

Swarthmore College

## Works

---

Classics Faculty Works

Classics

---

4-1-2007

### Review Of "Erodoto E Il "Modello Erodoteo": Formazione E Trasmissione Delle Tradizioni Storiche In Grecia" Edited By M. Giangiulio

Rosaria Vignolo Munson  
Swarthmore College, [rmunson1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:rmunson1@swarthmore.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-classics>



Part of the [Classics Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Rosaria Vignolo Munson. (2007). "Review Of "Erodoto E Il "Modello Erodoteo": Formazione E Trasmissione Delle Tradizioni Storiche In Grecia" Edited By M. Giangiulio". *Classical Review*. Volume 57, Issue 1. 24-26.  
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X06002964  
<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-classics/6>

This work is brought to you for free by Swarthmore College Libraries' Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Classics Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact [myworks@swarthmore.edu](mailto:myworks@swarthmore.edu).

In Chapter 8, ‘Tragic Fragments, Ancient Philosophers and the Fragments’, Christopher Gill makes some provocative remarks about the existential similarities between fragmentary texts and fragmentary identities, before moving on to discuss excerpts from drama as used by ancient philosophers. James Robson also considers the issue of composition in Chapter 9: ‘Aristophanes on How to Write Tragedy: What You Wear Is What You Are’. By examining the underlying principles of dramatic composition suggested by Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, and comparing these to later literary criticism, R. argues that Aristophanic composition was focussed around embodiment and the importance of texts as performed. This discussion provides a neat segue into the coda to the volume, where David Wiles presents a discussion and text of his 1997 production based on the fragmentary text of *Hypsipyle*. With a nod to the innovatory style of Euripides in his later years, the play as formed around different versions of ‘the fragment’ was performed at the Classical Association Meeting in 1997, and Wiles notes that the production worked with the audience’s background knowledge: ‘One of the advantages of performing to an audience of classicists was that one did not have to explain the story’ (p. 191).

The new ‘play about a play’ inspires contemplation of the relationship between text and performance, the part and the whole, contextualisation and artistic satisfaction. This production indicates the power of ancient texts to inspire creative endeavours, and I would have liked to see more comment from W. on the power of *Hypsipyle* not in spite of, but because of, its fragmentary nature.

The volume is well presented, with a useful *index locorum* in addition to the general index. While students are unlikely to read this cover-to-cover, they could be directed to some articles, with appropriate guidance about more recent bibliography. Some of the essays are more convincing than others, but all contain points of interest, and the collection deserves praise for its ambition in covering such a wide range of material.

University of Manchester

E.M. GRIFFITHS

emma.m.griffiths@manchester.ac.uk

## HERODOTUS AND HIS SOURCES

GIANGIULIO (M.) (ed.) *Erodoto e il ‘modello erodoteo’. Formazione e trasmissione delle tradizioni storiche in Grecia.* (Labirinti 88.) Pp. xxii + 396. Trent: Dipartimento di Scienze Filologiche e Storiche, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2005. Paper, €15. ISBN: 978-88-8443-118-9.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X06002964

In his narrative of the battle of Thermopylae, Herodotus discusses the reasons why, in the face of a Persian encirclement, Leonidas decided to keep his position with the Three Hundred while dismissing the rest of the Greek army: he wanted to save Sparta by his own death (in accordance with an oracle), as well as reserve undying glory for the Spartans alone. This small passage may serve to illustrate – albeit somewhat simplistically – two end-terms of a continuum for approaching the text. Are we going to ponder the meaning, in the economy of the *Histories*, of Herodotus’ emphatic presentation of his account of Leonidas’ motives as his own opinion (*gnômê*)? Or is the critic going to underline that this representation of Leonidas is part of a peculiarly Spartan tradition and examine, as Mario Lombardo does in this volume, how Herodotus’ narrative combines that tradition with another, more panhellenic, version of what happened at Thermopylae? Giangiulio’s introduction to this

collection suggests a double task: 1) to identify the traditions on which the historiographic text is based, studying their ideological value and the historical context in which they were formed; and 2) to analyse the relationship of historiography to this pre-existing material. The major unifying theme of the volume as a whole is to confirm a revival of the effort to recuperate piece by piece the oral traditions out of which Herodotus has fashioned his *Histories*. This enriches our knowledge of the social history of the Greek archaic period as well as of Herodotus' method of engaging with it.

Most of the contributions attempt to reconstruct the traditional components of a particular section of historical narrative in the last four books of Herodotus (ethnographic descriptions are not treated in this volume). One article (by Luigi Gallo) argues for an Alcmaeonid source for a single piece of information in Herodotus, the reference to 30,000 Athenians at 5.97.2–3 (and 8.65). Only one article deals with non-Greek tradition: Mauro Moggi demonstrates Herodotus' likely use of Persian sources in his representation of Artabanus, defending Herodotus' credibility as a historian (against Fehling, 1988).

