



Educating Croesus: Talking and Learning in Herodotus' Lydian Logos

Two themes, the elusiveness of wisdom and the distortion of speech, are traced through three important scenes of Herodotus' Lydian *logos*, the meeting of Solon and Croesus (1.29–33), the scene where Cyrus places Croesus on the pyre (1.86–90), and the advice of Croesus to Cyrus to cross the river and fight the Massagetae in their own territory (1.207). The paper discusses whether Solon is speaking indirectly at 1.29–33, unable to talk straight to Croesus about his transgressive behavior: if so, that illuminates the dynamics of speech at a court. At 1.86–90 Croesus may not have fully understood what Solon earlier said to him. Cyrus may understand Croesus' report of Solon's words better than Croesus does himself. Herodotus' readers will also be uncertain what the response of Delphi will be to Croesus' indignant questioning: if a reader has failed to grasp the significance of Gyges' transgression five generations earlier, that reenacts the forgetfulness of figures in the text. At 1.207 Croesus' advice to Cyrus is of questionable wisdom: Croesus too cannot speak directly, and he has anyway learned the wrong lesson from his catastrophe, extrapolating too directly from his own experience. The conclusion suggests some reasons why Herodotus should have chosen to begin his *History* with Lydia, the kingdom that is on the cusp between East and West, and with Croesus, a figure that resists description in the easy formulations of Greek/barbarian discourse.

This paper will be concerned with readings of three of the most famous passages in Herodotus: the meeting of Solon and Croesus, when Solon advises the king to “look to the end” in everything (1.29–33); the scene of Croesus on the pyre, when Cyrus decides to save him at the last minute and Apollo douses the flames with a shower of rain (1.86–90); and the advice Croesus gives to Cyrus at 1.207, telling him to cross the river and fight the Massagetae within their own territory. Various wider themes will, I hope, come out of these readings, two in particular. First, the *elusiveness of wisdom* in this book where so much

For acknowledgements, see p. 174.

wisdom is on show,¹ the way in which learning from experience is seen to be a very delicate business. I am hardly the first to stress this theme; indeed, for some of the way I shall be following Stahl,² though with some different twists; and Dewald has several times explored the ways that “genuine knowledge in the *Histories* is portrayed as hard to come by,” along with the implications for Herodotus’ own historical project.³ But the point is particularly pertinent now that so many powerful scholars find Herodotus pointing morals for his contemporary world.⁴ Those arguments may look less cogent if wisdom is as elusive as I shall be suggesting, for—then as now—you do need to know what history’s lesson is before you start trying to apply it. My second point will be the *distortion of discourse*, the way in which *logos* itself is so often perverted or off-key, particularly at an autocratic court where no one dares to be frank. Talking straight and thinking straight are both very hard things to do. These two themes will in turn illuminate why Herodotus starts, not with Persia or with Greece, but with Croesus and Lydia, that king and that country which are on the cusp between East and West. These episodes will indeed look both ways, and later have relevance not just for Persia but also for Greece.

SOLON AND CROESUS

It is hard to doubt the importance of this scene. For the first time in the History, Herodotus’ language reaches the heights.⁵ The scene is recalled explicitly by

1. Whether or not any canon of “the seven sages” yet existed, it will not be coincidence that so many of those wise men crop up in Herodotus’ first hundred chapters, not just Solon but also Periander (20, 23), Bias/Pittacus (27), Chilon (59), and Thales (74–45), in each case “performing wisdom” in the way Martin 1993 identified as distinctive of sage-behavior. Cf. also Benardete 1969: 17–19 and Asheri on 1.27.1.

2. Stahl 1975: this general standpoint is shared by e.g. Lateiner 1989: 221–22 and Munson 2001: 266.

3. See esp. Dewald 1985, 1993, 1997, and in Waterfield and Dewald 1998: xxxiv–xxxv. The quotation is from Dewald 1997: 80.

4. Particularly Moles 1996; Raab 1987, 1989, and 2002. Much of the groundwork for this approach was laid by Fornara 1971. I too find an interaction between Herodotus’ text and his audience’s contemporary experience, but prefer to see the present affecting the audience’s reading of the past as much as, or more than, the text pointing morals from the past to affect attitudes to the present. I return to this point in the closing sentences of this paper and I develop this approach a little, but only a little, in Pelling 1997.

5. Cf. Regenbogen 1930: 113–15 = Marg 1962: 389–91. Notice Croesus’ ἕμερος to interrogate Solon (1.30.2): the word recurs in suggestive autocratic contexts (5.106.5, 7.43.1, 44), and is particularly used of “desire for land” (1.73.1, 6.137.2, 9.3.1); Croesus’ “desire” is for Greek learning, and is a typically off-key introduction of a tyrannical theme. Then πᾶν ἐστὶ ἄνθρωπος συμφορῆ: the adverbial use of πᾶν is striking (here only in Herodotus), still more so the boldness of equating ἄνθρωπος and συμφορῆ (below, p. 145). The poetic αἶων (1.32.5) is elevated in prose; it recurs in heightened language at 3.40.2 and 7.46.4, both echoes of Solon, then 9.17.4, 27.2. The intensifying prefix ζα- (ζάπλοιοι, 1.32.5), again poetic, recurs in Herodotus only in the oracle at 7.141.3. ἄτην, 1.32.6 *bis*, with all its epic suggestions, does not recur, though it is echoed by the name of the ill-fortuned Atys. On the euphonic and powerful rhythm of 1.32.6, ἄπηρος δέ ἐστι, ἄνουσος,

Croesus on his funeral pyre (1.86), and implicitly for Herodotus' readers in several later exchanges, most clearly in Polycrates' conversation with Amasis (3.40–41) and by Artabanus as the final, decisive movement of the *Histories* begins (7.46, cf. 49). It comes to serve as a point of reference for the later narrative in something of the same way as Pericles' Funeral Speech in Thucydides: here a universal insight, there a civic vision, which the subsequent narrative tests, explores, renews. These remarks certainly do not represent Herodotus' last words on human experience, but they are prominent among his first, and provide the benchmark against which we measure much of the subsequent narrative.⁶

Nor does it reduce the significance of the passage to observe that much of Solon's moralizing is conventional Greek wisdom, a series of proverbs which are thrown at experience and may not always match up to its complexities.⁷ Proverbs after all can be most useful in rendering experience intelligible: in Homer, most obviously in *Iliad* 24, such traditional wisdom carries a strong

ἀπαθῆς κακῶν, εὖπαις, εὖειδής, cf. Denniston 1952: 6–7; for the triple α-privative cf. *Il.* 9.63, 24.157 (with Hainsworth's and Richardson's nn.), and Fraenkel on Aesch. Ag. 412. οὗτος ἐχεῖνος (1.32.7) sounds almost colloquial and, like the τὸν σὺ ζητέεις which follows, reflects the intimacy that permeates the heightened generalities. That is also reflected in the address Κροῖσε at 1.32.1 (until then he has used the formal "O king": see n. 21 below); Croesus' own irritated and forceful ἀπέρριπται ἐς τὸ μηδέν (1.32.1, cf. 9.79.1) also has a hint of the colloquial. εὐχαρίστως (1.32.9) is ἄπαξ λεγόμενον in Herodotus; προρρίζους (1.32.9) recurs in the echo at 3.40.3, elsewhere only at the climax of Leutychidas' speech at 6.86δ.

6. There has been some discussion of the question whether Herodotus "agrees with" Solon. Lang 1984: 61, followed e.g. by Gould 1989: 80 and Kurke 1999: 148 and n.52, thought there was insufficient reason to assume this: we ought to "respect the gap between the history and his characters" (Kurke). So already Hellmann 1934: 38, 43–45, who makes Herodotus agree about human vulnerability but allows his narrative to suggest more overarching explanations than divine jealousy; Miller 1963: 90. In a careful discussion Shapiro 1996 shows that the narrative of the *Histories* frequently gives support for one strand or another in Solon's moralizing; so does Harrison 2000: 31–63. It is perhaps clearer that Herodotus "agrees with" Solon's *agenda*, that Solon's moral questions and perspectives are good ones. Cf. De Lamer 1933: 55: "Wohl nirgends in der Geschichte wurde die trübe Weisheit von der Vergänglichkeit aller irdischen Grösse, und mag sie auch noch so fest gegründet scheinen, auf allender bewiesen als durch den Untergang des Kroisos. Selbstgenügsamkeit, Verblendung, Überhebung, alles war in ihm vereinigt, alles verlangt nach einer Sichtbarmachung, nach einer Antwort, nach einer Lösung, und da findet Herodot diesen wunderbaren Ausdruck der Mitteilung, der Aufdeckung und Klarlegung dieser Probleme, die für ihn in dem θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν (32) ihre Erklärung finden." De Lamer's point about the limits of understanding and the search for a solution is well taken; one may doubt whether divine envy is so total an "elucidation" without rejecting the first part of that elegant and eloquent formulation. Fisher 2002: 201 also puts it well: "The conversation establishes a number of basic *values* which *resonate* powerfully through the rest of the work" (my italics).

7. Cf. Gould 1989: 81–82. Against Gould see also Shapiro 2000, who is particularly interesting on the way in which apparently contradictory proverbs can provide productive interpretative suggestions. On the proverbial quality of Gyges' utterances see Laird 2001: 15–16, who sees a comparison with the conventional wisdom of Cephalus and Polemarchus at the beginning of the *Republic*. If that is right, the comparison suggests a further point, for in Plato too Cephalus and Polemarchus say things which are true, but true in ways very different from their own understanding. Cf. n.14 below, and Pelling 2002: 154, again comparing this technique of Plato with that of Herodotus. Elton Barker suggests to me that Herodotus' narrative could be seen to be *in competition with* proverbs,

explanatory force, “locating” specific experience within a general frame that renders it less perplexing.⁸ And in Herodotus’ own narrative we have already seen one scene in which proverbs work very suggestively, the scene of Gyges and Candaules, where the theme of tyrannical transgressive sexuality is so beautifully introduced by—the man who falls for his own wife. So much of the conversation there turns on three proverbs. One point of that is immediately to bring out the uneasy nature of court conversation: a despot is a hard person to talk with, and the best either Gyges or Candaules can do is to appeal to the nostrums of traditional wisdom. But there is more to it, for in each case the proverb turns out to have a very suggestive and unexpected application.⁹ “Together with her clothes a woman casts off her shame,” says Gyges (1.8.3).¹⁰ The precise relevance of the proverb to the present case is a little blurred,¹¹ but it anyway turns out to be utterly inadequate, for it is precisely the Queen’s “shame”—not at all cast off, but as strong as ever in her nakedness—which drives her to respond so decisively.¹² “Eyes are more trustworthy than ears,” says Candaules (1.8.2), again mouthing a proverb:¹³ this one turns out true, but once more in a way that Candaules did not expect, for it is the Queen’s eyes that become the crucial element, the eyes which glimpse Gyges as he steals away. “Each man should look to his own” (or “to his own

showing how contextualisation and further reflection makes them suggest a very different sort of truth; the same could be said of Plato.

8. Modern historiography (I hope one day in book form) has drifted into privileging one particular form of “rendering events intelligible,” that of tracing them back to origins and causes. Ancient historiography often (of course not always) prefers the suggestion that “this is the sort of thing that happens,” human experience is like that, and no specially elaborate origin-explanation is needed, even if frequently one may be given. Proverbs form the quintessential life-is-like-that explanation.

9. So also Shapiro 2000: 98, though she finds different turns of meaning from the ones I suggest here.

10. For the proverbial background cf. esp. Diog. Laert. 8.43, Theano’s apophthegma (“as she goes to her husband, a woman should cast off her sense of shame (αἰσχύνῃ) along with her clothes . . .”); Barth 1968: 288–91 is probably right to take both Herodotus and Diogenes Laertius as reflecting a proverb, rather than Herodotus as alluding to “Theano” (so Raubitschek 1957: 139–40). On the proverb’s meaning and relevance, see Cairns 1996a: “having abandoned her χιτῶν, a sign of her αἰδώς *qua* virtuous sense of shame, the woman has abandoned her claim to αἰδώς in the eyes of others—she no longer participates in the system by which her respect of convention is rewarded by the respect of her society” (p. 82). Plutarch objected strongly, *Advice on Married Life* 139c: “Herodotus was wrong to say that a woman puts off her shame along with her *chiton*; on the contrary the respectable woman puts on shame to replace her *chiton* . . .”; but that, perhaps, was the whole point of Herodotus’ narrative.

11. Thus Harder 1953 preferred to interpret Gyges’ remark as “along with her clothes, a woman is stripped of the honor which is due to her”; but the various parallel passages which he quotes, including the “Theano” passage, tell strongly against this.

12. Stahl 1968: 392 observes this unexpected significance of the αἰδώς remark; cf. also Konstan 1983: 12.

13. *Corp. paroem. gr.* ii.744, ὧτων (or ὠτίων) πιστότεροι ὀφθαλμοί; Heraclitus fr. 101a DK. Cf. Otto 1890: 251, citing Sen. *Ep.* 6.5, Hor. *Ars P.* 180, Jerome *Ep.* 60.10, Cic. *de Or.* 3.40, Sen. *Q.N.* 4.3.1, Apost. 18.71, and Lucian *Salt.* 78; Pfeiffer on Call. fr. 282, Walbank on Polyb. 12.27.1, Raubitschek 1957, and Graziosi 2002: 140.

interest”), says Gyges (1.8.4), in the same proverbial vein;¹⁴ and indeed he will do precisely that, but not in the sense that he is commending to Candaules: when the Queen confronts him with the choice of death or usurpation, “he chose to survive” (1.11.4). All of these proverbs take an unexpected turn, in each case because the Queen is revealed as so decisive; if there is truth and insight in what people say, it turns out to be in unexpected ways. Both points—the uneasy conversational dynamics, the way in which it only subsequently emerges *how* the proverbial wisdom is true—are again relevant to Solon.

It also interacts with the preceding text, most importantly the proem. As several scholars have urged, we should surely relate Solon’s moralizing to Herodotus’ own programmatic words at 1.5.3–4,¹⁵ with their roistering echo of the proem to the *Odyssey*:¹⁶

I am not proceeding with any intention to say that these things happened in this way or any other way; I shall indicate the man who I myself know began unjust deeds against the Greeks, and then go forward to the rest of my narrative, moving through cities of humans, small and big alike. For those that were big long ago have for the most part become small; and those that were big in my own day were small in the past. I therefore know that human prosperity is always unstable, and I will mention both sorts equally.

1.5.3–4

The first sentence of the work had also linked the *ἱστορίη*, the inquiring, and the *ἀποδείξις*, the exposition; here the gathering of information and the presentation are even more smoothly connected, because the description of his presentation is already couched in metaphors of physical movement, words that more naturally fit the travels. “I am not proceeding . . . I shall then go forward . . . moving through cities of humans. . . .” As in the familiar “path of song,” he will now move through the cities in his exposition, just as before he moved through them in his travels: the two activities are intimately connected.

