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HISTORIĒ BY HERODOTUS OF HALICARNASSUS – THEORETICAL ISSUES

Herodotus' *Histories*, probably like no other work coming from the early stage of the reflection on history and from the origins of Greek historical writings, show obvious connections with literature *par excellence*. Firstly, it is due to the fact that they directly manifest features of the Greek epic tradition both in terms of language forms and content as well.¹ In addition, they naturally reflect communication habits of the fifth century BCE, which is proved by the structure of *the Histories* discourse based, in the deep layer, on a narrative unit, i.e. an *episode*.² And this episodic nature is a feature characteristic of oral genres or those intended for oral performance. What is more, *the Histories* are both literature and a historical discourse which I understand as a specific type of figurative language which – as it was observed by H. White – like metaphorical expressions, symbolic language or allegorical performance, always implies more than says directly, says something else than seemingly implies, or reveals something about the world for the price of hiding something else.³ Declaring in the first sentence of his work that he will “show” (ἀποδεικνύναι) people's deeds (τὰ γεγόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων), Herodotus does the same as Homer in terms of defining the

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¹ Connections between epic and history in the article by J. GRETHLEIN: *From “Imperishable Glory” to History: The Iliad and the Trojan War*, in: D. KONSTAN, K.A. RAAFLAUB (ed.), *Epic and History*, Oxford 2014, p. 122-144.

² See the book by I. WIEŻEL, *Oralna perspektywa opowiadania “Dziejów” Herodota z Halikarnasu. W kierunku poetyki ustności prozy*, Kraków–Lublin 2012.

³ Compare the article by H. WHITE: *Figuring the Nature of the Times Deceased: Literary Theory and Historical Writing*, in: R. COHEN (ed.), *The Future of Literary Theory*, New York–London 1989, p. 19-43.

subject of his undertaking, who also, especially in *the Odyssey*, praises the deeds of the “cunning” hero (πολύτροπον – *Od.* 1.2), filtering his story by an invocation to the omniscient Muse. However, he also makes his own contribution, defining his task as ιστορίη, that is “researching” or rather “witnessing”, because the main meaning of Greek ἵστωρ is “a witness”, and then – “a researcher or historian”.⁴ Thus, if Herodotus – a witness, in an almost conventional manner continues an epic tradition revealing the identity of this *what* of his discourse with Homer’s discourse, then this *how* of this discourse gains a new meaning through the polyphony of the voices which – as it turns out – can be heard in his narrative. In the whole story of *the Histories*, Herodotus appears and shows himself as a witness (*histor*) feeling obliged to give this testimony.⁵

⁴ In the times of Herodotus the term *histor* was not used in relation to the activities represented by him and other contemporary researchers of ancient history, ethnographers or mythographers. They were called *logographoi* – see R. TURASIEWICZ’s article *Zakres znaczeniowy terminu λογογράφος w greczyźnie V i IV w. p.n.e.*, “Eos” 84(1996), p. 23-34. I understand Herodotus’ undertakings as those reported by a *histor*, i.e. a “witness” referring to the meaning of this noun close to Homer’s interpretation where this word means “a mediator, witness of a dispute who settles the case” (comp. *Il.* 18.497 f.:

ὠρώρει, δύο δ’ ἄνδρες ἐνεΐκεον εἵνεκα ποινηῆς
 ἄνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου: ὃ μὲν εὐχέτο πάντ’ ἀποδοῦναι
 500 - δῆμῳ πιφαύσκων, ὃ δ’ ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἐλέσθαι:
 ἄμφω δ’ ἰέσθην ἐπὶ ἱστορίᾳ πεῖραρ ἐλέσθαι.
 and two men were striving about the blood-price of a man slain;
 the one avowed that he had paid all,
 [500] declaring his cause to the people, but the other refused to accept aught;
 and each was fain to win the issue on the word of a daysman.)

Fragment of *the Iliad* translated by A.T. MURRAY (HOMER, *The Iliad*, with an English Translation by A.T. Murray, Ph.D. in two volumes, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1924.)

