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Posted on 28 January 2017 By Herodotus

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What do Herodotus and Tristram Shandy have in common Progress through digression.I suppose my first acquaintance with the work of Herodotus was through that technicolor cold

war drama *The 300 Spartans* in which a rampantly heterosexual force of Spartans defends freedom, liberty, and all that good stuff from allegedly ferocious yet ineffective, hordes of freedom hating Persians. The appalling, appealing, simplicity of that film is a grave disservice to the genius of Herodotus already mauled by Thucydides barely after completing if complete it is his surviving work. Later I was shocked into actually reading the first half of an old Everyman edition of Herodotus by a National Geographic article but it was only now at an advanced age older quite possibly than many of the protagonists described in the Histories that I have finally read through the complete Herodotus. The conflicts between the Persians and the Greeks, culminating in the battles of Marathon, Salamis and Plataea, form a framework in which Herodotus digresses his way round the Greek world physically view spoiler the only disappointments are getting to see India summed by by gold digging ants and a contingent of soldiers in Xerxes army or Europe represented by a story of the silent trade between Carthage and I presume some people in Spain, silent because it was carried out by the Carthaginians laying out some trade goods, retreating out of sight, then the Iberians coming forward and laying out some metal, this process continuing until both sides are happy and take what the other has offered, similar stories of this style of trade can be found in other parts of the world too hide spoiler I think I would like to invite my Goodreads friends to browse any Book you like, then take heart to start with Book I as the inception of the whole inquiry unthinkable to those Greek scholars at that time, but Herodotus could make it and you cannot help admiring him when you read his famous preamble Herodotus of Halicarnassus here displays his inquiry, so that human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvellous deeds some displayed by Greeks, some by barbarians may not be without their glory and especially to show why the two people fought each other p 4 This preamble, I think, in the 1970 edition may entice you as well HERODOTUS of Halicarnassus, his Researches are here set down to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and of other peoples and particularly, to show how they came into conflict p 41 Moreover, the one in this 1988 edition published by the University of Chicago Press is also interesting I, Herodotus of Harlicarnassus, am here setting forth my history, that time may not draw the color from what man has brought into being, nor those great and wonderful deeds, manifested by both Greeks and barbarians, fail of their report, and, together with all this, the reason why they fought one another p 33 First of all, don t be intimidated by its length, that is, 543 pages in the 1996 Penguin edition, please find any translation you re familiar with its style or wording then keep reading a few pages once in a while, don t hope to finish it in a few days weeks since it s one of the masterpieces in ancient history, you need time to think, take notes and ask yourself why. Secondly, this is definitely his magnum opus for posterity of all nations to read, reflect and interpret in terms of reciprocal toleration as fellow human beings so that we learn not to make unthinkable mistakes again In many engagements there, you can witness various unimaginably ruthless deeds instigated by the

powers that be, fate and godlike valour of those true Greek and Persian soldiers Those fallen heroes including all innumerable soldiers killed in various battles deserve our respect with awe, admiration and gratitude as our exemplary models of humankind. And finally, scholars should honour and keep him in mind since Cicero called him the father of history and we can enjoy reading his second to none narrative However, some chapters might not be interesting when he sometime told us about the flora fauna seemingly unrelated to the looming hostilities I take them as relaxing moments and we can learn from what he told us frankly and good humbly Those ruthless war scenes, for instance from Chapter 20 onwards in Book IX, are amazingly described to the extent that we can visualize such ruthless gory scenes with increasingly stupefying horror in which it is hopelessly put into words. That's it and I think I would reread the University of Chicago version for solace and advice in there whenever I'm free from work It'd teach us of course to mind our own business, be kind, have mercy towards our fellow colleagues, friends, cousins, etc since we all have limited time to live on earth. Note In fact, I have another Penguin copy with its front cover showing a painted vase depicting two soldiers in action Persian vs Greek, not this one so the page numbers as mentioned above may vary Therefore, I've reposted my review since I don't know how to return to its previous book cover.