It is the *nature* of this connection that might come as a surprise. A fifth-century audience would have known Hecataeus and were (surely) also used to the works that we call local “histories,” but which presumably ranged more widely over all sorts of interesting material about a locality.¹⁷ Now that Herodotus was

14. Also attributed to Pittacus of Mytilene by Σ Aesch. *Prom.* 887: cf. Call. *Epig.* 1, Diog. Laert. 1.79–80. For the proverb cf. Critias fr. 41a DK; Raubitschek 1958: 170–72, bringing out how it lies behind Plato’s τὰ ἐαυτοῦ πράττειν; Pfeiffer on Call. *Epig.* 1; Griffith on Aesch. *Prom.* 890.

15. “Solon . . . appears in Herodotus’ narrative as a kind of alter ego of the narrator himself,” Redfield 1985: 102. For other versions of this idea cf. Bischoff 1932: 39, Hellmann 1934: 38, Benardete 1969: 16, Drexler 1972: 25–28, Dewald 1985: 60, and esp. Moles 1996: 259–84. Stahl 1975: 5, 7 goes so far as to describe Solon (misleadingly) as Herodotus’ “spokesman”: on that cf. n.6 above.

16. Cf. Woodman 1988: 2–3; Moles 1993: 92–97; Marincola 1997; Pelling 1999: 332–34.

17. On this local material see Fowler 1996: esp. 62–69.

moving to his grander scale, travel could naturally help with an account of the world's wondrous sights and curiosities. But there is more: Herodotus explains that travel has given him not just exciting things to see and recall, but also an insight into human stability and "prosperity," εὐδαιμονίη. His spatial wanderings have taught him a lesson about temporal change. And that too links with Solon, who had "traveled great distances in the pursuit of wisdom and for contemplation" (1.30.2), and who similarly had learned, and tried to impart, a temporal lesson about human prosperity and vulnerability.¹⁸

Still, there are different ways that this link can be taken. Solon tries to teach Croesus, who learns his lesson too late; how does this affect our sense that Herodotus is trying to teach his own audience about human mutability? If we isolate what is going on in the Solon–Croesus episode, it may cast light on more than the content of the history, the way in which similar patterns of fruitless warners and heedless learners will return, and not only at autocratic courts; it may also illuminate how Herodotus presents the whole enterprise of historiography itself. Will his own audience prove any quicker to learn than Croesus? The easy metatextual inference is that they will, that this text will convey its lesson better, that Herodotus and history can touch spots that even a Solon could not (or could not with a Croesus, at least). But if they can, it will certainly not be easy. Learning from experience, one's own or others', is a most delicate business, and communicating that learning is more difficult still: this scene may also suggest the limitations that attend any project of grasping and communicating insight, the limitations within which Herodotus' own text and readers, no less than his characters, have to operate.¹⁹

One of the difficulties is that of grasping exactly what Solon is saying, for there are several different theses jostling together in Solon's words,²⁰ and they all herald important themes. We already know from Herodotus' own formulation at 1.5.3–4 that human good fortune is transient and mutable, but what sort of reasons can explain why human εὐδαιμονίη might come or depart, and how and why should it be destroyed? We are given a few more hints here, but not all of them go in the same direction. In telling Croesus of Tellus and of Cleobis and Biton (1.30–31), Solon deploys a variety of Greek ideals to set against Croesus' own estimation of himself: values which center on parenthood and children, on a simple sufficiency, on avoiding the disasters which hang over any human, on a good death in the service of one's city (Tellus) or one's family and the gods (Cleobis and Biton), on

18. That temporal element takes Croesus too by surprise. He takes Solon's θεωρεῖν as conducted in the interest of seeing and "contemplating" marvels: Solon is expected to have seen enough of the world to gaze on Croesus' wealth and realize its singularity. Croesus is not expecting Solon's temporal perspective, which might allow him to see that such singularity might yet be subject to universal hazard.

19. For this train of thought cf. again Dewald, works cited in n.3.

20. Cf. Krischer 1964: 176–77, and esp. Gould 1989: 79, though he draws very different conclusions from mine.

the desirability of a long and contented life (Tellus) or—not quite so good—of an early death (Cleobis and Biton). The suggestions of the two stories are not quite the same, but they are linked by the concentration on looking to the end (the name “Tellus” is itself striking) and the perpetual danger that the *opposites* of such happy experiences could strike—the destruction of children, the removal of wealth and sufficiency, the danger of living on (contrast Cleobis and Biton) to risk a bad death (contrast Tellus), with one’s country and family destroyed; all the things, in fact, which will prove to threaten Croesus himself. One needs *lots of things* to get to the end safely: note the gentle correction of Croesus showing Solon πάντα μεγάλα τε καὶ ὄλβια—showing him everything, *great* and *felicitous* as it was—in Solon’s description of Tellus “in *many* terms of felicity,” εἴπας πολλά τε καὶ ὄλβια (1.31.1~30.1). There is more than one way of measuring quantity; one should go for many things in life rather than big things, for so many things can go wrong.

Croesus is bemused, and so Solon explains further. “Croesus,”²¹ he begins, “you ask me about human experience (ἀνθρωπηίων πραγμάτων πέρι), when I know that all the divine is envious and turbulent (τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες)” (32.1). (Notice the movement in the argument here, one that we can often parallel within Herodotus’ own narrative: however much one may rationalize and phrase things in human terms—and human, ἄνθρωπος, keeps recurring in Solon’s words—the divine just *cannot* be excluded.) The seventy years of human life have 26,250 days, he continues, and none of them is the same;²² “thus, Croesus, a human is altogether συμφορά.” The phraseology is remarkably bold. συμφορά is a most expressive word, “chance,” “anything that might come along,” but also more specifically “disaster”; and here humans are not merely vulnerable to συμφορά—a human actually “is” συμφορά, human identity is defined by such contingency.²³ All humans are vulnerable; until a human is dead, one cannot call him “prosperous,” only “lucky,” and it is only a good death

21. Until now he has used the more formal “O king,” ὦ βασιλεῦ (and he will revert to that form at the end, 32.9), just as Croesus has addressed him as “My Athenian guest,” ὦ ξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε. “O king” is the regular mode of address at the court: 1.27.3, 4, 35.3, 36.2, 42.1, 71.2, cf. Ferrill 1978: 388. Croesus duly and expressively adopts it when acknowledging Cyrus as his master, 1.87.3, 88.2, and Cyrus is the next person to address Croesus by name, 1.87.3, 90.1, 3, 155.1. There is some intimacy here, as there is in the σύ of 32.5 and 32.7 (above, n.5; Hellmann 1934: 39 n.1): Solon’s wisdom establishes a stature where he can presume to address Croesus as an equal; and Solon is, or purports to be, talking in terms relevant to all humanity, the humanity they share, and an emphasis on Croesus’ position is less relevant. Dickey 1996: 236–37 notes the surprising informality of Solon’s Κροῖσε, but misses the subtle progression.

22. Boedeker 2003: 25 and n.17 quotes Konstan 1987 for the eastern taste for the quantitative in contrast with the Greek alertness to the qualitative, and thinks that Solon’s rhetoric is therefore well-attuned to Croesus as listener. That is fair, but there are also different *types* of quantitative analysis at play, if that distinction between “many things” and “big things” is sensed.

23. Stein compares τύχη τὰ θνητῶν πράγματα, a phrase of the tragedian Chaeremon (fr. 2 Snell) which was later proverbial: cf. e.g. Men. *Aspis* 411, *Monost.* 725, Cic. *Tusc.* 5.25 (Cicero claims it was a favorite of Theophrastus and subsequently much debated in the philosophical schools), Plut.

which will secure him the higher description. No one human can combine all good things, just as no land bears everything; no human is self-sufficient either. God has given many people wealth, then destroyed them utterly. One must look to the end in everything.

It is hard to know exactly what Solon is saying here;²⁴ several different theses merge, and the account leaves it open which of them will prove the most insightful. For clarity's sake, we can distinguish three positions: it is also important, though, that the audience would *not* initially discriminate them so clearly, and would simply be aware of a blur of different suggestions that partly, but only partly, overlap.²⁵

(1) Life is mutable; anyone's fortune may change.

(2) God is envious of those who come closest to divine prosperity, and turbulent in destroying them.

(3) The most prosperous act or think in particular ways, and those ways contribute to their destruction.

The first is the most general thesis, one that applies to all humanity; all are equally subject to such mutability. It has particular reference to the wealthiest and most powerful only in the sense that they start at the top of Fortune's Wheel and can only swing downwards; their shifts may therefore be the most marked.

The second and third differ from the first in focusing on the rich and powerful; it is now not simply a question of Fortune's universal Wheel, it is rather that these people will be *more* subject to fortune—changes than the mass of humanity. The two theses differ in that the second regards such people purely as passive victims, and—no matter how virtuous they may be—their wealth alone is enough to expose them to vindictive gods;²⁶ the third concentrates on them as active agents, contributing in thought or deed to their own downfall.²⁷ Both views of divine action were familiar ones in the fifth century; several tragedies derive

On *Fortune* 97c, Athen. 15.639a. It may well already have been proverbial before Herodotus and Chaeremon; in which case Herodotus gives it new force and elevation.

24. Munson 2001: 184: "Solon's words are cryptic, and deliver a mixed message." Her discussion of Solon's moralism (pp. 183–85) is very perceptive.

25. Hence I do not wholly disagree here with the trenchant remarks with which Harrison 2000: 39–40 criticizes the drawing of fine distinctions in interpreting Solon's words, though his approach to Herodotus' narrative technique is different from mine. Cairns 1996b: 20–22 has some good remarks on the difficulty of distinguishing "moralized" and "unmoralized" interpretations of divine *phthonos*, given that "excessive pursuit of honor and status" can itself be regarded as a moral failing, even without further transgression against others; but this is not quite the distinction between my (2) or (3), rather between different sorts of act and thought which might fall under (3).

26. Cf. e.g. Pindar *P.* 10.20f., *I.* 7.39, and it seems Aesch. *Pers.* 362: the thesis is arguably more pervasive in the early parts of *Persians* (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 1–15). Denniston and Page (on Aesch. *Ag.* 468f.) show good judgment here.

27. Cf. Pindar *Ol.* 1.55–56, *P.* 2.25–28, Theognis 153f., 229–31, 749–52, Aesch. *Pers.* 739–51, *Ag.* 369–84 and 750–62 (where the chorus oddly claim it to be an unusual view, δ' ἄλλων μονόφρων εἶμι: cf. Denniston and Page and Fraenkel ad loc.), and several passages in Solon's own poems (see nn.37, 39).

dramatic and conceptual capital from playing one view against the other.²⁸ A possible re nement is to combine the two theses: the gods feel envy of the prosperous, make them act in particular transgressive ways, and through these ways they generate their own destruction.²⁹

Herodotus' own language in 1.5.3–4 suggested the first of these theses, the simple "Fortune's Wheel" position; so does much of Solon's argument, in particular the central "no day is the same as any other" section, and the suggestion that it would be "luck" (τύχη), no more, that might preserve someone's prosperity till death (1.32.5). However, some parts rather suggest the second or the third theses, fastening particularly on the fate of the rich and powerful. The opening—all the divine is envious and turbulent—points to the second thesis and is perhaps compatible with the third,³⁰ but not the first: Croesus will himself now be *particularly* vulnerable, precisely because of his prized wealth.³¹ The end too—the analogy with the land, no one country provides every good thing—seems to point towards the second thesis: total, unimpaired prosperity would seem to be as impossible as total self-sufficiency for any land; if one good is present, it will be compensated by the lack of another, sooner or later. Once again, those who seem to have everything are therefore deluded, and they are more likely to suffer a fortune-shift than anyone else.

So far there is not much in Solon's language³² to suggest the third of the theses, the notion that someone like Croesus is not merely particularly vulnerable, but also particularly likely to act or think in a transgressive and self-destructive way.³³ Yet this suggestion may be there too if we look backwards a little in the narrative, for our memories of the "unjust deeds" he began against the Greeks are still fresh, and at 1.26.3 Herodotus had suggested that Croesus had been disingenuous in the

28. Notably *Persians* and *Agamemnon*: see last two notes and next note. If my reading of Herodotus is correct, then Herodotus' own procedure is not very different.

29. This sort of picture may be implied by Aesch. *Pers.* 94 . (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 3–5) and by Ag. 468–74, though the issues are difficult ones.

30. Two of the clearest formulations of divine *phthonos* in the text—that of "Themistocles" at 8.109.3 and of the narrator himself at 4.205—suggest envy aroused by the transgressive actions of those who usurp a divine prerogative, not just by human prosperity. The case of Polycrates (3.40.2) is more complex and disputed: cf. Shapiro 1996. But even if the formulation here is compatible with the third strand, Solon's words do not suggest any reason for taking it in that way rather than the second.

31. Gould 1989: 79 argues that *ταραχῶδες* points to a randomness in divine behavior, and sits uneasily with *φθονερόν*, which suggests a sharper and more predictable targeting. That, I think, misunderstands *ταραχῶδες*, which may denote a capacity to disrupt and confuse (LSJ I) rather than anything confused or unpredictable in the way the capacity is deployed (LSJ II).

32. Unless Munson 2001: 184 is right to find Solon's use of ἄτη and ἐπιθυμία (32.6) suggestive, the first term suggesting "the mental folly of one who has brought the misfortune on oneself as a result of surfeit and transgression," the second "an irrational impulse leading to self-detrimental action, which in the *Histories* is typical of monarchical rulers." If so, the suggestions are extremely oblique; but, then, they would have to be, for Solon is speaking to Croesus and must tread carefully.

33. So Krischer 1964 discriminates and finds both of the first two strands in Solon's reasoning, but does not mention the third.

“grievances” he had put forward; and also if we look forwards, for a version of this idea forms the transition to the next item.

After Solon’s departure a great righteous indignation (νέμεσις) came from God and struck Croesus, presumably (ὥς εἰκόσαι) because he thought himself the most prosperous of all mortals.

1.34.1

Herodotus marks this as his own conjecture (ὥς εἰκόσαι), and it goes some way beyond anything directly suggested by Solon’s words: this is not simply the second, “divine envy” thesis, for such envy would most naturally be evoked not by Croesus’ *perception* of his own felicity, but by the *fact* of a felicity so great that it threatened the boundaries of the divine. Now for the first time we find a suggestion that the rich and prosperous may be seduced by their felicity into thinking (though not here, we should note, in acting) in ways which bring on their own destruction. The audience would hardly find this new thesis a surprising one; it comes so close to traditional views of ὕβρις, the arrogant and transgressive behavior felt to be typical of the rich and powerful. It is disputed whether Croesus’ overconfidence would itself be regarded as ὕβρις.³⁴ But in any case it remains true that such thoughts, insufficiently alert as they are to the boundary between god and human, resemble those which *lead to or accompany* hybriistic behavior elsewhere.³⁵

What is more, the gods feel νέμεσις, or so Herodotus conjectures: “righteous indignation,” it seems, the sort of indignation that they might more naturally feel at human transgressive behavior than at mere thoughts. Interestingly, where we do trace such divine thought-policing elsewhere, it relates precisely to this sort of overconfidence about the future, which like a tyrant’s transgressive behavior lays claim to an immunity that no mortal can assume.³⁶ Thoughts like these are

34. Gould 1989: 80 thought not; Fisher 1992: 357–60 agreed, consistently with his thesis that ὕβρις relates particularly to transgressive behavior, an arrogant and insulting infringement of another’s honor. Cairns 1996b), who puts more weight on disposition, sees a closer link with ὕβρις: “the signs of *hybris* are all there” (18–19 n.80). Fisher 2002: 218 n.75 sticks to his view: “not ‘all’ the signs . . . as the offence lacks the necessary intent to insult.”

