

Four Notes on Herodotus

James Diggle

I

1.66.1 οἶα δὲ ἔν τε χώρα ἄγαθῇ καὶ πλήθει οὐκ ὀλίγω ἀνδρῶν ἀνά τε ἔδραμον αὐτίκα καὶ εὐθηνήθησαν (v.l. εὐθην-). “Because they [the Spartans] had a good land and no small number of men, they quickly grew and flourished.” Herodotus has active εὐθηνέω at 2.91.3 and 2.124.1. A passive of εὐθηνέω/εὐθηνέω is not found until much later writers.¹ Read εὐθηνή{θη}σαν. The corruption was prompted by εὐνομήθησαν at the end of the previous sentence.

II

3.128.2–3 ὁ Βαγαῖος ... βυβλία γραψάμενος πολλὰ καὶ περὶ πολλῶν ἔχοντα πρηγμάτων σφρηγῖδά σφι ἐπέβαλε τὴν Δαρείου, μετὰ δὲ ἦε ἔχων ταῦτα ἐς τὰς Σάρδεις. ἀπικόμενος δὲ καὶ Ὀροῖτεω ἐς ὄψιν ἐλθὼν τῶν βυβλίων ἐν ἕκαστον περιαιρούμενος ἐδίδου τῷ γραμματιστῇ τῷ βασιλῆϊ ἐπιλέγεσθαι. “Bagaios ... had many letters written, concerning many matters, and put the seal of Darius on them, and then went with them to Sardis. When he arrived there and came into the presence of Oroetes, περιαιρούμενος each letter in turn he gave it to the royal secretary.”

περαιρούμενος has been taken in a variety of senses, all unexampled and unsatisfactory. The active verb has the sense “take away something that surrounds, strip off, remove” (LSJ περιαιρέω I.1), as, for example, at 3.96.2 ἐς πίθους κεραμίνους τήξας καταχέει, πλήσας δὲ τὸ ἄγγος περιαιρέει τὸν κέραμον (“He melts it down and pours it [gold and silver] into clay jars, then, when the container is full, he removes the surrounding clay”).

¹ It is attested at Dem. 19.231. But the verb is inappropriate and is generally marked as corrupt.

περιαιρέόμενος has generally been taken to refer to the removal of the letters from something which contains or surrounds them: “taking [the cover] off one’s letter, i.e. opening it” (LSJ I.1); “taking it out of its case” (How and Wells);² “the most likely sense is that Bagaïos takes off the sheath, or the string, that envelops every scroll before handing it to the scribe” (Asheri).³ These interpretations assume an unparalleled linguistic usage, and they leave too much to the imagination—we have heard nothing about covers, cases, sheaths, or string. Powell, in his *Lexicon*,⁴ translated “undo,” leaving unclear what process he envisaged. In his later translation he preferred “unfold.”⁵

Richards⁶ proposed προαιρέόμενος, which he translated “taking out,” comparing Ar. *Thesm.* 419 (active προαιρεῖν). This is not suitable, since (i) the middle is unexampled in this sense, (ii) it leaves unspecified the source from which the letters are taken out, (iii) in *Thesm.* 419 the verb is used in a sense regular in the active, of removing an item from a store-room.⁷

Herodotus has two other instances of the middle περιαιρεῖσθαι, and they have one and the same meaning (to take off something which goes around oneself), and that meaning suits here: 2.151.2 περιελόμενος τὴν κυνέην (“taking off his helmet”), 3.41.2 περιελόμενος τὴν σφρηγίδα (“taking off his signet ring”).⁸ Bagaïos goes to Sardis “taking the letters with him” (ἔχων ταῦτα). He carries them himself—no other carrier is mentioned. Since

² W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford 1912) I 296. Similarly, at greater length, H. Stein, *Herodotos Erklärt*⁵ II (Berlin 1893) 140–141.

³ In D. Asheri, A. Lloyd, and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus, Books I–IV* (Oxford 2007) 510.

⁴ J. E. Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge 1938).

⁵ *Herodotus*, transl. J. E. Powell (Oxford 1949).

⁶ H. Richards, *Notes on Xenophon and Others* (London 1907) 219.

⁷ See my *Theophrastus, Characters* (Cambridge 2004) 212 (on 4.6).

⁸ Other examples of this sense: Pl. *Symp.* 213A (ταυνίας); Lycurg. *Leoc.* 122 (στεφάνους); Diod. 1.66.11 (περικεφαλαίαν), 17.35.6 (τὸν τοῦ σώματος κόσμον); Dion. Hal. *Ant.Rom.* 13.9.1 (τὴν μάχαιραν ἅμα τῇ θήκῃ καὶ τῷ ζωστήρῃ).

they must not fall into the wrong hands, it is natural that he should keep them on (and around) his own person. The participle is not aorist, as in the other two passages, which describe a once and for all action, but is present, reflecting an imperfect indicative,⁹ and suggesting, with some comedy, a drawn-out process, as he divests himself of a large number of letters, like items of clothing, one at a time.

