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HERODOTUS' USE OF PROSPECTIVE SENTENCES AND THE STORY OF RHAMPSINITUS AND THE THIEF IN THE *HISTORIES*

This study is a part of an attempt to analyze the work of Herodotus in terms of performance rather than as a text to be read, and it is based on two assumptions. The first is that the *Histories* evidently constitutes a performance in the ordinary sense of the word, being composed of sections which individually or in combination were designed to be delivered orally in front of an audience and whose performance has in turn helped to shape the text we now have.¹ The second assumption concerns the applicability to the *Histories* of the term “performative” from the point of view of speech-act theory. “Performative” in this sense denotes an utterance that “does” something.² On the one hand we may regard the *Histories* as a whole, seen from the outside, as performative. By verbal means it performs certain “world-changing” actions: it explicitly confers *kleos* (saving events of men and wonderful deeds of Greeks and non-Greeks from becoming “evanescent” with time and “unglorious,” according to the formulation of the first sentence), and it indirectly warns.³ On the other hand, if we look at the

¹ As Nagy states, *Pindar's Homer* 220, the inquiry Herodotus says he is presenting in the proem (ἱστορίης ἀπόδειξις), “is not a public oral performance as such, but it is a public demonstration of a performance.” For the likelihood that parts of the *Histories* may have been in the public domain before the publication of the whole and for evidence of oral performances see, most recently, Evans, *Herodotus* 90, 94–104. On the uses of writing in the fifth century and its relationship with oral modes of communication see Thomas, *Oral Tradition* 15–34.

² I owe this distinction between the wider and the more specialized use of “performance” to Martin, *Language of Heroes* 47 and passim, who applies both meanings to his analysis of heroic utterances in the *Iliad*. For the definition and discussion of “performative” I base myself on the study of Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, the initiator of speech-act theory; and on subsequent elaborations especially by Searle, “Classification” and *Expression and Meaning*; and Bach and Harnish, *Linguistic Communication*; as well as the useful compendiums provided by Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*. On the appropriateness of applying speech-act theory to literary works see van Dijk, “Pragmatics and Poetics”; Pratt, *Speech-Act Theory* esp. 132–51; Searle, *Expression and Meaning* 58–75.

³ See the detailed discussion by Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* 262–63, 303–13, 314–38, who draws a parallel between the medium of Herodotus and the *ainos* of Pindar on the basis of their equivalent performative roles. A world-changing, as opposed to world-describing, utterance is one which attempts to get the world to match the words—e.g., a

discourse of Herodotus from within, it appears composed of different types of sentences, or groups of sentences, which can be classified in terms of their different performative roles and force.

The very notion of speech-act originated with Austin's distinction between goal-directed utterances (such as promises, commands, and verdicts) and true-or-false statements of facts, which he called "constatives" (of the type "Napoleon won the battle of Austerlitz" or "The earth is flat"). Austin went on to show how this preliminary distinction is untenable, since saying, reporting, and narrating are also actions performed by words.⁴ Current speech-act theorists accordingly reject the notion of a nonperformative utterance and rather classify utterances by type on the basis of the action each of them performs. Thus Searle's classification of illocutionary acts includes five categories: representatives (the speaker commits to something being the case, e.g., stating, reporting); directives (the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something, e.g., commanding, advising); commissives (the speaker commits to some future course of action, e.g., promising, expressing intention); expressives (the speaker expresses a psychological state, e.g., congratulating, apologizing); declarations (the speaker brings a state of affairs into existence by declaring it to exist, e.g., naming a child, declaring war, appointing someone to office).⁵

The sentences which Austin used as paradigms of "constative" are regarded as representatives in Searle's taxonomy, but they differ from others of that class in that they are implicit rather than explicit performatives (that is, not in the form "*I declare* that the earth is flat," although that is their deep structure) and have no additional features besides the speaker's committing to something's being the case.⁶ For

command, verdict or promise—and not vice versa. The distinction is formulated by Searle, "Classification" 3–4. Cf. Pratt, *Speech-Act Theory* 142–43.

⁴Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 132–49.

⁵Searle, "Classification" 10–16. "Illocutionary act" designates an act performed in saying something. The first taxonomy was compiled by Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* 150–63, and many different versions have appeared since. Cf., e.g., Bach and Harnish, *Linguistic Communication* 39–119.

⁶Searle, "Classification" 10–11, focuses his description on explicit representatives and broadens the category to include illocutionary acts of "boast" and "lament" ("representatives with the added feature that they have something to do with the interest of the speaker") as well as "conclude" and "deduce" ("representatives with the added feature that they mark a certain relation between the representative illocutionary act and the rest of the discourse or the context of the utterance").

the purposes of our discussion on Herodotus, these implicit representatives should be grouped in a special category, because they constitute the basic units of narrative or description, and in turn narrative and description represent the two essential modes through which the speech-act of the *Histories* pursues its overall goals.