The first two articles of the collection pursue different, if related and interesting, themes: the parody of Herodotus' proem in the *Acharnians* (Leone Porciani) and the treatment of oral and written messages in Herodotus (Paola Ceccarelli). The last two essays examine how Herodotus' model of *historiê* influenced the later historians Ephorus (Luisa Breglia) and Pausanias (Marco Dorati). These are both useful, although the second formulates the parallel with Herodotus in rather vague terms; the analysis of Pausanias is erudite and specific.

Nino Luraghi's illuminating article complements the Editor's introduction by surveying the history (and giving a few recent examples) of the study of oral tradition in Herodotus. Already Wolf Aly (1921) had attempted to discover in the *Histories* the traces of a Greek oral genre of popular storytelling mixed with the scientific prose of *historiê*. But largely because of the influence on Herodotean studies of Felix Jacoby, Aly remained without followers. This changed some 30 years ago, when the studies of the anthropologist Jan Vansina and others on the mechanics of oral transmission in Africa gave classical scholars the methodological tools to return to the problem of Herodotus' sources – not merely of orally transmitted pieces of information, but of entire narratives. This new wave of studies on oral tradition in Herodotus began with Oswyn Murray's important general article 'Herodotus and Oral History', which first appeared in *Achaemenid History II. The Greek Sources*, edited by H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (Leiden, 1987). There are now several important studies on the subject. One of the most useful additions to the field is the recent collection edited by Luraghi himself, *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2001).

As several of the contributors themselves acknowledge, a study of oral tradition in Herodotus may be highly conjectural and circular, especially when it tries to reconstruct an original story that was transformed long before Herodotus; at other times it does not tell us much that is new (positive portrayals of Athenians come from Athens, of Spartans from Sparta, and so on). Also, although 'oral tradition' does not just mean oral sources, the term is here broadly applied. It seems to cover anything Herodotus may have gathered through hearsay, from the whole narratives that Murray and Luraghi are most interested in, to disarticulated details or views about recent events. In the episode of the Greek embassy to Gelon in 480 B.C. (7.157–62), for example, Silvio Cataldi can only tentatively attribute some of the data to different groups at different times (anti-Gelonian continental and Siceliot sources, Deinomenid

propaganda, or later Athenian, Spartan, Syracusan or Western Chalcidian sources). He argues that Herodotus' dramatic re-elaboration of this material has been profound, producing a veritable web of allusions to the hegemonic debate of his day.

But even scholars devoted to a more authorial approach to the *Histories* will learn a great deal from this collection. A 'stratigraphic' analysis – to use a recurring term – shows the depth of Herodotus' research and the care with which he expresses it in narrative. In the best cases it allows one to begin to distinguish several layers of ancient traditions and the addition to them of more recent interpretations. This happens, for example, with the story of the tyranny in Corinth in the speech of Socles (5.92), where Maurizio Giangliulo identifies the following: (1) generalised folkloric elements, elaborated into a specific 'legend' at the time of the *stasis* that led to the tyranny in Corinth; (2) later local elements inserted shortly after the fall of the tyranny; (3) broader Greek anti-tyrannical themes with an aristocratic stamp; (4) further re-elaboration of the above by a subsequent democratic ideology; and, finally, (5) Herodotus' own contribution, which mainly consists of integrating these various elements. In one of the best articles in the volume, Pietro Vannicelli examines Herodotus' section about the seer Teisamenus at Plataea, teasing out the components of a complex Spartan tradition designed to reinterpret the first period of the Pentecontaetia in opposition to the better known Athenian version. Herodotus reports the tradition but also, as Vannicelli argues, ever so slightly distances himself from it. Herodotus' narrative of the battle of Plataea proper is the subject of the study by Marco Bettalli; here heterogenous traditions, especially Athenian and Theban, but also Delphic and Spartan, come together to create the fragmented and ambivalent narrative in Herodotus. These essays taken together show how the study of what Herodotus is trying to say to his audiences is enhanced by inquiry into where his material comes from.

*Swarthmore College*

ROSARIA MUNSON  
rmunson1@swarthmore.edu

## HERODOTUS IN CYPRUS

KARAGEORGHIS (V.), TAIFACOS (I.) (edd.) *The World of Herodotus. Proceedings of an International Conference held at the Foundation Anastasios G. Leventis, Nicosia, September 18–21, 2003, and organized by the Foundation Anastasios G. Leventis and the Faculty of Letters, University of Cyprus*. Pp. xx + 423, ill., maps. Nicosia: Foundation Anastasios G. Leventis, 2004. Paper, €48. ISBN: 978-9963-560-57-8.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X06002976

This large, attractive and glossy book is not in any sense light reading, although the Preface, the Introduction and a number of the articles convey some of the spontaneity and scholarly conviviality of the original conference. The authors of the 25 articles are from Austria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece (Crete), Italy, the U.K. and the U.S. Herodotus is an appropriate focus for a conference volume from Cyprus. Like the island itself, he represents the confluence of different interpretive languages and concerns. Four approaches to his text occur in this volume: considerations of individual passages, questions of genre and intertextual influence,