

## HERODOTUS AND MYTHIC GEOGRAPHY: THE CASE OF THE HYPERBOREANS

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Does Herodotus believe in the Hyperboreans, a race which, as he himself points out, belongs more to poetry than to ethnography? His position should reveal itself, if anywhere, in the paragraph which concludes his long discussion of the myth:

(1) καὶ ταῦτα μὲν Ὑπερβορέων περὶ εἰρήσθω· τὸν γὰρ περὶ Ἀβάριος λόγον τοῦ λεγομένου εἶναι Ὑπερβορέου οὐ λέγω, [λέγονται]\* ὥς τὸν οἷστον περιέφερε κατὰ πᾶσαν γῆν οὐδὲν σιτεόμενος. εἰ δέ εἰσι ὑπερβόρεοί τινες ἄνθρωποι, εἰσὶ καὶ ὑπερνότιοι ἄλλοι. (2) γελῶ δὲ ὁρέων γῆς περιόδους γράψαντας πολλοὺς ἤδη καὶ οὐδένα νόον ἐχόντως ἐξηγησάμενον, οἳ Ὠκεανὸν τε ῥέοντα γράφουσι πέριξ τὴν γῆν, ἐοῦσαν κυκλοτερέα ὥς ἀπὸ τὸρνον, καὶ τὴν Ἀσίην τῇ Εὐρώπῃ ποιεῦνται ἴσην. ἐν ὀλίγοις γὰρ ἐγὼ δηλώσω μέγαθός τε ἐκάστης αὐτέων καὶ οἷ τίς ἐστι ἐς γραφὴν ἐκάστη. (4.36)

\*λέγοντα propos. Schweighäuser λέγων mss., del. Reiske et edd. plurimi λέγων...σιτεόμενος secl. Rosen

The ambiguities surrounding his final assessment of the matter, however—εἰ δέ εἰσι ὑπερβόρεοί τινες ἄνθρωποι, εἰσὶ καὶ ὑπερνότιοι ἄλλοι (4.36.1)—make Herodotus' attitude toward the Hyperboreans unclear. Scholars have generally seen in this sentence a skeptical or ironic refutation of the legend; J. L. Myres, for example, translates, "If there are Hyperboreans, there should also be Hypernotians 'furthest South'; and there are not [Myres' italics]."<sup>1</sup> Casaubon, however, responding to a similar reading proposed in the seventeenth century, noted that the sentence has no contrafactual force that would make this an obvious interpretation, and so treated it as entirely neutral and non-dismissive in tone.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of commentators and editors have preferred Myres'

<sup>1</sup> *Herodotus, Father of History* (Oxford 1953) 40. For an earlier view by the same author, see "An Attempt to Reconstruct the Maps Used by Herodotus," *Geographic Journal* 8 (1896) 608.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. F. Friedmann, *Is. Casauboni Commentarius in Strabonem* (Leipzig 1818) 433. The dispute has good ancient pedigree: Eratosthenes and Strabo both read 4.36.1 as a dismissal (see below), whereas the scholiast to Pindar's *Pyth.* 10 (line 10) seems to have derived his curious notion of bipolar Hyperboreans from an affirmative reading of the same sentence. The ambiguity is perfectly embodied, moreover, in the variant manuscript readings of a scholium to Apollonius Rhodius (2.675), where the shift between μέν and μή has Herodotus either believing in, or rejecting, the legend of the Hyperboreans. See Hugo Berger, *Die geographische Fragmente des Eratosthenes* (Leipzig 1880) for the μέν variant, which has not been included in Wendel's *Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium vetera*

reading over Casaubon's,<sup>3</sup> and have strengthened their position by linking the Hyperborean/Hypernotian sentence with the refutation of Ocean immediately following (4.36.2). This juxtaposition notwithstanding, I shall here attempt to show that the Hyperboreans cannot in fact be paired with Ocean, or with the other mythic constructs debunked in the *Histories*, and that Herodotus' final assessment does in fact mean what Casaubon took it to mean: "Si ea est terrae figura, ut sint aliqui Hyperborei, ergo erunt et Hypernotii."<sup>4</sup> I shall then point out a set of parallels which connect the Hyperboreans to a more affirmative correlate than Ocean: Herodotus' own search for the headwaters of the Nile in Book 2.

The case of the Hyperboreans is worth an extended examination, I believe, since what is at stake is not only the meaning of a sizable section of the *Histories*, but also our ability to situate Herodotus properly in the evolution of scientific geography. The Hyperboreans are only the most prominent of several cases involving the *πεῖρατα γαίης*, the Homeric and Hesiodic "borders of the earth," in which Herodotus finds himself torn between the mythic, speculative constructs of the archaic age and the nascent empiricism of the fifth century B.C. In the majority of these cases Herodotus casts a skeptical eye on the archaic legacy, leading some scholars to label him a 'Father of Empiricism,'<sup>5</sup> but this formulation fails to account for other passages in which mythic and speculative thinking still predominate; indeed, the contradictions between the two approaches have led Lionel Pearson and others to question whether any

(Berlin 1935), or in the testimonia section of Haiim Rosen's *Herodoti Historiae* v. 1 (Leipzig 1987) 372.

<sup>3</sup> Casaubon's supporters include H. F. Tozer, *History of Ancient Geography*<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge 1935) 78, and James Rennell, *The Geographical System of Herodotus* (London 1830) 198–99. Other writers have implied an openness to his reading, without voicing any explicit judgement; so Moses Hadas, "Utopian Sources in Herodotus," *CP* 30 (1935) 113–21, and Marie Delcourt, *L'Oracle de Delphes* (Paris 1955) 159–60. Among the many authorities ranged against this reading, and in favor of Myres, we may here cite only the most prominent: E. H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography* v. 1 (London 1879) 160, 175; W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* v. 1 (Oxford 1936) 316; Hugo Berger, *Geschichte der Wissenschaftlichen Erdkunde des Griechen*<sup>2</sup> (Leipzig 1903) 125; and Felix Jacoby, "Herodotos," *RE* Suppl. 2 (1913) cols. 432, 470. Of the commentaries I have been able to consult, none deviate from this position, and only Legrand bothers to note that a counterfactual condition would better have suited Herodotus' presumed intention ("Herodotea," *REA* 60 [1938] 232 n. 2).

<sup>4</sup> Above, note 2, 433; Schweighäuser (*Herodoti Musae* v. 2 [Paris 1816] ad loc.), on the other hand, translates the εἶσι of the apodosis to Latin *fuertint*.