We can now state that in Herodotus' discourse, series of narrative (or descriptive) statements of the type we have just described are irregularly interspersed with sentences or clauses which either clearly fall in one of the classes of Searle's illocutionary acts other than the representative, or in any case have an illocutionary purpose (be it implicit or explicit) different from that of stating, reporting, etc.⁷

The subdivision I have just made between implicit representatives (Austin's original "constatives") and other performatives roughly corresponds to a distinction of a different order, between narrative and metanarrative.⁸ While the narrative describes the "outside world," the metanarrative (more or less explicitly) describes the narrative.⁹ Most metanarrative sentences come either before or after the narrative segment to which they refer and may therefore be catalogued as either

⁷For example, explicit praise (as at 7.135.1, "The daring of these men is worthy of wonder, and in addition so are their words"), though, I suppose, Searle (on the basis of note 6 above) would attribute it to the class of representatives.

⁸Most (though not all) statements belong to narrative, and most (though not all) performatives of the second group are metanarrative. To show the precise extent to which this is true would require a discussion beyond the scope of this paper.

⁹Here, and from now on, the term "narrative" includes description and is employed in antithesis with "metanarrative" and in a broader sense than usual. For different restricted definitions see, e.g., Labov, *Language in the Inner City* 359; Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology* s.v. "narrative"; and Coste, *Narrative as Communication* 36. In my use of the term, the narrative is made up of all referential facts, and its minimal units may be represented by statements in the mode of *do* or *happen* or *is* in the present or in the past, including what some critics would call "description." Any "piece" of narrative, more or less autonomous and made out of one or more statements, will be called a "narrative segment." An obvious illustration of metanarrative, on the other hand, is provided by titles of chapters in some modern novels. Regardless of its form, "Mr. Pip Goes to London," if it is a title, does not describe an action but rather the topic of the coming narrative. In light of the earlier distinction, moreover, the sentence clearly has a different performative function from that of a formally identical statement of fact. It does not report; it implicitly promises a narrative and is semantically equivalent to "I will narrate what happened when, or how it came about that, Mr. Pip went to London." It is, in other words, a commissive. For the concept of metanarrative or metanarration as talk about the narrative see Babcock, "Story in the Story," and Bauman, *Story, Performance and Event* 98–101.

introductions or conclusions, identifying a narrative segment which follows or capping one that precedes. Each of these two categories may in turn be subdivided into a limited number of different types according to their syntactical structure and the relationship of their propositional content to the narrative to which they refer.¹⁰ What all introductions and conclusions have in common, however, is that they all *in some way* summarize what will be narrated or what has been narrated. These sentences are rhetorical signs of a didactic communication from the speaker to the audience, and although their illocutionary purposes must be assessed in the specific cases, generally speaking they bid the audience to receive the narration in a certain manner, they announce narratives to come, and they effect in the *logos* subdivisions necessary for its comprehension (“I end,” “I begin”).¹¹

Among these metanarrative statements, the *prospective sentence* is, according to my definition, the type of introduction in which the primary element of summarization is represented by a forward-looking demonstrative (a form of ὅδε, τοιόσδε, or οὗτος) which either modifies or replaces an expressive nominal element (subject, object, predicate, or adverb).¹² For example:

Σάρδιες δὲ ἤλωσαν ὧδε (1.84.1)
They captured Sardis in this way (i.e., in the following way).

κατ'αὐτὸν δὲ Κροῖσον τάδε ἐγίνετο (1.85.1)
Concerning Croesus himself, these things (i.e., the following things) happened.

¹⁰Some of these types are described in Munson, *Transitions* 28–33.

¹¹Thus Barthes, “Discourse of History” 130, observes that traditionally the initial sentence of a history constitutes a “performative opening, for in it speech is usually a solemn act of foundation.” In most cases metanarrative sentences are indirect speech-acts, in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another (typically a statement). For indirect speech-acts in ordinary communication in English see Searle, *Expressions and Meaning* 30–57.

¹²Munson, *Transitions* 28. There is otherwise no other ready-made terminology which distinguishes among different types of introductory and concluding statements. Van Groningen, *Composition Littéraire* 44, applies the term *cheville prospective* to all introductions. “Framing sentences” (Immerwahr, *Form and Thought* 12) and “shifters of organization” (Barthes, *Discourse of History* 129) are among the terms which have been used to denote a general category of metanarrative sentences which includes the prospective type.

