, an idea that I will further explain later on. In this vein, the ring’s method of transportation (i.e. the fish) stands as a symbol for the Fates themselves. Polycrates hurls his jewellery, a symbol of his fortune, into the sea, and the Fates reply by sending him a message that he is, in fact, doomed for misfortune on account of his great fortune: But, Herodotus cannot simply have the Fates themselves show up at Polycrates’ doorstep. As Ste. Croix describes Herodotus’, and Thucydides’, writing in his own article, Herodotus’ *Histories* represents “the beginnings of scientific method, of that wonderful movement of enlightenment, of proto-scientific thinking... which took place in the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries.”²³ Thus, Herodotus’ *Histories* recognizes the divine elements (i.e. the gods and the Fates) while also only writing them as they relate to the “real world” or, as Ste. Croix himself puts it, their “relevance to man.”²⁴

As Herodotus represents, in Ste. Croix’s understanding, this “proto-scientific thinking”, he would therefore be unlikely to place outright responsibility solely on divinity; instead, Herodotus employs a “middle-man” or “mediator” between the realm of the divine and the realm of man. This “middle-man” that Herodotus employs is Nature itself (i.e., the

²³ G. E. M. De Ste. Croix. (1977). Herodotus. *Greece & Rome*, 24(2), 130.

²⁴ Ibid

elements and all the creatures that live within them). In the story of Arion, the dolphins are employed as a symbol of the god Dionysus, come to rescue the man who invented the dithyramb and thereby honored him with it; in the story of Amasis and Polycrates, the fish that returns Polycrates' ring is a symbol for the Fates, come to deliver the news to Polycrates that he is, in fact, doomed to misfortune on account of his great fortune. Furthermore, the fact that Herodotus needed to alter the actual course of events (i.e., Amasis breaking off diplomatic relations with Polycrates, instead of the other way around) in order to exemplify the “wholly Greek doctrine of ‘nothing to excess,’” furthers the idea that Herodotus was not so much the “Father of History” but rather the “Cataloguer of Greek identity.”

Delving further into Herodotus' use of Nature to exhibit the Greek identity, we can see that it is not always the active agent when it comes to Herodotus' use of symbolism. In Book 7 (chapters 34-35) when a violent storm destroys the bridges that Xerxes troops had built across the Hellespont, Xerxes was outraged and ordered that the water be given three-hundred lashes with a whip and that a pair of shackles be sunk into its depths. Herodotus even gossips:

ἤδη δὲ ἤκουσαὼς καὶ στιγέας ἅμα τούτοισι ἀπέπεμψεστίζοντας τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον.²⁵

And as if all that was not enough, Herodotus then tells us that Xerxes reprimanded the waters with these words:

‘ὦ πικρὸν ὕδωρ, δεσπότης τοι δίκην ἐπιτιθεῖ τήνδε, ὅτι μινῆδίκησας οὐδὲν πρὸς ἐκείνου ἄδικον παθόν. καὶ βασιλεὺς μὲν Ξέρξης διαβήσεται σε, ἦν τε σύ γε βούλη ἦν τε μή: σοὶ δὲ κατὰ δίκην ἄρα οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων θύει ὡς ἐόντι καὶ θολερῷ καὶ ἀλμυρῷ ποταμῷ.’²⁶

As Herodotus shows us in his *Histories*, it is part of Greek culture to revere Nature as divine itself and to treat it with respect; therefore, to have Xerxes whip, shackle, and berate

²⁵ Hdt. 7. 35

²⁶ Ibid

the waters is not something that the Greeks would have agreed with. In this way, Herodotus paints Xerxes as a foil for the Greek identity. That is to say, Herodotus shows Xerxes, enemy of the Greeks, mistreating nature in order to emphasize both how non-Greek Xerxes is, and how not to treat nature.