<sup>5</sup> This view is suggested by Dietram Müller, "Herodot—Vater des Empirismus? Mensch und Erkenntnis im Denken Herodots," in *Gnomosyne: Menschliches Denken und Handeln in der frühgriechischen Literatur*, ed. G. Kurz, D. Müller, and W. Nicolai (Munich 1981) 299–319. While aware of Herodotus' frequent reversion to speculative arguments from τὸ οἶκός (310–13), Müller virtually ignores this issue in his concluding remarks, where he actually compares Herodotus' empiricism to that of Hume (314–15). A similar view, that Herodotus "was careful not to cross the boundary into mythological space," has been voiced by Christiaan van Paassen (*The Classical Tradition in Geography* [Groningen 1957] 141), who has made a thorough and probing study of the problem, but who nevertheless overstates the case for Herodotus' empiricism. The pro-empirical bias also pervades the How and Wells commentary (above, note 3), especially the appendix on "The Geography of Herodotus" (434–37), and Jacoby's *RE* article (above, note 3, esp. cols. 470–71).

coherent scheme of thought underlies Herodotean geography at all.<sup>6</sup> I would argue that the inquiry into the Hyperboreans (which I shall henceforth refer to as the Hyperborean *logos*) has been consistently misread as a dismissal in an effort to uphold the first of these characterizations and refute the second: To interpret otherwise would be to indict Herodotus both for naive adherence to myth and for glaring methodological inconsistency. Thus my first task will be to situate this passage within the larger context of Herodotus' response to mythic geography, to show that Casaubon's non-skeptical reading does not, in fact, conflict with the empiricism found elsewhere in the *Histories*.

# I

Herodotus' explorations of the old Homeric *πεῖρατα γαίης* have been analyzed in several recent studies as a special type of cognitive experiment.<sup>7</sup> In geographic excursions Herodotus often moves centrifugally from *ὄψις* to *ἀκοή*, that is, from the realm of his own experience to that which can be investigated only through report; at the furthest remove his inquiry arrives at a realm untested even in report yet still somehow known through poetry and popular belief.<sup>8</sup> These most distant locales form a coherent group for Herodotus, embodying the unique problem of how a place or a people have come into repute without having been seen, or even perhaps without having existed; hence it is with these alone, and not with the vast range of other, less remote legends he evaluates, that we shall concern ourselves.<sup>9</sup> The major cases which fall into this

<sup>6</sup> Pearson, "Credulity and Scepticism in Herodotus," *TAPA* 72 (1941) 335–55, esp. 346; and Truesdell S. Brown, "Herodotus Speculates About Egypt," *AJP* 86 (1965) 60–76, esp. 75–76. A developmental model, according to which Herodotus progressed from rationalism to empiricism in the course of his travels (especially as a result of his trip to Egypt), is presented by Kurt von Fritz, "Herodotus and the Growth of Greek Historiography," *TAPA* 67 (1936) 315–40; but, like all such models, von Fritz's depends on our ability to identify different strata of composition in the fabric of the *Histories*, a task which has not yet been proven feasible. More recently, some scholars have raised the more perplexing question of whether Herodotus ever made the travels he claims; see, for example, O. K. Armayor, "Did Herodotus Ever Go to the Black Sea?" *HSCP* 82 (1978) 45–62, and *Herodotus' Autopsy of the Fayoum* (Amsterdam 1985).

<sup>7</sup> See, in particular, van Paassen (above, note 5) 117–51; Hannelore Edelmann, "ἐρημίη und ἔρημος bei Herodot," *Klio* 52 (1970) 79–86; and Hannelore Barth, "Einwirkung der vorsokratischen Philosophie auf die Herausbildung der historiographischen Methoden Herodots," in *Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Alten Welt*, ed. E. Welskopf, Band 1 (Berlin 1964) 173–85. In addition, other authors, although more closely concerned with historical than with geographic narratives, help elucidate the cognitive issues involved in the movement from *ὄψις* to *ἀκοή*; see in particular François Hartog, *Le Miroir d'Hérodote: Essai sur la représentation de l'autre* (Paris 1980) esp. 271–82; and Guido Schepens, *L'autopsie dans la méthode des historiens grecs du Ve siècle avant J.-C.* (Brussels 1980).

<sup>8</sup> See Edelmann (above, note 7) for a fuller account of this concentric structure.

<sup>9</sup> The more usual contrast between *ὄψις* and *ἀκοή* has in my view been overstressed, since, as Macan points out (*Herodotus: The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books* v. 1 [London 1895] ciii–cv), these terms do not always imply a distinction in degrees of credibility (cf. 4.16.1, where *ἀκοή* is considered "reliable"). The category established by the term *ἀφανές* (2.23), identifying those few places

category are those of the river Ocean, the river Eridanus and the Tin Islands (taken together), the headwaters of the Nile, and the Hyperboreans; for all four, Herodotus dutifully concedes that he can discover no credible eyewitness report even at second or third hand.<sup>10</sup>

Herodotus seems perplexed and even annoyed by the legends which derive from this “unseen” realm—the region he once refers to as ἀφανές (2.23)—since they defeat the method of empirical investigation he practices elsewhere. The case of Ocean, for example, proves particularly troublesome to him, and he returns to it on three separate occasions.

In the first of these discussions, his frustration is clearly discernible: He derides as ἀνεπιστημονεστέρη a theory which explains the floods of the Nile as proceeding from Ocean, the river which flows around the entire earth (2.21), and adds, “The man who makes reference to Ocean”—probably referring principally to Hecataeus—“removes the discussion into the realm of obscurity, and makes refutation impossible,” οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον (2.23). That is, when dealing with unseen locales, Herodotus’ usual method of ἔλεγχος, the detective-like pursuit of a story back to its original eyewitness, cannot be usefully employed.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, he goes on to voice his own opinion on the matter, speculating that “the name Ocean was, I suppose, invented by some ancient poet or other, and inserted into his poetry.” The train of thought in this first investigation of an unseen locale is revealing: Herodotus begins by ruling out the possibility of disproof, then proceeds to reject the legend anyway. It would seem that, for lack of empirical evidence on which to judge the matter—obviously his preferred procedure—Herodotus falls back onto a more subjective form of refutation, based on his own sense of τὸ οἰκός or “likelihood.”<sup>12</sup>

Herodotus’ subjective criteria for rejecting the legend of Ocean become clearer in Book 4, where he returns to the problem in two further discussions. In the first he again complains of a lack of evidence: “They say that Ocean runs around the entire earth, starting from the East, but they don’t show any evidence for the assertion” (4.8.2). However the key point of contention here is contained in the phrase “runs around the entire earth,” γῆν περι πᾶσαν ῥέειν, repeated verbatim from the earlier critique (2. 21). Ocean is characterized by its adherents

which have *never been seen*, is somewhat sharper and hence more useful for my purposes here.

<sup>10</sup> 2.28–29, 3.115.1, 4.8.2, 4.32. A further, less prominent case involves the Scythian report of goat-footed men and men who sleep for half the year (4.25.1), where the tribes in question lie behind a veil of impassable mountains. Herodotus simply rejects these stories, without inquiring into how they got started; since they have no place in the mythic record he seems uninterested in them.

<sup>11</sup> This section has been poorly understood by some commentators, who claim, for example, that “Herodotus rightly rejects the theory of the circumambient Ocean as unsupported by the evidence” (How and Wells [above, note 3] 169–70; see also Bunbury [above, note 3] 165). In fact, lack of evidence is cited here not as grounds for refutation, but as a shield against it. For the meaning of ἔλεγχος here see G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience* (Cambridge, 1979) 253 and n. 118.