Utterances of this type may attain various degrees of complexity and fulfill a number of performative functions by virtue of additional elements besides those which make them “prospective.” Considered in their barest form, however, prospective sentences are at least semantically equivalent to illocutionary acts which promise information and indirectly request attention. They are metanarrative because “the following things” and “in the following way” mean “the things I am going to recount” and “in the way I am going to recount”; in other words, the prospective demonstratives refer not to the material of the narrative, but to the narrative itself.

Prospective sentences constitute, with retrospective conclusions (their approximate counterpart),¹³ one of the most pervasive features of Herodotus' expository style and are largely responsible for the chopped-up rhythm of his account. In Thucydides' book 2, for example, we find eight prospective sentences in all; in chapters 1–124 of Thucydides' book 1 there are five. On the other hand, two passages of equal length in Herodotus, taken at random from books 3 and 7, contain forty-four and twenty-six respectively.¹⁴

Prospective sentences can be external or internal to a varying degree. In an absolute sense, the only external prospective is one which, occurring at the beginning of a work, summarizes and identifies the whole. This is the case, for example, of Herodotus' first sentence (Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέος ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε . . .) and the opening of Hecataeus' *Genealogiai* (*FGrHist* 1 fr. 1, Ἐκαταῖος Μιλήσιος ὧδε μυθεῖται· τὰδε γράφω . . .), both highly expressive programmatic-prospective introductions.¹⁵ Within a complex narrative unit, however, we may call “external” those prospective sentences that are equivalent to

¹³These are statements that end a narrative segment, in which the primary element of summarization is represented by a backward-looking demonstrative referring to the narrative “above”: e.g., 1.22.4, κατὰ μὲν τὸν πρὸς Μιλήσιους τε καὶ Θρασύβουλον πόλεμον Ἀλυάττη ὧδε ἔσχε, where ὧδε means “in the way I have just reported.”

¹⁴The higher frequency of prospective pronouns in Herodotus than in Thucydides, as recorded by Müller, *Satzbau* 71, though not conclusive for the limited category of prospective sentences, points in the same direction. In my own count I am not including prospective sentences of the type “he said the following” (τὰδε ἔφη, etc.) introducing direct speeches, which are almost compulsory in the mixed dramatic mode and whose number therefore largely depends on the number of separate direct utterances reported in the text.

¹⁵See below, note 24, for the “programmatic” element.

chapter headings or titles for semiautonomous narratives, that is for narrative segments that could be excerpted from the context and told as separate stories. External prospectives frequently (though irregularly) mark articulation points in the narrative of the *Histories*: the two quoted above, for example, delimit two consecutive chapters in the account of the Persian conquest of Lydia. But in the narrative style of Herodotus this large-scale organizing role of prospective sentences is merely an extension of their primary *internal* function—that of pointing out in advance a particular element within the narrative and of introducing even very small segments that have no autonomy whatsoever.

ταῦτα ἐπιλεξάμενος ὁ Πολυκράτης καὶ νόψ λαβῶν ὡς οἱ εὖ ὑπετίθετο ὁ Ἄμασις, ἐδίζητο ἐπ' ᾧ ἂν μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀσθεῖν ἀπολομένῳ τῶν κειμηλίων, διζήμενος δ' εὗρισκε τόδε· ἦν οἱ σφογγίς τὴν ἐφόρει χρουσόδετος, σμαράγδου μὲν λίθου ἐούσα, ἔργον δὲ ἦν Θεοδώρου τοῦ Τηλεκλέος Σαμίου. ἐπεὶ ὧν ταύτην οἱ ἐδόκεε ἀποβαλεῖν, ἐποίηε τοιάδε· πεντηκόντερον πληρώσας ἀνδρῶν ἐσέβη ἐς αὐτήν. . . . (3.41.1–2)

Polycrates, upon reading these words and realizing that Amasis was giving him good advice, began to search among his treasures one for the loss of which his heart would especially suffer, and thus searching, *he found the following*: he had a seal which he wore mounted on a gold ring, made of emerald, the work of Theodorus, son of Telecles the Samian. Since, then, he decided to throw that away, *he did the following*: having manned a fifty-oared ship, he went on board . . .

Prospective sentences like those just quoted, as inexpressive as they may be, still subsume a narrator who organizes his own discourse¹⁶ and who openly controls the pace of the narrative, forcing the recipient of the narration to take in the story in progressive stages and to focus his attention on the salient points so preannounced. This narrator is not necessarily always identical with the *histor*—that is, the narrator of the *Histories*, the “I” of the text.¹⁷ He is rather a more vaguely

¹⁶Barthes, *Discourse of History* 128.