35. So much would be common ground between Fisher (1992, e.g. 254, 259, 290 on *Seven against Thebes*, *Persians*, and *Oresteia*) and Cairns (1996b). Cf. e.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 807–808, 820–31.

36. The close conceptual link between ὕβρις and νέμεσις, often claimed by scholars, admittedly seems a mirage: see Fisher 1992: 300, 358 n.81, 427–28; Cairns 1996b: 18 n.80 agrees. But indignation, either human or divine, at mere thoughts is strikingly rare. Homeric cases of νέμεσις nearly all relate to clear action, or more rarely (e.g. *Od.* 1.158) to speech; even when emotions are the primary point of relevance, it is always important that those emotions were vented in marked action (*Il.* 2.296, “I don’t feel indignant with the Achaeans that they should ἀσχαλάαν παρὰ νηυσί; 9.523, “it was not νεμεσσητόν, Achilles, for you to feel anger before”; *Od.* 18.227, “I don’t blame you, mother, for your anger”; *Od.* 22.59, “it was not νεμεσσητόν, Odysseus, for you to feel anger before Antinous was killed,” an expressive travesty of *Il.* 9.523). The same goes for Plato *Laws* 853c8-d1, where it is ἀνεμεσσητόν for a law-giver to entertain fear of a particular sort of numbskull (and therefore to enact against sacrilegious outrages which might otherwise have remained unthinkable); for the various cases, esp. in tragedy, where gods take umbrage at mortals who “think big” (and act accordingly:

divided by a thin boundary from hybriatic action; the danger that the overconfident man will cross that boundary is a clear one, and we have already seen enough of Croesus' disingenuous aggression to reinforce any such feelings of unease. The language here is therefore enough to trigger that nexus of familiar ideas, the traditional notions that wealth, overconfidence, and ὕβρις go hand in hand.

Indeed, one of the most familiar sources for the link of ideas would be Solon's poems themselves.

τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὕβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἔπῃται
ἀνθρώποις ὁπόσοις μὴ νόος ἄρτιος ᾖ.

fr. 6.3–4W²

Over-sufficiency generates violence, whenever great prosperity
attends those humans whose minds are not well-ordered.

The thought may already have been proverbial.³⁷ This, indeed, may well be what an audience might *expect* Herodotus' Solon to say,³⁸ particularly as the rest of

discussed by Cairns 1996b: 10–17, with some different emphases from Fisher 1992); and also for such tragic passages as Aesch. *Pers.* 827–28, Soph. *Ant.* 127–, 1250–53, and Eur. *Heraclid.* 387–88 (all quoted by Harrison 2000: 40 n.23), where the word νέμεσις is not used but boastful “words” are still punished *along with their concomitant actions*. The Herodotean cases of Aristodicus (1.159) and Glaucus (6.86γ) may seem to convey punishment for thoughts, but (a) in each case it is thinking about a particular peridious action that is dangerous, not just “thinking big” in general; (b) that of Aristodicus implies that the relevant action is *also* necessary before divine destruction strikes; and (c) it is the consultation in each case, not just the thinking about peridy, that offends the god—itself a sort of action. That leaves the nearest parallels for such divine thought-policing (a) Theognis 659–64:

Οὐδ' ὁμόσαι χρὴ τοῦθ' ὅτι “Μήποτε πρῆγμα τόδ' ἔσται”·
θεοὶ γάρ τοι νεμεσῶς, οἷσιν ἔπεστι τέλος·
κἄπρηξαν μέντοι τι· καὶ ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸν ἔγεντο
καὶ κακὸν ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ. καὶ τε πενιχρὸς ἀνὴρ
αἰψά μάλ' ἐπλούτησε καὶ ὃς μάλα πολλὰ πέπαται
ἐξαπίνης ἀπὸ ὧπάντ' οὐνὼ ὤλεσε νυκτὶ μιῇ.

And (b) a tragic fragment, Stob. 3.22.5 = Euripides fr. 1113a Kannicht (but Kannicht counts it among the *dubia et spuria*):

ὅταν ἰδῇς πρὸς ὕψος ἡρμένον τινὰ
λαμπρῷ τε πλούτῳ καὶ γένει γαυρούμενον
ὀφρύν τε μεῖζω τῆς τύχης ἐπηρκότα,
τούτου ταχεῖαν νέμεσιν εὐθὺς προσδόκα.

That reference to “fortune” suggests that here too the “lofty”-minded figure has not taken its possible vicissitudes into account: so both these cases relate to the νέμεσις (clearly divine with Theognis, unclear whether divine or human with the tragic fragment) that awaits one who is too confident about the future.

37. To judge from the parallel in Theognis 153–54: thus Fisher 1992: 75 n.128. Here cf. Solon frs. 4.7–11 and 34–37, 13.7–13 W²; also Diog. Laert. 1.59. Solon said that κόρος was generated by ὕβρις, ὕβρις by κόρος. Not that Solon suggested ὕβρις to be an *inevitable* concomitant of wealth; a well-ordered mind, νόος ἄρτιος, could cope with it. But Croesus' lack of alertness to his own vulnerability did not suggest a well-ordered mind.

38. This view seems more authentically Solonian than the thesis of divine φθόνος, as emerges from the material collected by Chiasson 1986.

his remarks echo some famous parts of his poems.³⁹ But he does not; the audience may have noticed that he does not; and, if so, they would have understood why. Solon is talking to a despot, and a recurrent Herodotean idea is the way that discussion with despots imposes its own conversational dynamics.⁴⁰ No one can talk straight, and λόγος itself becomes distorted. No one, however wise, Greek, and sure of his own stature, is likely to say, “Croesus, the thing about you is you’re bound to be hybriatic, and you’re bound to bring disaster on yourself: that’s what people like you do.”⁴¹ Seen like this, Solon’s type of argument is expressively roundabout. He warns Croesus of the dangers, but very tactfully. There is the assertion of universal mutability, the muted, but only muted, suggestion that the supreme individual may be particularly vulnerable—but no more. Speech at a despot’s court is, as usual, indirect; even a Solon, however bold, ends by skirting around this aspect of the issue which, in a different and less menacing atmosphere, we might expect to have been central to his thoughts.

The speech is indeed too oblique for Croesus to catch. “Solon’s words did not appeal at all to Croesus, and he sent him away, thinking that there was nothing to him; he thought he was a complete ignoramus for neglecting his current opulence and bidding him look to the end in everything” (1.33.1). Notice the language: not just “a fool” or “a silly fellow,” but an “ignoramus,” ἀμαθέα, contrasting with that original reputation for acquired wisdom at 1.30.2. And such dismissiveness is itself enough to signal that Croesus will not prosper.⁴²

If this is right, all three strands are in the air, universal mutability, divine envy, and the prospect of tyrannically transgressive, self-destructive behavior. Solon comes close enough to hinting at this last aspect to suggest an indirectness born of the atmosphere of the court—exactly the atmosphere that generates that tyrannical oppression and violence.

39. Particularly the emphasis on life’s uncertainty (e.g. Solon fr. 13.63–70 W²), the uselessness of wealth in the face of death (fr. 24.1–10 W²), and the notion of seventy years as man’s natural span (fr. 27 W²): cf. Miller 1963: 89; von Fritz 1967: 217–18; Chiasson 1986; Erbse 1992: 12–13; Harrison 2000: 36–38.

40. For a different (though compatible) reading of the scene, again concentrating on conversational dynamics, cf. Kurke 1999: 146–51, esp. her suggestion that the display of Croesus’ opulence would naturally serve as a precursor to a generous gift to Solon, in return perhaps for flattery (Kurke), perhaps for wisdom. The exchange is short-circuited because Solon “interposes the city” and its values (Kurke)—and/or because Croesus does not recognize the value of what Solon has to offer.

41. So also Cairns 1996b: 22. Munson 2001: 185 and n.34 compares the ways in which epinician poets link calamity and greatness rather than calamity and transgression, noting McGlew 1993: 41 and Nagy 1990: 274–313: so also in her review of Harrison 2000 in *BMC* 2001, text to n.4. The point is well taken, especially if Nagy is right in finding an implicit warning beneath the surface of Bacchylides’ comparison of Hieron to Croesus (esp. 3.61–62; Nagy 1990: 278). If Nagy is right, that should probably be taken as implied compliment rather than chastening: Hieron is assumed to be wise enough to welcome rather than resent such a perspective, it is a lesson he can be assumed already to have learned.

42. cf. Bischoff 1932: 34.

The audience may not clearly discriminate these three strands: after all, they are not mutually incompatible, and all might offer explanations for that fall of Croesus which is beginning to be signaled. But a reader or hearer may still sense some uncertainty about the full implications of Solon's wisdom, and the way in which it will illuminate the future, especially Croesus' fall. Herodotus' own statement at 1.5.3–4 (above, p. 145) had simply stated human mutability without comment on its causes: we have sensed various ways in which that insight might productively be deepened and any or all of our strands may come into play. How does the subsequent narrative help, first the Atys–Adrastus episode when Croesus loses his son (and Solon's word *συμφορή* keeps recurring⁴³), then the catastrophic attack on Cyrus?

One thing that swiftly deepens is the presentation of Croesus himself.⁴⁴ So far we might indeed follow Crane and see him as “a ‘straw man,’ who endorses an unsophisticated and unacceptable view of *olbos*”:⁴⁵ Crane brings out that Solon's view of vulnerability and the precariousness of *olbos* should not be so hard to grasp. But perhaps Croesus has understood *something*, despite that dismissiveness. Certainly it is no under-sensitivity to danger that we see in the Atys sequence, it is rather an over-protectiveness—that determination to take the menace to his son seriously and do anything that is necessary to avert it (1.34.3, 36–38). Nor is there any unwillingness to listen, nor any failure to take the gods seriously. He is all too willing to regard his dream as significant, and it is his readiness to listen to his son and admit his intellectual defeat that turns out so disastrous (1.40.1), just as he was already prepared to listen to Bias/Pittacus at 1.27.5.

Those same characteristics return in the move against Cyrus. Croesus is not at all overconfident: it is his fear of Cyrus that drives him into launching a preemptive strike (1.46.1), and if this defensive mindset is swiftly combined with an expansionist urge⁴⁶ it is still not one that takes victory for granted. This is a

43. 1.35.1, 35.4, 41.1, 42.1, 44.2, 45.1: Adrastus is indeed βαρυσυμφορώτατος, 45.3. Both Adrastus and Croesus are seen as men of *συμφορή*, extreme examples of that universal feature of humanity. Another of Solon's key-words, *ταραχώδες*, comes back at 1.44.1, where Croesus is “thrown into confusion,” συντεταραγμένος.

44. Cf. Marg 1953: 1104–1105 = 1962: 292 on the Atys–Adrastus episode: it shows “daß er kein verhärteter dünnhafter Mensch ist, sondern großzügig und milde, ein guter Mann, wie er sich später auch als frommer Mann zeigt.”

45. Crane 1996: 81; cf. 84, “the Herodotean Kroisos demonstrates a ludicrously naive pride in his accumulated wealth and shows he has no feeling for the proper rhetoric of ‘wealth.’”

46. Thus by 1.73.1 “desire for land” (γῆς ἕμερος) has become a motive. Many take this progressively, e.g. Marg 1953: 1105 = 1962: 292, Stahl 1975: 10, and Fisher 1992: 358 n.74 (“Originally his intention had been more defensive, to check the expansion of Persian power, but his ambitions have grown with his confidence”). That is probably wrong: explanations in Herodotus work more “paratactically,” with later explanations supplementing earlier ones rather than replacing them (cf. e.g. 9.41.4–45.2). The advice of Sandanis at 1.71 takes the form of asking what Croesus has to gain by such a war: that would be bewildering unless a reader/hearer was *already* assuming that Croesus' motives include expansionism. If this was still thought of as a response to Cyrus'

man who knows that allies matter (1.56.1, 69, 77, 81) and that he needs all the advice he can get, both human advice and—especially—divine: here again we see him taking the gods very seriously. Even here, too, he is cautious, and takes every precaution he can with those “tests.” His way is not the Greek way,⁴⁷ but it is not a way that is unalert to the possibility of error or failure. If he naïvely misreads the oracle, even Greek readers or hearers might reasonably reflect that they would have done no better,⁴⁸ just as the Spartans did no better in interpreting their oracle at 1.66.3⁴⁹—and just as readers might have responded in exactly the same way about Atys, with the same fears and then the same readiness to acknowledge that Atys is talking what looks like sense when he pleads with his father (1.37).⁵⁰ Croesus may still not have learned enough from Solon, or learned the right things. But then learning is very difficult, especially when wisdom is as elusive as this.

Croesus cared about what Solon thought about him, even if he did not fully understand it; he cares about what Delphi says too, and finds it equally difficult to fathom. By now, indeed, he is no longer so much “the first person to commit unjust deeds against the Greeks,” but rather one who is concerned to get the Greek world on his side, and Greek allies—Athens or, better, Sparta (1.56–69)—as well as Greek wisdom. As early as 1.6.2 Herodotus had looked forward to the way Croesus “made some of the Greeks his friends” as well as subjecting others to his power: we have already seen some of the alliance (1.27.5) as well as the subjection (1.28), and friendship now comes to dominate. We see again the attraction of starting with this land that is on the cusp: so far he may have been seen as an easterner, but now, as the focus and viewpoint shifts to Cyrus,⁵¹ he

aggression, Croesus’ response would be to think that it would simply be impossible to leave the Persians be. The audience would be sage enough to assume that any war, even a preemptive one, offers gains for the victor, and that the victor knows it: so Heuss 1973: 396. See also n.82, below.

47. Below, n.74.

48. So Heuss 1973: 401, surely rightly. Cf. also West 2002: 19, observing that the advice to enlist as an ally “the most powerful of the Greeks” (1.53.3) must imply an expectation of success: otherwise this god of the Greeks would be destroying his own people.

49. That oracle is described as χρῆσιμὸν κίβδηλον, and so is Croesus’ at 1.75.2, one of several features encouraging us to compare the two sequences. Another is Croesus’ reproachful sending of “fetters” to Apollo at 1.90.4, by then as emblematically significant for him as they were for the Spartans at 1.66.4. κίβδηλος is the normal archaic word for “mixed” coinage, i.e. one in which the gold or silver is combined with less valuable metals, and that, rather than “counterfeit” (Kurke), is how the word should be taken here: so Kroll 2000: 89. Kurke 1999: 152–56 is interesting on the relation of the two sequences, though she stresses the differences rather than the similarities (“this paradigm of failed, then proper, oracular consultation is lost on Kroisos”, 155): that seems to me to underrate both Croesus’ caution and the difficulty of reading the oracle in any way other than he did (n.48).

50. Croesus wants to put off Atys’ death “for my own lifetime” (1.38.2). That is a natural and touching desire of any father, not of a king concerned for the future of a dynasty; just as Atys’ riposte is that of any young bridegroom or citizen (“how can I go to the *agora* . . . how will I look to my fellow-citizens and my new wife?” 1.37.2–3), not of a crown-prince.