The Histories, Herodotus The Histories Greek also known as The History of Herodotus is now considered the founding work of history in Western literature Written in 440 BC in the Ionic dialect of classical Greek, The Histories serves as a record of the ancient traditions, politics, geography, and clashes of various cultures that were known in Western Asia, Northern Africa and Greece at that time Although not a fully impartial record, it remains one of the West's most important sources regarding these affairs Moreover, it established the genre and study of history in the Western world The Histories also stands as one of the first accounts of the rise of the Persian Empire, as well as the events and causes of the Greco Persian Wars between the Achaemenid Empire and the Greek city states in the 5th century BC

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Hubris in History A Recurring Terror The conversion of legend writing into the science of history was not native to the Greek mind, it was a fifth century invention, and Herodotus was the man who invented it R.G Collingwood The prime subject of The Histories is the twenty years 499-479 B.C.E of war between Greece and Persia for domination of the Greek world, but he intersperses this main narrative with plenty of personal interest stories, wonders about firsts and bests, historical parallels and occasionally his own biased judgements, but always making it clear that he is interested only in presenting a viewpoint he leaves the act of judgement to the reader It would be true to assure that it was Herodotus who helped create the concept of the discipline of history, in part by stressing and criticizing his sources and accepted traditions My job is to record what I have been told, make of it what you will that is the dominant warning note wherever H's authorial voice intervenes in the narrative That should be the disclaimer all history books

should come with. All the main themes of the book are evident in its beginning and ending, in keeping with the circular narratives that H prefers to adopt. All the intervening incidents act like reinforcements of the overall thrust inherent in the beginning and ending.

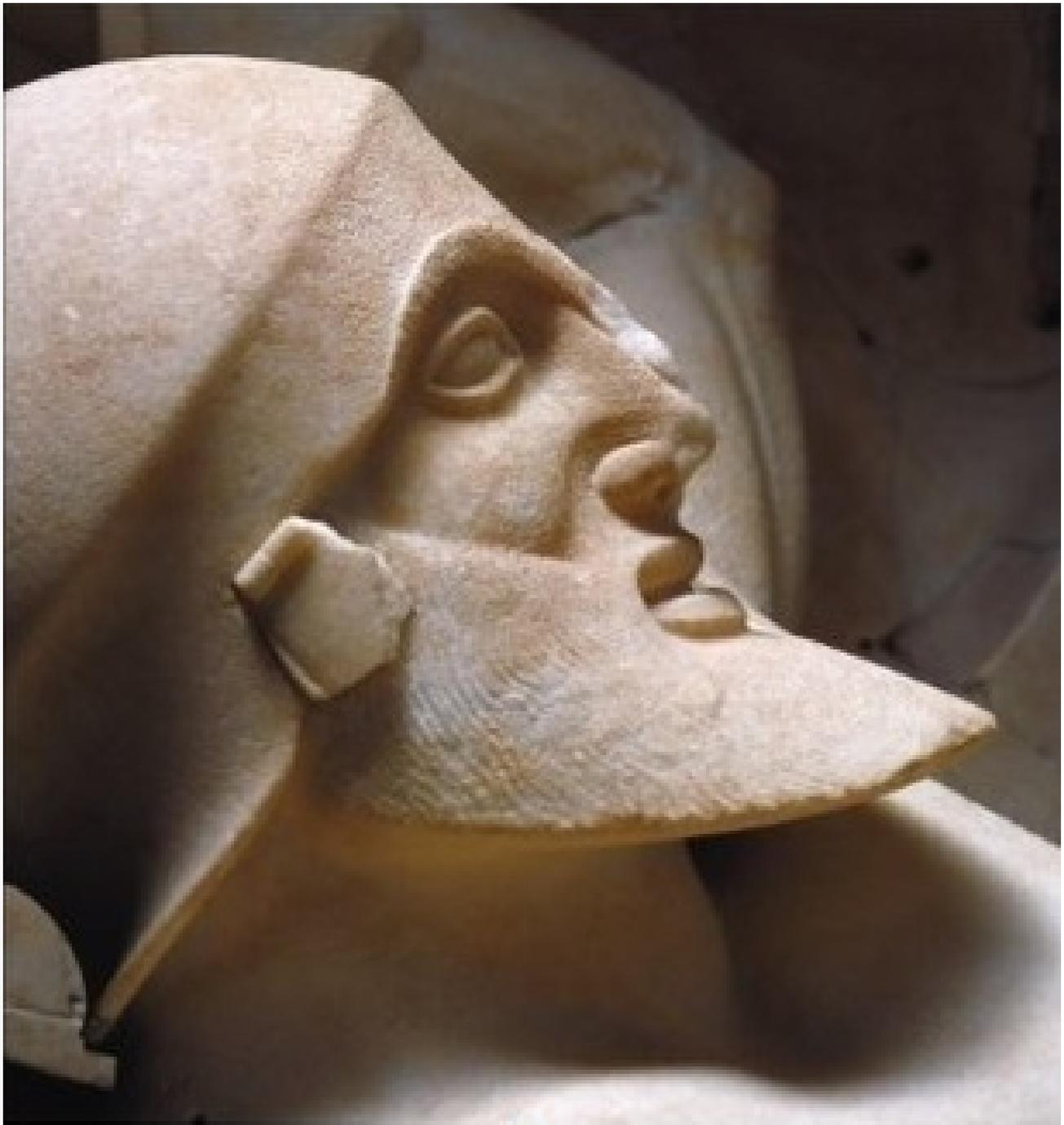
The Beginning: The Parallel Rise of Freedom and Empire We begin with an insecure Hellenic world, just shaking off the shackles of tyranny and tasting real ambition for the first time. Meanwhile in the other end of the world, an existing empire is being shaped into a fearsome tyrannical force by the new Persian rulers. Soon the Persian empire starts to extend ominously outwards and gobbles up most of the known world. This infringes on a core idea of H: the concept of natural limits and over extension. Persia is meant to fall. The Small shall become the Big and the Big shall become the Small. As long as empires are driven by ambition, history is doomed to repeat itself. The gods set limits and do not allow human beings to go beyond them. Herodotus makes it clear that the Persians have to fail in their plan to conquer Greece, because they have overreached their natural boundaries. Xerxes announces his campaign by telling his advisers that he intends to conquer Greece so that we will make Persian territory end only at the sky.