¹⁷The term *histor*, which here and elsewhere I borrow from Dewald, “Narrative Surface,” denotes the narrator of the *Histories* not only qua narrator but also in his guise of researcher, collector, editor and critic of the *logoi*, and composer and organizer of the whole, as he emerges from the text itself, and as distinct from the historical author Herodotus. Because the distinction is important but relatively new, *histor* constitutes a useful conventional term. Moreover, in spite of the criticism of Evans, “Six New Studies” 95, that the term is not found in Herodotus and means “mediator” in Homer (see *Iliad*

definable “teller of the story” at that particular point, a narrative voice which in the reader’s perception has the faculty of including both the *histor* and his possible source (especially if the narrative is in indirect speech), or either one of the two, according to the context.

One can easily understand why external prospective sentences would constitute a commonplace feature of serious expository discourse and how they answer to the practical demands of the genre. They represent one of the “shifters of organization” which Barthes identifies as typical of historical discourse.¹⁸ They help to subdivide and group the material and to identify the topic at a given point:

Ἰητρικὴν ὅστις βούλεται ὀρθῶς ζητεῖν, τάδε χρὴ ποιεῖν·

Whoever wishes to investigate medicine correctly should do this.

(Hippocr. *Airs, Waters, Places* 1)

νοσήματά τε τάδε ἐπιχώρια εἶναι·

The endemic diseases are these.

(*Airs, Waters, Places* 3)

οἱ γὰρ Ἀθηναῖοι τρόπῳ τοιῷδε ἦλθον ἐπὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐν οἷς ἠὺξήθησαν.

This is how the Athenians came to the circumstances in which their power grew.

(Thuc. 1.89.1)

The greater frequency of external prospectives in Herodotus is thus partly explained as a means of acknowledging and counterbalancing the exceptional diversity of his material and the number of articulations in his *logos* in comparison with the more linear works of other fifth-century prose writers. Prospective sentences at once make the subdivision explicit, emphasize the part, and connect it to what precedes.

Internal prospectives, by contrast, do not fulfill as clear a practical function in a written work. They are the most expendable of metanarrative interventions, so that some translators of Herodotus occasionally edit them out of the text, as the following example shows (all the meta-

18.501), its application to Herodotus is entirely appropriate. As Nagy demonstrates, *Pindar's Homer* 250–61, *historia* (“inquiry”), like *histor*, expresses a juridical concept; Herodotus presents himself at the outset as practitioner of *historia*, and like the arbitrator in the Homeric passage he takes a position on who is *aitios* (“responsible”). For the narrator of the *Histories* see also Marincola, “Herodotean Narrative,” and Darbo-Peschanski, *Discours du particulier* 107–12.

¹⁸Barthes, “Discourse of History,” 128–31.

narrative sentences are underlined in the Greek and italicized in the English):

θῶμα δὲ μέγα εἶδον πυθόμενος παρὰ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων [external summary introduction].¹⁹ τῶν γὰρ ὁστέων κεχυμένων χωρὶς ἑκατέρων τῶν ἐν τῇ μάχῃ ταύτῃ πεσόντων (χωρὶς μὲν γὰρ τῶν Περσέων ἔκειτο τὰ ὀστέα, ὡς ἐχωρίσθη κατ' ἀρχάς, ἐτέρωθι δὲ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων), αἱ μὲν τῶν Περσέων κεφαλαὶ εἰσι ἀσθενέες οὕτω ὥστε, εἰ θέλοις ψήφῳ μούνη βαλεῖν, δι-ατετρανέεις, αἱ δὲ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων οὕτω δὴ τι ἰσχυραὶ, μόγις ἂν λίθῳ παίσας διαρρηξείας. αἴτιον δὲ τούτου τόδε ἔλεγον, καὶ ἐμέ γε εὐπετέως ἔπειθον [internal prospective introduction, with gloss], ὅτι Αἰγύπτιοι μὲν αὐτίκα ἀπὸ παιδίων ἀρξάμενοι ξυρῶνται τὰς κεφαλὰς καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἥλιον παχύνεται τὸ ὀστέον. τῶντὸ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ τοῦ μὴ φαλακροῦσθαι αἰτιὸν ἐστὶ· Αἰγυπτίων γὰρ ἂν τις ἐλαχίστους ἴδοιτο φαλακροὺς πάντων ἀνθρώπων. τούτοισι μὲν δὴ τοῦτό ἐστὶ αἴτιον ἰσχυρὰς φορέειν τὰς κεφαλάς [internal retrospective conclusion], τοῖσι δὲ Πέρσησι ὅτι ἀσθενέας φορέουσι τὰς κεφαλὰς, αἴτιον τόδε [internal prospective introduction]· σκιητροφέουσι ἕξ ἀρχῆς πῖλους τῶντας φορέοντες. ταῦτα μὲν νυν τοιαῦτα [ἔόντα εἶδον] [external retrospective conclusion]· εἶδον δὲ καὶ ἄλλα ὅμοια τούτοις ἐν Παπρήμῃ τῶν ἅμα Ἀχαμένει τῷ Δαρείου διαφθαρέντων ὑπὸ Ἰνάρω τοῦ Λίβυος. (3.12)