51. Which it does around 1.75–79. Notice the pattern of grammatical subjects: typically “Croesus” till 1.74; a mix of “Croesus” and “Cyrus” in 1.75–78; predominantly “Cyrus” from 1.79 onwards.

is aligned with the Greeks, as he becomes the first narrative target of the Persians just as the Greeks, including his current allies, will be the last. In his first, more eastern identity he had introduced one important scheme of explanation into the *Histories*, the man who began the modern equivalent of those tit-for-tat acts of wrong that we saw in 1.1–4. But, as the first book develops, that initial picture of reciprocity and vengeance is supplemented by other patterns of explanation, ones concerned with expansion and ambition, with the ways of human power and the limits imposed on it by stubborn mortals and disapproving gods. Croesus helps us to understand those strands in a different mode, not as a first-mover but as a thought-provoking paradigm.⁵²

But no audience can yet be clear exactly what thoughts should be provoked, or what exactly Croesus is paradigmatic *of*: any or all of our three strands may come back. Let us see if our next scene helps us, or helps him, to become wiser.

CROESUS ON THE PYRE

By then Cyrus has won, and for Croesus the important aspects of life that had emerged in Solon's examples of Tellus and Cleobis and Biton—children, family, a good end—have proved as impermanent or elusive as Solon suggested they might. It no longer matters to Croesus whether he lives or dies, and only his mute son cares to save him (1.85),⁵³ that mute son who was mentioned in the Atys episode (1.34.2, 38.2); indeed, all the important elements of Croesus' story—Solon, Atys and Adrastus, the oracles—are reprised one by one.⁵⁴ Solon's presence in particular begins to loom even before Croesus makes the memory explicit: Croesus is rendered silent “by the συμφορή” (1.85.3), his past “prosperity” (εὖεστώ) is remembered (1.85.1), and the terms of the oracle, “he will first speak on an unhappy day” (ἀνάλβω, 1.85.1), recall Solon's crucial word. The style suggests closure too: “the Persians took Sardis and captured Croesus himself; he had ruled fourteen years and been besieged for fourteen days, and—in accordance with the oracle—had brought his own great empire to an end.”⁵⁵ But it is not in fact Croesus' end. Instead we have the great scene on the pyre.

Cyrus' decision to set Croesus on the pyre is one of those things which requires an explanation:

52. These two modes are brought out particularly well by Erbse 1992: 29–30 and by Visser 2000. I return to this paradigmatic mode at the end of the paper (p. 172).

53. On Croesus' two sons, and the paradoxes here of communication and speech/silence, cf. esp. Sebeok and Brady 1979.

54. Von Fritz 1967: 229, 234; Stahl 1975: 11.

55. Even in Croesus' closural sentence, the Persians are expressively the subject: they are in control (n.51). On the closural features see Stahl 1975: 11–12; on the significance of “fourteen,” Hellmann 1934: 103–104 and Fehling 1989: 225–26 (with the general reservations of Rubincam 2003). Mathieu de Bakker suggests to me that this may be a further echo of Solon and his division of life into seven-year periods (fr. 27 W²): note that Croesus was thirty-ve years old on coming to the throne (26.1), half of the seventy years which Solon allows as the norm of life (32.2).

Cyrus built a large pyre, and set Croesus on it, bound in fetters, and twice seven children of the Lydians about him. Perhaps he had it in mind to make this sacrifice to some god or other; perhaps it was in fulfillment of some vow; perhaps it was because he had heard that Croesus was a pious man, and this led him to put him up on the pyre, wishing to discover if any supernatural power would save him from being burnt alive.

1.86.2

All these possibilities have something to do with deities, but only the last, and least deferential, motive will be recalled in the narrative itself. Cyrus, it would seem, is as given to experiment with the divine as Croesus had been when he tested the oracles:⁵⁶ this is one way in which Croesus' suggestions look east. But there is another aspect as well, as Cyrus' curiosity is likely to be mirrored in the audience:⁵⁷ they too will be wondering if Croesus' generosity will meet with divine gratitude. They were probably aware of a version which told of a miraculous last-minute salvation:⁵⁸ will this be Herodotus' version too? Or will it rather be a tale of presumption punished, as the reenactment of the Atys sequence

56. On this kingly taste for experimentation cf. Christ 1994, who suggests an implicit meta-textual comparison of Herodotus' own "investigations" with those of the kings, and Munson 1991: 58–62. Cyrus' experiment here is recalled particularly at 3.14–16, where Cambyses "made trial of the soul of Psammenitus" by—once again—setting up a ceremonial execution, but this time everything misfires: the attempt to save Psammenitus' son is too late; Psammenitus is accepted Croesus-like into Cambyses' entourage, but starts plotting and has to take his own life; and, despite the echo of Homer's Priam in Psammenitus' words (ἐπὶ γῆρας οὐδῶ, 14.10~*Iliad* 22.60), Cambyses is far from the insight of *Iliad* 24 in his vicious vindictiveness towards the dead Amasis (16). Croesus and Cyrus come to some sort of shared understanding; Cambyses and the Egyptian kings miss one another. I return to this in Pelling 2006.

57. Thus, rightly, Stahl 1975: 13.

58. This is the version of Bacchylides' third ode (468), which predates Herodotus' account. The Louvre amphora—the "Myson amphora," c. 490–470 , ARV² 238.1—probably reflects the same version as Bacchylides; at least, it seems to align with Bacchylides in presenting a voluntary self-immolation. But we cannot tell from the vase-painting whether a miraculous escape was looming; nor, presumably, could its first viewers, and they too would have wondered. The relation of Herodotus' account to Bacchylides' ode raises complex issues that I cannot here go into: different aspects are handled well by Segal 1971, Burkert 1985, and West 2002. Fehling 1989: 207 thinks "it is fairly clear that Herodotus' source was Bacchylides," with the poet's translation to the land of the Hyperboreans rationalized into survival at the court, and attempted suicide changed to attempted execution. That is not at all clear. Bacchylides may himself have known a range of versions (notice esp. the advice of Apollo to Admetus at Bacch. 3.78–82 that "mortals should nurse two thoughts, one that you will only see the light of one more day, one that you will continue for fifty years of immense wealth": that would play very well for an audience who had not known which of several possible fates awaited Croesus); and if the poet *had* known of Cyrus' role, tact would still make it natural for him to pass over an external conqueror in an ode aligning Croesus with the *laudandus* Hieron. Stressing human vulnerability, dignity, and the possibility of divine reward is one thing; pointing to a real-world possibility of a superior victor is another. Cf. Maehler 2004: 79–83, concluding that it "seems very unlikely that B[acchylides] was the source of Herodotus' story," and speculating that Hieron may have realized that his own death *from illness* was near: so also e.g. Hutchinson 2001: 329, 354. That too would make Cyrus irrelevant. Flower 1991 similarly argues for multiple traditions from an early stage, and suggests that both Bacchylides and Herodotus draw on genuine Delphic traditions.

might suggest? The audience would not themselves have presumed to experiment with a deity, but they will still be asking Cyrus' questions, and waiting for answers.

Croesus, despite his predicament, recalled what Solon had said:⁵⁹ it seemed to him as if Solon's words had been echoed σὺν θεῷ, "with god behind him" (1.86.3)—a formulation that seems to suggest momentary inspiration, even divinely guided coincidence, rather than settled human insight.⁶⁰ Croesus, with a deep groan, called out "Solon" three times. Cyrus wondered who this was that Croesus was "invoking" (ἐπικαλέοιτο: the word suggests that, very reasonably, he assumes that Croesus is calling on a god); the interpreters are sent to find out. Croesus for a time keeps silent—he too by now knows how to be intriguing, Solon-like—and finally says, "the man who should come into conversation with all tyrants: I should prefer that to great wealth"—the wealth, of course, which had once been Croesus' hallmark.⁶¹ When pressed, he now tells Cyrus more: he explains how Solon had visited him, how "he had seen all his wealth and decided it—that was how Croesus put it"—ἀποφλαυρίσειε (οἷα δὴ εἶπας), 1.86.5;⁶² how

59. The narrative here, very strikingly, moves into *oratio obliqua* (τὸν μὲν δὴ ποιεῖν ταῦτα . . .), even though there is no introductory verb of "saying" or "thinking." The traditional explanation, argued most fully by Cooper 1974: 23–76 at 72–74 and followed e.g. by Lateiner 1989: 23, Kurke 1999: 166, Munson 2001: 223, and Chiasson 2003: 29–30, is that this suggests "dubiety," "distance," or "reserve," that it is "material the author does not want to vouch for unconditionally." This seems unsatisfactory. (For a broader critique of Cooper's paper see Harrison 2000: 248–50, with some good points.) Here the *oratio obliqua* soon gives way to finite indicatives, and the indicatives take for granted the truth of the material earlier stated in *o.o.* (πάλιν ἐπειρώτων τὰ λεγόμενα, 86.4); then we have *o.o.* again for the burning of the pyre and Cyrus' repentance, and continues, in *o.o.*, but this time with a regularizing λέγεται ὑπὸ Λυδῶν, for the miraculous salvation (87.1–2). That salvation too, though, does not seem to be doubted: at least it is referred to in the Pythia's reply at 91.3, a reply which is itself introduced by λέγεται but is finally summarized with a finite verb (ταῦτα μὲν ἡ Πυθίη ὑπεκρίνατο τοῖσι Λυδοῖσι . . . , 91.6). The interdependence of the facts attested in narrative indicatives and those in *o.o.* seems to exclude any distinction between more or less certain elements. The same is true in a similar case of unIntroduced *o.o.* at 2.162.4–6, where the mutilation referred to in *o.o.* at § 5 is assumed as real at § 6. Perhaps the right approach is to distinguish "distance" from "dubiety": distance can add other effects too, notably importance and respect. This is a story that others still tell (and the Lydians in particular tell about the moment that showed the divine favor for their king . . .): it is, as it were, *in illustri positum monumento*, and deserves more than the narrator's own validation. See now Davies 2004: ch. 2 for illuminating discussion of a similar issue in Livy.

60. Bischoff 1932: 38, comparing 3.153.2. On the "epiphanic" qualities of this scene see the brilliant remarks of Kurke 1999: 157–59.

61. For Kurke 1999: 160 Croesus' phrasing shows him still out of touch with Solon's more civic thinking, still entrenched in an old world of gift- and currency-exchange: "he puts Solon's wisdom in the marketplace." I am not so sure: Croesus is not rating Solon's wisdom as an equivalent to a particular sum, even a vast one; he is *preferring* it to the wealth that used to matter so much. That can be seen as a preference for a whole new perspective, not a forcing of a new insight into the same value-scheme. But both readings are possible, and (as Carolyn Dewald suggests to me) it may certainly be telling that "Croesus is the one mentioning money, at a point in his life where it would not occur to other people." Here too it may be that we should sense an ambiguity about how much Croesus has learned.

62. The difficulties of this phrase, faced squarely though unsatisfactorily by the earlier commentators, have been glossed over in the last century. Cf. e.g. Stein ("("was es eben war")), How and Wells ("with such and such words"), Legrand ("en tenant des propos tels qu'il en avait tenu"), LSJ

it had all turned out as Solon had said; how Solon's words had applied not merely to himself but to all the human race, and especially those who thought themselves fortunate (ὀλβιοί). That is a phrase to which we will return.

Cyrus, now he had heard through the interpreters what Croesus had said, thought again about what he was doing. He reflected that he too was a human, and now it was another human, one who had been no less fortunate (εὐδαίμων) than himself, whom he was consigning alive to the pyre; in addition he feared vengeance, and took consideration that nothing in mortal life was safe; so he gave instructions that the flames should be put out as soon as possible, and that Croesus and those with him should be brought down. . . .

1.86.6

This is an intriguing sequence, as Croesus becomes teacher as well as learner, and truth seems to speak, strangely and even supernaturally, through the participants' remarks in a way that goes beyond their surface relevance. Croesus thought that Solon was speaking "with god behind him," σὺν θεῷ: perhaps the verdict applies more truly to both Croesus and Cyrus here.

It is important to see precisely what each king says or thinks. Has Croesus here understood exactly what Solon meant?⁶³ One aspect, the word "derision," seems explicitly marked by Herodotus ("that was how he put it") as a questionable way of phrasing what Solon had said,⁶⁴ and we may still sense the hurt pride of Croesus here: this is a figure, as usual, with a certain individuality. His summary of Solon's insight, "that no living person is prosperous" (1.86.3), is again not quite what Solon's own words might most naturally have suggested.⁶⁵ But we should also remember that it was not easy at the time to pin down exactly what Solon meant, and there were several different strands. For instance, Croesus'

s.v. οἷος I.4 ("saying so and so"), Waterfeld ("dismissed it as rubbish [or words to that effect]"), and Antelami (in Asheri 1988: 101, "...e come, dopo aver visto tutte le sue ricchezze, le avesse sprezzate dicendo così e così"); not translated at all by Rawlinson or de Selincourt. This seems to belong with the other uses of adjectival οἷος δὴ collected by Denniston 1954: 220, s.v. δὴ (9)v(a): "the note of disparagement, irony, or contempt is rarely quite absent." In that case Hude's and Rosén's punctuation becomes inevitable, taking (οἷα δὴ εἶπας) as a parenthesis; and the phrase must refer back to Croesus, subject of ἔλεγε, rather than Solon, subject of ἀποφλαυρίσειε. On the inappropriateness of ἀποφλαυρίσειε to capture Solon's insight, cf. Schneeweiss 1975: 169–70: a gloss "that is how he put it" is thoroughly appropriate.

63. Cf. Bischoff 1932: 38, emphasizing particularly that the phrase σὺν θεῷ may not do justice to Solon's insight: above, p. 157. More generally on this scene see especially Stahl 1975: 12–19; Chiasson 2003).

