

indeed what makes de Selincourt's version much less satisfactory than it otherwise might read well, and it is sharp and to the point, convey any part of the conscious mask of Herodotus' inherited way of talking (from Homer) while we live. The Penguin Herodotus sounds exactly like a twentieth-century journalist. There are details of nuance, which is quite false to the Greek Herodotus, a man who is himself so preeminently the historian and somewhat literary and whimsical. Still, it is important, to be powerful and direct, because Herodotus is designed for public reading. Very many of his details are there that must have come straight from the mouth of the narrants and were to find their artistic form of Herodotus of the public reader and for an audience. If the Penguin Herodotus must pass on to us, it is in a compact, especially in the conversations and dialogues, and callously, it is exactly at those places that the Herodotus is most heavily laid under contributions, interventions, and personal notes, the constant must again appear direct, almost involuntarily in objection to the other current Herodotean translation of Rawlinson, is that it is dull and prosaic, or listen to it, with surprise or enjoyment. Herodotus, for, then, was an English Herodotus who wrote with his own tongue but with echoes of the Greek Herodotus, a powerful eccentric who has made even the best of us feel that no man but himself could do it, the sentence, the cadence, which is so characteristic of him and himself. That is the ideal; how near this we get to it the reader will judge for himself.



## Book One

---

1. I, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, 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.

The chroniclers among the Persians say that it was the Phoenicians who were the cause of the falling-out; for they came from what is called the Red Sea<sup>1</sup> to our sea, and, having settled in the country in which they now live, they at once set about long voyages; and carrying Egyptian and Assyrian freights, they put into other lands, and among them Argos. At this time Argos excelled all others of what is now called Hellas. To Argos, then, came the Phoenicians, and there they put their cargo on display. On the fifth or sixth day after their arrival, when almost all their goods had been sold off, there came down to the sea, with many other women, the king's daughter; her name—it is the same in both the Greek and Persian accounts—was Io, and she was the daughter of Inachus. The women all stood by the stern of the ship and were buying from among the wares whatever they had most set their hearts on; as they did so, the Phoenicians let out a great shout and made for them. The most of the women, they say, escaped, but Io and some others were carried off. The Phoenicians loaded them into their ships and sailed away to Egypt.

2. That is how, the Persians say, Io came to Egypt (though that is not how the Greeks tell it), and that was the beginning of the wrongdoing. After that, say the Persians, certain Greeks, whose name they cannot declare, put into Tyre in Phoenician country and carried off the king's daughter, Europa. These must have been Cre-

1. Herodotus' Red (Erythraean) Sea is not our Red Sea (the long strip of water between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula). It is, instead, our Indian Ocean, together with its several gulfs.

tans. So far, say the Persians, it was tit for tat, but after that the Greeks were guilty of the second piece of injustice; for they sailed with a long ship to Aea in Colchis and the river Phasis,<sup>2</sup> and from there, when they had done the business on which they came, they carried off the king's daughter, Medea. The king of the Colchians sent a herald to Greece to ask for satisfaction for the carrying-off of his daughter and to demand her return. But the Greeks answered (this is still the Persian story) that the Persians, on their side, had not given satisfaction for the carrying-off of Argive Io, and so they themselves would give none to the Colchians.

3. It was in the next generation after this, as the story goes, that Alexander,<sup>3</sup> the son of Priam, having heard of these deeds, wanted for himself, too, a wife from Greece by rape and robbery; for he was certain that he would not have to give satisfaction for it, inasmuch as the Greeks had not. So he carried off Helen. The Greeks first resolved to demand her back, as well as satisfaction for her carrying-off. But when they did so, the Persians brought against *them* the rape of Medea, saying that the Greeks had given no satisfaction for that nor had surrendered her when asked. Did they now want satisfaction from others?