<sup>12</sup> Herodotus uses the terms οἰκός and οἰκότης frequently in speculative geography, especially in discussing theories concerning the Nile (2.22.2, 2.24.2, 2.25.2 and 5, 2.27). At 3.111.1 and 4.195.4 the evidence of οἰκότης and λόγος οἰκότης is explicitly ranked as a “second best” form of inquiry, where hard information is lacking. See How and Wells (above, note 3) 170, Bunbury (above, note 3) 165.

as a confluent body, the “river which flows back on itself (ἀψόροος)” according to its poetic epithet, whereas Herodotus sees possible gaps in its circuit at the eastern and northern quadrants of the earth.<sup>13</sup> Thus the debate is not over the general idea that the earth is surrounded by water—Herodotus acknowledges that this is true, at least for the greater part of the world—but whether those waters form a continuous circle. The issue of circularity then becomes critical in the next and final discussion of Ocean, a passage which, as we have seen, adjoins our key sentence regarding Hyperboreans and Hyperboreans (the juxtaposition will be explored further below). Here Herodotus scoffs at those who “draw Ocean running around an earth which is rounder than a circle drawn with a compass, and make Asia the same size as Europe” (4.36.2). This artificial roundness violates Herodotus’ sense of the οἰκός of terrestrial form,<sup>14</sup> and thus becomes the decisive element in the case against Ocean;<sup>15</sup> the initial critique based on sources of evidence only renders the legend vulnerable to this further attack.

Much the same sequence of argument, moving from an empirical ‘cold trail’ to a refutation based on τὸ οἰκός, can be illustrated in Herodotus’ second inquiry into the lore of the unseen world, which involves the river Eridanus and the Tin Islands:

οὔτε γὰρ ἔγωγε ἐνδέκομαι Ἡριδανόν τινα καλέεσθαι πρὸς βαρβάρων ποταμὸν ἐκδιδόντα ἐς θάλασσαν τὴν πρὸς βορέην ἄνεμον, ἀπ’ ὅτεν τὸ ἡλεκτρον φοιτᾷ λόγος ἐστὶ, οὔτε νήσους οἶδα Κασσιτερίδας ἐούσας, ἐκ τῶν ὁ κασσίτερος ἡμῖν φοιτᾷ. τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ὁ Ἡριδανὸς αὐτὸ κατηγορεῖ τὸ οὖνομα ὥς ἔστι Ἑλληνικὸν καὶ οὐ βάρβαρον, ὑπὸ ποιητῶν δὲ τινος ποιηθέν· τοῦτο δὲ οὐδενὸς αὐτόπτεω γενομένου δύναμαι ἀκοῦσαι, τοῦτο μελετῶν, ὅπως θάλασσά ἐστι τὰ ἐπέκεινα τῆς Ἑuropῆς. (3.115.1–2)

Here, a logical improbability inherent in the name “Eridanus,” in addition to lack of evidence, renders the legend invalid; in fact, the linguistic argument is clearly marked as complementary to the empirical one by the μέν...δέ construction in which they are framed. In the case of the Tin Islands, by contrast, where lack of evidence is the only issue at stake, Herodotus seems to take a less antithetical stance, asserting “I don’t know” rather than “I reject”; but in any event the two legends are so closely intertwined in his eyes that the argument against

<sup>13</sup> 1.204.1, 4.45.1; see Rennell (above, note 3) 195. At 3.115.1 Herodotus expresses doubt about the western coast as well, but by this he must mean only the Northwest, since he elsewhere shows familiarity with the Pillars of Heracles (4.49). Myres (above, note 1 [1896], 608 and 624) mistakenly attributes to Herodotus a view that Europe is circumnavigable, based on a forced reading of 3.115 and 4.45; Myres seems to think that when Herodotus says “no one knows if Europe is surrounded by water,” he means that this is in fact true but has yet to be proven.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. von Fritz (above, note 6) 326.

<sup>15</sup> Correctly perceived by Brown (above, note 6) 75: “[Herodotus] ridicules the view...that the river [Nile] flows from an outer sea, because the Ocean stream idea makes the surface of the earth ‘round, as though it had been turned on a lathe.’” See also van Paassen (above, note 5) 138–42, who puts the case exactly the wrong way around: “His criticism was directed not so much at the diagrammatisation of Hecataeus’ map of the world as against the mythological elements it contained.” William Arthur Heidel (*The Frame of the Ancient Greek Maps* [New York 1937] 11–12) believes that the maps to which Herodotus refers were not really circular, despite his explicit phrasing in the passage above.

the Eridanus effectively sinks the Tin Islands as well. As in the case of Ocean, then, Herodotus here uses the empirical argument only to question, rather than refute, a geographic myth; and where evidence gives out, he relies on his own sense of τὸ οἰκός to distinguish true from false.

One further example, taken not from the realm of the unseen but from that of distant report, will help to solidify this formulation. Herodotus goes to some trouble to trace the story of the Arimaspians, the one-eyed griffin-fighters said to live just south of the Hyperboreans, to its origin among the Issedones, a tribe living on the very edge of the investigable world. The Issedones are known to pass the story along to the Scythians—whence the Arimaspians get their name, “One-eyes” in the Scythian tongue—who in turn relay it at third hand to the Greeks (4.27). The whole account of the story’s transmission has been taken as an empirically-based rejection of the Arimaspians; however, Herodotus ultimately dismisses them for a different reason, because he “cannot believe that there are men who have only one eye, but are physically normal in other respects (3.116).” Clearly, the burden of proof for such fabulous tales finally rests on their conformity to τὸ οἰκός, even after their remote origin has initially called them into question.

The refutations of these unseen and unreliable legends are important to us here in that they are frequently adduced as parallels to Herodotus’ treatment of the Hyperboreans. Indeed, Herodotus’ introduction to the Hyperborean *logos* seems, at first glance, to make such a parallel inescapable; for here he methodically eliminates all primary sources of information,<sup>16</sup> and traces the legend instead to epic poetry instead:

Ὑπερβορέων δὲ περὶ ἀνθρώπων οὔτε τι σκῦθαι λέγουσι οὐδὲν οὔτε τινὲς ἄλλοι τῶν ταύτῃ οἰκημένων, εἰ μὴ ἄρα Ἰσηδόνης· ὥς δ’ ἐγὼ δοκέω, οὐδ’ οὔτοι λέγουσι οὐδὲν· ἔλεγον γὰρ ἂν καὶ σκῦθαι, ὥς περὶ τῶν μονοφθάλμων λέγουσι. ἀλλ’ Ἡσιόδῳ μὲν ἔστι περὶ Ὑπερβορέων εἰρημένα, ἔστι δὲ καὶ Ὀμήρῳ ἐν Ἐπιγόνοις, εἰ δὴ τῷ ἑόντι γε Ὀμηρος ταῦτα τὰ ἔπεα ἐποίησε. (4.32)

Once we have recognized that mere lack of evidence is never a decisive argument for Herodotus, though, we need not see the attribution to Homer and Hesiod here as a refutation of the Hyperboreans, despite the seeming parallel between this and similar attributions in the discussions of Ocean and Eridanus. Indeed, it must be objected to such a parallel that here we find no explicit or polemical expression of skepticism, as we did in those earlier investigations. Thus, whereas Herodotus elsewhere charges the poets with having “invented” or “created” the names of Ocean and Eridanus, on this occasion he says only that “there is mention” of the Hyperboreans in Homer and Hesiod. Nor can it be argued that Herodotus’ references to the poets are always, or self-evidently, pejorative, for in a passage only three chapters prior to this one (4.29) he cites the *Odyssey* as a legitimate geographic authority (in discussing the absence of

<sup>16</sup> Such must be the import of λέγουσι οὐδὲν in both of the first two periods, as understood by many of the commentators (e.g. J. C. F. Baehr, *Herodoti Musae* v. 2 [Leipzig 1857] 358, K. Abicht, *Herodotus* v. 2.2 [Leipzig 1886] 31); to take the phrase in its more usual sense of “speak nonsense” would render οὐδ’ οὔτοι λέγουσι οὐδὲν unintelligible. It is curious that Herodotus introduces the Issedones as a possible source of information, only to reject this possibility in the next moment; Macan sees a tip of the hat to Aristaeas here (above, note 9, 24).

horns on Scythian cattle), and in the entire opening section of Book 4 he takes information from the epic poet Aristeas without raising any question of its credibility (4.13, e.g.).<sup>17</sup> At the least, it must be admitted that if he means to charge the poets with fraud in the case of the Hyperboreans, he has certainly framed the accusation in uncharacteristically neutral terms.