64. If my interpretation of that phrase is correct: see n.62.

65. As Aristotle brings out (*E.N.* 1100a10–17), Solon's words admit two interpretations, (a) no human can securely *be called* prosperous until he is dead (but then a retrospective description can accurately say that he "was" prosperous, even though no one could be sure of it at the time); (b) no human is prosperous during his own lifetime. Cf. the interesting discussion of Lloyd 1987. Here Croesus' summary also allows both interpretations: notice "no *living* person," μηδένα τῶν ζώντων (rather than "no mortal"); this could mean "no mortal while alive." It remains true that Solon's words invite more naturally interpretation (a), Croesus' summary more naturally interpretation (b).

nal formulation—that Solon’s words applied not merely to himself but to all the human race, and especially those who thought themselves fortunate—does credit to several of these strands at once: the “Fortune’s Wheel” element, applying to all humanity, but also the particular relevance to those who were rich and powerful and thought of themselves in those terms. Again, Croesus here takes Solon as having not merely generalized about human life, but also given a *prediction*: “how it had all turned out as Solon said.” In fact, Solon had not given any explicit prediction about Croesus’ own fate, and had been careful to remain on the tactfully general level: his generalizations might have pointed to Croesus’ potential human vulnerability, but that is different from uttering a prediction. Still, we also sensed at the time that Solon might be skirting around a deeper insight and one more specific to Croesus himself, the notion that someone like him was particularly likely to think and act in ways that would generate his own downfall. So here too we are left with a choice of readings: one that takes Croesus as once again the hurt individual here, a man who took things more personally and pointedly than Solon’s language had suggested; or one that has a man who responded sensitively to the subtext of Solon’s remarks, and realized that their drift did indeed imply a prediction of Croesus’ coming fate.⁶⁶

Cyrus’ response is also interesting. He too echoes Solon, and in part reverts more closely to Solon’s words than anything in Croesus’ outburst.⁶⁷ He is quick, perhaps unrealistically quick, to learn what must underlie them—a rapid learner, when his teacher Croesus is still groping slowly towards wisdom.⁶⁸ Nothing is secure in mortal life, he concludes: that evokes Solon’s statement of universal mutability. The stress on “humanity” (he is an ἄνθρωπος and is consigning another ἄνθρωπος to the flames) and on good fortune (εὐδαιμονίῃ) picks up Solon’s key concepts. But there is a difference too. Cyrus has no hesitation in using εὐδαιμονίῃ both of himself and of Croesus; he evidently understands such things rather differently from Solon.⁶⁹ And his point is that he is one human

66. Croesus’ repeated claim that Delphi “encouraged” or “stirred him up” (ἐπάρας, 87.3, ἐπαρθείς, 90.3) to launch an expedition can be regarded similarly. For Heuss 1973: 409, it shows Croesus’ blindness to his own past self, as he had already decided to fight Cyrus before consulting Delphi (one recalls Socrates’ scolding of Xenophon for asking the wrong question at Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.7); but here the initial question to the oracle had included “whether he should launch an expedition (στρατεύεσθαι, the same word as at 87.3 and 90.3) against Cyrus” (53.1–2), and as Heuss himself stressed (401–402, cf. n.48) the only reasonable interpretation of Delphi’s response was one of encouragement.

67. Cf. Bischo 1932: 39; Hellmann 1934: 104–107.

68. Segal 1971: 45, 48, draws attention to the “knowing,” “learning,” and “realizing” words used in 1.86 of Cyrus: ἐν νόῳ ἔχων . . . πυθόμενος . . . βουλόμενος εἰδέναι; then words of “asking,” ἐπειρέσθαι, εἰρωτώμενον, ἐπειρώτων; then “learning and reflection” again, μεταγνόντα, ἐννόσαντα, ἐπιεξάμενον, followed by more questioning at 87.2–3. “Herodotus makes this ‘learning’ [of Cyrus] appear almost as significant as the actual salvation of Croesus.”

69. So, it seems, does Croesus, still: a little later he too talks of Cyrus’ εὐδαιμονίῃ (1.87.3). For εὐδαιμονίῃ in the earlier sequence cf. 1.32.1 *bis*. But admittedly it was the word ὀλβιος, not εὐδαίμων, that Solon regarded as inapposite before death.

maltreating another, and that this other human had been no less prosperous than himself. That is closer to *Iliad* 24, where the victor and the king who is losing everything sense the human vulnerability which they share, than to anything that Solon made explicit. The hints of *Iliad* 24 soon become even louder, as “Cyrus released Croesus, invited him to sit close to him, and took great care of him: *he marveled as he looked upon him, he and all those around him*”: this is very much the “marvel,” the θαύβος with which Achilles so memorably gazed upon Priam “and the others marveled too,” at *Il.* 24.480–84.⁷⁰

This awareness of a bond, this sensitivity that “it could also happen to me,” becomes—as so often in Greek values⁷¹—an inhibiting factor; but there is more than this at stake. Cyrus is not only influenced by the thought that he should *empathize with* another human, someone who is already experiencing what he might one day suffer himself. He also fears *vengeance* for what he is planning to do. That is another aspect which goes beyond Solon’s explicit suggestions,⁷² and the intrusion of this notion moves the emphasis more decisively towards that final strand which Solon’s words merely suggested, the likelihood that a tyrant may be misled by his own prosperity into courses which provoke his own downfall—in this case, by eliciting vengeance. The notion of reciprocity, so important in Herodotus, is another theme that is therefore recurring here, mirroring that other aspect of Croesus, the man who instituted these tit-for-tat exchanges. But who or what will do the reciprocating, the balancing of the scales? It is unclear what sort of vengeance Cyrus has in mind, human, divine, or both. We have moved beyond Croesus and Solon, that is clear: but there are still unanswered—perhaps so far unasked—questions here for the future.

One last point about this sequence. It began with *Cyrus* experimenting with the gods, rather as Croesus had done before; then Croesus goes on to elicit Cyrus’ permission to send to Delphi and put a further question—and this time to remonstrate with the deity. He tells Cyrus of the oracles “and especially of

70. The parallel is noted by Stein: cf. Chiasson 2003: 26–27, arguing also for the presence of more distinctively “tragic” elements (I am not sure that “epic” and “tragic” elements can be disentangled in a case like this). The same context was evoked at the beginning of the Atys–Adrastus episode (1.35.1), one of many close links between the two sequences: Croesus’ final pity for Adrastus (1.45.2) also has something in common with Achilles’ for Priam (*Il.* 24.516, 525–26). Cf. Pelling 2006.

71. “A man recognizes his very own existence in the reflecting mirror of another man’s fate,” Stahl 1975: 14. Cf. esp. Arist. *Rhet.* 2.8.2, bringing out clearly that pity has a strong self-directed element: pity attends the undeserved suffering of another, when such suffering might equally one day descend on oneself or on someone close; see Konstan 2001: esp. 49–50, 128–31, 134–36. Soph. *Ajax* 118–25 is perhaps the clearest literary formulation of the idea. Eur. *Hec.* 282–85 is particularly close to the suggestions of the Croesus–Cyrus scene: Hecuba there uses herself as an *exemplum* that should warn the Greeks against assuming that their prosperity will be permanent, rather as Croesus becomes an *exemplum* for Cyrus here.

72. Cf. Bischoff 1932: 39. This is understandable, for the desire for vengeance is elicited by actions, and Solon was not warning Croesus against any particular action. “Vengeance” would have been an odd way of putting the divine punishment for Croesus’ presumptuous thoughts.

his dedications and how he was roused up by the oracle to attack the Persians” (1.90.3); he will now ask “if it is the custom of the Greek gods to be ungrateful” (1.90.4). To ask such a question and expect an answer is again un-Greek,⁷³ even if a little less un-Greek than his earlier testing of the oracles.⁷⁴ Croesus, an audience must think, is again playing a perilous game.⁷⁵

But what will the answer be? I suggest that the audience do not know: just as they may have distanced themselves from Cyrus’ experimenting and still wondered what the outcome would be, they will here too be wondering what the answer will be. There have been so many different strands in speech and narrative. Will it emerge that Croesus is responsible for his own fate, and if so how? Is it punishment for overambitiousness, crossing the natural bounds of his kingdom? Or for that presumption in “testing” the oracle, and now in reproaching the god? Or for thinking that the Greek god would care so much for material goods or apply so crude a model of gift-exchange, in using language such as “Croesus has given you gifts worthy of your discoveries . . . ” (1.53.2)?⁷⁶ Once again as with Solon, eastern wealth and Greek wisdom might seem to be coming together

73. The reproaching is admittedly not so irregular (Parker 1998: esp. 114–16 and Hutchinson 2001: 341–43, though Harrison 2000: 80 can still comment on Croesus’ “markedly peremptory tone” at 1.87.1, despite the similarities to 1.159.4); the testing and the cross-examination, more so. The echoing of *Il.* 24 here takes a new twist. Croesus can say “this must have been the will of a divine force” (ἀλλὰ ταῦτα δαίμονι καὶ φίλον ἦν οὕτω γενέσθαι, 1.87.4), rather as Achilles explained the troubles as sent by gods to mortals (24.525–26); but Croesus is *blaming* the god, while Achilles was using this insight to urge a resigned acquiescence in the common human lot. Croesus’ insight into divine ordinance was closer to this Achillean vein in the Atys sequence at 1.45.2, but here his instincts are closer to those of Agamemnon at *Il.* 19.86–87 (Erbse 1979: 190).

74. Cf. Klees 1965: esp. 16–49 and 63–68, who extensively demonstrates that such testing (a) was genuinely carried out by non-Greeks and (b) would have been most irregular for any Greek. Xen. *Cyr.* 7.2.15 . . . makes it explicit that any such testing would naturally offend a god. Thus it is the Egyptian king Mycerinus who similarly questions an oracle at 2.133. Mycerinus there provides a less fraught Egyptian counterpart of a charged moment in Book 1, rather as a few chapters later the story of the Ethiopian king Sabacus (2.139) mirrors that of Aristodicus at 1.159 (n.36 above, cf. e.g. Harrison 2000: 103–104, 225–26), and the Egyptian “incapacity to do without a king” and Psammetichus’ accession (2.147, 151) have much in common with the constitutions debate and Darius’ accession at 3.80–87.

75. Here too (cf. n.45) one scholar finds Croesus a dummy-figure: “dieser Kroisos ist kein lebendiger Mensch, sondern nur noch eine Atrappe. Als Mensch hat er nach dem ganzen Läuterungsprozeß, den H. schildert, dieses primitive, um nicht zu sagen peinliche tête à tête mit dem delphischen Apoll nicht mehr nötig” (Heuss 1973: 410). Yet Croesus’ urge for enlightenment and his direct way of seeking it are both fully in character, and that enlightenment is still not complete—as incomplete, indeed, for Croesus himself as it is for Herodotus’ readers.

76. Cf. Klees 1965: esp. 63–66; Visser 2000: 23, “Kroisos behandelt Apollo nicht als Gott, sondern als einen mächtigen Herrscher,” failing to discriminate the different ways in which gods behave and must be addressed. For Harrison 2000: 61, “[Herodotus’] lengthy description of Croesus’ dedications, each act of dedication compounding Croesus’ certainty in his success, is inevitably a prelude to his ‘betrayal’ by Delphi”; cf. Nagy 1990: 274–75. Kurke 1999: 130–71 has a highly sophisticated argument that Croesus’ view of gift-exchange is set at odds with a new, civic sensibility. None of these is, I think, the *final* suggestion of the narrative, but the first-time reader—or rather different readers of varying sophistication—might well have sensed danger in one or more of these ways.

without true contact or understanding. It would be no surprise, either, if there were other echoes of Solon's wisdom, interpreted in any of our three ways. Croesus' fall could have been presented as the turning of Fortune's Wheel; there might even have been a hint of divine envy of such prosperity, though Apollo might have found it difficult to admit to that directly; there might certainly have been further suggestions of punishment for Croesus' presumption in counting on that prosperity. The more recent hints of transgressive and self-destructive tyrannical *action*, the "yearning for land" or the devastation of the guiltless, might also have come into play. We might have had something on the avenging of the Greeks who had initially been the target of Croesus' expansion; this is, after all, the god of the Greeks, described as such by Croesus himself (1.87.3, 90.2, 4). There are so many ways in which Apollo might have justified himself or issued a stern rebuke.

What Apollo does say will come as, at least partly, a surprise. There is no suggestion of any divine punishment. Far from showing disdain for Croesus' lavish gifts and resentment at Croesus' remonstrance, Apollo answers the remonstrance civilly and suggests that he was indeed grateful for the gifts⁷⁷ and had done what he could. As for any suggestion of divine envy, or of divine punishment of presumption, or of divine distaste for aggression, all are wholly absent. The answer is quite different: "Croesus has paid for the mistake (or fault, or failing: ἀμαρτάνειν) of his ancestor in the fifth generation back, a guard of the Heraclidae who, enticed by a woman's deceit, killed his master and took over a position to which he had no right" (1.91.1). It all goes back to Gyges: *that* is the explanation, at least the first explanation, of it all.

We had certainly been told of this at the beginning; there had been the prophecy of the five generations and even the notice that the Lydians forgot all about it until it was fulfilled (1.13.2). Still, it is an odd reader who has been thinking about this in the more recent narrative.⁷⁸ Several of the earlier parts of the narrative have certainly been recalled, but not this one; we had not, for instance, been prepared in any way to understand what "holding destruction back for three years" might

77. Thus the language of 91.3, "he had done as much as the Fates allowed and granted these favors" (ὅσον δὲ ἐνέδωκαν αὐταί, ἥνυσέ τε καὶ ἐχαρίσατό οἱ) echoes and counters the charge of being ungrateful (ἀχαρίστος, 90.4): Stahl 1975: 17, cf. Crane 1996: 77. It is important that Apollo does not reject the expectation of *charis*: if there is a "dialectic of divergent economies" at play here (Kurke 1999: 160–63), it is a dialectic where both economies are felt to be valid. It is important too, as Christ 1994: 189–93 observes, that Apollo does not condemn the testing as impious.

78. Such formulations as that of Pohlenz 1937: 61 ("... stehen zugleich wie ein Motto über der ganzen folgenden Geschichte") and Stahl 1975: 4 ("we see [Croesus'] success against the background of his expected doom...") seem untrue to the reading experience. Had Herodotus wanted to remind us of this "Motto" he could have found ways to recall the Gyges episode, just as he finds so many ways to recall Solon; yet the only clear reminiscence comes at 91.6 (Apollo explains that Cyrus is "the mule" because "his father was a Persian, ruled by the Medes and subordinate in all things, and yet lived with his own mistress," very much as Gyges had done), *after* Apollo has made the importance of Gyges clear.

mean.⁷⁹ The effect of this narrative is rather similar to that which Stanley Fish so thought-provokingly suggested for *Paradise Lost*, arguing that the audience of the poem, finding Satan so seductive and God's rhetoric so lack-luster, effectively reenact for themselves man's original sin.⁸⁰ Here too the audience forget, just as the Lydians forgot, until it all becomes clear. Such explanations are slippery things; even when all the clues are present, they can be missed.

It is easy to think of Herodotus as playing games with his audience here, starting all sorts of ideas which prove to be red herrings and false leads; nor is that formulation wholly unfair. However, we should also do credit to the way in which this game is a most productive one, drawing the audience into essaying their own interpretations and measuring them against what turns out to be the case. The human audience, like human observers at the time, can only see so much; there may be a broader scheme as well, transcending several generations in a way that is visible only to the gods and then later, retrospectively, to the historian.⁸¹ But we should also be clear that even those first ideas were not useless. Even if they proved not to be decisive here, it does not mean that they have no purchase at all on events. This is not a question of the text undermining itself, for Herodotus does not operate with a system where one causal explanation excludes another; any or all of the strands may be relevant later. For all his individuality, his aggression has come to fit Croesus more closely into the later imperialist pattern;⁸² and even after apparently finishing with explanations, Herodotus adds another story in the next chapter, one that dates back to the dynastic unrest when Croesus took over the throne, and to a particularly barbarous punishment—death by carding—which he inflicted on a man who had intrigued for a rival claimant (1.92.2–4). This is a new slant again on Croesus, and one that again brings his behavior (the torture)

79. In retrospect we might understand this as referring to the death of Atys, which (it is perhaps implied at 1.46.1) delayed Croesus' fatal campaigning for two years: so e.g. Kurke 1999: 163 n.68. Apollo, unable to delay destruction to the next generation (1.91.2), delays it by destroying the next generation instead. But no reader could have sensed that dimension in the Atys narrative itself: that is introduced as an act of divine indignation (1.34.1), not of oblique favor.