7.8. The Middle: The Clash of Civilizations Then we are taken through the many over extensions of the Persian empire under a succession of rulers in Ionia, Scythia, etc., until they are poised to encroach upon the newly non tyrannical Greek world. Here we enter the climactic middle of the narrative and is drenched in the details of the gory encounter. Many heroes, legends and dramatic material is born here and we emerge on the other side with a clear sense that it was Athens, without the yoke of tyranny, that was able to bring down the fearsome war machine of the Persian empire. David has won out against Goliath. This is achieved due to much luck and much pluck, but in the final analysis H seems to imply that the fault was with the hubris of the Persians. It needs to be pointed out that H is quite clear that as human beings Persians are on the whole no better and no worse than Greeks. Structurally, however, Xerxes' great expedition to Greece stands as a monument to the dangerous blindness of massive empires and grandiose thinking but it is also the backdrop against which H has been able to present to us the Greeks' love of their homeland, their valor against incredible odds, and their deep desire to preserve their freedom. So, even as this main narrative concludes, we are shown what is the inevitable result of Hubris that over extends its own reaches. And of how tyranny in any form is not going to triumph over people who have tasted what freedom means.

The Ending: A Reenactment of The Beginning Herodotus could have ended there. But he doesn't. Instead he takes us to the Ending to rub in the message and to instill that message with its true significance: what is its bearing on the future. For, an investigation of History is meaningless unless it can educate us about the future. And it is the future that H ironically points to as he takes us through the concluding sections of his Histories. For now it is the turn of the Greeks to over extend. In the thrill of victory and in the thrall of a thirst for revenge, in the spirit of competition with its own neighbors, Athens and Sparta launch out on its own imperialistic enterprise to mainland Asia. This is to culminate in H's own day with