A further distinction arises, moreover, from Herodotus' failure, at least in this introduction to the Hyperborean *logos*, to raise the sort of argument from τὸ οἰκός which had allowed him to condemn earlier myths. For example, the issue of nomenclature, which might have shown that the Hyperboreans, like the Eridanus, were a native Greek invention, is not mentioned, nor do the Hyperboreans present any anatomical peculiarity such as had told against the one-eyed Arimaspians. In fact, Herodotus ignores all of the more fabulistic elements of the Hyperborean legend, not only in this introduction, but throughout the *logos* which follows. There is no mention of the material he would have found in Pindar,<sup>18</sup> for example—the tremendously long lifespan of the Hyperboreans, their use of asses in sacrifice, their fellowship with Apollo and Leda, the paradisaical splendor of their home. These omissions are telling: Had Herodotus intended to debunk the Hyperboreans, he could have done so quite easily by showing them to be in clear violation of τὸ οἰκός.<sup>19</sup> Instead, Herodotus recounts a set of more credible tales (to which we shall return momentarily) collected on the island of Delos, revealing nothing exceptional about them other than their extreme remoteness from Greece.

So long as Herodotus does not raise any οἰκός-based objections to the Hyperboreans, they remain an investigation *sui generis*, separate from all other examples of mythic geography: Here alone Herodotus would be able neither to support nor dismiss his case. For this reason, it now becomes imperative for us to specify the meaning of the sentence which concludes the discussion, Εἰ δὲ εἰσι ὑπερβόρεοί τινες ἄνθρωποι, εἰσὶ καὶ ὑπερνότιοι ἄλλοι. Only here, if anywhere, is an οἰκός-based argument brought to bear against the validity of the myth; up to this point, Herodotus' investigation has established only a lack of empirical evidence, that is, οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον, not οὐκ ἔστιν. Do the Hyperboreans supply him at last with the resolution he has been seeking?

Before moving to this troublesome sentence, however, we must briefly take account of the material we are passing over, the tales gathered by Herodotus on Delos. Here the historian records a religious cult centered on what were said to be Hyperborean grave sites, and local lore describing mysterious offerings, wrapped in wheat-straw, brought to the island by relay from the Hyperboreans. Unfortunately this Delian evidence (4.32–35), which actually occupies the greatest portion of the Hyperborean *logos*, establishes nothing conclusive regarding Herodotus' doubt or credulity, but two points about it suggest he is leaning toward the latter. First, the very plenitude and specificity of this

<sup>17</sup> On the importance of poetry in defining the northern landscape, see Seth Benardete, *Herodotean Inquiries* (The Hague 1969) 104–9. For Herodotus' reliance on Aristeas for much of his septentrional material, see James Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus* (Oxford 1962) 42–44.

<sup>18</sup> *Ol.* 3. 17–45, *Pyth.* 10. 29–46, fr. 272; cf. also Alcaeus fr. 1. Unfortunately the two sources Herodotus himself cites, Hesiod and the Homeric *Epigoni*, have been lost, although the Hesiodic reference may have been recovered in fr. 150 Merkelbach-West (20–21).

<sup>19</sup> A. Riese, in *Die Idealisierung der Naturvölker des Nordens in der griechische und römische Literatur* (Frankfurt 1875) 14–16, notes that Herodotus actually portrays the Getes and Thracians in a more exotic light than the Hyperboreans.

material, including such concrete testimonia as parcels apparently sent by Hyperborean hands, show Herodotus considering the whole question rather seriously; to recount the Delian traditions at such length, only to end by declaring it all a huge hoax, would seem a willful and misleading way to proceed.<sup>20</sup> Herodotus' tone becomes even more strongly marked as affirmative, furthermore, when the historian himself steps in to support the account of the straw-wrapped offerings, claiming to know personally (οἶδα δὲ αὐτός, 4.33.5) of a similar practice among the Thracians. This evidence from comparative ethnology does not in itself prove anything, but Herodotus' insistence on citing it, and on guaranteeing its veracity (cf. 4.34.1), indicates that he is looking for reasons to believe the Delians rather than to refute them. With these tonal cues noted, however, we must pass on to the more directly relevant "coda" chapter quoted at the outset of this discussion (4.36).

## II

We have already looked briefly at the interpretive controversy surrounding the second sentence of 4.36.1, a sentence we may for convenience refer to as the Hypernotian condition. Scholars have usually attributed contrafactual force to this sentence, despite its construction in the present indicative. We shall have to deal both with attempts to infer the tone of the sentence from those which precede and follow it, and with assumptions about its geographic and climatological background.

A first point, concerning the omission of Abaris at the opening of the chapter, can be dealt with in short order. Herodotus gives no reasons for the omission, but we must not therefore assume, as some interpreters have done,<sup>21</sup> that the story has been rejected as an absurdity. Herodotus has numerous motives for not telling us what he knows,<sup>22</sup> but disbelief is not among them. Indeed, his narrative principle, as expressed on two separate occasions in the *Histories*, is γράφειν (or λέγειν) τὰ λεγόμενα (2.123.1, 7.152.3) no matter how egregiously such stories may exceed plausibility; we can point to places where he retails a legend even while finding it absurd,<sup>23</sup> but none where he withholds one for that reason. It seems likely, then, that Herodotus simply looks upon Abaris as a side issue which he does not have enough evidence, or

<sup>20</sup> Pliny the Elder, for example, takes the story of the straw-wrapped offerings as confirmation of the legend's veracity (*Historia Naturalis* 4.19). It is hard to believe that Herodotus would not have anticipated such a response from his readers and taken steps to discourage it, had such been his intent.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Jacoby (above, note 3) col. 385; B. A. van Groningen, *Herodotus' Historiën* v. 2 (Leiden 1950) 21.

<sup>22</sup> Examples collected by H. Drexler, *Herodot-Studien* (Hildesheim 1972) 62–64. In most cases Herodotus withholds names rather than stories, in an effort to prevent scandal. At 1.193.4 he declines to tell the height of Babylonian grain crops, but the issue there is his audience's skepticism rather than his own.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. 2.21–22, 4.5–6, 4.77. From what we can glean of it (see A. Dryoff, "Abaris," *Philol.* 59 [1900] 610–14), the story of Abaris, a semidivine wonder-worker, must have been similar to those of Aristaeas (4.14–15) and Salmoxis (4.95–96), stories which Herodotus retells in full, and on at least one of which he suspends judgement (4.96.1).



perhaps enough time,<sup>24</sup> to treat fully. The *praeteritio* does not, therefore, help establish a skeptical or dismissive tone for the paragraph which follows.