However, as an opposition to the statement that Homer’s witness-mediator is obliged to give a verdict, I will quote a passage from *the Histories* from I.5.3, where Herodotus clearly refrains from giving any judgements of issues covered by his account (ταῦτα μὲν νυν Πέρσαι τε καὶ Φοίνικες λέγουσι: ἐγὼ δὲ περὶ μὲν τούτων οὐκ ἔρχομαι ἐρέων ὡς οὕτω ἢ ἄλλως κως ταῦτα ἐγένετο, τὸν δὲ οἶδα αὐτὸς πρῶτον ὑπάρξαντα ἀδίκων ἔργων ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας, τοῦτον σημήνας προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου, ὁμοίως σμικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών. – “These are the Tales told by the Persians and the Phenicians severally: and concerning these things I am not going to say that they happened thus or some other way, but when I pointed to the man who first within my own knowledge began to commit wrong against the Hellenes, I shall advance the story, giving an account of the cities of men, small as well as great.”). I included this explanation in the text of my article thanks to an anonymous Reviewer. Fragments of *the Histories* translated by G.C. Macaulay (HERODOTUS, *The Histories*, with an Introduction and Notes by D. LATEINER, New York 2004.)

⁵ See. J. KINDT, *Oracle Stories and the Beginning of Historiography: Herodotus’ Croesus Logos*, “Classical Philology” 101(2006), no 1, p. 34 n; H. IMMERWAHR, *Form and Thought in Herodo-*

Herodotus – a witness, traveller and writer collects, stores in his memory and writes down τὰ λεγόμενα, that is “what was said” about facts which historians presently consider to be a source of knowledge of the distant history of Europe and Asia. What is more, listening to τὰ λεγόμενα, Herodotus lets the people who agreed to enter into a dialogue, exchange of thoughts and opinions speak for themselves.⁶ And these people are referred to as “sources” by some historians. I deliberately use the word “dialogue” because I am convinced of a dialogic nature of all cultural activities performed by Greeks, particularly in the archaic era, with respect to creating, cultivating and passing on their own culture. In *the Iliad* heroes take turns to sing κλέα ἀνδρῶν, which indicates a continuity in the sending and reception process, since there is always a person who can change from a sender into a recipient.⁷ Confrontations on the verbal level always occur in a situation of a two-way communication, as there is always somebody who talks to someone else; there are no scenes of long monologues in *the Iliad*, there is always somebody the word must be sent to, therefore the word has its addressee; and what is more, it always triggers a specific effect, this is the word which is encumbered with a driving force. It is due to the fact that humans have a natural ability to engage into a directed communication, i.e. directed at another human being. Describing other people’s accounts obtained as a product of a dialogic method of collecting information, Herodotus himself and his text become witnesses of the life and words of his contemporaries. Due to metaphorical nature of a historical discourse – as it was noted by F. Ankersmit – a recipient wants to ask further questions, thus, it does not close but open the door to a discussion and interpretation (sic!) of the past events.⁸ Thanks to his interlocutors, Herodotus relates these events in a certain order, both in terms of chronology and casual sequences, thereby giving them a particular

tus, Cleveland 1966, p. 4-7; H. VERDIN, *De historisch-kritische method van Herodotus*, Brussels 1971; E.J. BAKKER, *The Making of History: Herodotus’ Historiēs Apodexis*, in: E.J. BAKKER, I.J.F. DE JONG, H. VAN WEES (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, Leiden–New York–Köln 2002, p. 3-32.

⁶ I could imagine Herodotus conducting such a dialogue, for example, on the basis of a passage from book III, 50-51 of *the Histories*, where Periander interrogates (ἐλπάρει τε ιστορέων) his elder son so as to hear a recount of his stay at his father’s-in-law Prokles. Also see W.R. CONNOR, *The Histor in History*, in: R.M. ROSEN, J. FARRELL (ed.), *Nomodeiktēs: Greek Studies in Honour of Martin Ostwald*, Ann Arbor 1993, p. 4 f., and especially the remarks on the meaning of the word ἱστορῶν and testimonies including this word.

⁷ See the scene of alternate singing of the heroes Achilles and Patroclus accompanied by the lyre belonging previously to Eetion, the king of the Cillician Thebe: *Il.* IX, 185-195.

⁸ F. ANKERSMIT, *Narracja, reprezentacja, doświadczenie. Studia z teorii historiografii*, edited and with an introduction by E. Domańska, Kraków 2004.

