Pausanias in the World of Greek Myth
Pausanias in the World of Greek Myth

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this book is dedicated to

Will Christie,
whose vision of a humane and hospitable humanities
should be a gadfly to us all
Acknowledgements

This book has taken its time: I needed time to get my head around the topic, time to discover its core, and time to come up with a language to describe what I found there. And as months of illness have turned into years, time has become ever the more precious.

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Introduction

With Pausanias as Guide

This book is about the stories of Pausanias’ Periegesis. It is about a journey—or, rather, the very act of journeying—through the southern and central Greek mainland with a curious narrator who fixes the conceptual world of myth onto the realia of the Imperial landscape. Pausanias offers us glimpses of Greek myths as a lived and living tradition. His restless narrative makes them a facet of hodological knowledge: stories enable the traveller to understand each new place encountered; each new place encountered enriches, challenges the traveller’s sense of this shared narrative repertoire. Movement through the landscape, bodily engagement, empirical details thus become inextricable from the workings of narrative. Pausanias can show us how pervasive were the interrelations between storytelling and the physical landscape at this particular point in time, and how myths, lantern-like, cast both light and shadow.

I am acutely aware that this book does not exhaust the subject of Pausanian storytelling. After trying for several years, I realized that one cannot write a full, tidy, joined-up account of the Periegesis. Or if one can, I could not. However much we might now stress the virtues of understanding the Periegesis holistically, there are few who will have cause to read it cover-to-cover, and even fewer who can hold it complete in their mind at once and account, completely and even-handedly, for its idiosyncrasies. We quite naturally dip into it piecemeal, making of it what we will, remembering and revisiting the particular passages that interest us. This book is as partial, eclectic, patchy, idiomatic as Pausanias himself. Do not hope for tidy explanations of this author, for any last words on why he selects what he does describe, why he might have overlooked or remained ignorant of something else. Without the seeking to provide a definitive chart, I pick one possible set of paths through; this is my florilegium of Pausanian selections.¹

¹ Thus, Elsner (2001) 19: ‘the mythical totality which the text attempts to purvey is always selective. Pausanias’ Greece is inevitably a florilegium of what he most wished to collect, of those
2 INTRODUCTION

I hope, nonetheless, that readers will recognize in my observations insights which extend beyond this one text. Pausanias lets us see something of how Greek storytelling worked. He illustrates the rootedness of Greek myths: stories are bound in time and to place. But they are, at the same time, products of the imagination, part of a conceptual world extending both across and beyond the actual expanses of the Mediterranean. Myths are stories which are retold, never merely told; they are a kind of cultural patrimony, absorbed from childhood. And yet they belong, too, to the world of intellectual achievements: the accumulation of obscure lore and mythological facts, and the forging of new uses for them, was an entry ticket amongst the elite. Somewhere amongst being ‘always known’, ‘laboriously acquired’, and ‘open to novelty’, we must leave some wriggle-room for that most unstable of entities, the living tradition. There is no such thing as ‘Greek myth’ if we imagine it as a singular, abstract system existing beyond the contingencies of human storytelling. Myths never cohere neatly as we might like them to. They are a set of conflicting assertions, subject to diverging interpretations, and to the whims of memory, creativity, and chauvinism. They explain the world, but rarely in any straightforward way. The communal is, after all, an interlocked amalgam of myriad personal fleeting thoughts. This is the world the Periegesis reflects. It shows us myth without defining—or confining—it as an ancient phenomenon. And so, yes, this is a book about Pausanias, but it is also a book about Greek myths. It is about the messy, chaotic, uncategorizable, un-pindown-able, entirely irrepressible workings of these stories in one corner of their native habitat.