the Ionians looking upon Athens as the equivalent of a Tyrant. The beginning of this period saw the triumph of the Greek mainland states over the might of the Persian Empire, first in the initial invasion of 490 and the battle of Marathon, and then in the second invasion of 480-79, with the battles of Thermopylae, Salamis, Plataea, and finally Mycale in Asia Minor. This unexpected victory against what seemed like the mightiest empire on Earth resonated in Greek consciousness through the fifth century and indeed beyond. The Greeks in general, and the Athenians in particular, because they had played the major part in the triumph of Freedom, saw these victories as a triumph of right over might, courage over fear, freedom over servitude, moderation over arrogance. It helped crystallize and reinforce Greek attitudes to their own newfound way of life and values, intensified their supreme distrust of monarchy and tyranny, and shaped their attitude to the Persians. And after what they visualized as the great struggle for freedom, the people of Athens entered upon a spectacular era of energy and prosperity, one of the great flowering periods of Western civilization. In practical terms, Athens' naval success in the Persian Wars and its enterprise immediately after led to the creation of the Athenian Empire, which started as an anti-Persian league and lasted for almost three quarters of a century (479-404). It seems to imply that Athens should learn from these investigations of the past, see what Tyranny can do, see the dangers of over-extension, understand the need for balance, respect certain international boundaries, and stay its own overreaching hand. And indeed within fifty years of the Persian defeat the dream had faded, and before the end of the century Athens, over-extended abroad and overconfident at home, lay defeated at the mercy of her enemies, a Spartan garrison posted on the Acropolis and democracy in ruins. Much in the intervening years had been magnificent, it is true, but so it might have remained if the Athenians had heeded Herodotus. He had portrayed the Greek victory as a triumph over the barbarian latent in themselves, the hubris that united the invader and the native tyrant as targets of the gods. The Persian downfall, or at least the defeat of their imperialistic ambition, called not only for exultation but for compassion and lasting self-control. As should be quite obvious, there is much to learn in this for modern times too, but with an added twist. For Hubris did not end its romp through history there. It took on new wings once history started being recorded. Now every new emperor was also competing with history. Alexander had to outdo Xerxes, Caesar had to outdo Alexander, Britain had to outdo Rome, Germany had to outdo Britain, USA had to outdo Britain, etc. A never-ending arms race with imperial history and the accompanying Hubris that powers it. So Herodotus, even as he recorded History so as to blunt its devastating force on the lives of men, also unwittingly added new impetus to its influence, by adding the new flavor of recorded glory to the existing receptacle of legendary glory. Hubris drank it up. It wasn't just Vollmann's fourth reference to Herodotus in a span of 20 pages in *Rising Up and Rising Down*, it was the reality and shame that I'm in my 40s and the most I know about the war between Persia and the Hellenic city states is what I learned from the movie *300*. Thus, *The Histories*. First I can't imagine what it would

have been like reading these nine books by Herodotus in any format other than this simply amazingly researched and presented volume The Landmark has to be the final word on Herodotus the maps, the footnotes, the appendices, indices, forwards and notes it is an astounding collection created for the layperson like me to approach a subject that is seemingly dry and yawn worthy But The Histories is anything but boring At times, even page turning, jaw dropping awesome When you say to your partner, Honey, listen to this and then quote Herodotus, you know something amazing has happened. Herodotus does than just recount tales of war, he goes to great lengths to describe the culture and the history of dozens of the denizens in his world An astounding undertaking in any age made even incredible given that this was written 600 BCE His even handed histories and details of Persia, a nation looking to conquer and subjugate his own, is an astounding feat of scholarship and academia even before those words had meaning. I was so impressed with The Landmark that I purchased their publications on Thucydides and Xenophon By the time I ve finished both of those, I ll be able to play horseshit bingo the next time I watch 300.