I saw a great wonder here, having learned it from the natives. The bones of those who have fallen in that battle were all scattered about, the bones of the Persians separate on the one side, those of the Egyptians on the other, just as the two armies had been separated at the beginning. The skulls of the Persians are so brittle that, if you struck them with a pebble only, you would go right through them; but those of the Egyptians are so stout that you would scarcely break them with the stroke of a stone. *The reason the natives give for this—and I was persuaded by them—was** that the Egyptians from childhood on shave their heads, and the bones grow thicker through exposure to the sun. The same reason holds for the scarcity of baldness among them. For one sees fewer bald men in Egypt than anywhere else in the world. *This, then, is the reason why their skulls are so thick, and it is the same reason why the Persians, on the other hand, have such brittle skulls.** For from *their* childhood they shelter their heads by wearing woollen caps. *That is the way this matter of the skulls was.* I saw something similar in the case of those Persians who were killed along with Achaemenes, son of Darius, by Inarus the Libyan at Papremis.

¹⁹I call a “summary introduction” one that, unlike the prospective and programmatic types (see below, note 26), does not formally look forward to what follows, although it does so in context.

[Asterisks mark the points at which the prospective element has been eliminated.]²⁰

I have cited the Greek passage in full to show how internal prospective sentences may, as in this case, cooperate with other narrative and metanarrative strategies for engaging the recipient.²¹ In particular the fragmentation of the narrative by means of retrospectives recalling what has just been said and prospectives preparing for what is about to be said suggests an effort at step-by-step clarity typical of oral presentation.²² This hypothesis is destined to remain largely impressionistic, since although we all have experience of informal forward-pointing markers in ordinary speech (“I’ll tell you what”; “So, this is what we do”),²³ prospective sentences or their equivalent are not an inevitable feature of sustained oral narration.²⁴ A parallel to internal prospective

²⁰Greene, *Herodotus*, p. 212. See also 3.41 (quoted above) in the translation by Rawlinson, *Persian Wars*, p. 231, for another example of omitted prospectives.

²¹Celebratory summary (θῶμα), repetition of key terms (χωρίς, ἐχωρίσθη, three times; αἴτιον, four times, etc.), first-person interventions (εἶδον, three times; ἐμέ . . . ἔπειθον); use of the second-person address to the audience (θέλοις, διατετρανέεις, διαρῶξιας), retrospective conclusions.

²²For other stylistic features perhaps due to the influence of oral storytelling in Herodotus see Lang, *Herodotean Narrative* 1–69. Is the *histor* treating his own narrative as a performance, or is he faithfully reproducing the performances of others, oral narratives that he himself has received? The text of the *Histories* reveals that both types of factors may be at play: 3.12 would constitute an example of the former, but the second cannot be excluded for many narratives of events in the past, including the Rhampsinitus story discussed below. Various types of signs of interaction with the audience in the *Histories* are listed by Evans, *Herodotus* 100–102. For Herodotus’ dependence on oral tradition, rather than written sources, see most recently Thomas, *Oral Tradition* 4, 96, 98, 171–72, 198, 235, 238–82; Evans, *Herodotus* 105–43.

²³Direct speeches in Herodotus contain several prospective sentences equivalent to these. They may anticipate performative utterances such as exhortations or reproaches (e.g., 7.39.1, εὖ νῦν τάδε ἐξέπίστασο) or introduce narratives (e.g., 1.117.4, ποιέω δὲ ὧδε).

²⁴The exact form of original oral narratives cannot be determined from old-fashioned collections (e.g., the Grimm fairytales). Prospective sentences and other deictic sentences involving demonstratives are frequent in the alphabetic *Popol Vuh*, which represents a reconstruction of readers’ performances of the ancient Mayan hieroglyphic (see, e.g., Tedlock, *Popol Vuh* 105). In the contemporary narratives exactly transcribed by Labov, *Language in the Inner City* 354–95, retrospective conclusions, but not prospective introductions, are a common feature. Prospective sentences sometimes occur at the beginning of the narratives of practical jokes collected by Bauman, *Story, Performance and Event*, e.g., 37, 42. Tannen, “Oral and Literate Strategies,” analyzes samples of oral and written narratives to demonstrate how strategies normally connected with oral communication are found in written discourse of certain genres.

clauses among modern narratives, however, can perhaps be found in the habit of certain oral folk–narrators from different parts of the world of connecting the episodes of a story by means of a direct question addressed to the audience: “Why couldn’t they find their shoes? The shoemaker picked them up. And what did the shoemaker do next?” And so on.²⁵ Herodotus only uses this type of open–ended direct question once, accompanying it with a programmatic introduction:²⁶