Three themes swirl through this book. The first concerns Pausanias as a source for Greek myths. His utility in transmitting so many unusual titbits of information sits at odds with his benighted ‘lateness’: as an author he is more consulted than appreciated, not least because the Greece he describes is no longer the vigorous world of the archaic and classical poleis. There is bits which would best evoke the sublime fantasy of the whole (which arguably had never existed as Pausanias imagines it and certainly never possessed the perfect plenitude with which he imbibes it). The interesting aspect of this is that the writing of Pausanias’ Greece (as a florilegium) is parallel to the process of reading the text of his Greece. No reading of Pausanias has ever been anything but a selection of passages—not even that of Frazer, whose six volumes of introduction, translation, and commentary…represent a good many more words devoted to Pausanias than Pausanias ever wrote himself. Every reader’s selections are strung together in a manner that suits the reader’s own desire, the reader’s view of what the Periegesis of Greece is trying to accomplish. That is to say, the only way to approach Pausanias’ text is as he himself approached Greece: choosing what pleases us by tying those selections together according to an ulterior set of aims.’ For the autonomy of Pausanias’ readers, see Hawes (2018) 171–2.
something deeply ironic in the fact that this text, which seems to model so clearly the granularity of the Greek mainland, its points of tension and its shifting power dynamics, is the product of a time when so little was in fact at stake. This historical context cannot be ignored; too often Pausanias’ testimony is treated as timeless, applicable equally to earlier periods as if he managed to reach back into the past and retrieve it unadulterated. Throughout this book, I point to the ways in which Pausanias’ myths reflect not only the pragmatic contingencies of the Imperial world, but the pragmatics of travelling through and committing to words an ‘already written landscape’.² Every story, so easily excerpted and used as evidence for something else, has its particular role to play in the world of the Periegesis.

Fundamentally—and this is my second theme—this is a book about the living experience of Greek storytelling. Pausanias offers us an archive of localized stories not yet become bedrock. Pausanias’ myths are not distant or mysterious. They are everyday companions, part of the infrastructure of the mainland, and subject to the same forces as wear down the fabric of Greece’s cities. Pausanias’ narrative assumes an embodied sense of storytelling. Myth is not some cerebral game played out solely through words, but a mode of thought and explanation. It is an immersive habit, suffused with the everyday divine so that ‘the sacred landscape of Greece is not simply a catalogue of monuments, but a living religious system that […] is safeguarded by the very powers it celebrates’.³ It is seductive to see in Pausanias’ words ‘a Greece which no longer exists, […] a fantasy image, a false and indeed impossible totality’.⁴ But this close focus on the literary alone takes us into impractical territory. My aim—and again it is ironic that this should be done in a book about myth of all things—is to grant the Periegesis a solid materiality. Pausanias’ myths take place, they exist somewhere, they are afforded concrete weight by discrete acts of storytelling. And the places where they are told are not purely castles in the air or mountains of the mind. To put it another way, the imagination does not roam on its own but is housed in a living person who moves about the world.⁵

My third theme comprises the nature of local myth, those stories for which Pausanias has long been valued as a unique repository. But here of course we come to see how vague our notion of this phenomenon in fact is:

² Quotation: Cherry (2001) 250–1. ³ Platt (2011) 219. ⁴ Porter (2001) 68. ⁵ In this regard, and in the manner of Grethlein (2017) esp. 4–6 I chaff at the scholarly straitjacket which reduces literary meaning to semiotic analysis, or experience to a narrow conception of cognitive response.
local stories might be those of relevance to a specific locale; they might be those told in these locales; they might be stories which existed only in oral form; stories which seem obscure or idiosyncratic; stories which project a ‘geographical ideal’ in which toponyms are not empty references but places with independent ontological status.⁶ In effect, the variety of localisms replicates the various natures of a panhellenic mythic core, which is likewise subject to slippage. In this book, interactions between stories as local possessions and myth as a shared obsession reveal what is bound up in Greek storytelling.