meaning. For this reason, he requires from his listeners an effort to assess the value of these events. He himself regularly makes such assessments in the text of *the Histories*, recapitulating the sequences of events by reaching the “meaning” of individual stories expressed in the comment evaluating these events. Hence, Herodotus’ record of stories encompasses layers of meaning, and therefore potential interpretations as well. Following White’s terminology, I would call Herodotus’ merging of facts or historical data an “*emplotment*”⁹, so as to endow them with a symbolic dimension referring to something which is “beyond” and already built on somebody else’s report, each time associated with an individual point of view. Thus, at the very beginning, at the moment the data are merged, they are filtered through two layers: a “source” layer built on the “second-hand” recount, that is witnesses’ report, and “author” layer resulting from personal experience of the researcher in order to obtain the quality of a discourse which can be passed on, spread and communicated to a wider circle of recipients. I would see the order of the third-person narrative in *the Histories* as the materialized voices of Herodotus’ interlocutors, whereas the order of the first-person narrative – as the layer of “author’s voice”, Herodotus- witness’s voice, somehow holding the *meta-* position of this discourse.¹⁰ If it was possible to describe vividly the method of merging these two orders in *the Histories*, it can be said that they coexist in a dynamic mutual interlacing, in a constant dialogue also in relation to each other. At the methodological level, it would be a dialogue between the tropological theory of a historical discourse, which vests the language with an important place in shaping the nature of this discourse, and the theory of the natural narratology which – basing on the results of social and linguistic sciences – confirms, from the point of view of the cognitive structures, the intuitions inherent in the poetics of H. White’s historical writings.¹¹

In case of Herodotus’ texts, just like Homer’s, the category of reporting and reference is somehow culturally enforced. Greeks of the archaic and classical period expected narrative genres to impart rather momentous content which was important and necessary to build and convey the sense of

⁹ H. WHITE, *Poetyka pisarstwa historycznego*, transl. from English by E. Domańska, M. Loba, A. Marciniak, M. Wilczyński, Kraków 2010 (second amended edition), p. 211 f.

¹⁰ See e.g. a book by David BRANSCOME entitled: *Textual Rivals. Self-Presentation in Herodotus’ Histories*, Michigan 2013, Paul DEMONT’s article, *Figures of Inquiry in Herodotus’s “Inquiries”*, “*Mnemosyne*” 62(2009), no 2, p. 179-205.

¹¹ M. FLUDERNIK, *Towards a Natural Narratology*, London 1996, p. 12-52.

national identity created by the notion of a “hero” and the fame of his great deeds (*klea andron*).¹² In order to express these aspirations in a story, whether in verse or prose, it is best to follow the combination of the metonymic and ironic trope, but with a predominance of the former one. The structure of events expressed by these categories will reflect a natural cause and effect sequence based on a simple sequence “event/action – reaction to this event/action”, which has its consequences in a general scheme of stories primarily formed as episodic structures with a relatively firm construction. This category can be also justified in terms of reception. Only by re-realization within the cognitive schemes which are common for humans in the process of reception, was a recipient able to identify Herodotus’ literary writings or heroic poetry as epic narrative genres, and what is more, he would not have been able to do it outside the context of these genres publication. It is the context of their performance that ultimately sanctions the essence of Homer’s poetic epic and Herodotus’ prose epic, both at the level of transmission and reception and also at the level of the very verbal act, that is the *medium* of this transmission.

Herodotus himself defines his method in paragraph II, 99.1-4, when he says:

Μέχρι μὲν τούτου ὄψις τε ἐμὴ καὶ γνώμη καὶ ἱστορίη ταῦτα λέγουσά ἐστι, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε αἰγυπτίους ἔρχομαι λόγους ἐρέων κατὰ [τὰ] ἤκουον· προσέσται δέ τι αὐτοῖσι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος.¹³

Thus, apart from autopsy and rational reflection, among the techniques used by the historian to obtain information, there is also ἱστορίη, that is “study, interview” based on hearsay (ἀκοή). Egbert Bakker advises to separate Herodotean *historiē* from the activity of writing about “history” in the present sense of this word, and thus treating it in the same way as *historio-graphy*. He argues that Herodotus perceived his method primarily as an intellectual tool and communication task, which was moreover implemented through verbal communication rather than the techniques related to literacy.¹⁴ In order to support this opinion more extensively, it is possible to present the results obtained on the grounds of the analysis of *the Histories*

¹² G. NAGY, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, Cambridge MA 2013.

¹³ „Hitherto my own observation and judgement and inquiry vouch for that which I have said; but this point onwards I tell the Egyptian σοφιστες that I heard, and also some things I have myself seen.”