4. Up to this point it was only rape on both sides, one from the other; but from here on, say the Persians, the Greeks were greatly to blame. For the Greeks, say they, invaded Asia before ever the Persians invaded Europe: "It is the work of unjust men, we think, to carry off women at all; but once they have been carried off, to take seriously the avenging of them is the part of fools, as it is the part of sensible men to pay no heed to the matter: clearly, the women would not have been carried off had they no mind to be." The Persians say that they, for their part, made no account of the women carried off from Asia but that the Greeks, because of a Lacedaemonian woman, gathered a great army, came straight to Asia, and destroyed the power of Priam, and from that time forth the Persians regarded the Greek people as their foes. For the Persians claim, as their own, Asia and all the barbarian<sup>4</sup> people who live in it, but Europe and the Greek people they regard as entirely separate.

2. This is the story of Jason, the Argonauts, and the Golden Fleece.

3. Alexander is the name by which Paris is usually known in Greek literature.

4. Herodotus uses the word "barbarians" in its Greek sense, which is simply those who by origin and speech are "foreigners," i.e., non-Greek-speaking.

5. That is how the Persians say it happened, and it is in the capture of Troy that they discover the beginning of their enmity toward the Greeks. But about Io herself the Phoenicians disagree with the Persians. For they say they brought her to Egypt, but not against her will; she lay, they say, with the ship's captain in Argos, and, when she found she was pregnant, in shame for her parents she sailed with the Phoenicians voluntarily, that she might not be discovered.

These are the stories of the Persians and the Phoenicians. For my part I am not going to say about these matters that they happened thus or thus, but I will set my mark upon that man that I myself know began unjust acts against the Greeks, and, having so marked him, I will go forward in my account, covering alike the small and great cities of mankind. For of those that were great in earlier times most have now become small, and those that were great in my time were small in the time before. Since, then, I know that man's good fortune never abides in the same place, I will make mention of both alike.

6. Croesus was a Lydian by birth, the son of Alyattes, and ruler of all the peoples west of the Halys, a river that flows from the south, between Syria and Paphlagonia, and northward goes out into the sea called Euxine.<sup>5</sup> This Croesus was the first of the barbarians of whom we know who subdued some of the Greeks to the payment of tribute and made friends of others. He subdued the Ionians, Aeolians, and Dorians who were in Asia, and he made the Lacedaemonians his friends. But before Croesus' rule all the Greeks were free. For the invasion of Ionia by the Cimmerians, which was elder than Croesus'

"Bar-bar-bar" is presumably the Greek impression of how such unfortunates expressed themselves instead of with the proper sounds of Greek.

It has been questioned whether the word "barbarian" belongs in the Greek text at this point. If one includes it, as I have (and as the main MS tradition seems to require), it would seem to mean that the Great King of Persia differentiated between his Greek and non-Greek subjects. However, both Greeks and non-Greeks were ruled by the Persian kings in Herodotus' *History* and, before them, by Croesus of Lydia. Possibly the text is restricting this distinction, in Persian thinking, to the Greeks of Europe as distinct from those living in Asia Minor. It is worth noticing that Herodotus quotes the Persians as considering Priam an Asiatic. As far as modern scholarship goes, he was not, but a Greek, and the war between Greeks and Trojans was a war between two peoples of Greek origin.

5. The Euxine Sea (also called Pontus) is the Black Sea.

day, was no subjugation of the cities but a matter of raid and plunder.

7. The sovereignty of Lydia belonged to the Heraclidae<sup>6</sup> but had devolved upon the family of Croesus, who were called Mermnadae; and this is how it happened. There was one Candaules, whom the Greeks call Myrsilus, the ruler of Sardis and descended from Alcaeus, the son of Heracles. For Agron, the son of Ninus, the son of Belus, the son of Alcaeus, was the first of the Heraclidae to be king of Sardis, and Candaules, the son of Myrsus, was the last. Those who had been kings of this country before Agron were descendants of Lydus, the son of Atys, from whom this whole Lydian region takes its name; for earlier it was called the land of the Meii. It was by the Meii that the sons of Heracles were entrusted with the rule in accordance with an oracle; the Heraclidae were born of a slave girl, belonging to Iardanus, and Heracles. They held sway for two and twenty generations of men, or five hundred and five years, son succeeding father in the rule, until Candaules, son of Myrsus.