The de facto mythographer

Who was Pausanias? We know as much about him as can be gleaned from his work.⁷ He was, obviously, well-travelled and well-read; we must assume, then, that he had wealth, leisure, and education.⁸ He was a keen observer of cultural difference and a participant in initiatory cults.⁹ Internal evidence suggests that his Periegesis was several decades’ work, undertaken between AD 155 and 180. The frequency and ease with which he introduces Lydian comparanda suggests that he was from Lydia in Asia Minor.¹⁰ In one passage he reveals a more precise affiliation. After describing the various peregrinations of Pelops’ shoulder-blade he adds (5.13.7):

There remain still to this day signs that Pelops and Tantalos lived among us (παρ’ ἡμῖν): of Tantalos, a lake named after him and a prominent tomb; of Pelops a throne on the peak of Sipylos above the Sanctuary of the Plastene Mother. Across the river Hermos in Temnos there is a statue of Aphrodite crafted from still-living myrtle. Our tradition is that it was given as an offering by Pelops when he sought the goddess’ help in winning Hippodameia as his wife.¹¹

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⁶ This final observation is made by Berman (forthcoming).
⁷ For fuller discussion of the dating and identity of Pausanias, see Habicht (1985) chapter 1; Bowie (2001) 21–5.
⁸ These travels took him beyond Asia Minor and the Greek mainland: see the catalogue of places visited by Pausanias collected by Frazer (1898) I: xx–xxii.
⁹ Pausanias’ religiosity is the most apparent of his personality traits as a narrator: see Heer (1979); Habicht (1985) 151–2; della Santa (1999).
¹⁰ For a list of passages, see Habicht (1985) 13–15; for discussion, see Spawforth (2001) 389–90.
¹¹ All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
Here Pausanias reveals his local affiliation to the region around Mt Sipylos and his—own—local knowledge of the area. He shows, too, that he understands what his readers would find most significant in it. Mythical data is accumulated through physical proximity over long periods of time, certainly, and observations gleaned through autopsy are of prime value, but there is little space in this text for the purely parochial. Tantalos and his son Pelops—and daughter Niobe, as we shall see in a moment—are the most prominent Lydians in Greek myth. By cataloguing the relics of Mt Sipylos as he does, Pausanias reiterates a specific, traditional connection between Lydia and ‘old Hellas’. More than this, Tantalos and his offspring offer opportunities for asserting Lydian primacy. At Acriai, at what purports to be the oldest sanctuary to the Mother (i.e. Cybele) in the Peloponnese, Pausanias comments that the Magnesians around Sipylos have the oldest image of her, made by a son of Tantalos (3.22.4). And when he encounters at Argos a small bronze vessel containing the bones of Tantalos, he argues that these must belong to someone else by that name since the tomb of the famous son of Zeus he has seen on Mt Sipylos, and there is no story which tells of that Tantalos ever going to Greece (2.22.3). The logic of these arguments is unassailable, despite being motivated by self-interest. As we will see throughout this book, such chauvinistic pride is not Pausanias’ exclusive privilege; everywhere he assumes that all will speak to their own advantage.

Chauvinism makes storytelling about us and them; or about us against them. We, too, possess a part of that tradition; or we, not they, are its rightful owners. The architecture of the Perigesis naturally promotes these attitudes. Its itineraries create a here against which all else is there; its scope, by contrast, makes the distinction one of qualitative difference: what is here, in this specific place, is a local perspective on traditions which exist at the same time everywhere across the Greek world. Pausanias may view the foreign landscapes of the mainland through the comparative lens of his familiar home, but from the point of view of the Periegesis Pausanias’ Magnesia ad Sipylum is the distant there. It finds its place in Pausanias’ narrative only when he can exploit an opportunity; its visible landmarks are only those with analogies, or duplications, on the mainland. To his description of an image on a tripod on the Athenian Acropolis showing Apollo and Artemis killing the children of Niobe, Pausanias appends his observations on the stone Niobe in Lydia (1.21.3):

I myself saw the Niobe when I climbed up Mt Sipylos. Close up it is just rocks and cliffs and has no resemblance at all to a woman, mourning or
otherwise; but as you get further away you think you see (δόξεις ὁ ἄρω) a woman in tears, her head downcast.