PENGUIN  CLASSICS

HERODOTUS

The Histories

The kids bought me this for Christmas and it is a thing of infinite beauty I've been meaning to read these histories for years and never quite got around to it I had never realised quite how remarkable this book would be. This version of the book is the third that I now own I've also got a copy of the Penguin Classics and I've just finished listening to this as a talking book But I am going to make my way through this book eventually, as it is hard to focus on many of the details of the wars and so on without a decent map in front of you to refer to and this book has lots of maps and drawings and other illustrations, although, annoyingly, no illustration of the Egyptian labyrinth which Herodotus said was even remarkable than the pyramids. Along the way Herodotus tells some incredible stories Some of them sound like they are straight out of the 1001 nights Others make your jaw drop open There are also discussions of things like what is the source of the Nile, that really have whetted my curiosity to read about the 19th century types who finally discovered the source Now, why was this such a big question in the ancient world Well, the problem was that the Nile seemed to come out of the desert and that isn't exactly the sort of place where you would expect to find lots and lots of water The winds that came from where the Nile seemed to flow out from were also always hot and so the idea that perhaps the water in the Nile swelled once a year due to the melting of snow although partly reasonable, obviously didn't seem to make a lot of sense when you thought that the river was coming out of a desert deserts being the natural enemy of snow It really is fascinating listening to Herodotus discussing these speculations about the source of the Nile and the paradoxes such speculations provided. In the immortal words of Bob Dylan, There ain't no limit to the amount of trouble women bring There are interesting asides about the Trojan war and how Herodotus speculates that Helen was probably dead by the time of the war started and so when the Greeks asked for the Trojans to hand her over they literally couldn't He can't see why else they would have allowed their civilisation to be crushed for the sake of one woman, beautiful or not There is a woman who commanded a ship on the side of the Persians, there are women who come back as ghosts and complain about being cold which their husband should know as the last time he tried to bake his bread the oven was cold this would have taken me a while to understand if Herodotus did not explain that the husband had lain with her after she had died But this is not really a history that involves many women this is a story about blokes doing what blokes like most killing other blokes All the same, my favourite bit of this came quite early in the piece The story of the theft of Rhampsinitos treasure I'm going to give you the short McCandless version of this as it really is a wonderful story and I can't leave this review without talking about it. When Rhampsinitos an Egyptian king decided to have a place built for his treasure he didn't know that the builder would put a stone into the works that could be easily removed The builder told his sons about this stone as he lay dying and once the builder had died his sons nipped around to the king's treasury and helped themselves to the riches inside The king noticed this sudden loss of wealth and set a trap to capture those who were all too frequently popping in and

stealing his goodies The trap was quite successful and one of the brothers ended up getting caught He told his other brother to cut off his head so that they wouldn't both be discovered This his all too obliging brother did The king then had a body without a head in his treasury, but still had no idea how anyone could get into the treasury room without breaking any of the seals on the locks. So, he had the body of the thief hung up and guarded so that whoever cried in front of it would be brought before him The thief who had cut off his brother's head was then told by his mother that he had better do something to rescue his brother's body or else all hell would break loose He came up with a plan to get the guards drunk and to steal the body, which he did and also shaved half of their beards off to make sure they quite understood how stupid they had been made to look The king was, needless to say, bloody furious I did mention this reminded me of the 1001 nights, yeah Anyway, the king then decides to get his daughter to work in a brothel, but before she sleeps with anyone she is to ask them what is the worst thing they have ever done and if any of them say anything like they cut off their brother's head and stole his body from the king's guards, she is to grab hold of him and call for the police or whatever the Egyptian equivalent was at the time The thief decides to play along, and goes to the brothel with the severed arm of a freshly dead corpse under his jumper When he tells the king's daughter about his exploits she makes a grab for him and he holds out the dead man's arm, which she holds onto while the thief cleverly makes his escape The king is so impressed with this man's exploits that he begs him to come forward and receive a reward, which he does and ends up getting to marry the king's daughter I assume the daughter he gets to marry is the prostitute mentioned earlier, but I guess no one actually ever called her that to her face. The best bit of this is that it shows something Herodotus does the whole way through these histories He will be telling one of these stories and suddenly they will start to become completely unbelievable and he will say, of course, I don't believe this stuff for a minute, but this is the story I was told in Egypt and what would you have me do I have to tell you what I was told The other story that held me enthralled was of the self mutilation of Zopyros honestly, this is utterly remarkable It is worth reading the book just for this story alone. There are lots of occasions where fathers are forced to do horrible things to their sons my favourite is the story of a king who punishes one of his advisors by feeding him his son as the meat portion of a feast The king then leaves this advisor in a position where he can revenge himself on the king You know, if I was to feed someone their own child I would probably kill him straight away afterwards call me overly cautious, but I've a sneaking suspicion that the person who has feed you the flesh of one of your kids is never going to be one of your best friends ever again, no matter what else they do for you This book is fantastic and the Landmark edition is like its name implies, really something special. 141 141 *Download Book ? ?στωρ?αι ? One Of The Masterpieces Of Classical Literature, The Histories Describes How A Small And Quarrelsome Band Of Greek City States United To Repel The Might Of The Persian Empire But While This Epic Struggle Forms The Core Of His Work,

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