80. Fish 1967.

81. Cf. Dewald 1993: 69–70. The formulation of Focke 1927: 57, "Sein Götterglaube hat Herodot recht eigentlich erst zum Historiker gemacht," lauded by Erbse 1979: 192 n.30 ("Man sollte diese Erkenntnis mit goldenen Buchstaben vor jede moderne Abhandlung über Herodot setzen"), is multiply thought-provoking: this point of historical perspective and insight is only one of the thoughts that might be provoked (another, for instance, would be both the expectation of coherent historical patterning and the awareness that any such expectation might often be belied by experience, the gods being what they are). Here the modern reader (as Elton Barker points out to me) thinks naturally of the dynamics of, precisely, "reading": one can re-read, look back, go over things again. The advent of literacy is indeed relevant here, but even in an oral culture one can re-hear, re-experience, and re-think: we ourselves do that every time we see a *Hamlet*.

82. The shift in motivation-statement—caution at 1.46.1, expansionism at 1.73.1 (n.46)—helps this movement. It goes with this that Sandanis' restraining advice (1.71), appropriate as it is to this expansionism (n.46), can now more closely complement Bias/Pittacus at 1.29 and resonate through the *Histories* as the sort of consideration that many imperialistic kings, not just Croesus, might have taken into account. Cf. p. 167 and n.93 below.

and predicament (dynastic intrigue)⁸³ closer to those which typify the later tyrants who “transgress customs and kill without trial” (3.80.5).⁸⁴ Thus the questions the audience have come to ask, and the explanations they have themselves essayed, remain questions and explanations for their future reading and hearing. Apollo’s answers do not end the procedure; but they do remind the audience that historical explanation is a very provisional, very elusive, and very challenging business.

CROESUS’ ADVICE ON THE MASSAGETAE

By 1.201 Cyrus has enjoyed wondrous success in Asia Minor, in the East, and especially in Babylon. Now Cyrus’ attention switches to a very different target, the primitive Massagetae and their queen Tomyris:

Πολλά τε γάρ μιν καὶ μεγάλα τὰ ἐπαίροντα καὶ ἐποτρύνοντα ἦν, πρῶτον μὲν ἡ γένεσις, τὸ δοκέειν πλεον τι εἶναι ἀνθρώπου, δεύτερα δὲ ἡ εὐτυχία ἡ κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους γενομένη· ὅκη γὰρ ἰθύσειε στρατεύεσθαι Κῦρος, ἀμήχανον ἦν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἔθνος διαφυγεῖν.

1.204.2

The factors which stimulated him and urged him on were many and great: first, his birth, the impression⁸⁵ that he was something more than human; secondly, the good fortune he had enjoyed in war, for wherever Cyrus launched a campaign, that nation found it impossible to escape.

The explanatory mode is unusually explicit and itself serves as a marker of the campaign’s significance: aggressive expansion normally requires no special

83. Notice how little there is on dynastic intrigue within the bulk of the Croesus-λόγος itself, even if the advice of 1.89.2 suggests that Croesus knows the dangers. At 1.51.5 Herodotus mentions in passing the statue of “the bakerwoman” which Croesus gave to Delphi. Plut. *Pyth. or.* 401e-f explains the statue as representing a bakerwoman who saved Croesus from conspiracy. If Parke 1984: 219 is right in arguing that the story pre-dates Herodotus, the absence of this explanation at 1.51.5 points this general lack of interest in Croesus’ internal difficulties.

84. Thus Munson 2001: 104: “This entirely new story . . . rectifies the domesticated portrayal of the Lydian king in the preceding narrative and regularizes his membership in the analogical category of absolute rulers that dominates the rest of the *Histories*.” I am not sure about “rectifies” or “domesticated,” but the last point seems to me exactly right. For the way this analogical category works, see esp. Dewald 2003.

85. The Greek is here elegantly ambiguous: τὸ δοκέειν could be the infinitive counterpart either of an impersonal δοκέει, ‘it seemed’ (*LSJ* s.v. II: so Rawlinson, Waterfeld), or of the personal ‘he thought’: *LSJ* I: so de Selincourt, Antelami, Immerwahr 1966: 166): this impression could be one that others entertained (creating expectations that he had to live up to) or one of his own. The narrative of 1.122.3 suggested that the tale of Cyrus’ origins was originally put round as a political ploy, ‘so that the child might seem to the Persians to have survived in a more supernatural way.’ At 126.6 Cyrus claims a divine hand in his survival, with a personal δοκέω (‘Io stesso, infatti, credo di essere nato per sorte divina,’ Antelami: the English translators obscure the point), but that again might have been a rhetorical ploy rather than genuine conviction. That passage is echoed here, but this time the phrasing more clearly invites, but still does not require, the assumption that Cyrus has come to believe in his own propaganda.

explanation, and it is only the most momentous campaigns—Croesus’ attack on Cyrus, and now this one—that are treated in this way.

Being superhuman, having confidence in one’s own good fortune: these themes are, again, Solon’s. ‘Mortal,’ ἄνθρωπος, had been Solon’s watchword: Solon knew that mortals were all vulnerable, and knew that human good fortune, εὐτυχία, could not be relied upon to last to the end. It was a lesson that Croesus had eventually learned, at least in part, and had passed on to Cyrus in the great scene of the pyre (1.86). It was a lesson too that Cyrus had then seemed to learn—perhaps indeed to learn more perceptively than his teacher Croesus. He then had realized that he was a man entrusting another man to the flames; and he then had seen that nothing was secure among mortals (1.86.6). Yet where is that insight now?

If we wished, we could construct our own story about Cyrus’ psychology here. We could try to reconcile his present outlook with that insight of the pyre; perhaps better, we could say that the insight of the pyre was purely momentary and had not penetrated to the source of Cyrus’ being.⁸⁶ But the text does not encourage us to dwell on the point. There is psychological interest, certainly, but it is an interest that points forward to the rest of the episode, to the way in which Cyrus’ convinced determination becomes an irreducible datum that he and everyone else needs to accept; it is not an interest that encourages us to construct a coherent, global picture of Cyrus’ mental history. It would be wrong to talk of psychological ‘inconsistency’ with the drift of the pyre-episode,⁸⁷ for it is so easy to build a picture of Cyrus’ psychology with room for both; but this sort of psychological reconstruction is not the main point or focus of the scene.⁸⁸

Rather than relating Cyrus’ psychology to the insight he gained at the end of the pyre-episode, it is more fruitful to relate it to the Cyrus of the *beginning* of that sequence, the Cyrus who was sufficiently unmindful of his own human vulnerability to presume to consign Croesus to the flames, the Cyrus who still had a lesson to learn. For there is a sense in which this whole sequence reenacts the sequence of the pyre; this is another extreme situation, and another time when Croesus unexpectedly (for he was not among those initially consulted by Cyrus,

86. Bischof 1932: 43; cf. Stahl 1975: 21–22, 35, and the different formulations of Harrison 2000: 44, ‘Cyrus has apparently forgotten the lesson taught to him earlier by Croesus,’ and Shapiro 1993–1994: 352–53, ‘Cyrus does not forget his wisdom because he never really learned it in the first place.’ If we had to choose one of those variations, I should agree with Shapiro; but the important point is that both views of the psychology are possible, neither inescapable—and neither stressed.

87. Thus Immerwahr 1966: 167 n.54.

88. This is not far from the characterizing techniques of tragedy, where again we see marked and arresting changes of front, the passive Ismene suddenly determined to die with her sister, the self-willed Ajax suddenly acquiring insight into the ways of the world, the self-eating Creon coming finally to impose his will on the blinded but determined Oedipus and force him back into the accursed house. In tragedy (though not always in comedy) a plausible mental background *could* be filled in for such mental shifts; these actions are *potentially* intelligible. (Cf. Pelling 1990: 252, discussing issues of psychological consistency raised by the papers of Griffin and Silk earlier in that volume.) Yet the focus of those tense and involving scenes rests elsewhere, and the same is true here.

1.206.3) produces advice—Solonian advice—which Cyrus finds profoundly impressive. In the pyre-episode the two spoke the same language and probed the deepest areas of the human experience they shared; wisdom spoke through both of them. Here too experience is in point; but experience can mislead as well as instruct, and in this new extreme situation we are led to the limitations, rather than the glories, of human wisdom.

The scene needs close analysis. Cyrus has tried to avoid a campaign by offering marriage to Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae; she has refused. Cyrus turns to the task of bridging the Araxes (1.205), but Tomyris offers to save him this trouble. Either she will retreat three days' march within her own country, and they can fight there; or, if Cyrus prefers, he can retreat a similar distance into his own land, and that can be the scene of the battle. Cyrus consults the leading Persians on what to do, and they all advise—cautiously, one presumes—the second option, that of retreat rather than advance.

Croesus the Lydian was present, and was critical of that advice. He expressed a view contrary to that which was before them: 'O king,⁸⁹ this is not the first time, since Zeus gave me over to you, that I have promised to do what I can to turn away any mistake that I see within your house. My experiences, unwelcome as they were, have become lessons for me. If you think you are immortal yourself and lead an army of immortals, there would be no need for me to give you my advice; but if you recognize that you are human and you lead others who are human too, your first lesson should be that there is a cycle in human affairs, and its rotation does not allow the same people always to enjoy good fortune. That already, then, brings me to the opposite view about the matter before us. If we choose to receive the enemy into our land, this is the danger: if you lose, you also lose all your empire; for it is clear that if the Massagetae win, they will not see back home, but will drive on towards your dominions. If you win, your victory will not be as great as it would be if, after crossing into their land, you could pursue the fleeing Massagetae; for this is the equivalent point on the other side, that if you beat the enemy, you will drive straight on to Tomyris' seat of power. And, besides, it is disgraceful and intolerable for Cyrus son of Cambyses to retreat before a woman and withdraw from his country. My view, then, is that we should cross the river and advance for as far as they retreat and then try to overcome them by the following device. I am informed that the Massagetae have no experience of the good things of the Persians and are untouched by great delights. What we should do for these men, then, is to kill large numbers of our animals, prepare them as food, and lay out a feast in our camp; there should be no stinting in this, nor in the bowls of unmixed wine and all sorts of other food which we should lay out as well. When we have done that, we should leave the worst of our troops, and retreat

89. On the form of address cf. above, n.21.

with the rest to the river. Unless I am mistaken, once they have seen so many good things they will fall on them. Then it will be our turn, and we can put on display⁹⁰ great things.”

1.207

This is an intriguing speech. We again note how skillfully Croesus has taken the measure of the king: the first part addresses the second of the motives of 1.204, that confidence in his εὐτυχίῃ, just as the later part returns chiasmatically to the first, the pride in his γένεσις (“it is disgraceful and intolerable for Cyrus son of Cambyses . . .”)—even if, again expressively, Croesus puts it in a way that avoids ascribing superhuman birth to the king. I shall later suggest that there are deeper ways too in which this Croesus knows his Cyrus. But the speech poses two main problems. The second will be the issue of wisdom: is this advice *good*? First, though, a question of coherence. Does Croesus’ opening—those wise, Solonian remarks on the human limitations of Cyrus and his army, the ckle transience of good fortune, the cycle in mortal affairs—link in any natural way with the advice which Croesus goes on to give?

In part, those remarks simply justify his right to speak at all.⁹¹ If Cyrus sees no risk, then there is no point in giving advice; and Croesus, as the court’s resident expert on human vulnerability, knows all about risk. But the run of the argument suggests strongly that he is using such insight to support his practical advice, as well as defend his right to speak.⁹² And those Solonian insights would seem to prepare for a quite different conclusion, urging Cyrus to recognize the risk he is running *and to abandon the campaign completely*. The audience would be the more primed to expect such a continuation because they have already become used to such warning-scenes: there was Bias/Pittacus, warning Croesus of the dangers of attacking the Ionians on their own ground, in that case the sea (1.27); there was Sandanis, urging him not to attack the Persians, primitive and unused to luxury as they were, for the risk was not worth the potential gain (1.71). Cyrus himself had

90. Note the echo of Herodotus’ first sentence, ἀπόδεξις ἔργων μεγάλων ~ ἀπόδεξις . . . ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά. The irony is that Croesus is right, and the upshot of Croesus’ advice will indeed be the sort of “great things” that are the stuff of his history: but they are “wondrous” too, and their greatness and wondrousness will eventually rest in the magnitude of failure rather than success.

91. Thus Klamp 1930.

92. So, rightly, Bischo 1932 44 n.1. Notice particularly the connection ἤδη ὧν at 207.3: the force of that combination seems normally to be that the evidence accumulated is “already” sufficient, and one can move on to the next step (cf. e.g. 2.144.1, 172.5, 3.155.4, 4.31.2, 6.53.2, 7.184.3, 8.100.5; the transition is admittedly weaker at 4.86.3 and 100.2). Because of Croesus’ awareness of the wheel of human fortune, he “therefore” (ὧν) “already” (ἤδη) takes a different view. The force of the ἤδη may be that this insight is in itself enough to convince him, without his needing to hear further arguments; or that his own experience is enough to show him the wisdom of his view, without his needing to see how events develop further. Either way, his experience justifies his practical advice as well as his right to give it. The same connective ἤδη ὧν recurs at 1.209.4, where Cyrus regards his confidence in divine protection as already enough to support his interpretation of the dream: the echo may be expressive, as first Croesus and now Cyrus move to a precipitate conclusion, though both are drawing conclusions from a reasonable reflection on their previous experience.

found it problematic that Croesus should have preferred such pointless and risky aggression to the safety of welcoming Cyrus as his friend (1.87.3). The present circumstances seem to beg for a further warning on similar lines. The audience have already been told enough about the Massagetae to see that they are just as formidably primitive as the Persians seemed to Sandanis: their diet, for instance, is one of roots and fruit, and in one region raw sh (1.202.1, 3), and they are unused to wine just as Sandanis stressed the wineless frugality of the diet of the Persians themselves before they became used to Lydian luxuries (1.71.2–3). What could be worth taking from such a people? That was Sandanis' question, and it looks as if it will be Croesus' question too;⁹³ but that is not the way the argument turns. Instead he seems to accept that Cyrus will ght, and to urge him to take what was *prima facie* the bolder of the two courses, to go and ght the Massagetae on their own ground. This is the precise opposite of the wisdom of a Bias/Pittacus.

Some scholars convict Herodotus of confusion here. Does the speech perhaps combine two versions, one with Croesus arguing against the whole campaign, one with him simply giving strategic advice?⁹⁴ Is the weakness of the argument a clever piece of reverse psychology, aiming to nudge a counter-suggestible Cyrus into the exactly opposite course?⁹⁵ Another subtle interpretation makes the inconcinnity expressive of Croesus' own psychology: he has himself failed to learn the obvious lesson from that past experience and is blind to the real implications of his own argument.⁹⁶ But there is a different way of making sense of this. This is not the first time that we have been aware of the limitations of human wisdom and discourse, human λόγος, especially at a dynastic court. In such a court, before such a king, certain things are unthinkable—or at least unsayable. Admittedly, not all dynasts are the same, and one can speak more freely at the court of a Cyrus than of a Cambyses: it is notable that Croesus can interpose himself at all into such a discussion, uninvited though he is; he can even mention the possibility that Cyrus may be defeated.⁹⁷ Still, even before a Cyrus there are limits to what one can say—

93. One possible answer to such a question would be the “bronze and gold” which the Massagetae use for their weapons (not, be it noted, for any more familiar luxurious purposes); but it is significant that Herodotus has not told us about that yet, but leaves it to 1.215. As Hellmann 1934: 84 observes, this delay brings the narrative of the campaign itself into closer contact with the type addressed by Sandanis, reduces it to the “typische Situation.” Cf. also Cobet 1971: 104–107, and above, nn.46 and 82.