Like her brother Pelops, Niobe left Lydia for Greece. She married Amphion, a founder of Thebes. Her children were killed at Thebes, and their tomb was a feature of Theban topography.¹² But she operated likewise as a commonplace: she stands as the paradigm of an eternally mourning parent in Iliad 24 where Achilles invokes her to console Priam and to encourage him to eat. In the logic of the epic, she is a prefiguring commentary on the laments offered over Hector’s body: the ritualistic performance of intense grief may be time-bound, but the sense of loss will never entirely subside. Even ‘now’ Niobe grieves, Achilles says: ‘somewhere amongst the stones, amongst the sheep-roamed peaks on Sipylos . . . she lives still in stone and nurses the pains of the gods’ (24.614–17). In the logic of the Periegesis, this ‘now’ has striking valence.¹³ Ignoring Niobe’s role as a marker of emotional resolution, Pausanias the Lydian takes from the Iliadic passage just its mythical data: Niobe, made childless at Thebes, somehow wandered homewards to Lydia. No less than Homer vouchsafes this surprising idea.

Homer’s panhellenic prestige made his epics a crucial aspect of what I call the supportive infrastructures of Imperial storytelling.¹⁴ The cultural clout of the Iliad ensured both that the story of Niobe would belong to all the Greeks, and that her stone form would be localized only on the slopes of Mt Sipylos. (Thus, when Antigone, another Theban woman bereft of family, invokes Niobe’s example, she likewise describes her petrified form there: Soph. Ant. 823–33.) Iliadic codification ensures, in essence, both the cultural prominence of the story, and the singular fame of the Lydian relic. Greek myths existed in many forms. The mimetic scene on the Acropolis that triggers Pausanias’ comment attests the ubiquity, even the banality, of reminders not to transgress the gods’ privileges. Any number of mythical figures—Actaion, or Marsyas, or Cassiopeia—might convey the same message. At Mt Sipylos a suggestive rock formation provided another kind of infrastructure—an anchor for the story in the landscape. There, by contrast, the story has very specific dimensions; this landmark can be investigated in

¹² The tomb of the Niobids at Thebes is mentioned by Eur. Phoen. 159–60 (although, as Berman (2007b) 102–3 notes, we cannot be sure that this is not a poetic fabrication), and Paus. 9.16.7. For discussion of references to the tomb—and pyres—see Fowler (2013) 366–7.

¹³ For the possibility of reading the ‘now’ (νῦν) of Il. 24.614 as a reference to the (Iliadic) audience’s present, see Taplin (2002).

¹⁴ See pp. 154–63.
the round; as Pausanias notes, context matters, for the same person looking
at the rockface from different places will see (or, think they see . . . ) very
different sights. Mythic relics are concrete survivals in the present, but
nothing is nonetheless certain. All three sights—the image of the slaughter
of the Niobids on the Acropolis, the tearful Niobe on Mt Sipylos, and the
recognition that Homer’s famous passage just describes a normal rock—
embrace equally an experience of myth on the ground. Mythical know-
ledge is comparative, always unfolding and shifting in relation to what is
seen and new thoughts arising. Offering up his titbit of autopsy on the
Acropolis, Pausanias is the sceptical traveller, shining new light on
entrenched traditions. Then ‘later’, in Arcadia, when he argues that the
present is a denuded epoch quite unlike the deep past when mortals lived
side-by-side with gods and even joined them after death, he finds a different
significance in that rocky outcrop. Certainly Niobe was transformed into
stone back then as the story tells, he argues; but metamorphosis is no longer
part of the credible fabric of reality: no rock on Mt Sipylos actually still now
weeps tears—that is just a fabulous addition (8.2.5, 7).