κοῦ δῆτα, εἴποι τις ἄν, ταῦτα ἀναισιμοῦται; ἐγὼ καὶ τοῦτο φράσω.
(3.6.2)

Where on earth, one might ask, are these (i.e., the empty jars) used? I will explain this too.²⁷

The open–ended direct question and the prospective sentence are to some extent analogous. With the open–ended direct question, the implicit riddle which a given narrative segment will in any case elicit from the recipient becomes explicitly formulated by the narrator either as a challenge to the recipient of the narrative (“Guess why/what. You tell me”), or—in the Herodotean example just quoted—as if it were coming from the recipient of the narrative himself (“You ask why/what. I will tell you”). The internal prospective leaves the riddle implicit but provides the terms of its formulation (what he did, why he did, in which way, etc.) and marks a moment of suspense which functions as additional encouragement for the hearer to pose the question to himself, before the narrative segment that provides the answer: “Since then Polycrates decided to throw that away, *this is what he did*.” (pause: Guess what. I will tell you.) “He manned a fifty–oared ship and went on board. . . .”

What is important is not so much to demonstrate the oral origin of

²⁵This stylistic feature is noticed by Thompson, *Folktale* 17, and Dorson, “Oral Style” 39.

²⁶I call “programmatic introduction” one which contains an explicit reference to the act of narrating, often (though not inevitably) couched in the narrator’s first–person.

²⁷For rhetorical questions in the *Histories* see Lang, *Herodotean Narrative* 38–41, who however fails to distinguish between introductory and other types of questions and, within the class of introductory questions, between open– and close–ended, the latter more properly rhetorical (the only instance in Herodotus is at 7.21.1, “For, what people did Xerxes not lead out of Asia to Greece? What stream of water, except for large rivers, was not dried up by the army who drank at them?”). Both types are Homeric, as Lang saw.

this method for establishing contact with the recipient of the narration, as rather to observe how it characterizes a certain type of discourse. Internal prospective sentences mark an especially significant moment of choice, in which the narrative can take different directions depending on the option selected by the narrative agent who happens to be in control (the character who *acts* or, at a different level, the *histor* or the alleged source who *knows*). In Herodotus, especially the report of a clever or outrageous or unexpected action in the middle of a story tends to be introduced by inexpressive prospective sentences of the type “he did/devised the following,” emphasizing that the action of the character in question at that particular point of the story is one, and perhaps one of the most unpredictable, among several possible choices and will be determinant for the course of the narrative or its outcome.²⁸

The frequency of internal prospectives in those parts of the *Histories* closest to the genre of folktale is perhaps due to the fact that the surprising resolution is typical of this genre of narratives. At the same time, however, prospective sentences occur throughout the *Histories*, scattered in narratives of all types of contents, from battle narratives to ethnographical passages, and their presence or absence is rather a question of pace and mode of narration. Thus we find no internal prospectives in the Gyges–Cambyses episode, the Atys–Adrastus story, and the flashback on Cyrus’ survival—to take some famous examples—which contain no fewer folktale elements and unusual actions than the story of Polycrates cited above. These passages emplot the story in the tragic mode, and the narrator qua narrator is almost totally absent from them—though the *histor* may occasionally appear in the role of audience, on this side of the narrated.²⁹ They employ a discourse entirely different from that of more punctiliously didactic or ironic narratives in which a narrator appears in charge of the narration and organizes it for the benefit of the recipients.

The limiting case for the use of prospective sentences in Herodotus is the story of Rhampsinitus and the thief in *Histories* 2.121, a folk-

²⁸ See, e.g., 1.21.1, 48.2, 80.2, 96.2, etc.

²⁹ See, e.g., the chilling concluding gloss at 1.119.7, ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ ἔμελλε, ὡς ἐγὼ δοκέω, ἄλισας θάπτειν τὰ πάντα. Harpagus has just exited from the stage carrying the miserable remains of his son. Where will he go? Presumably to take care of the burial, supposes the narrator as spectator, who knows no more than the rest of the audience. For the “employment” of history in the tragic and other modes see White, *Tropics of Discourse* 58–74.

tale attested in several different versions throughout the world.³⁰ What distinguishes this version from its Greek parallels or antecedents is that here several perhaps originally independent stories have been joined together to produce a longer chain.³¹ The strung-along effect is enhanced by the discourse: in no other passage of the *Histories* do we find prospective introductions used to organize the narrative with such frequency and regularity to the exclusion of other metanarrative sentences. Prospective pointers distinguish six out of eight equivalent cardinal functions or functional sequences (here given an asterisk):³²