The reading of the next sentence, however—our crucial Hypernotian condition—depends on a wider and more complex set of considerations, which were already causing interpretive problems as early as the 2nd century B.C. In fact it will be worth our while to start our examination with these early readings, since they have, rightly or wrongly, influenced more recent ones. Eratosthenes of Cyrene, as we know from Strabo, believed that this sentence amounted to a rejection of the Hyperboreans, albeit an illogical one. He attacked the argument as a fallacious attempt to make the non-existence of one entity depend on the non-existence of its opposite, i.e. “There are no ἐπιχειρεκάκοι because there are no ἐπιχειραγάθοι” (fr. I.B.21 Berger). Anyway, he added, there actually *are* Hypernotians, that is, the Aithiopians, whom he imagines living beyond the source of the South Wind; in other words Herodotus had misguidedly rejected the Hyperboreans because he failed to properly identify their opposite number. Unfortunately Eratosthenes’ analysis is itself logically unsound,<sup>25</sup> and seems to prove only that Herodotus *should* have believed in the Hyperboreans rather than that he did not. Thus it contributes little to our efforts here, beyond revealing that Myres’ reading of the sentence was already current among Alexandrian scholars of the Hellenistic era.

Strabo, in a discussion of Eratosthenes’ analysis (1.3.22), agrees that Herodotus meant to dismiss the Hyperboreans, but reads the argument as an attack on the excesses of the epic poets rather than as earnest geographical speculation. Herodotus had deliberately situated the Hyperboreans in the impossible locale designated by their name, in “the land where Borcas does not blow,” as a satire on the whole idea of tramontane wind shelters (in which Strabo refuses to believe). According to Strabo’s view, Herodotus could have accepted the Hyperboreans not by counterbalancing them with the Aithiopians, but by moving them inside the circle of the known world, that is, by interpreting ὑπερβόρειοι to mean simply βορειότατοι, “furthest north.” This reading seems more coherent than that of Eratosthenes, and in fact several modern interpreters have adopted it.<sup>26</sup> Others, however, have pointed out, quite correctly, that Herodotus nowhere indicates that either Hyperboreans or Hypernotians live in the regions suggested by their names,<sup>27</sup> or even implies that such windless

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, he signals at the end of this paragraph his hurry to get back to the main topic, the Scythians, by promising to be brief (ἐν ὀλίγοις... δηλώσω) in his further digression on the world-map.

<sup>25</sup> Eratosthenes’ analogue for Herodotus’ argument seems entirely specious, since the concept of ἐπιχειραγαθία can exist even if the word does not (see Casaubon [above, note 2] ad loc., and Berger [above, note 5] 77). The second point seems more reasonable, and indeed, we too may well ask why Herodotus did not identify the Aithiopians as his hypothetical Hypernotians, since he located them in the farthest South (3.17.1), and their role in mythology made them a natural counterpart (see Hadas [above, note 3] 115–16).

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Baehr (above, note 16) 367, and C. S. Wheeler, *Herodotus* v. 1 (Boston 1842) 415.

<sup>27</sup> Although taken literally by Pindar (*Ol.* 3.31), the word ὑπερβόρεος could be construed more loosely even in Herodotus’ time, as noted by Casaubon (above, note 2) 434: Aeschylus uses it (*Choe.* 373) simply of “extreme” good fortune, and in *Hom. Hymn* 7 it occurs in the unremarkable sequence, “Egypt, or Cyprus, or the Hyperboreans, or even further” (29–30). Much later, Dionysius Periegetes

havens exist.<sup>28</sup> In fact, he seems to duck the question deliberately by avoiding all mention of the perfect climate which legend attributed to the Hyperboreans, and of the Rhipaeen Mountains which allegedly separated them from the blast of the North Wind.<sup>29</sup> Such omissions have the effect of domesticating the Hyperboreans in exactly the way Strabo advises, placing them “farthest north” rather than “beyond Boreas,” so that this reading too finally proves only that the Hyperboreans should be acceptable within Herodotus’ scheme.<sup>30</sup>

If neither of these ancient geographers helps elucidate the meaning of the Hypernotian condition, however, they at least establish the grounds on which it can conceivably be translated as a counterfactual: Although unmarked grammatically, it may posit a situation which both author and audience understand to be wholly unreal, as in, “If there are Hyperboreans then the moon is made of green cheese.”<sup>31</sup> In an effort to establish this form of unreality, some commentators, for example R. W. Macan, have assumed that “Hypermotians” are impossible for climatological reasons: “The intense heat of the South makes such an

uses Herodotus’ ὑπερνότιος (151) without any connotation more exotic than “far to the south,” and without provoking comment from the scholiast.

<sup>28</sup>See S. Casson, “The Hyperboreans,” *CR* 34 (1920) 1–3, who ascribes to Herodotus a “rational view...according to which Hyperboreans and Hypernotians represented respectively the northern and southern fringes of the inhabited world, and served only as geographical terms” (2); cf. also Berger (above, note 5) 77. It is far from certain that Herodotus would have found windless zones implausible even if he had paused to consider them, since such sober-minded authorities as Eratosthenes and Aristotle (*Meteor.* 361B) accepted the idea.

<sup>29</sup>Cited by Bunbury (above, note 3) 175 as evidence that Herodotus disbelieved this legend also, but wrongly; Herodotus also neglects to mention the Volga, a river whose existence he could scarcely have doubted (see Tozer [above, note 3] 88). Bolton (above, note 17) 42 observes that the nameless “high mountains” mentioned by Herodotus at 4.23.2 could be the Rhipaeans, but if so they have been entirely demythologized.

<sup>30</sup>We may perhaps ascribe both these misreadings to the tendentious nature of ancient geographical debate, since both serve to advance the particular ideologies of their respective authors. Eratosthenes, for example, the great debunker of Homer, who had scorned the *Odyssey* as an ἐξωκεανισμός or “journey into the (mythical realm of) Ocean” (Strabo 1.2.12–19), seems to have adopted Herodotus as an ally in skepticism who had rejected not only Ocean but other, more exotic legends as well. Strabo, for his part, takes the opposite approach, making Herodotus a worthless fabulist (1.2.35, e.g.) who had failed to perceive that myths must be treated as allegories, containing valid information about the earth but in exaggerated form. Thus he bolsters his own allegorical revisionism by making Herodotus an over-literal reader of Homer and Hesiod.