III

7.163.1 ταύτην μὲν τὴν ὁδὸν ἠμέλησε, ὁ δὲ ἄλλης εἶχετο. “He ignored this course (of action) and adopted another.” This is the only instance in any author of an accusative instead of a genitive after ἀμελεῖν or a compound of this verb. Herodotus has a genitive at 2.121.γ.2 and (with ἐξαμελεῖν) at 1.97.1. LSJ ἀμελέω I.3 cites, as an instance of the accusative, Eur. *Ion* 438–439 παῖδας ἐκτεκνούμενος λάθρα / θνήσκοντας ἀμελεῖ. Here the accusative is governed in the first instance by ἐκτεκνούμενος, and, in any case, the construction of an accusative+participle with ἀμελεῖν (in the sense of περιορᾶν, which regularly takes that construction) would be unremarkable (one might compare such structures as Hom. *Il.* 13.352–353 ἤχθετο ... δαμναμένους; Soph. *Aj.* 136 σὲ μὲν εὖ πράσσοντ’ ἐπιχαίρω; Eur. *Med.* 74–75 καὶ ταῦτ’ Ἰάσων παῖδας ἐξανέξεται / πάσχοντας).¹⁰ An instance of ἀμελεῖν with accusative which has been cited from Pl. *Leg.* 908E is non-existent.¹¹

The accusative ὁδὸν cannot be an ordinary direct object. It must depend upon a verb of motion, either to be supplied mentally (not a welcome recourse) or to be added as a supplement: e.g. ταύτην μὲν <ιέναι> τὴν ὁδὸν ἠμέλησε, like 7.12.2 ταύτην ἴθι τῶν ὁδῶν (“proceed on this course of action”). Similarly (with

⁹ See R. Kühner-B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache* (Hanover/Leipzig 1898–1904) I 200; E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich 1939–1953) II 297.

¹⁰ See Kühner-Gerth II 54–55; Schwyzer II 395.

¹¹ Cited by H. Friis Johansen and E. W. Whittle, *Aeschylus The Suppliants III* (Copenhagen 1980) 320–322, ad 1034. They misunderstand the connection of the words.

literal *ὁδός*) 1.111.1 ἦτε τὴν αὐτὴν ὀπίσω ὁδόν, 6.34.2 ἰόντες ... τὴν ἰρὴν ὁδόν, 7.31 ταύτην ἰών ... τὴν ὁδόν, 8.143.2 ἔστ' ἂν ὁ ἥλιος τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν ἴη. For the infinitive with ἀμελεῖν see 2.66.3 ἀμελήσαντες σβεννύναι τὸ καιόμενον, LSJ I.4.

IV

7.223.2 οἱ τε δὴ βάρβαροι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ξέρξην προσήισαν καὶ οἱ ἀμφὶ Λεωνίδην Ἕλληνας, ὡς τὴν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ ἔξοδον ποιούμενοι, ἤδη πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐπεξήισαν ἐς τὸ εὐρύτερον τοῦ ἀχένοσ. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔρυμα τοῦ τείχεος ἐφυλάσσετο ἀνὰ τὰς πρότερον ἡμέρας, οἱ δὲ ὑπεξιώντες ἐς τὰ στεινόπορα ἐμάχοντο. The final battle at Thermopylae. “The barbarians with Xerxes moved forward; and the Greeks with Leonidas, since they were taking the field to meet their death, advanced much further into the broader part of the neck of land than they had done at the beginning. For on the previous days the defensive wall was being protected, and they fought ὑπεξιώντες into the narrows of the pass.”

The picture is clear. Ahead of the defensive wall is a neck of land, at first narrow, then broadening out. The Spartans, while defending their wall, ventured out only into the narrow part. But, for this final confrontation, when they know that they are going to their deaths, they have abandoned all thought of defending the wall, and advance into the broader part. But ὑπέξειμι and ὑπεξέρχομαι do not mean “advance.” They mean “withdraw, retire.” And it makes no sense here to translate (as many do) “they withdrew to the narrow part.” The reference cannot be to the tactic used in an earlier encounter, described in section 211—the tactic of pretending to withdraw before the enemy, so as to draw them on, and then suddenly turning to confront them. This is not compatible with the language of our passage. That the Spartans are described as advancing much further than they did previously makes clear that what they are being described as having done previously was advance, not withdraw.

Powell, who understood what Herodotus is saying, gives the

sense “sally out.”¹² He attributes the same sense to two other passages, where it is not appropriate, 1.176.1 (ὑπεξιόντες) and 2 (ὑπεξελθόντες). For the former of those LSJ (ὑπέξειμι II) gives “go out to meet or against one,” for the latter (ὑπεξέρχομαι II) “go out to meet,” adding, for both, “(leg. ἐπεξ-).” The changes to ἐπεξ- (Bekker) have been generally accepted, most recently by Wilson (OCT, 2015). In our passage, too, ὑπεξιόντες must be changed to ἐπεξιόντες, echoing ἐπεξήισαν two clauses earlier.

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Queens’ College, Cambridge
jd10000@cam.ac.uk

¹² *Lexicon*, s.v. ὑπεξέρχομαι. Similarly R. Waterfield, *Herodotus, The Histories* (Oxford 1998), “they had made sorties into the narrows of the pass.” Others who interpret correctly, in defiance of the linguistic difficulty, are G. Rawlinson, *History of Herodotus*⁴ IV (London 1880), “they ... had gone forth to fight,” and A. B. Butler, *Herodotus VII, with notes* (London/New York 1891), “they had advanced as far as ‘the narrows in front.’” In 1949 Powell, *Herodotus*, offered the odd translation “but now they joined the battle without [i.e., presumably, “outside”] the narrow pass,” which appears not to square with his proposal (in his Critical Appendix, p.714) to delete ἐς τὰ στεινόπορα.