8. This Candaules fell in love with his own wife; and because he was so in love, he thought he had in her far the most beautiful of women. So he thought. Now, he had a bodyguard named Gyges, the son of Dascylus, who was his chief favorite among them. Candaules used to confide all his most serious concerns to this Gyges, and of course he was forever overpraising the beauty of his wife's body to him. Some time thereafter—for it was fated that Candaules should end ill—he spoke to Gyges thus: "Gyges, I do not think that you credit me when I tell you about the beauty of my wife; for indeed men's ears are duller agents of belief than their eyes. Contrive, then, that you see her naked." The other made outcry against him and said, "Master, what a sick word is this you have spoken, in bidding me look upon my mistress naked! With the laying-aside of her clothes, a woman lays aside the respect that is hers! Many are the fine things discovered by men of old, and among them this one, that each should look upon his own, only. Indeed I believe that your wife is the most beautiful of all women, and I beg of you not to demand of me what is unlawful."

9. With these words he would have fought him off, being in dread lest some evil should come to himself out of these things; but

6. The ending *-idae* means "sons of," here "sons of Heracles."

the other answered him and said: "Be of good heart, Gyges, and fear neither myself, lest I might suggest this as a trial of you, nor yet my wife, that some hurt might befall you from her. For my own part I will contrive it entirely that she will not know she has been seen by you. For I will place you in the room where we sleep, behind the open door. After my coming-in, my wife too will come to her bed. There is a chair that stands near the entrance. On this she will lay her clothes, one by one, as she takes them off and so will give you full leisure to view her. But when she goes from the chair to the bed and you are behind her, let you heed then that she does not see you as you go through the door."

10. Inasmuch, then, as Gyges was unable to avoid it, he was ready. Candaules, when he judged the hour to retire had come, led Gyges into his bedroom; and afterwards his wife, too, came in at once; and, as she came in and laid her clothes aside, Gyges viewed her. When she went to the bed and Gyges was behind her, he slipped out—but the woman saw him as he was going through the door. She understood then what had been done by her husband; and though she was so shamed, she raised no outcry nor let on to have understood, having in mind to take punishment on Candaules. For among the Lydians and indeed among the generality of the barbarians, for even a man to be seen naked is an occasion of great shame.

11. So for that time she showed nothing but held her peace. But when the day dawned, she made ready such of her household servants as she saw were most loyal to her and sent for Gyges. He gave never a thought to her knowing anything of what had happened and came on her summons, since he had been wont before this, also, to come in attendance whenever the queen should call him. As Gyges appeared, the woman said to him: "Gyges, there are two roads before you, and I give you your choice which you will travel. Either you kill Candaules and take me and the kingship of the Lydians, or you must yourself die straightway, as you are, that you may not, in days to come, obey Candaules in everything and look on what you ought not. For either he that contrived this must die or you, who have viewed me naked and done what is not lawful." For a while Gyges was in amazement at her words; but then he besought her not to bind him in the necessity of such a choice. But he did not persuade her—only saw that necessity truly lay before him: either to

kill his master or himself be killed by others. So he chose his own survival. Then he spoke to her and asked her further: "Since you force me to kill my master, all unwilling, let me hear from you in what way we shall attack him." She answered and said: "The attack on him shall be made from the self-same place whence he showed me to you naked, and it is when he is sleeping that you shall attack him."

12. So they prepared their plot, and, as night came on—for there was no going back for Gyges, nor any riddance of the matter but that either himself or Candaules must die—he followed the woman into the bedroom. She gave him a dagger and hid him behind the very door. And after that, as Candaules was taking his rest, Gyges slipped out and killed him, and so it was that he, Gyges, had the wife and the kingship of Lydia. Archilochus of Paros, who lived at the same time, made mention of him in a poem of iambic trimeters.