Who Pausanias is is inextricable from where he came from. His Periegesis
reflects something of his experience of encountering in the foreign land-
scapes of the mainland his familiar cultural patrimony. The Lydian obser-
vations reflect more than simple local pride: comparison of one site to
another, enquiry into the reality of things, and a habitual expectation of
chauvinistic bias are part and parcel of how Pausanias makes sense of the
world around him. To ask, ‘Who is Pausanias?’ is to seek more than the
barely reconstructable biography of a minor Second Sophistic author; it is to
take into our reading of Pausanias’ myths a particular nexus of affinities and
localisms, habits and interests which animate them. Yet ‘Pausanias’ is not
merely the author of the text, it is also the authority: the name has become
conflated with the Periegesis itself. When we say ‘Pausanias says . . . ’ we
speak of both the man and his work, both the narrator and the narrative,
speaking to us.¹⁵ What, we might then ask, is Pausanias? This is a weightier

¹⁵ Hutton (2005a) 27 makes a similar observation, on the invocation of the text as if it
recorded the particular experience of its author. So, on the example of Wycherley’s formulation
‘Pausanias entered at the northwest corner [of the Athenian agora]: ‘It is convenient and almost
irresistible to talk about Pausanias’ text in this way as a shorthand for what would otherwise
have to be expressed in a much more cumbersome fashion: “Pausanias chooses to begin his
description of the Agora from the point of view of someone entering it from the northwest . . . ”
As long as one is aware that this is a conceit, it is a rather harmless one. The problem comes
when the conceit is taken seriously; erroneous readings of the text frequently result.’
question: What is this text, how does it function, and what can it allow us to know? What is it a guide to?

Although undoubtedly the product of personal on-site researches, the Periegesis does not describe a particular journey. Pausanias peppers his account with personal observations, but the centralizing structure is a linear narrative organized by ideal itineraries. Amongst extant ancient literature, the Periegesis seems sui generis; yet parallels and precedents for it can be traced.¹

What distinguishes Pausanias’ work—and presumably ensured its survival—is its scope: it is dedicated not to a single city or sanctuary or region, but to a broad swathe of the southern and central Greek mainland, and it covers each element of this expanse in quite fine-grained detail. Pausanias says very little about his aims. There is no formal prologue, and those statements often held up as programmatic are in fact geared to quite specific circumstances within the narrative. Of course, even when we are aware of the contextual nature of such pronouncements, adopting Pausanias’ own expressions, like desiring to cover panta ta hellenika (‘all Greek things’), and to cover logoi (‘stories’) and theoremata (‘sights’) in tandem, makes for an attractive heuristic.¹⁷

Most crucial to this study is the principal literary debt that Pausanias himself signals: to Herodotus.¹⁸ The vocabulary and syntax of the Periegesis recall the Histories;¹⁹ moreover, Pausanias emulates some of the

¹ I will have little to say in this book about the literary context for Pausanias’ topographic genre. The most obvious extant analogies are Herodotus’ account of Egypt, Strabo’s Geography (after the first two books) and the verse Periegesis of Dionysios. For Pausanias’ relationship to ancient periegetical texts, see Hutton (2005a) 247–63; Akujärvi (2012) 42–5; for the quite different presentation of politized space in Pausanias and Dionysios, see Whitmarsh (2015).

I tend to agree with Dan et al. (2014) that being overly concerned with identifying genre specificities can be a distraction: ‘the discussion about ancient spatial and geographic knowledge and thinking must be distinguished from discussion about genres. We posit that “Definition (sic) games” such as distinguishing between periploi/periegeseis/peridoi, although widely used in recent publications, are beside the point as these terms were never consistently defined or used in ancient and Byzantine sources’ (22) ‘Of course, one may speak of a ”periplographic order” or an ”itinerary order” versus a ”chorographic look” at the world when describing ancient texts and tabulae. We hold that for their original authors, they were only narrative choices (never genres) because we cannot identify ancient chronology or classification regarding the invention and use of these forms’ (24).

¹⁷ The full passages are: ‘I must press on with my account since I intend to cover all Greek things equally’ (δεί δέ με ἀφικέσθαι τοῦ λόγου πρόσω, πάντα ἁμοιως ἐπεξώντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά, 1.26.4, on which see p. 121); and ‘these, in my opinion, were the Athenian sights and stories most worthy of being noted…’ (τοσα τὰ κατὰ γνώμην τὴν ἑμῶν Ἀθηναίων γνωριμώτατα ἢν ἐν τε λόγοις καὶ θεωρήμασιν, 1.39.3).