<sup>31</sup>H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Harvard 1956) §2298 b (p. 517); R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführlich Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*<sup>3</sup> v. 2.2 (Hannover 1904) §573 a n. 1 (pp. 466–67); W. W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (N.Y. 1896) §404 (p. 146). Herodotus himself supplies an excellent example of such a condition, in a sentence attributed to Prexaspes: εἰ μὲν νυν οἱ τεθνεώτες ἀνεστήσασι, προσδέξέοι τοι καὶ Ἀστυάγεα τὸν Μῆδον ἐπαναστήσεσθαι (3.62.4; cf. Dem. 18.12, Plat. *Phaedr.* 228A). For the logical issues involved, see David K. Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Harvard 1973) 24–26, and Robert C. Stalnaker, “Indicative Conditions,” in *Ifs: Conditions, Belief, Decision, Chance, and Time*, ed. W. L. Harper, R. C. Stalnaker, and G. Pearce (London 1981) 193–210.

hypothesis inadmissible, and the argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*.<sup>32</sup> Against this argument, however, it must be conceded that Herodotus does not clearly define or espouse a consistent scheme of climatology in which the southern latitudes would be unbearably hot. Thus he can speak of a Phoenician voyage around the tip of Libya (4.42) or of “long-lived” Aithiopians who dwell on its southern coast (ἐπὶ τῇ νοτίῃ θαλάσσει, 3.17.1),<sup>33</sup> without raising the issue of heat; and although Herodotus’ earth in general grows hotter as one moves southward and colder in the North,<sup>34</sup> nevertheless mankind remains surprisingly comfortable, adaptable, and even prosperous at the extremes of either direction, the so-called ἑσχατίαι explored at 3.106–16.<sup>35</sup>

In short, these various attempts to make problems of wind and cold the central issue of the Hypernotian condition come to naught, since Herodotus shows little consciousness of the torrid and frozen zones defined by his Hellenistic successors. On the other hand climate does interest him here, as elsewhere, to the extent that it creates a symmetrical opposition between northern and southern halves of the globe. Thus, only a few chapters prior to the one before us (4.29), Herodotus had hypothesized that the growth of a cow’s horns must be impeded by cold, since it is accelerated by heat; and in his explanation for the flooding of the Nile in Book 2, he envisions a similarly bipolar scheme, in which the south and north winds, and the climates they represent, could be made to exchange global positions. Indeed, this latter scenario bears a close comparison with our Hypernotian condition:

εἰ δὲ ἡ στάσις ἥλλακτο τῶν ὥρέων καὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῇ μὲν νῦν ὁ βορέης τε καὶ ὁ χειμῶν ἐστᾶσι, ταύτῃ μὲν τοῦ νότου ἦν ἡ στάσις καὶ τῆς μεσαμβρίας, τῇ δὲ ὁ νότος νῦν ἔστηκε, ταύτῃ δὲ ὁ βορέης, εἰ ταῦτα οὕτως εἶχε, ὁ ἥλιος ἂν

<sup>32</sup> Above, note 9, 24. The same theory is proposed, though only tentatively, by How and Wells (above, note 3) 316: “Symmetry would require us to believe in ‘Hypernotians’ also; but this is neither asserted (nor possible on account of extreme heat?). Therefore there are no Hyperboreans.” The question mark with which they qualify their assertion itself reveals that no convincing evidence can be produced in its support.

<sup>33</sup> There has been some confusion as to the whereabouts of these “long-lived” Aithiopians, largely as a result of Herodotus’ own inconsistent use of the term νοτίῃ θαλάσσει. Twice (2.158.4, 4.37.1) this body of water is equated with the Red Sea, but at other times (4.13.2, 4.42.3) the two are distinct. In this particular case, it is clear from the phrase ἐς τὰ ἑσχατα γῆς (3.25.1) that the southernmost coast of Africa is meant.

<sup>34</sup> Herodotus conjectures at 4.31 and 5.9 that extreme cold renders the North devoid of habitation, taken by Berger (above, note 5) 124–26 as evidence of a ‘frozen zone’ conception. However, in both cases, his major concern is in finding ad hoc explanations for exotic legends regarding the northern frontier, not in constructing a general scheme of world climate. On the whole, it is safer to say, with How and Wells (above, note 3) 435, that “Herodotus treats as independent facts forces like the winds or peculiarities of climate...He has no conception that there are general laws of atmospheric pressure.”

<sup>35</sup> Henry Wood attempts an argument along lines similar to Macan’s: Herodotus demonstrates empirically in his other ethnographic surveys that no Hypernotians exist, thereby rendering his apodosis here inherently unreal (*The Histories of Herodotus* [The Hague 1972] 104). However, since Herodotus clearly leaves room in his ethnographic map of Libya for tribes which are as yet unknown to the Greeks, such as the ‘wizards’ supposedly encountered by a Nasamonian expedition (2.32), this argument too proves untenable.

ἀπελαννόμενος ἐκ μέσου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ χειμῶνος καὶ τοῦ βορέω ἦιε ἂν τὰ ἄνω τῆς Εὐρώπης κατὰ περ νῦν τῆς Λιβύης ἔρχεται, διεξιόντα δ' ἂν μιν διὰ πάσης Εὐρώπης ἔλπομαι ποιέειν ἂν τὸν Ἴστρον τὰ περ νῦν ἐργάζεται τὸν Νεῖλον. (2.26.2)

This condition is, of course, explicitly contrafactual; but its assumption that Boreas and Notus “stand” directly opposite one another, on opposite sides of the earth, suggests that (in Herodotus’ view) the peoples associated with these climatic extremes may do likewise.

Herodotus’ pervasive interest in the correspondences between North/Boreas/cold and South/Notus/heat thus leads us to treat the Hyperborean condition as an argument about global symmetry rather than about wind and temperature. However even after restricting the argument in this way we still find ourselves in a dilemma, since scholarly opinion divides over whether Herodotus supports or rejects ‘Hyperborean’ symmetry, and either path presents difficulties. If we start from the former assumption, as do How and Wells—that “symmetry would require us to believe in Hyperboreans”—we must needs find a reason why such belief is untenable (if we are to continue to read the condition as contrary-to-fact), and no such reason has been convincingly adduced. More importantly, we face a problem of consistency when we move on to the very next sentence, the polemic against the round map of the earth, in which the principle of world symmetry seems to be not endorsed but explicitly rejected; that is, we confront the difficulty noted, but left unexplained, by How and Wells: “It is curious to see Herodotus appealing to the very symmetry which three lines later he denounces.”<sup>36</sup>

Recognizing this difficulty, Philippe Legrand<sup>37</sup> has proposed to read 4.36.1 as a parody of archaic geographical speculation, spoken ironically in the voice of a Hecataeus or a Damastes: “C’est du moins ce que devraient prétendre, pour être conséquents, les amateurs de combinaisons symétriques a priori dont se moque ici Hérodote.” This ingenious solution does indeed make the two sentences cohere as part of a single attack on geometric and speculative geography. However, such an attack cannot be reconciled with other sections of the *Histories* in which North-South symmetry, archaic and speculative though it may appear, forms a legitimate basis for deduction. Since the Boreas/Notus correlation is elsewhere accepted as valid, for example in the Book 2 passage quoted just above, there is no basis for Legrand’s assumption that the idea of Hyperborean/Hyperborean symmetry is inherently ridiculous to Herodotus and could not have been asserted in the historian’s own persona.

It would seem, then, that glaring inconsistencies in geographic theory result from following either of the readings which take symmetry to be the central issue of the Hyperborean condition; 4.36.1 can be reconciled either to the Nile *logos*, or to the polemic against the round map, but not to both. These apparent inconsistencies are particularly troubling, moreover, inasmuch as they involve an issue which obviously evokes strong feelings from Herodotus, and on which he has taken some pains to present his views. Thus, if we are to avoid the “defeatist” position to which some have resigned themselves—that Herodotus’

<sup>36</sup> Above, note 3, 316. The difficulty of the juxtaposition is also remarked by Jacoby (above, note 3) col. 306, and van Groningen (above, note 21) 21.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. his Budé edition, *Hérodote: Histoires*, v. 4 (Paris 1945) 69 n. 3, and the further comments in “Herodotea” (above, note 3). The same view is expounded by H. Stein, *Herodotos* v. 2.2 (Berlin 1877) 38, and Abicht (above, note 24) 35.

geography cannot be held to any firm principles, and that he may in fact be capable of espousing contrary ideas in consecutive sentences—we must find a way to bridge 4.36.1 and 4.36.2, without at the same time doing violence to the notion of symmetry adduced in the *logos* on the Nile. This shall be my task in the final section of this discussion.