94. Thus von Fritz 1967: 236–38, drawing large conclusions about Herodotus' respect for his source material; earlier Stein *ad loc.* suggested that the opening is a survival from one of Herodotus' earlier drafts.

95. Erbse 1992: 27–28.

96. Stahl 1975.

97. 1.207.3, Ἐσσωθεις (sc. on your own side of the river) μὲν προσαπολλύεις πᾶσαν τὴν ἀρχήν. Stahl 1975: 27–30 finds it significant that Croesus does not address the possibility of losing even if he does cross the river, suggesting that he is “truly blind” to that possibility; cf. Erbse 1992: 26 and n.27, and already De nér 1933: 77. Yet (1) that possibility is implied by the conditional force of the participles νικῶν and νικήσας, “if you win. . . .” (2) As Stahl 33 acknowledges, Cyrus himself clearly picks up the implication that he may lose anyway (1.208, his injunctions to Cambyses of

and a need to adjust the advice to the presuppositions of his hearer, just as he then goes on to suggest a tactic that he has reason to think Cyrus will find appealing.⁹⁸ However much Croesus is aware of the true implications of his insight, he knows better than to try to dissuade Cyrus from the whole campaign: that by now is fixed, for all the reasons which Herodotus himself outlined at 1.204.⁹⁹ All he can do is to move to second best and try to minimize the risk. This in fact mirrors the logical progression of Tomyris' own argument a few lines earlier:

“King of the Medes,¹⁰⁰ stop your efforts; there is no way you could know if this enterprise will work out well for you. Stop, rule your own people, and endure to go on seeing us ruling the people we rule. But you will not be willing to follow this advice, and will prefer any course but one of peace. So, if you have such a great desire to make trial of the Massagetae, come, abandon this present labor of yours of bridging the river. We will retreat three days' march from the river and you can cross to our land. If you prefer to receive us into your land, then you retreat in the same way.”

1.206.1–2

Tomyris too begins with the more generalized advice, and she too echoes Sandanis; but she too acknowledges it will be hopeless and swiftly moves to second-bests. Tomyris speaks bluntly, and Croesus' words are a more polite and indirect equivalent; and, as usual, the indirectness is expressive, bringing out the limitations of free speech at the court.

Let us turn to the second problem, that of the practical advice itself. Is Croesus wise to advise, and is Cyrus wise to accept, that the shrewd option is to cross the

what to do ἢν ἡ διάβασις ἡ ἐπὶ Μασσαγέτας μὴ ὀρθωθῇ). (3) The run of Croesus' rhetoric naturally requires that he pass swiftly over that possibility, not least because his next point (“And, besides, it is disgraceful and intolerable for Cyrus son of Cambyses to retreat before a woman, and withdraw from his country”) appeals, by a shameless rhetorical ploy, to a feeling of contemptuous pride in Cyrus. The transition to that point would have been marred by a final insistence on the possibility that such a woman might win anyway. Cf. also Flory 1987: 178 n.25, Fisher 1992: 355, and Shapiro 1993–1994: 351 and n.8.

98. That is, the elaborate ploy of the banquet, exploiting his enemy's unfamiliarity with luxury (§ 6–7). ἀβρότης is a recurrent theme with Cyrus. This is—famously and conclusively—the man who knows the dangers of luxury to a warlike people (9.122); but this is also the man who knew how to use luxury persuasively, showing the Persians the pleasures they can win if they take his side (1.126). Croesus knows his Cyrus, and knows what advice will find a ready ear; he has already taken one earlier opportunity to advise the use of luxury, when he urged Cyrus to spare the Lydians but to make them soft (1.155.3–4). Indeed, some of the first words he said to Cyrus were on softness and hardness (1.89.2). At 207.6–7 this is a point both of rhetoric—Croesus knows what he can say to persuade—and, again, of learning, for both Cyrus and Croesus are drawing a lesson from their past successes. It is a lesson which will again bring a victory (211), but this time one that is indecisive, indeed one that will infuriate Tomyris (212) and make her vengeance even bloodier (214.4–5).

99. So also Visser 2000: 24–25.

100. There is again (above, n.21) an expressiveness in the form of address, as Avery 1972: 540 n.20 noticed. Here Tomyris addresses him formally, at 212.3 he is “Cyrus”; at 214.5 she addresses his corpse as σὺ. There is a shift from deference to contempt, and from formality to a strange, off-key form of intimacy. Here as elsewhere, Tomyris' words have a chilling, uncanny element.

river? It is easy to fault that advice: the first person to do so is Cambyses at 3.36.3, who, in a fit of frenzy, blames Croesus' advice for the defeat. True, we do not need to follow Cambyses' lead, and there is something to be said for Croesus' advice;¹⁰¹ indeed, when a similar case arises during the Ionian Revolt, Herodotus explicitly praises the suggestion made by a certain Pixodarus that the Carian troops should fight with the Maeander at their backs (5.118). Still, Pixodarus' reasons are different from Croesus' and cannot be straightforwardly transferred to this situation;¹⁰² and there are good reasons for thinking that, on balance, Croesus was wrong.¹⁰³ Communications would be particularly difficult in such a hostile terrain; the river would bar any possibility of escape in the case of defeat (the equivalent of Pixodarus' point); the elaborate ploy which Croesus goes on to suggest, involving the display of all those luxuries and the concealment of the greater part of the army, would be far easier to orchestrate on the Persians' own soil. Perhaps Herodotus' original audience would not address the issue in quite this rationalistic way, but there are other elements in the narrative that would trigger just as much unease. They might recall Bias/Pittacus, and the general injunction against fighting the enemy on his own ground; they might find the crossing of the mighty Araxes disquieting, with its suggestions of the even more disquieting crossing of the Gyndes (1.189);¹⁰⁴ they will have noted that the first instinct of Cyrus and his advisers was to retreat rather than advance, and would have accepted the obvious signal that this was a gesture of caution; the closural ring of the narrative will anyway be suggesting that Cyrus' story is nearing its end, and Cyrus is marching on to defeat. There is certainly enough here for the audience to feel that Croesus' advice is paradoxical and dangerous, even if they also accept that the issues are problematic rather than clear-cut.

So Croesus' advice will strike the audience as odd: how are they to explain it? Not, surely, as a Machiavellian ploy to secure his master's defeat: even Cambyses does not suspect that.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps they will infer that Croesus is as susceptible to a

101. Cf. Lattimore 1939: 29 n.12, Immerwahr 1966: 75, 166, Evans 1978–1979: 34 and n.6, Flory 1987: 95–96, Shapiro 1993–1994: 380–82, and especially Fisher 1992: 355, who emphasizes that nothing in the sequel falsifies or calls into doubt Croesus' analysis.

102. Pixodarus emphasizes that the river at their backs would force the Carians to fight well, "better than their natures": that formulation builds on Herodotus' frequently dismissive attitude to the courage of the Asiatic Greeks. Croesus never doubts the Persians' courage or determination, and in the battle-narrative itself (1.214) nothing calls these qualities into question.

103. Thus How and Wells *ad loc.* and Asheri 1988: 381; cf. esp. von Fritz 1967: 236–38.

104. Immerwahr 1966: 166. At the Gyndes the construction of *three hundred and sixty* channels caused a delay of *a year* (1.189.3–190.1): that suggests some supernaturally orchestrated appropriateness. True, in the present case Croesus' elaborate bridging works are not described with any particular "dark" coloring (1.205), and, despite the precedent of Croesus at the Halys (1.75), the "river-motif" has not yet become insistent enough to constitute an automatic signal of rashness and defeat; it did not figure in the Persians' attack on the Medians, for instance (1.127). But perhaps the Gyndes parallel is itself enough to insinuate an impression that Cyrus is crossing a boundary in a way that may prove dangerous.

105. Stahl 1975: 24–26 is wholly convincing here.

run of success as Cyrus and is himself blind to the demands of caution; he has in fact learned little.¹⁰⁶ But there is a subtler point to sense. “My experiences,” says Croesus, “unwelcome as they were, have become lessons for me.” That experience has certainly convinced him of human vulnerability, but we should also remember the specifics of his experience, the way in which his kingdom fell. He had crossed the Halys, certainly, but the resulting battle had been indecisive, and he had withdrawn into his own kingdom (1.76.3–77.1). The crucial battle had been fought in his own territory; Cyrus had swiftly gone on to take the center of government, Sardis; and that had been the end of his great empire. The equivalent fate is what he now envisages as the greatest danger for Cyrus: that Cyrus should turn out to be playing the role which Croesus played then, that Tomyris should this time be the victorious enemy, that the battle should be fought on the home side of the river, and that the victor should drive on to conquer the whole kingdom. True, the language that he now uses may not fit the present case (Cyrus could not “drive on to Tomyris’ center of government,” for the nomadic Massagetae would have no such center); his fears may not suit the present case either, for it strains belief that the primitive and marginal Massagetae would choose, even in victory, to drive on to threaten the entire Persian empire.¹⁰⁷ But even those misperceptions can be expressive, as language and fears—even unrealistic fears—reenact Croesus’ own past: he is fighting his own campaign over again. He has indeed learned from his own “unwelcome sufferings.” It remains a question whether he has learned the right lessons.

Stahl argued that this sequence illustrated “man’s narrow learning capacity”;¹⁰⁸ at first sight that is a paradox in this context where Croesus insists on the need to learn from experience, but the paradox is emerging as an expressive one. For this “narrow learning capacity” may emerge, less (as Stahl thought) in a blindness to the lessons of one’s experience, more in a difficulty in isolating the correct lesson to learn.¹⁰⁹ Croesus may be reliving his own past too closely, extrapolating too mechanically from his own experience. We should also be alert to man’s narrow *teaching* capacity, especially at an oriental court; here, even

106. So Stahl 1975. For a critique of Stahl along different lines cf. Shapiro 1993–1994.

107. Though this may be more complicated an issue than it seems. In the sequel the Massagetae did not drive on to attack the empire: indeed, they virtually disappear from the narrative. But, as Michael Flower reminds me, the nomadic Scythians had done just that during the reign of Cyaxares and had ruled Asia for 28 years, until Cyaxares invited them to a banquet and murdered them (1.103.3, 106). At least that might suggest that this too was a good argument to use on Cyrus, who like Croesus had good reason to remember Cyaxares and his banqueting habits (1.73–75.2). Xerxes later fears similar aggression from the Greeks (7.11.3), and the rhetoric of Aristagoras at 5.49 suggests that such talk could fall on willing ears in Greece as well: post-480 Panhellenic visions lent it some force (Flower 2000).

108. Stahl 1975: 29.

109. Rather as at 7.52.1 Xerxes learns the wrong lesson from Darius’ Scythian expedition: he remembers the loyalty of the Ionians at the bridge and infers that they can be trusted again now. As his interlocutor Artabanus knows, there were many other lessons to learn from the Scythian failure and other ways to view the temper of the Ionians (7.10γ, 7.51).

with Cyrus willing to listen to Croesus, there are limits on what a wise adviser can achieve, and even limits on what he can usefully say: despite the obvious implications of Croesus' own Solonian generalizations, it is simply not possible for him to try to deflect the whole expedition. The momentum of events is simply too great.

CONCLUSIONS

First, the paradigmatic role of the Croesus-λόγος within the History. It is evident that Croesus introduces many themes that will recur later; and it is often tempting to speak as if Croesus' mistakes offer a prototype for the eastern side of the later narrative. These are the ways of the court, and Croesus stands first in the sequence completed by Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. That sort of view is perhaps most intellectually articulated in Marg's famous article on *Selbstsicherheit*,¹¹⁰ where Croesus becomes his prime example of the overconfident self-assurance that typifies the east. But there is more to it. (There is more to Croesus' *Selbstsicherheit* too: we saw how many of his errors are initially stimulated by caution (p. 153)—his caution with Adrastus, his caution in wanting to get in a preemptive strike at Cyrus before he becomes too powerful, his caution in wanting to test the oracles before committing himself to their advice.) We have recurrently seen Lydia as by no means a straightforwardly "eastern" realm, but rather an in-between country.¹¹¹ This is a king who is fascinated by Greece; a king who welcomes Greek sages to his court, who is prepared to listen, who learns his lessons from Bias/Pittacus and eventually even from Solon; a king who prizes Greek insight, Greek gods, and Greek friendship. Herodotus' description of Asia begins with the kingdom that is nearest to Greece, one known to Greek poets five generations before Croesus (1.12.2), and one whose customs are noted as extremely similar to those of the Greeks (1.94.1). In terms of any east/west division, Herodotus begins on the margins of both parts of the world, with a figure who resists description in the easy formulations of Greek/barbarian discourse. The text begins by pressing on the boundaries and blurring them, not by establishing them clearly: the categories are problematic from the start. And we have seen several ways in which Croesus' implications point west as well as east. If it is hard to learn lessons from experience, that is not simply a point about Persian warners and listeners, but about everyone: Greeks are not immune to the elusiveness of wisdom, just as Greeks would have found it hard to read the oracle any better than the Lydian king. Croesus' own

110. Marg 1953.

111. For Lydia as a suggestively in-between starting point cf. Benardete 1969: 13–14; Schneeweiss 1975: 164–65; Lang 1984: 3; Lateiner 1989: 39, 43, 122; Pelling 1997; and, less sympathetically, Heuss 1973: 390.

words on the pyre are seen to capture a much wider truth: Solon's words, now filtered through his own experience, capture something relevant "not merely to himself but to all the human race, and especially those who thought themselves fortunate."

Secondly, let us return to that opening analogy between Solon and Herodotus. As we saw, that implied further analogies between the interaction of Warner and Despot and of author and audience. Since then, we have seen how in Herodotus' narrative both teachers and learners can find insight shifting and elusive; and here too we can find analogies between people in the text, the characters there who are trying but failing to learn the right lessons, and the audience of the text, readers who are themselves trying to gauge what lessons there are to be learned. In that context, let us go back to Croesus on the pyre, and my suggestion that the audience would be as surprised as Croesus by Apollo's reply. If that reading was right, the audience are drawn into Herodotus' narrative with new intensity. They wonder as his characters wonder; the narrative has suggested plenty of possible ideas and solutions; and, if the audience reproduce the same mistake and then follow the same false leads as the characters, that is a most arresting effect. On one level, it reinforces emotional engagement. Croesus provides a real "focus," we react cognitively through his eyes. That is high-quality mimesis, reconstructing in an audience the same emotions as would have driven the original agents. But it goes beyond that, for the difficulties of finding true explanations have a wider implication for any audience of Herodotean historiography. Any other morals or interpretations that emerge from the past may turn out to be equally slippery. That does not mean that one cannot learn from historical experience, nor that one cannot find new perspectives for one's own contemporary experience—but those "lessons" must be extremely provisional. The wise reader will be extremely doubtful about their validity, and may expect to reckon with continual re-evaluation in the light of new reading and new experience.