¹⁸ This paragraph summarizes observations from Hawes (2015), which provides fuller discussion and bibliography on Herodotus’ influence in the Periegesis.

Halicarnassian’s memorable tags. He ruminates, for example, on how fate causes cities to rise and fall in turn, making some shrink while others thrive (Paus. 8.33.1; cf. Hdt. 1.5.3);²⁰ he offers caveats about reporting material that he does not necessarily believe (e.g. Paus. 2.17.4, 6.3.8; cf. Hdt. 2.123.1, 7.152.3);²¹ and maintains ‘ritual silence’ in refusing to disclose sacred knowledge to the uninitiated (e.g. Paus. 1.37.4, cf. Hdt. 3.51.2).²² Herodotus’ influence is not really reducible to catalogues of intertextual echoes, suggestive of a learned, superficial patina; it is more fundamental than that. Mauro Moggi describes the Herodotean tradition as ‘l’intelaiatura, il reticolo di base’ (‘the framework, the fundamental grid’)²³ of Pausanias’ narrative style, and this better captures the relationship: Herodotus provides a model for conveying the experiences of travel, for asserting its privileges in the gathering of knowledge. More than this, he gives Pausanias a way of converting the world into words, and with this ‘framework’ comes a specific perspective. Cicero describes the Histories as full of ‘stories’ (fabulae), an obvious observation and one that Cicero clearly intends as a black mark against the ‘father of history’ (De Leg. 1.5): Herodotus are the wrong kind of stories; he is insufficiently scrupulous. The world that emerges from the early books of the Histories in particular is chaotic and polyvocal. Stories are the currency of knowledge, but their forms are malleable and their veracity endlessly disputable. Competitive storytelling is habitual practice and Herodotus models by giving space to epichoric informants, each speaking to defend its own advantage. So, the Histories opens with Herodotus matching up and pitting against each other rationalized accounts of the abductions of Io, Europa, Medea, and Helen, attributed in turn to ‘Phoenicians’, ‘Persians’, and ‘Greeks’ (1.1–5). It is futile to speculate on the strict truthfulness of such attributions; their pragmatic efficacy is what matters.²⁴ They cumulatively replicate something of a loquacious environment in which subjectivity, disagreement, and accommodation are simply expected. Yet this is an artful loquacity, staged by the author to communicate his own agenda: each source responds to the previous in neatly dovetailed passages. This is a decentralized, dialogic ethnography in which many communities seem to jostle for the historian’s attention. The proliferation of stories about the past reveals not just ever-present communal divisions, but the constant necessity of sifting through information and weighing biases, truthfulness, and fabrication.

²⁰ I discuss this pair of passages in pp. 163–5.
²¹ For further examples, see Hutton (2005a) 192–4.
Pausanias borrows from Herodotus the model of the ‘investigative storyteller’, a figure who recognizes the inability of the human intellect to achieve perfect knowledge in a world where everyone has his own version of events and yet—almost paradoxically—stands as a reminder of the value of nonetheless making an attempt.²⁵

Determining the original uses of the Periegesis is difficult given its patchy reading history in antiquity. Echoes of Pausanias’ language have been recognized in a number of late-second-century and third-century authors, but little can be extrapolated from these.²⁶ The only direct reference to it—in Aelian’s Historical Miscellany 12.61—is likely a later interpolation. Speculation as to the Periegesis’ intended readership has focused on the implied location of the reader: was it to be read by tourists on site, or by armchair travellers? Without conclusive evidence either way, opinion remains not so much divided, as undecided.²⁷ Whereas the question of