¹⁴ E. BAKKER, *The Making of History*, 3;8 ff. and R. THOMAS, *Herodotus in Context: Ethnography, Science, and the Art of Persuasion*, Cambridge 2000, s. 249 ff.

inner text which encompass the structures putting Herodotus' discourse in the light of the mechanisms of a spoken, and not written, language.¹⁵ The fact that Herodotus gathered "hearsay" information about events and people encourages a reflection on the real mechanism of such a process of data collection. In several papers I have argued that both narrative and descriptive paragraphs of *the Histories* exhibit a structure showing a receptive nature of Herodotean account in which the author presents a special ability to steer a listener's attention to make him comprehend the conveyed issues in a proper way.¹⁶ This structure is similar to stories generated in the circumstances of a conversation, that an exchange of facts based on the speaker's personal experience or on the account of vicarious experience, i.e. so-called "second-hand information."¹⁷ Transmission of "τὰ λεγόμενα" ("what is said") would be organically connected with the sense of hearing because we acquire knowledge by listening to others. This process would be reflected, for instance, by a situation described by Herodotus himself in book I, chapters 23-24, where, in order to believe in the miraculous rescue of the singer Arion by a dolphin, the tyrant Periander of Corinth has to hear the account provided by the artist himself, as well as interrogate the witnesses of the event, that is the treacherous sailors (I, 24.25-28):

Περίανδρον δὲ ὑπὸ ἀπιστίας Ἀρίονα μὲν ἐν φυλακῷ ἔχειν οὐδαμῷ μετιέντα, ἀνακῶς δὲ ἔχειν τῶν πορθμέων· ὥς δὲ ἄρα παρεῖναι αὐτούς, κληθέντας ἱστορέεσθαι εἰ τι λέγοιεν περὶ Ἀρίονος.¹⁸

¹⁵ See M. LANG's article, *Herodotus: Oral History with a Difference*, "Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association" 128(1984), no 2, p. 93 n., a book by the same author: *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse*, Cambridge 1984; and also I. WIEŻEL, *Oralna perspektywa opowiadania*, 47-130; I. WIEŻEL, *Herodotus' Histories as Natural Narrative. Croesus' Logos I. 6-92*, "Amsterdam International Electronic Journal for Cultural Narratology" 6(2010/2011), <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/narratology/index.html>.

¹⁶ See I. WIEŻEL, *Performance a gatunki narracyjne w Grecji okresu archaicznego i klasycznego*, in: A. WITCZAK (ed.), *Epika antyczna i jej kontynuacje. Wybór*, Gdańsk 2015, (in print); and by the same author: *Kompozycja pierścieniowa w "Dziejach" Herodota na tle stylu oralnego wczesnej literatury greckiej – ujęcie kognitywne*, „Quaestiones Oralitatis” I 1(2015), p. 69-85.

¹⁷ A scheme of narrative based on the speaker's own or vicarious experience is presented thoroughly by W. LABOV and J. WALETZKY, *Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience*, in: J. HELM (ed.), *Essays on Verbal and Visual Arts*, Seattle 1967, p. 12-44.

¹⁸ "Periander doubting of his story kept Arion under guard and would let him go nowhere, while he kept careful watch for those who had conveyed him. When these came, he called them and inquired of them if they had any report to make of Arion."

Also comp. V. GRAY, *Herodotus' Literary and Historical method: Arion's Story (I.23-24)*, "The American Journal of Philology" 122(2001), no 122, p. 14 n.

Herodotus' questioning and listening to witnesses reminds of an issue which has been long appearing in reference books, namely the problem of "sources" used by a historian and oral traditions that the researcher of the past events had an access to.¹⁹ Some researchers, like D. Fehling, argue that Herodotus fabricated evidence on various topics on purpose, so as to prolong a good impression and somehow sanction his position as a historian.²⁰ There is no denying, however, that he had an access to different traditions, for example Corinthian and Lesbian, as it was in case of a story about Arion (Book I, 23-24).²¹ This, in turn, would confirm a technical assumption that "the father of history" must have had an opportunity to talk to many people, probably with different points of view of the same case, hiding under the term "X or Y tradition". This conversational aspect of "the method of collecting interviews" is confirmed by the deep layer of his *Histories* which implies placing this text in the category of narratives embedded in the natural mechanisms inherent in the spoken language and communication habits arising from this fact.

At the end, let us return to the image of Herodotus as a *histor*. As I tried to demonstrate in this paper, on the basis of the content of his work, this author appears to be "a witness and researcher at the same time". Nevertheless, we could also call Herodotus a *logios*, which would make it possible to complete the image of the issues raised in this short article. This image, in turn, would present our historian as an epic writer, in spite of writing prose, who – like Homer – gives a good report of great deeds of both Greeks and barbarians despite using a medium of poetry. G. Nagy has already defined quite clearly this interdependence between the objectives set by the great Epic Writer and Herodotus, and he perceived that the essence of this relationship rested in the identity of aspirations of these both artists to commemorate *kleos aphthiton* of human deeds.²² As *the Iliad* invocation depicts the cause of the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon, i.e. the anger of the former, which is at the same time "the driving force" of the action of the poem, also Herodotus in the prooemium to his work looks for the causes of hostility between the Hellenistic and barbaric world. And these

¹⁹ This problem is covered most explicitly by J.A.S. EVANS, *Herodotus the Explorer*, Princeton 1991, p. 121 n.; R. FOWLER, *Herodotus and His Contemporaries*, "Journal of Hellenic Studies" 116(1996), p. 62-87 and D. FEHLING, *Herodotus and His Sources: Citation, Invention, and Narrative Art*, transl. by J.G. Howie, Leeds 1989.

