



# Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus

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Herodotus, the "Father of History," is infamously known for having employed elements more akin to mythological tales than to unvarnished "truth" in translating his historical research into narrative form. While these narratives provide valuable source material, he could not have surmised the hostile reception his work would receive in later generations. This mythical aspect of the *Histories* led many successors, most notoriously Plutarch, to blame Herodotus for spinning far-fetched lies, and to set him apart as an untrustworthy historian. Echoes of the same criticism resounded in twentieth-century scholarship, which found it difficult to reconcile Herodotus' ambition to write historical stories "as they really happened" with the choices he made in shaping their form.

This volume brings together 13 ground-breaking essays written by specialists in the fields of ancient Greek literature and history. Each article seeks to review, re-establish, and rehabilitate the origins, forms, and functions of the *Histories'* mythological elements. These contributions throw new light on Herodotus' talents as a narrator, underline his versatility in shaping his work, and reveal how he was inspired by and constantly engaged with his intellectual milieu. The Herodotus who emerges is a Herculean figure, dealing with a vast quantity of material, struggling with it as with the Hydra's many-growing heads, and ultimately rising with consummate skill to the organizational and presentational challenges it posed. The volume ultimately concludes that far from being unrelated to the "historical" aspects of Herodotus' text, the "mythic" elements prove vital to his presentation of history.

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### Review

rich and multifaceted ... the contributions are well-argued and present new and exciting readings of these important mythic narratives in Herodotus' Histories. \* Andreas Schwab, *Hermathena* \* sharp, readable analyses ... Essential. \* P.M. Green, *CHOICE* \*

### About the Author

**Emily Baragwanath** is Assistant Professor in the Classics Department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on the literary techniques employed by the Greek historians in their construction of historical narratives. Her first book, *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus* (Oxford University Press, 2008), won Oxford's Conington Prize and the CAMWS Outstanding Publication Award. At present she is working on the Athenian author Xenophon.

**Mathieu de Bakker** is University Lecturer in ancient Greek at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on Greek historiography and oratory, and he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Greek language, literature, linguistics, and epigraphy. In 2009 he received the lecturer of the year award from his university.

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