²⁵ For this as a central theme of the Histories, see Baragwanath and de Bakker (2012) 26–7.
²⁶ These are: Athenagoras, Leg. 17 (cf. Paus. 1.26.4); Snodgrass (2003); Athenaeus 13.588c–d, 589a–b (cf. Paus. 2.2.4); Hutton (2005) 254 n.49; Longos, Daphnis and Chloe 2.25.3–29.3 (cf. Paus. 10.23.1–7); Bowie (2001) 30–1; Philostr. V A 6.10–11 (cf. Paus. 10.5.9–13); Dickie (1997); Poll. Onom. 7.37 (cf. Paus. 5.14.5); Hanell (1938). Rusten (2004) 152–8 discusses the suggestive parallel between Philostr. Her. 8.14 and Paus. 1.35.8 (on the bones of Hylos) and concludes that we should be willing to entertain the idea that Philostratos’ source was the Periegesis ‘if Pausanias’ work could in fact be proved to be circulating’.
²⁷ Frazer (1898) I: xxiv assumes that the Periegesis was a guide to ‘help [readers] find their way from one object of interest to another’ since, given its overwhelming concern with topographical directions, ‘The ordinary reader is more likely to yawn…and shut up the book.’ Few recent discussions have been as categoric; most prefer rather to suggest a dual purpose. Habicht (1985) suggests that the work in fact fails because Pausanias wanted to ‘kill two birds with one stone’ (21): ‘The [topographical] organization of his book makes patent his intention: the book was meant to be a guide for travellers who he hoped would follow the same route from point to point’ (20) but the long digressions on history and mythology show that ‘Pausanias wanted his book to be read at home for pleasure and edification’ (21); this ‘ambivalence of purpose’ (22) meant that the work never found an audience. Bowie (2001) 32, stressing that we cannot know where the text was read, points out that both readerships imagined by Habicht consist of the same educated elites. Hutton (2005a) esp. 242–7 agrees that the text could be used by travellers, but argues that it is the characterization as merely a travel guide which is misplaced since this suggests too utilitarian a function. The major objection to the use of the text as an on-site guide was the practical limitations of locating particular information within ten unwieldy book-rolls (Casson (1974) 263–4; Habicht (1985) 22; Anderson’s discussion in Chamoux (1996) 73); this line of reasoning has been dismissed more recently: Arafat (1996) 33; Bowie (2001) 32; Elsner (2001) 16; Hutton (2005a) 245; Pretzler (2007) 40–1. There is little secure evidence for ancient travellers using texts as guides in general. My own discussion (esp. in Chapter 1) seeks to get beyond these kinds of issues. Likewise, Platt (2011) 223: ‘the Periegesis offers a reflection of the Hellenic sacred landscape that purports to cross the ekphrastic barrier and facilitate the reader’s own experience of théoria; yet…the text offers a dematerialized vision of this world, a form of phantasia that can be clearly apprehended only through full initiation and active pilgrimage. Pausanias generally leaves it open as to whether this can be achieved through the acquisition of religious memory by means of literary sophia, or by literally retracing
who read Pausanias in antiquity cannot be adequately resolved, I argue in Chapter 1 that this question of where the reader stands, of what she sees and what she knows, is integral to understanding how the text functions. In essence, different potential readers experience the text in different ways.

What we can speak to with more certainty is its uses in more recent times.² The Periegesis is an invaluable documentary resource for ancient culture. Its utility for archaeologists and art historians hardly needs reiteration. But running parallel to this is its use as a de facto mythography, a reservoir of obscure local traditions and unusual variants. In this role, it balances precariously between being understood as having the comprehensiveness of an antiquarian resource and displaying the idiosyncrasies of an account constructed out of personal observation and selectivity. Pausanias’ idiomatic approach might be said to be mirrored by those who have used the Periegesis as a guide to Greek myths; it is obvious (yet no less observably true for that) that what—and who—Pausanias becomes is shaped in no small way by what needs illustrating. At issue is a basic question of what this text conveys: is it the singular work of an idiosyncratic author, or a work deeply resonant of its time and broadly representative of its culture? This framing is, of course, a false opposition. No author can step outside of his culture any more than a culture can produce a text of its own accord. What the formulation does is focus our minds on the assumptions at play when we turn the pages of ‘our’ Pausanias.