But the Nature symbols don't only serve to represent the divine and the Fates. Sometimes, throughout Herodotus' *Histories*, mules are used to represent people of mixed origin. In fact, according to Anise K. Strong, Cyrus, king of Persia, is Herodotus' "most famous mule figure."²⁷ Cyrus is referred to as a mule by the oracle when Croesus inquires whether or not he should invade Persia:

“ἀλλ’ ὅτανήμιονος βασιλεὺς Μήδοισι γένηται,
καὶ τότε, Λυδὲ ποδαβρέ, πολυψήφιδα παρ’ Ἑρμῶν
φεύγειν μηδὲ μένειν μηδ’ αἰδεῖσθαι κακός εἶναι.”²⁸

Croesus does not understand what the oracle is trying to say and disregards it, thinking it preposterous that a mule should ever become king of anything. Meanwhile, Cyrus, being half-Persian and half-Mede, overthrows his grandfather and, as Strong puts it, becomes “the King of Kings himself.”²⁹ Surprisingly, the mule is not a derogatory symbol; rather, it represents an individual who “is not burdened by inherited tradition.”³⁰ Thus, Cyrus' character is compassionate and respectful. Although he conquered many lands, he never oppressed any as his Median ancestors did before him. This trait is even what leads him to spare Croesus' life when he hears his story of Solon.

In the stories of Arion and Polycrates Herodotus exhibits how the Greeks perceived nature itself as divine, with the dolphins being a symbol for Dionysus and the fish that returns

²⁷ Strong, A. (2010). Mules in Herodotus: The Destiny of Half-Breeds. *The Classical World*, 103(4): 457

²⁸ Hdt 1.55.2

²⁹ Strong, A. (2010). Mules in Herodotus: The Destiny of Half-Breeds. *The Classical World*, 103(4): 457

³⁰ Ibid: 457

Polycrates' ring being a messenger from the Fates. But with the symbol of the mule, especially in Cyrus' case, we see how the Greeks saw themselves reflected in nature. Mules represent someone of mixed ethnicity who is therefore not bound to any one culture. As Strong explains, Cyrus is "free... to adopt the Egyptian breastplate as superior to Persian,"³¹ showing that he owes no obligation to partake in Persian or Median culture, his two ethnicities, if he finds them lacking or unnecessary. Despite his half-Persian background, Herodotus clearly flatters Cyrus by symbolizing him as a mule. As opposed to the previous examples where the Nature symbols were connected to the divine, in this case the mule represents the connection that Nature has with humanity. Thus Herodotus presents Nature as an integral part to all aspects of life: Nature is simultaneously connected to the gods, to the Fates, and to humanity.

So, having explained my view that Herodotus is using his narrative to exhibit what it means to be Greek, and having shown examples of the literary elements that Herodotus employs in order to mould these historical accounts into "folkloric tale[s],"³² I have brought forth several examples in which Herodotus shows, through his use of Nature symbols, a glimpse of what it means to be Greek. In the story of Arion, Nature, by way of dolphin, is equated to divinity by juxtaposing it with Arion who himself is the inventor of a song used primarily to worship the Gods and the moral of the story is to "do your duty to the Gods and they shall reward you." In the story of Amasis and Polycrates, Nature, by way of a fish, is equated to divinity by returning the ring to Polycrates, confirming him to be doomed and the overall purpose of the story is to exemplify the "wholly Greek doctrine of 'nothing to excess.'" in the story of Xerxes and the Hellespont, Xerxes exhibits the exact opposite behaviour towards Nature to what the Greeks should have, according to Herodotus. Finally,

³¹ Ibid

³² Cartledge, P. A. (2009). Taking Herodotus Personally. *Classical World*, 102(4), 371-382.

the case of Cyrus, whose mixed heritage is symbolic of the mule, is, in the Greek mind, freed from cultural restraints.

In these ways, Herodotus subtly lays out his idea of what it means to be Greek, and for that reason I suggest that perhaps instead of naming Herodotus the “father of history” we rename him the “cataloguer of the Greek identity.” As I said before, however, Nature is just one way in which Herodotus relays the Greek identity, and I am positive that there are several more ways in which he accomplishes this goal; and that is a subject more than worthy of further research. But here, I have shown a glimpse of Herodotus’ Greek Identity by both his use of literary elements and his use of Nature as symbolism.

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