1. The king builds storage to keep treasure in it: τὸν δὲ ἐργαζόμενον ἐπιβουλεύοντα τάδε μηχανᾶσθαι.
- *2. The builder and his sons devise an opening in the storage to steal the treasure; they steal part of it: ὡς δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ δις καὶ τρις ἀνοίξαντι αἰεὶ ἐλάσσω φαίνεσθαι τὰ χρήματα (τοὺς γὰρ κλέπτας οὐκ ἀνιέναι κεραίζοντας), ποιῆσαι μιν τάδε.
- *3. The king sets a trap to catch the thieves; he catches one of them.
4. The thief decapitates his trapped brother; he escapes with

³⁰Elwell, "Tale of Thievery"; Aly, *Volksmärchen* 67. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II* 2.53–54, gives a complete bibliography on probable prototypes and descendants and identifies two basic common folk motifs: that of the discomfiture of the ruler and that of the wily thief. See Thompson, *Motif Index* H.507, I.0.2, K.346.1.1, and K.301ff.

³¹Fehling, *Herodotus and His "Sources"* 210–11, identifies three originally separate strands in the tale and argues that they were put together by Herodotus himself: (1) theft from the king's treasure and the thief's escape by decapitation of his brother (Charax *FGrHist* 103 F 5 and Paus. 9.37.5–6, both ultimately from the *Telegony*, as Proclus' summary indicates); (2) men guarding the headless body being made drunk, from an unknown source; (3) prostitution of the king's daughter, transferred from Herodotus 2.126.

³²"Function," in the sense given to the term by Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* 21, is an act seen in terms of the role it plays in the story to which it belongs, regardless of how and by whom it is performed. Barthes, "Introduction to Structural Analysis," considers functions in greater detail, distinguishing within Proppian functions nuclei or "cardinal functions" that "constitute veritable hinges of the narrative" from "others which merely 'fill' the narrative space separating the hinge functions." Though the distinction is excessively fluid also because nothing in narrative is mere filler—see 108 with 114—it works in relative terms: in the story of Rhampsinitus and the thief, the death of the builder, for example, or the intervention of the thieves' mother may be regarded as secondary actions. A succession of nuclei linked together by a relation of solidarity is an actional sequence, which in turn constitutes a nameable functional unit (e.g., "clever action"). Most of the clever actions marked in the scheme constitute sequences of several actions.

brother's head, protecting his own identity: ἀπορεύμενον δέ μιν τάδε ποιῆσαι.

- *5. The king sets a trap to catch the thief, using the other thief's headless body: ὥς δὲ χαλεπῶς ἐλαμβάνετο ἢ μήτερ τοῦ περιεόντος παιδὸς καὶ πολλὰ πρὸς αὐτὴν λέγων οὐκ ἔπειθε, ἐπιτεχνήσασθαι τοιάδε μιν.
- *6. The thief makes the guards drunk and steals the body: τὸν δὲ βασιλέα, ὥς αὐτῷ ἀπηγγέλθη τοῦ φωρὸς ὁ νέκυς ἐκκεκλεμμένος. δεινὰ ποιέειν, πάντως δὲ βουλόμενον εὔρεθῆναι ὅστις κοτὲ εἶη ὁ ταῦτα μηχανώμενος, ποιῆσαί μιν τάδε, ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιστά.
- *7. The king sets a trap by prostituting his daughter: ὥς δὲ τὴν παῖδα ποιέειν τὰ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς προσταχθέντα, τὸν φῶρα πυθόμενος τῶν εἵνεκα ταῦτα ἐπρήσσετο, βουληθέντα πολυτροπή τοῦ βασιλέος περιγενέσθαι ποιέειν τάδε.
- *8. The thief escapes using the limb of an unknown dead man.

The narrative segments listed above follow a regular pattern, each including an initial clever action followed by the achievement of its intended result, if that occurs. The prospective introductions show a fairly typical form, in which units of contents (that is, functions) and units of discourse (the summarizing elements) appear side by side: in most cases a circumstantial clause or group of clauses which belongs to the narrative and rushes it through ("since after opening the chamber two or three times he saw that evidently the treasure was less and less . . .") precedes the metanarrative prospective element, corresponding to the main clause of the sentence, which stops the narrative short.³³

The last prospective, marking function 8 in the scheme above, formulates explicitly the idea of a race of cunning intelligence between king and thief (βουληθέντα πολυτροπή τοῦ βασιλέος περιγενέσθαι) as it announces the action which will determine the final winner. All the preceding narrative segments in the list are functions of this race in which each of the two opponents in turn tries to outsmart the other for the purpose of *keeping* (preserving the treasure, saving one's life) and *taking* (stealing the treasure, catching the thief).

³³ The reverse pattern, in which the prospective element appears in a subordinate or participial clause, is sometimes used externally to introduce anachronistic narratives: e.g., 1.73.2, . . . γενόμενον γαμβρὸν Κροίσῳ ὥδε.