The first mythographical Pausanias we notice is the Frazerian one. In Pausanias James Frazer found a bridge between his twin interests in the anthropology of religion and classical antiquity; in Frazer Pausanias found his match, a man similarly given to expansive collation and digressive curiosity.² Frazer saw in Pausanias a prototype for the broad-minded anthropologist; championing the text was a way of championing an

his steps and encountering the physical Realien and the supernatural inhabitants of Greece itself.²⁸ Studies in the Nachleben of the Periegesis in recent centuries can be found in the final section of Alcock et al. (2001); Georgopoulou et al. (2007); and volume 2 of the Classical Receptions Journal (2010), with Elsner’s useful introduction.

²⁹ Ackerman (1987) 127: ‘Pausanias and Frazer were made for one another. Both were erudite, both tend to the encyclopedic, the curious and out-of-the-way, and the digressive. Both have an abiding and complex interest in religion. Both are essentially commentators, whose talent requires for its fullest expression a large body of material to describe and a large canvas on which to work; both tend to be impressive in the mass as well as in the detail.’ For discussion of the rhetorical effect of Frazer’s reliance on the presentation of massed examples, rather than precise theoretical models, see Manganaro (1992) 23–5. Comparison of Frazer and Pausanias as commentators on ancient Greece is the structural conceit of MacCormack (2010).
approach to the ancient world at odds with the purely philological.³⁰ In identifying Pausanias’ pervading interests as primarily antiquarian and religious, Frazer was naming his own.³¹ He presents the Periegesis as a ‘plain, unvarnished account’.³² Its trustworthiness is predicated on the sharp observations but dull intellect of its author, an ‘honest, laborious, plodding man of plain good sense, without either genius or imagination’:³³

his work is [ . . . ] the dry bones of knowledge unquickened by the breath of imagination. Yet his defects have their compensating advantages. If he lacked imagination he was the less likely to yield to that temptation of distorting and discolouring the facts to which men of bright fancy are peculiarly exposed, of whom it has been well said that they are like the angels who veil their faces with their wings.³⁴

By treating Pausanias as a dependable observer, Frazer made the Periegesis a diaphanous window on antiquity untinted by ideological bias.³⁵ Indeed, he describes Pausanias as unremarkable in his ethical and religious beliefs against the general tenor of Imperial Greece.³⁶ What Frazer did with Pausanias’ Greece was, however, quite unprecedented: he set Greek culture up not as the prime example of enlightened civilization, but as analogous to

³⁰ So, Ackerman (1987) 133–6 holds up Frazer’s arguments for Pausanias’ utility in the face of Wilamowitz’ hostility as embodying a broader disciplinary conflict over the nature of Classics at the time.
³¹ Frazer (1898) I: xxv: ‘When we come to examine the substance of the book we quickly perceive that his interests were mainly antiquarian and religious, and that though he professes to describe the whole of Greece or, more literally, all things Greek, what he does describe is little more than the antiquities of the country and the religious traditions and ritual of the people.’
³² Frazer (1898) I: xiii.
³³ Frazer (1898) I: lxix.
³⁴ Frazer (1898) I: xlix.
³⁵ The temptation to extend this observation to Frazer is likewise strong. Despite his copious writings on myth and religion, he offered little by way of coherent theoretical models for either beyond a broad methodological commitment to cross-cultural comparison. (For his place amongst late Victorian theorists of myth, see Connor (1990).) It is notable that he shows little interest in the nature of Pausanias’ mythic knowledge beyond generalized comments which fall back on a popular taxonomy of the time: ‘In carrying out his design of recording Greek traditions, Pausanias has interwoven many narratives into his description of Greece. These are of various sorts, and were doubtless derived from various sources. Some are historical, and were taken avowedly or tacitly from books. Some are legends with perhaps a foundation in fact; others are myths pure and simple; others again are popular tales to which parallels may be found in the folk-lore of many lands. Narratives of these sorts Pausanias need not have learned from books. Some were doubtless commonplace with which he had been familiar from childhood. Others he may have picked up on his travels’ (xxvii). Frazer does, however, discuss passages of rationalistic and allegorical interpretation as indicative of Pausanias’ attitudes to myth (Frazer (1898) I: lv–lx).
³⁶ Frazer (1898) I: 1–lv.