That is a model for the reading of Herodotus. We should not be surprised if even aspects as basic to the narrative as (say) the Greek/barbarian polarity subtly shift their suggestions as the narrative wears on. It can be argued too that the audience's re-evaluation of what they have read may go on after the reading has stopped, that, for instance, their contemporary experience of the Athenian empire might suggest further revisions of any strong distinctions between eastern tyranny and Greek freedom which they may, provisionally, have drawn from the text. But that would be a different paper.¹¹²

Christ Church, Oxford
chris.pelling@classics.oxford.ac.uk

112. One not very different from Pelling 1997.

This present paper has a long ancestry. It was first written in 1994, and was intended to fit into a longer study of historical explanation in the fifth century (cf. n.8 above); it may yet do so. Oral versions were delivered in Oxford in 1995, at the National Humanities Center, North Carolina in 2000, and at Smith College and Brown University in 2002; it was also circulated and discussed by the Atlantic Coast meeting of ancient historians in Philadelphia in November 2002 and by a graduate seminar at the University of Southern California in April 2005. I am grateful to all these audiences for many helpful comments, and apologize for keeping them to myself for too long. Many thanks too to Emily Baragwanath, Roger Brock, Mathieu de Bakker, Philip Stadter, Michael Flower, Judith Mossman, Elton Barker, and especially Carolyn Dewald for their careful reading and acute suggestions, and to the participants in an Oxford graduate seminar in Hilary term, 2005, for full discussion of many aspects of Herodotus' speeches.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asheri, D. 1988. *Erodot: Le Storie Libro I: La Lidia e la Persia*. Milano.
- Avery, H. C. 1972. "Herodotus' Picture of Cyrus." *AJP* 93: 529–46.
- Bakker, E. J., I. J. F. de Jong, and H. van Wees. 2002. *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*. Leiden, Boston, and Köln.
- Barth, H. 1968. "Nochmals Herodot 1.8.3." *Phil.* 112: 288–91.
- Benardete, S. 1969. *Herodotean Inquiries*. Den Haag.
- Bischoff, H. 1932. *Der Warner bei Herodot*. Diss. Marburg.
- Boedeker, D. 2003. "Pedestrian Fatalities: The Prosaics of Death in Herodotus." In Derow and Parker 2003, 17–36.
- Burkert, W. 1985. "Das Ende des Kroisos: Vorstufen einer herodoteischen Geschichtserzählung." In Schäublin 1985, 4–15.
- Cairns, D. L. 1996a. "'O with her αἰδώς': Herodotus 1.8.3–4." *CQ* 46: 78–83.
- . 1996b. "Hybris, Dishonour, and Thinking Big." *JHS* 116: 1–32.
- Chiasson, C. C. 1986. "The Herodotean Solon." *GRBS* 27: 249–62.
- . 2003. "Herodotus' Use of Attic Tragedy in the Lydian Logos." *ClAnt* 22: 5–36.
- Christ, M. R. 1994. "Herodotean Kings and Historical Inquiry." *ClAnt* 13: 167–202.
- Cobet, J. 1971. *Herodots Excurse und die Frage der Einheit seines Werkes*. *Historia Einzelschriften* 17. Wiesbaden.
- Cooper, G. L. 1974. "Intrusive Oblique Initiatives in Herodotus." *TAPA* 104: 23–76.
- Crane, G. S. 1996. "The Prosperity of Tyrants: Bacchylides, Herodotus, and the Contest for Legitimacy." *Arethusa* 29: 57–85.
- Currie, B., M. Clarke, and R. O. A. M. Lyne. 2006. *Epic Interactions: Homer, Virgil, and the Heroic Tradition*. Oxford.
- Davies, J. P. 2004. *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on their Gods*. Cambridge.
- Denner, A. 1933. *Die Rede bei Herodot und ihre Weiterbildung bei Thukydides*. Diss. München.
- Denniston, J. D. 1952. *Greek Prose Style*. Oxford.
- . 1954. *The Greek Particles*. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- Denniston, J. D., and D. L. Page. 1957. *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*. Oxford.
- Derow, P. S., and R. C. T. Parker, eds. 2003. *Herodotus and His World: Essays from a Conference in Memory of George Forrest*. Oxford.

- Dewald, C. 1985. "Practical Knowledge and the Historian's Role in Herodotus and Thucydides." In M. H. Jameson, ed., *The Greek Historians: Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek*, 47–63. Saratoga.
- . 1987. "Narrative Surface and Authorial Voice in Herodotus' Histories." *Arethusa* 20: 147–70.
- . 1993. "Reading the World: The Interpretation of Objects in Herodotus' Histories." In R. Rosen and J. Farrell, eds., *Nomodeiktes: Festschrift for Martin Ostwald*, 55–70. Michigan.
- . 1997. "Wanton Kings, Pickled Heroes, and Gnostic Founding Fathers: Strategies of Meaning at the End of Herodotus's Histories." In D. H. Roberts, F. M. Dunn, and D. P. Fowler, eds., *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*, 62–82. Princeton.
- . 2003. "Form and content: The Question of Tyranny in Herodotus." In K. Morgan, ed., *Popular Tyranny: Sovereignty and its Discontents in Classical Athens*, 25–58. Austin.
- Dickey, E. 1996. *Greek Forms of Address*. Oxford.
- Drexler, H. 1972. *Herodot-Studien*. Hildesheim and New York.
- Erbse, H. 1979. *Ausgewählte Schriften zur klassischen Philologie*. Berlin.
- . 1992. *Studien zum Verständnis Herodots*. Berlin and New York.
- Evans, J. A. S. 1978–1979. "What Happened to Croesus?" *CJ* 74: 34–40.
- Fehling, D. 1989. *Herodotus and His "Sources": Citation, Invention, and Narrative Art*. Trans. J. G. Howie. German original 1972. Leeds.
- Ferrill, A. 1978. "Herodotus on Tyranny." *Hist.* 27: 385–98.
- Fish, S. 1967. *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Berkeley.
- Fisher, N. R. E. 1992. *Hybris*. Warminster.
- . 2002. "Popular Morality in Herodotus." In Bakker, de Jong, and van Wees 2002, 199–224.
- Flory, S. 1987. *The Archaic Smile of Herodotus*. Detroit.
- Flower, H. I. 1991. "Herodotus and Delphic Traditions about Croesus." In Flower and Toher 1991, 57–77.
- Flower, M. A. 2000. "From Simonides to Isocrates: The Fifth-Century Origins of Fourth-Century Panhellenism." *ClAnt* 19: 65–101.
- Flower, M. A., and M. Toher, eds. 1991. *Georgica: Greek Studies in Honour of George Cawkwell*. *BICS Supp.* 58.
- Focke, F. 1927. *Herodot als Historiker*. Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 1. Stuttgart.
- Fornara, C. 1971. *Herodotus*. Oxford.
- Fowler, R. L. 1996. "Herodotos and His Contemporaries." *JHS* 116: 62–77.
- Fraenkel, E. 1950. *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*. Vols. 1–3. Oxford.
- Friedrich, W. H. 1973. "Der Tod der Tyrannen: Die poetische Gerechtigkeit der alten Geschichtsschreiber—und Herodot." *A&A* 18: 97–129.
- Gould, J. 1989. *Herodotus*. London.
- Graziosi, B. 2002. *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic*. Cambridge.
- Gri th, M. 1983. *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound*. Cambridge.
- Hainsworth, J. B. 1993. *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Vol. 3, Books 9–12. Cambridge.
- Harder, R. 1953. "Herodot 1.8.3." In G. E. Mylonas and D. Raymond, eds., *Studies presented to David Moore Robinson on his Seventieth Birthday*, ii. 446–49. St.

- Louis. Repr. in W. Marg, ed., *Kleine Schriften* (München, 1960), 208–11, and in Marg 1962, 370–74.
- Harrison, T. 2000. *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus*. Oxford.
- Hellmann, F. 1934. *Herodots Kroisos-Logos*. Neue Philol. Untersuch. 9. Berlin.
- Heuss, A. 1973. "Motive von Herodots lydischem Logos." *Hermes* 101: 385–419.
- Hutchinson, G. O. 2001. *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Commentary on Selected Larger Pieces*. Oxford.
- Immerwahr, H. R. 1956. "Aspects of Historical Causation in Herodotus." *TAPA* 87: 247–80.
- . 1966. *Form and Thought in Herodotus*. Cleveland.
- Klump, G. 1930. "Zu Herodot 1.207 und 2.39." *PhW* 50: 890–93.
- Klees, H. 1965. *Die Eigenart des griechischen Glaubens an Orakel und Seher*. Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 43. Stuttgart.
- Konstan, D. 1983. "The Stories in Herodotus' *Histories*: Book 1." *Helios* 10: 1–22.
- . 1987. "Persians, Greeks, and Empire." *Arethusa* 20: 59–73.
- . 2001. *Pity Transformed*. London.
- Krischer, T. 1964. "Solon und Kroisos." *WS* 77: 174–77.
- Kroll, J. 2000. Review of Kurke 1999. *CJ* 96: 85–90.
- Kurke, L. 1999. *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold: The Politics of Meaning in Archaic Greece*. Princeton.
- Laird, A. 2001. "Ringing the Changes on Gyges: Philosophy and the Formation of Fiction in Plato's *Republic*." *JHS* 121: 12–29.
- Lang, M. L. 1984. *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse*. Harvard.
- Lateiner, D. 1989. *The Historical Method of Herodotus*. Toronto.
- Lattimore, R. 1939. "The wise advisor in Herodotus." *CP* 34: 24–35.
- Lloyd, M. 1987. "Cleobis and Biton (Herodotus 1.31)." *Hermes* 115: 22–28.
- Maehler, H. 2004. *Bacchylides: A Selection*. Cambridge.
- Marg, W. 1953. "'Selbstsicherheit' bei Herodot." In G. E. Mylonas and D. Raymond, eds., *Studies presented to David Moore Robinson on his Seventieth Birthday*, ii. 1103–11. St. Louis. Repr. in Marg 1962, 290–301.
- . 1962. *Herodot: Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung*. Wege der Forschung xxvi. Darmstadt.
- Marincola, J. 1997. "Odysseus and the Historians." *Histos* 1.
- Martin, R. P. 1993. "The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom." In C. Dougherty and L. Kurke, eds., *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece*, 108–28. Cambridge.
- McGlew, J. F. 1993. *Tyranny and Political Culture in Ancient Greece*. Ithaca.
- Miller, M. 1963. "The Herodotean Croesus." *Klio* 41: 58–94.
- Moles, J. L. 1993. "Truth and Untruth in Herodotus and Thucydides." In C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman, eds., *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, 88–121.
- . 1996. "Herodotus Warns the Athenians." *PLLS* 9: 259–84.
- Munson, R. V. 1991. "The Madness of Cambyses (Herodotus 3.16–38)." *Arethusa* 24: 43–65.
- . 2001. *Telling Wonders: Ethnographic and Political Discourse in the Work of Herodotus*. Ann Arbor.
- Nagy, G. 1990. *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past*. Baltimore and London.
- Otto, A. 1890. *Die Sprichwörter der Römer*. Leipzig.
- Parke, H. W. 1984. "Croesus and Delphi." *GRBS* 25: 209–32.

- Parker, R. C. T. 1998. "Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion." In C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite, and R. Seaford, eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*, 105–25. Oxford.
- Pelling, C. B. R. 1990. "Conclusion." In C. B. R. Pelling, ed., *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, 245–62. Oxford.
- . 1997. "East is East and West is West—Or Are They? National Stereotyping in Herodotus." *Histos* 1. <http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1997/pelling.html>
- . 1999. "Epilogue." In C. S. Kraus, ed., *The Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts*, 325–60. Leiden.
- . 2002. "Speech and Action: Herodotus' Debate on the Constitutions." *PCPS* 48: 123–58.
- . 2006. "Herodotus and Homer." Forthcoming in Currie, Clarke, and Lyne 2006.
- Pfeiffer, R. 1949. *Callimachus*. 2 Vols. Oxford.
- Pohlenz, M. 1937. *Herodot, der erste Geschichtsschreiber des Abendlandes*. Leipzig.
- Raubaugh, K. A. 1987. "Herodotus, Political Thought, and the Meaning of History." *Arethusa* 20: 221–48.
- . 1989. "Contemporary Perceptions of Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens." *C&M* 40: 33–70.
- . 2002. "Herodotus and the Intellectual Trends of His Time." In Bakker, de Jong, and van Wees 2002, 149–86.
- Raubitschek, A. E. 1957. "Die schamlose Ehefrau (Herodot 1.8.3)." *RhM* 100: 139–41.
- . 1958. "Ein neues Pittakeion." *WS* 71: 170–72.
- Redfield, J. 1985. "Herodotus the Tourist." *CPh* 80: 97–118.
- Regenbogen, O. 1930. "Die Geschichte von Solon und Krösus." *Das humanistische Gymnasium* 41, 1–20. Repr. in F. Dirlmeier, ed., *Kleine Schriften* (1961), 101–24 and in Marg 1962, 375–403.
- Richardson, N. 1993. *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Vol. 6, Books 21–24. Cambridge.
- Rubincam, C. 2003. "Numbers in Greek Poetry and Historiography: Quantifying Fehling." *CQ* 53: 448–63.
- Schäublin, C. 1985. *Catalepton: Festschrift für Bernhard Wyss*. Basel.
- Schneeweiss, G. 1975. "Kroisos und Solon: Die Frage nach dem Glück." In A. Patzer, ed., *Apophoreta für Uvo Hölscher zum 60 Geburtstag*, 161–87. Bonn.
- Sebeok, T., and E. Brady. 1979. "The Two Sons of Croesus: A Myth about Communication in Herodotus." *QUCC* 30: 7–22.
- Segal, C. P. 1971. "Croesus on the Pyre: Herodotus and Bacchylides." *WS NF* 5: 39–51.
- Shapiro, S. O. 1993–1994. "Learning through Suffering: Human Wisdom in Herodotus." *CJ* 89: 349–55.
- . 1996. "Herodotus and Solon." *ClAnt* 15: 348–64.
- . 2000. "Proverbial Wisdom in Herodotus." *TAPA* 130: 89–118.
- Stahl, H.-P. 1968. "Herodots Gyges-Tragödie." *Hermes* 96: 385–400.
- . 1975. "Learning through Suffering? Croesus' Conversations in the *History* of Herodotus." *YCS* 24: 1–36.
- Visser, E. 2000. "Herodots Kroisos-Logos: Rezeptionssteuerung und Geschichtsphilosophie." *WJb* 24: 5–28.
- von Fritz, K. 1967. *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*. Vols. 1–2. Berlin.
- Walbank, F. W. 1957–1979. *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*. Oxford.
- Waterfield, R., and C. Dewald. 1998. *Herodotus: The Histories*. Oxford.
- West, S. R. 2002. *Demythologisation in Herodotus. Xenia Toruniensia* 6. Torun.
- Winnington-Ingram, R. P. 1983. *Studies in Aeschylus*. Cambridge.
- Woodman, A. J. 1988 *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*. London.

