

NATURAL NARRATOLOGY AND THE ORAL STRUCTURE  
OF NARRATIVE GENRES IN ANCIENT GREECE

by

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*...both oral and written forms of discourse are  
coequal, structurally determined symbolic media  
which operate within specific generic, cultural  
and contextual frames*

(FLUDERNIK 1996: 15)

ABSTRACT: Monika FLUDERNIK's model of natural narratology implies a new understanding of 'narrativity' and 'experientiality', and provides a paradigm for structuring different modes of speech on the basis of cognitive frames of reading (FLUDERNIK 1996: XI). Having prepared the scheme, she gives a thorough analysis of discourses that in the past received little attention, such as oral or pseudo-oral types of storytelling. Thus, FLUDERNIK concentrates her effort on scrutinising literature, especially as a *species* of language usage (as a personal or vicarious type of storytelling). This model applies particularly well to the narrative genres of ancient Greece as it allows us to view epic and early literary writings (RYAN 1998) in new light with regard to their structure (i.e. episodic structure), purposes (i.e. public performance) and recipients (i.e. audience). This paper will address some of the above issues as exemplified by the Homeric epic and literary writings of Herodotus of Halicarnassus. In the course of the presentation the episodic structure of the *Iliad* will be recalled and denoted using cognitive parameters, which could contribute to understanding of the poetic strategy of reception. Also, the experiential model of narrative in Herodotus' *Histories* will be shown to prove the prose writer's stratagem of 'naturalness' in front of an audience largely familiar with the long existence of oral storytelling which could be poetic as well as prosaic.

## INTRODUCTION

The *Iliad* by Homer has often been claimed to be the epic which is most often read in the history of European literature. This widespread opinion is undoubtedly confirmed by the amount of ink that has been used writing about its plot and characters, not to mention the structure of the work itself, which gives rise to complicated questions concerning the tradition, memory and orality of the archaic epic. In this context, another paper dealing with this topic may seem