The thief's career is represented by a series of increasingly advantageous compromises between gains and losses: he steals part of the treasure (2), but has to give up his brother, although he keeps his brother's head, which allows him to save himself (4), and later he also manages to steal his brother's body by wasting and giving away a great quantity of wine (6). In the clever action that closes the series (8), the thief succeeds in saving something valuable (himself) while giving up something worthless (the mutilated limb taken from an unknown man already dead), in contrast with his previous escape, achieved at the high cost of leaving behind the mutilated body of his brother, whom he had to kill. For the losing side, a similar alternation of keeping/catching and letting go/giving up follows a descending curve. The king builds a stone chamber in order to preserve his treasure, but that causes him to be deprived of some of it. He sets a trap and catches one of the thieves, but only as a headless corpse, which provides him with a second inexpensive trap, but which he must subsequently surrender. The king's prostitution of his own daughter (7) represents the last and highest expenditure for the sake of gaining and is more strongly emphasized than the others in the prospective introduction by the addition of a gloss with the grammatical first-person ($\epsilon\mu\omicron\iota\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}$, 122.ε1). This is the first clear appearance of the *histor* in the narration, since the prospective sentences in themselves are, as we have already observed, merely signs of the story being told, either by the *histor* or by the sources implied in the *oratio obliqua* construction (presumably the "Egyptian priests" of 2.120.1). Here the *histor*'s expression of disbelief devalues as historical fact the segment of the narrative most crucial from the point of view of signification.³⁴

The king's prostitution of his own daughter corresponds in fact to a scandalous and unbelievable narrative moment, when the two adversaries, who are lexically defined as opposite (king–thief), start becoming one. As when the thief decapitated his brother, blood ties are here traded in by the king for the purpose of obtaining something else, and the king outrageously accepts the race of wit on the thief's own terms: in order to be equal to the thief in *sophiē*, the king must be also *anosios* to the same degree ($\tau\omicron\ \sigma\omicron\phi\omicron\nu\ \text{and}\ \tau\omicron\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ are in fact the terms used

³⁴The appearance of several infinitives in subordinate clauses throughout the story in indirect speech ($\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$, 121.α1; $\tau\upsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$, 121.β1, etc.) indicates disbelief in the story in general. See Cooper, "Intrusive Oblique Infinitives." For the value of false stories in Herodotus see Lateiner, *Historical Method* 77.

in the narrative at 122.ε4; cf. πολυφροσύνη and τόλμη at 121.ζ1).³⁵ This leveling off of king and thief on the basis of the inseparability of shrewdness and impiety paves the way for the final reconciliation and contraction of marriage kinship between the two. Just as the king becomes equivalent to the thief, so the thief becomes, so to speak, kingly: he marries the king's daughter and is praised as the one who knows most among men (ὡς πλεῖστα ἐπισταμένῳ ἀνθρώπων). The story of this race ironically contributes to the exploration of two themes of great importance in Herodotus, for which the narrative throughout the *Histories* keeps offering contradictory evidence. The first is that of the possibility of the convergence of opposites (e.g., Greek and barbarian), which includes the narrower question of whether a king is essentially different or essentially similar to other human beings. The second is the question of whether *sophiē* need be a moral or an amoral virtue.³⁶

The prospective announcements that reveal the structure of the tale of Rhampsinitus and the thief slow down and scan the narrative, although not at the cost of violating the required dramatic pace. Thus the thief's decapitation of his brother at the entreaty of the latter (4) is portrayed as a hasty and desperate solution and is not mediated prospectively. Each prospective introduction which breaks a continuum naturally draws attention to the individual item. Here the cumulative effect is that the particular actions lifted out of the context in the same way become conspicuous as equivalent items in a series. Though prospective sentences often are, as are most of these, meaningless shifters which do not in their contents interpret the facts of the narrative, yet they can serve the purpose of evaluation. In a more general sense, this tale in Herodotus is a small example of how meaning is produced by the cooperation of two different levels, the level of functions (the story itself) and the level of discourse (how the story is told).

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³⁵ Ἄνοσιος and οὐχ ὄσιος are strong evaluative terms elsewhere in the *Histories*, denoting disregard for what is "sacred," either in the proper sense (i.e., "pertaining to the divine") or with a broader meaning. See Powell, *Lexicon* s.vv., and Darbo-Peschanski, *Discours du particulier* 42–43, 64–69.

³⁶ See especially the stories of private individuals who become kings: Gyges (1.8–13), Deioces (1.96–100), Cyrus (1.107–30), and Darius (3.84–87). On *sophiē* and morality see, e.g., Munson, "Artemisia" 103–4.

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