### III

Our first step in connecting 4.36.1 and 4.36.2 is to discard all attempts to construe them as part of a single argument, or to subordinate one to the other in logical sequence. The Hyperborean condition seems rather to have been inserted as a parenthetical statement, appended after the close of the Hyperborean *logos* (τὰυτα μὲν Ὑπερβορέων περὶ εἰρήσθω) and before the opening of the next topic (γελῶ δὲ ὀρέων γῆς περιόδους γράψαντας). That is, Herodotus includes it almost as an aside or afterthought, loosely adjoining the Hyperborean *logos*, rather than as an essential link connecting it to what follows; a free-handed translator might consider rendering it as a footnote.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it accompanies another, similar footnote, the capsule description of the Abaris story, which is itself so far out of the chain of argument that one recent editor has excised it from the text.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the entire chapter is structured not as a tricolonic series of refutations, expanding in scope—"I don't believe in Abaris, or the Hyperboreans generally, or the circular world-map"—but as an antithesis between old and new topics of discussion, "So much for the Hyperboreans, now on to cartography," in which two subsidiary issues, Abaris and the possibility of Hyperboreans, have intruded into the intermediate space.

This structure becomes more intelligible once we recognize that the δέ of the Hyperborean condition does not answer to the μὲν of τὰυτα μὲν εἰρήσθω, but in fact intervenes between it and its true correlate, γελῶ δὲ ὀρέων. Hyperbata of this kind are normal enough where μὲν...δέ marks a transition from one topic to another,<sup>40</sup> as is the case here, where Herodotus uses his standard formula for effecting such transitions: τὰυτα μὲν περὶ (old topic) εἰρήσθω· (new topic) δέ...<sup>41</sup> If we are to reconstruct the train of thought governing this passage in a manner consistent with Herodotus' other uses of this formula, the δέ of 4.36.2 should in fact be translated as an adversative, or better still as a paragraph break.<sup>42</sup> Confusion over this point has arisen because here alone, Herodotus varies the μὲν...δέ transition by inserting a parenthesis containing a δέ of its own between old and new topics; furthermore the issue of

<sup>38</sup> Myres (1896, above note 1, 606) recommends devices of this kind to editors of Herodotus, as a way of clearing up confusions created by the author's paratactic style.

<sup>39</sup> Rosen, in the new Teubner edition (above, note 2).

<sup>40</sup> See LSJ s.v. μέν, section 1; Denniston unfortunately does not address the subject. Good examples can be cited from Xenophon, e.g. *Mem.* 1.1.2–1.2.1, separating the two counts of the indictment against Socrates, and 1.3.1–1.3.5, separating the discussions of Socrates' religious behavior and his lifestyle in general.

<sup>41</sup> Used seven times in the first four books alone: 1.92.4, 2.34.2, 2.76.3, 3.113.1, 4.15.4, 4.45.5, 4.199.2.

<sup>42</sup> Aubrey de Selincourt, for one, inserts such a break in his Penguin translation (*Herodotus: The Histories* [N.Y. 1972] 282), and Walter Blanco informs me that he plans to do likewise in his forthcoming translation for the Norton Critical Edition series.

world symmetry raised in this parenthesis has obliquely suggested the discussion of the circular world-map which follows,<sup>43</sup> creating an exceptionally tangled and easily misconstrued sequence of argument.<sup>44</sup> Despite these anomalies, however, we must refrain from seeing any strict connection between the parenthesis and the transition into which it intrudes; nor can we subordinate the old topic (Hyperboreans) to the new (circular map), since, in every other instance of the ταῦτα μὲν εἰρήσθω formula, no stronger link than a paratactic "speaking of which" is intended.

We can further explain the transition between 4.36.1 and 4.36.2 by pointing out that the symmetrical constructs Herodotus considers in these two sentences strike him as fundamentally different, and that he therefore changes tone abruptly as he moves from one to the next. As we have seen above, most prominently in the scenario describing the reversal of the North and South Winds, Herodotus relies heavily on climate as the organizing principle of world structure,<sup>45</sup> so that North-South correspondences appeal to him as naturally οἰκότα. East and West, however, defined by the risings and settings of the sun rather than by winds and temperatures, do not mirror one another to nearly the same degree;<sup>46</sup> therefore the geometry of the circle improperly extends that of the latitudinal line<sup>47</sup> in that nothing about it conforms with τὸ οἰκός. Thus, although the symmetrical constructs of 4.36.1 and 4.36.2 have seemed to modern readers to be closely akin if not identical, Herodotus actually has intelligible reasons for embracing the first while rejecting the second. In fact, the degree to which North-South predominates over East-West symmetry in Herodotus' mind can be seen in other passages of the *Histories*, where he locates the ἑσχατίαι or "edges of the earth" at the climatic extremes of North and South (3.106–16), and defines the center of the earth at the zone of mediation between them (3.106, 1.142.2).<sup>48</sup> Nowhere in the *Histories*, significantly, does he subscribe to the

<sup>43</sup> That is, in both the Hyperborean condition and in the reference to Abaris, who traveled all around the world (κατὰ πᾶσαν γῆν) in a circle as sweeping as that of the river Ocean.

<sup>44</sup> Further obfuscation arises from the fact that our Greek texts include the entire sequence within a single chapter, whereas, ordinarily, a chapter division separates old and new topics. Quite possibly Jungermans, who introduced the chapter divisions in his 1608 Frankfurt edition, failed to glimpse the proper run of the passage, and hence obscured it for all later readers.

<sup>45</sup> On this whole subject see Guy Lachenaud, "Connaissance du monde et représentations de l'espace dans Hérodote," *Hellenica* 32 (1980) 42–60, esp. 49–52; Berger (above, note 3) 118–29; and Heidel (above, note 15) 18–20, 53–55.

<sup>46</sup> In fact, the positions of sunrise and sunset, far from being distinctively east-west markers, can themselves be used to designate North and South, due to the procession of the equinoxes; see, for example, Hippocrates *De aëre* 12.

<sup>47</sup> Herodotus constructs these East-West lines wherever possible, for instance in tracing the upper course of the Nile (2.34), in dividing Europe from Asia (4.42), and throughout the entire ethnography of Libya (esp. 4.181–86); see Bunbury (above, note 3) 162–63. Some have seen the rudimentary notion of a meridian line in the passage which links the mouths of the Nile and Ister (2.33).