²⁰ Comp. D. FEHLING, *Herodotus and His Sources...*, p. 21-24.

²¹ See V. GREY, *Herodotus' Literary...*, p. 24.

²² G. NAGY, *Herodotus the Logios*, "Arethusa" 20(1987), no 1-2, p. 175-184.

both conflicts trigger this ἀπόδειξις of the individual and collective military achievements. Nagy sees the solution of this problem in interpreting Herodotus' activity as *logios*, active involvement in acquiring and proclaiming knowledge to the public, just like a prose equivalent of *rhapsode* which used the medium of poetry. A different opinion is presented by N. Luraghi, who places Herodotus somehow at the other end of the semantic field of the word *logios*.²³ He allocates the profession described with this term in the sphere of activities of barbaric "wise men" believe only in historically and naturally supported explanations. In conclusion, I would be in favour of a conciliatory approach to these two extreme attitudes to our Historian as both "a wise man and a story-teller" whose primary method of data collection applied in order to describe history was an interview conducted as a casual conversation. However, the orality of this method can be seen only after a thorough analysis of the deep layer of his text, which reveals "the natural nature" of this narrative resulting from choosing the natural, that is "non-directed" circumstances of interpersonal communication.

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²³ See N. LURAGHI, *The Importance of Being logios*, "Classical World" 120(2009), p. 439-456.

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DZIEJE HERODOTA Z HALIKARNASU –
ZAGADNIENIA TEORETYCZNE

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł obecny stanowi garść refleksji natury metodologicznej nad narracją w *Dziejach* Herodota, której podstawowym substratem jest opis świata widzianego z perspektywy doświadczenia tego, kto opowiada, tj. Herodota oraz narratywizowanego przez niego doświadczenia świadków, z którymi sam przeprowadzał wywiad dotyczący przedstawionych zdarzeń historycznych. W związku z tym traktuje się tutaj *Dzieje* przede wszystkim jako pewien szczególnie rodzaj narracji (*narrative*), którą stanowi, oparta na indywidualnym doświadczeniu (*personal experience*) Historyka oraz jego oralnych źródeł, opowieść o konflikcie grecko-barbarzyńskim ujęta w szereg krótszych opowiadań opartych na strukturze epizodycznej. Opowiadania te Historyk scala na

zasadzie, którą określa się jako „fabularyzację” (White 1973), czyli opisanie faktów historycznych jako składników specyficznego rodzaju struktur fabularnych. Metodą analizy *Dziejów* będzie w tym ujęciu narratologia naturalna (Fludernik 1996) dysponująca siatką pojęć dostosowanych do badania tekstów pseudo-oralnych, do których *Dzieje* niewątpliwie należą.

Słowa kluczowe: Herodot, *Dzieje*, pisarstwo historyczne, narracja naturalna, dialog, fabularyzacja

HISTORIĒ BY HERODOTUS OF HALICARNASSUS – THEORETICAL ISSUES

SUMMARY

Besides its historical values which imply a certain “accuracy” in presenting historical events and people, it is also possible to stipulate in Herodotus’ *Histories* these fragments which belong only to the domain of fiction, a genre literature whose basic substratum consists primarily in the description of the world seen through the eyes of the narrator-witness (*histōr*). In case of *Histories*, it is difficult to explicitly define how much of it is history and how much is literature. Nevertheless, it is certain that *Histories* are a special kind of storytelling, which, as shown by a closer analysis, is based on a personal and vicarious experience of the historian and his oral sources that cover several dozens of years of conflict between the East and the West, intertwined with historical, geographical and ethnological descriptions of Greek and barbaric tribes. In such a context the paper will focus on presenting a twofold nature of Herodotean discourse, revealing, on the one hand, the “rising” of the oral history from the sheer activity of dialoguing with people about the recent past, reconstructed on the basis of its formal and cognitive structure (Fludernik 1996), and, on the other hand, the technique of emplotment (White 1973) used by Herodotus to make the story reportable and tellable within the realm of an epic convention which was vivid and influenced the Archaic and Classical Greek literary texts of his times.

Key words: Herodotus, *Histories*, historical writing, natural narrative, dialogue, emplotment