In this very comprehensive survey of Greek religion in Herodotus, Jon D. Mikalson provides the reader with valuable insights into aspects of religious beliefs which helped shape the overall Greek perspective on the outcome of the conflict with the Persian Empire, a victory of the pious Greeks against the impious hubristic despot Xerxes. As M emphasizes in the introduction, the role of religion in the Greek understanding of the conflict has been much underrated by historians, ancient and modern. Herodotus is the major exception and the fact that he, as 'the best and richest single source for Greek religion as it was practiced in the Classical period' (6), offers religious explanations for the causes and outcomes of the conflict is noted by M, who, as a historian of Greek religion, seeks to analyse Herodotus' account of Greek religious beliefs during the Persian Wars in greater detail and restore these 'religious elements to the importance that Herodotus gives them' (9).

M admits that there are 'significant limitations in focusing on one author' (6), and freely acknowledges the possibility that there may be exaggerations and inaccuracies in Herodotus' account; none the less he is inclined to trust Herodotus, given that his account can be taken to represent the history of religious phenomena as they were accepted and believed by the Greeks in generations after the resolution of the Persian Wars. His attempts to supplement and at times cross-examine Herodotus' account with those of much later authors such as Plutarch, Pausanias and Diodorus Siculus, are at times useful given that these authors sometimes provide different versions and perspectives on the same events recorded in Herodotus. However the chronological gap between them and the Persian Wars is so great that it is extremely difficult to arrive at an accurate estimation of their ultimate value. In this case their contribution seems to be negligible at best and falls well short of M's expectations, but given that his intention is to focus more on what the Greeks believed in, rather than the hard facts of history, this
deficiency is only a minor blot on an otherwise excellent analysis of Herodotean Greek religion.

After the introduction follows a long chapter (almost a hundred pages) that provides an almost exhaustive catalogue of religious phenomena as reported by Herodotus. The detailed survey is useful, but only just manages to avoid the pitfall of repeating what Herodotus actually wrote. M’s choice to delay the major discussions on the religious elements of Herodotus’ account until the third chapter may be deliberate: however, to students familiar with the Histories this causes the first chapter to seem more like a tedious narrative than a scholarly analysis. Comments, when they do appear, are brief and leave the reader with the feeling that more could have been said.

The second chapter is of greater interest and provides an excellent and comprehensive summary of the roles attributed to individual deities, heroes and the divine in Herodotus. Particular emphasis is given to the key roles attributed to Zeus of Olympia, Poseidon of the Isthmus, and Apollo of Delphi. Unlike the other deities and heroes whose participation in the conflict is determined largely by locale (eg Athena, Artemis, Hera) and is usually a reaction to some act of sacrilege committed against their sanctuaries and temples by the Persians, these three gods who were already Panhellenic in cult are shown to take an active interest in the preservation of Greece.

In the third chapter M begins in earnest to discuss the religious beliefs and attitudes of Herodotus. He makes the interesting comment that Herodotus’ religious belief, in a typically Greek manner, is ‘cognitive not emotional’ (139): that it is almost always qualified or reinforced by an appeal to reason. The adoption of this ‘cautionary mode of narrative’ (146) whenever describing religious phenomena however, M adds, does not imply disbelief. Herodotus, like most Greeks, M notes, accepts the existence and power of the gods. Omens and oracles are accepted as legitimate and it is a recognizable trait of the Histories that prayers and sacrifices made are almost always effective; which, however, may be due to the historian’s adoption of a poetic convention. Yet we do find Herodotus consciously avoiding the
Homeric practice of describing the gods in action on the battlefield. The nonappearance of the gods, M notes, is a characteristic of Greek prose that may also reflect the common popular belief that except in dreams ‘Greek gods did not appear to their worshippers’ (139).

Like Gould and Lateiner before him, M emphasizes the importance of the concept of divine \textit{phthonos} in the Histories. He also notes that \textit{phthonos}, the concept of the divine, and the fatalistic notion of divine nemesis are all features borrowed from the Greek poetic tradition. However, throughout the book, he prefers to concentrate his inquiry on the cultic side of Greek religion. Thus although he is prepared to acknowledge the influence of the poetic tradition on Herodotus’ prose, he is adamant that Herodotus shows a greater preference ‘for cult realities over poetic conceptions’ (154). He argues that concepts such as \textit{phthonos} and \textit{hubris} that derive from poetry do not form a ‘pervasive theological causality’ (154), but that greater emphasis is given to the religious cause of the war in a cultic sense. He thus argues for the preponderance of cultic religion over the poetic in Herodotus’ narrative of the Persian Wars. Even when describing foreign religions, he adds, Herodotus’ main interest is in religious practices, not actual beliefs.

Several of the claims made by M concerning foreign religions in Herodotus can be challenged, perhaps even refuted: they need to be reinforced with more evidence. For instance his assertion that the Persians are shown using Greek-style divinations from the time of Darius by Herodotus (157) is questionable given that the divination of the kind mentioned in 3.76.3 of the 	extit{Histories} could just as easily have been formulated in the context of Near Eastern tradition and religion. We do indeed discover similar divinations in the Bible in the books of Genesis and Jeremiah which were all written prior to the Persian conquest of Babylonia. Oracles, the interpretation of dreams, the keeping of oaths and the payment of tithes, which M identifies as being typical features of Greek cultic religion are also features of Near Eastern religions and are not necessarily the product of Hellenic influence or Hellenization of non-Greeks for literary purposes.
Lastly in the final chapter M recognizes Herodotus’ immense contribution to the formulation of the history of Greek religion. A thorough summary of the origins of Greek religion and deities is provided along with comments on Herodotus’ relativism in the matter of religious beliefs and practices of different peoples. Overall, M provides an excellent overview of the nature and origins of Greek religion as they are presented in Herodotus. He fully appreciates the value of Herodotus as the most important source on Greek religion during the classical period. He chooses to concentrate on the cultic, practiced side of Greek religion and stresses its preponderance over the religious elements drawn from the Greek poetic tradition, especially in the narrative of the Persian Wars, and successfully accomplishes his aim of placing this aspect of Hellenic religion within a religious and historical context.

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