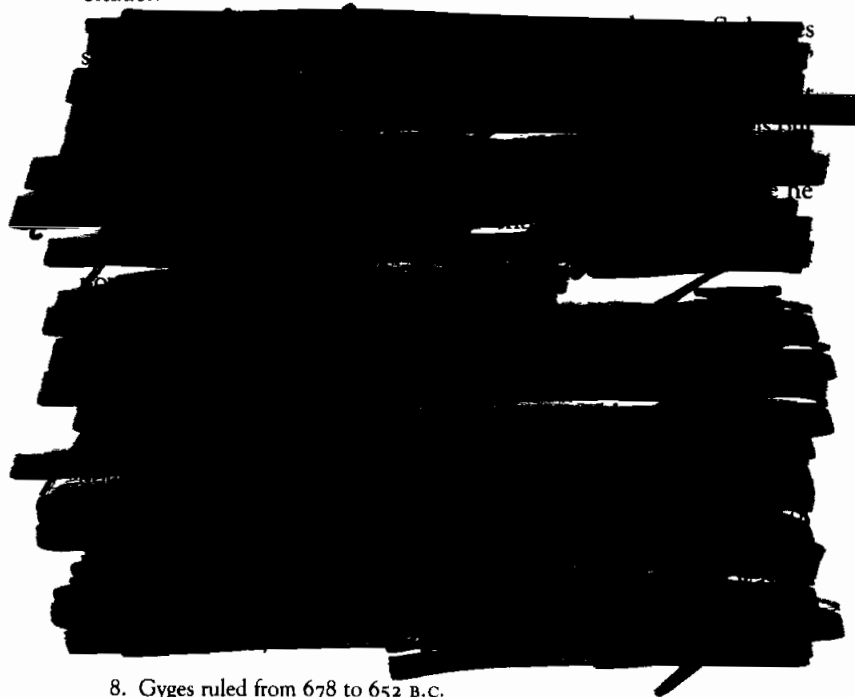
13. He had, indeed, the kingship, and it was strengthened by an oracle from Delphi. For when the Lydians made a great to-do about what had happened to Candaules and were in arms about it, the conspirators who were with Gyges came to an agreement with the rest of the Lydians that if the oracle should proclaim him king of Lydia, he should indeed be king; if it should not, he should hand back the power to the Heraclids. The oracle gave its answer, and so Gyges gained his kingship. But this much the Pythia said: that the Heraclids should yet have vengeance on a descendant of Gyges in the fifth generation. But of this word neither the Lydians nor their kings made any account until it was fulfilled.

14. Thus it was that the Mermnadae gained the sovereignty and despoiled the Heraclids, and Gyges, when he became king, sent off dedicatory offerings to Delphi, and not a few at that. For of all the dedications of silver, the most of them in Delphi are his; and apart from the silver he dedicated a vast deal of gold, including what is most worth remembering, six golden bowls. These stand in the treasure house of the Corinthians and weigh thirty talents.<sup>7</sup> Though, truly spoken, it is not the treasure house of the commonalty of the Corinthians but that of Cypselus, the son of Eëtion. This Gyges was

7. For a discussion of Greek weights and measures, see the end notes at the back of the book.

the first of the barbarians of whom we know who dedicated objects at Delphi—the first, that is, after Midas, the son of Gordias, king of Phrygia. For Midas, too, dedicated his royal throne on which he sat and gave judgment, and this indeed is a marvel to see. The throne stands where Gyges' bowls stand. This gold and the silver that Gyges dedicated have been given the name Gygian by the Delphians, after him that dedicated them.

15. When Gyges became king, he, like others, invaded the country of Miletus and Smyrna, and he captured the city of Colophon. However, no other great deed was done by him, although he reigned thirty-eight years, and so we will pass him by with just such mention as we have made.<sup>8</sup> But I will speak of Ardys, his son, who became king after him. This man captured Priene and invaded the country of Miletus, and it was when he held power over Sardis that the Cimmerians, who had been driven out of their usual haunts by the nomad Scythians, came into Asia and took all of Sardis except the citadel.



8. Gyges ruled from 678 to 652 B.C.