<sup>48</sup> It is remarkable that Herodotus virtually ignores East and West in this digression and focuses rather on the lands which, according to the formulation of the opening sentence, are climatically farthest removed from temperate Greece. He does, to be sure, discuss India, but gives remarkably little attention to this exotic realm (see Bunbury [above, note 3] 231). As for the West, Herodotus does not even bother to mention the Cynetes and Celts among the ἑσχατίαι, tribes which he elsewhere considers ἑσχατοὶ in this direction (4.49).

popular belief in the centrality of Delphi, predicated as it was on an abstract symmetry of East and West rather than on the natural and οἰκότα correspondences of North and South.<sup>49</sup>

That the Hypertotian condition ultimately depends on climatic rather than purely geometric symmetry allows us not only to distinguish it from Ocean, but to link it with a different exploration of speculative geography: Herodotus' investigation into the source of the Nile (2.29–34). Here too, as we have already seen, the correspondence of North/Boreas/cold and South/Notus/heat becomes a central consideration, and here too Herodotus draws a stark contrast between this correspondence and the more venturesome, geometric symmetry of Ocean (2.21, 23). Moreover, the connection between these two excursions is strengthened by their parallel position as preludes to the *logoi* that contain them, the ethnographies of Egypt and Scythia. Since the Egyptian and Scythian books have recently been shown to mirror each other in a number of important ways,<sup>50</sup> as determined by the larger symmetry of hot and cold climates which governs them, we might well expect this structural correlation to include the explorations of their furthest regions—places which, it should be noted, had already been linked by Pindar as eschatological twins (*Isthm.* 6.22–23 b).<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, upon closer examination, we find that Herodotus provides an explicit verbal signal of the close tie between the Nilotic and Hyperborean investigations. In the first he proposes to conduct his inquiry ἐπὶ μακρότατον, “to the outer limit” both of geographical space and empirical data (2.29.1), while the second forms the capstone of a similar journey ἐπὶ μακρότατον (4.16.1).<sup>52</sup> Both inquiries, moreover, bring Herodotus to borders designated by his text as τὰ μακρότατα (2.32.3, 4.31.2). The linguistic echoes are significant in that they highlight the methodology pursued in both passages: Herodotus attempts to push beyond the cognitive limits established by ὄψις and ἀκοή into the realm of the ἀφανές. Such transgressions are, in part, the natural result of all Herodotus' inquiries into the πείρατα γαίης, as we have seen. But the extremes of South and North form especially revealing cases, since, in both directions, the boundaries of empirical knowledge had been fixed at clearly

<sup>49</sup> According to legend (probably first recorded by Pindar), Delphi had been revealed as the center of the earth after two eagles, flying from the extreme East and extreme West, had met at that spot; see Pausanias 10.5.9 and Plutarch *De Pyth. Orac.* 402 d, and, on Herodotus' omission, How and Wells (above, note 3) 437.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. in Benardete (above, note 17) 99–132, and James Redfield, “Herodotus the Tourist,” *CP* 80 (1985) 97–118, esp. 106–11. The parallels appear to have been noted first by Karl Trüdinger, in his *Studien zur Geschichte der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie* (Basel 1918) 34–36, but have been fully outlined only in more recent work.

<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately the connection has not been explored by modern commentators, perhaps because of a tendency to separate ‘real’ entities like the Nile from ‘mythical’ Hyperboreans. This distinction would not have been valid for Herodotus, however, who treats both entities as ‘invisibles’ requiring special forms of investigation.

<sup>52</sup> The phrase ἐπὶ μακρότατον is used again at 4.192.3 in reference to the problems of exploring distant space (the southern reaches of Libya), and occurs once in the context of prehistoric time (1.171.2); but only in the above two passages does it define the course of the investigation from the outset. It is perhaps possible that the two other usages, however, and in particular that in the Libyan *logos*, imply other empirical experiments of the type I have outlined here; I have excluded them simply in an effort not to overburden the present discussion.

identifiable points; no such termini had been established in the East, as Herodotus is keenly aware (1.204.1, 3.98.2, 4.40.2, 4.44.3), and even the West seems strangely open-ended to him at 3.115.1 (despite his awareness of the Pillars of Heracles). Thus the Nile and the Hyperboreans appear to have been adopted as twin test cases for Herodotus' larger ἐπὶ μακρότατον experiment.

This verbal focus on μακρότατα in both the Nilotic and Hyperborean *logoi* is reinforced by a further, structural parallel: In each of these excurses, Herodotus follows the route of a single αὐτόπτης in order to reach the outer limits of empirical knowledge. These lone travelers—Herodotus himself in the former case, the poet Aristaeas in the latter—fare outward, in opposite directions, until they reach definitive stopping points—Elephantine in the South, the Issedones in the North. At those points, both eyewitnesses are driven back onto a secondary source of information, hearsay, in order to learn what lies beyond (2.29.1, 4.16.1); but in both cases the final mystery they seek remains out of reach even of hearsay. Herodotus has, in short, constructed mirror-image journeys of exploration in these two books, the former undertaken in person, the latter by way of a proxy; and the two journeys bring him to much the same place, the point at which hearsay evidence fails and the geographer finds himself thrown back onto his own deductive resources.

Since the two *logoi* are linked in these essential ways—by the climatic symmetry of North and South, and by the way in which vectors of travel demarcate the μακρότατα of empirical evidence—it should come as no surprise that their results are also closely parallel: Herodotus ends by using symmetry to fill in the blank spots on the map. Thus in the famous conclusion to the Nile *logos* he assumes “that the Nile runs through all of Libya along a course equal to that of the Ister” (2.34.2), extrapolating from the fact that the mouths of the two rivers lie opposite one another across the axis of the Mediterranean. The passage (which goes on at greater length than can be quoted here) has baffled and bemused interpreters, some of whom have seen in it an irresponsible abandonment of empirical standards of evidence. But, on the basis of the foregoing analysis, it should be clear that such reasoning from τὸ οἰκός is perfectly consistent with Herodotus' other approaches to mythic geography, and, in particular, with his solution to the problem of the Hyperboreans. In fact, Herodotus' earnestness in positing a correspondence between the Nile and the Ister—for here there can be no question of irony or reductio ad absurdum—may be taken as final confirmation of Casaubon's reading of the Hypernotian condition, making it an equally earnest, if more tentative,<sup>53</sup> attempt to escape an empirical dilemma by way of speculative deduction.

In sum, then, Herodotus' theory about the course of the upper Nile shares with the Hypernotian condition an unquestioning faith in the correlation of North and South, while the case of Ocean and the circular map is instead condemned by its reliance on a similar correlation of East and West. As a result, the juxtaposition of the two constructs in 4.36 must be understood not as a two-part refutation of a single notion of symmetry, but as a contrast between a plausible application of that notion, in the first instance, and a wrongheaded overextension in the second. To conclude, I would paraphrase Herodotus' argument in 4.36 as follows: “We are forced to leave the Hyperboreans an open question—although were we in a position to pursue the problem further, the

<sup>53</sup> As explained by the fact that Herodotus is in the case of the Hyperboreans dealing with two unknowns rather than one, and with information gathered at second hand rather than first.



general pattern of the earth's North-South symmetry might provide a solution, in that we would expect to find Hyperboreans as well. Speaking of symmetry, however, we should note that the current maps of the world have taken this principle too far, as I shall now reveal." With that Herodotus moves on to his next topic, leaving the Hyperboreans still shrouded in their cloak of invisibility. Having passed beyond the μακρότατα of empirical research, he is unable to come to any firm conclusion, but at least establishes that the myth remains plausible so long as it conforms to τὸ οἰκόζ.