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## Herodotean Symbolism: Pericles as Lion Cub

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A recurring question that finds place in practically every general discussion of Herodotus' work concerns the single mention of Pericles' name in the *Histories*.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, scholars have asked why Herodotus chooses to report that Pericles' mother, Agariste, dreamt that she bore a lion cub on the night before Pericles' birth.<sup>2</sup>

The "traditional" understanding is that Herodotus made a brief tribute to Pericles in an excursus aimed at vindicating the Alcmaeonids from charges of treason, uncritically repeating the family's version of history. Although not the first so to theorize, Felix Jacoby is customarily recognized as the creator of this view, owing to the prominence of his Pauly–Wissowa article characterizing Herodotus as an ardent partisan of the Alcmaeonids.<sup>3</sup> The authority of this position seems to be questioned but little in casual classroom treatments of Herodotus, and is still maintained in a few scholarly quarters.<sup>4</sup>

However, there are now more than a few scholars who have re-evaluated Herodotus' purpose in the Alcmaeonid excursus, with Hermann Strasburger penning the groundbreaking article some forty years ago.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Charles Fornara and John Hart wished to see Herodotus less as completely dependent on his source material, and more as an independent analyst.<sup>6</sup> More recently, there have been in particular two examinations of

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers of *ICS* for their helpful observations, which have strengthened my argumentation considerably. Any misapprehensions or other errors are, of course, my own responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> Hdt. 6. 131. 2.

<sup>3</sup> F. Jacoby, "Herodotos," *RE Suppl.* II (1913) 226–42, himself following the tradition of H. Stein's early claim that Pericles was referred to "wie einen Gott"; cf. W. Aly, *Volksmärchen, Sage und Novelle bei Herodot und seinen Zeitgenossen* (Göttingen 1921) 158.

<sup>4</sup> Rather recently O. Murray, "Herodotus and Oral History," in H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Achaemenid History II: The Greek Sources* (Leiden 1987) 93–115. Also cf. F. D. Harvey, "The Political Sympathies of Herodotus," *Historia* 15 (1966) 254–55, to oppose Strasburger; see next note.

<sup>5</sup> H. Strasburger, "Herodot und das perikleische Athen," *Historia* 4 (1955) 1–25, especially 16–17.

<sup>6</sup> C. W. Fornara, *Herodotus: An Interpretative Essay* (Oxford 1971), to whose landmark views on Herodotus' message for his audience I am much indebted; J. Hart, *Herodotus* (New York 1982).

Herodotus' treatment of the Alcmaeonid family in general. Robert Develin argued for a neutral, objective report;<sup>7</sup> somewhat in the tradition of Strasburger, Rosalind Thomas demonstrated how Herodotus' "Alcmaeonid excursus" may well have a critical tone.<sup>8</sup>

In this paper, I propose to add a new dimension to the current skepticism of the "traditional" understanding of Agariste's dream by looking at the episode in the context of Herodotus' narrative as a whole. Specifically, I wish to focus on how Herodotus utilizes lion cubs symbolically; in light of previous context, what would identifying Pericles as a lion cub mean for Herodotus? I will venture to argue that, given its textual background, the association can well be quite uncomplimentary. Such an examination, I hope, will provide deeper insight into Herodotus' narrative themes and authorial objectives.

Prior debate on the Alcmaeonid excursus has not ignored the lion symbol itself, but has been confined to a rather general level. How and Wells' commentary on Agariste's dream and G. W. Dyson's early piece (entitled "Λέοντα τεκεῖν") generally represent the "traditional" view.<sup>9</sup> The story of the dream was apparently well known, enough to warrant a parody by Aristophanes, and was doubtless circulated as Periclean propaganda.<sup>10</sup> In addition, some famous Greek monuments of lions as symbols of noble, regal power (e.g. the gate of Mycenae, the commemoration of Leonidas and the other Spartan dead at Thermopylae) further suggest that Herodotus could not have meant the association to be anything but honorific.

However, the more recent scholars frequently point out that, as a symbol alone, the lion had ambivalent force in Greek thought.<sup>11</sup> In myth, lions tend to appear as ferocious, strange, and certainly dangerous; the Nemean lion, the lions who draw Cybele's chariot, and the partially leonine Sphinx of Thebes are but three legendary examples, and in Homer the lion often appears as nothing more than a symbol of bloodthirsty savagery.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as for lion cubs in particular, the ambivalence shows itself in a well-known theme that may have been proverbial in Athens. To "raise a lion cub in the house" was to invite disaster. What at first appears to be a pleasant,

<sup>7</sup> R. Develin, "Herodotus and the Alcmaeonids," in J. Eadie and J. Ober (eds.), *The Craft of the Ancient Historian* (London 1985) 125–35. I think it particularly appropriate to quote Develin's statement of purpose (134–35) as applicable to the present offering as well: "I would not wish this to be interpreted as a more general lack of regard for Jacoby's contribution. Rather would I stress that it is a disservice to the great investigators of the past if we allow devotion to their magisterial statements to develop into scholarly sclerosis."

<sup>8</sup> R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989) 261–82.

<sup>9</sup> G. W. Dyson, "Λέοντα τεκεῖν," *CQ* 23 (1929) 186–95.

<sup>10</sup> Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* 514–16.

<sup>11</sup> See especially Fornara (above, note 6) 51–55. See also J. A. S. Evans, *Herodotus* (Boston 1982) 98 and M. Ostwald, "Herodotus and Athens," *ICS* 16 (1991) 137–48, especially 142. Although J. Gould, *Herodotus* (New York 1989) 117–18, also identifies the lion as ambivalent, he rejects some of the conclusions that I will draw here.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Iliad* 3, 23–26 and 15, 592 and 630–36. Cf. also Hdt. 4, 191.

even docile animal will later grow up to be not the pet and guardian of an Androcles, but what its nature dictates: a violent beast with unchecked ferocity and no regard for higher-order human concerns, such as past beneficence. The most famous occurrence of this conceit is of course found in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where Helen is likened to the lion cub: Paris brings home an apparently attractive prize, only to find that it will turn out to cause Troy's ruin.<sup>13</sup>

Herodotus' inclusion of Agariste's dream was indeed a matter of choice, and although Herodotus is fond of reporting dreams—particularly with regard to eastern nations, whose traditions emphasize them—propaganda such as this may have been one story of a dream that Herodotus might well have decided to omit.<sup>14</sup> The historian himself makes it clear early on that he is not above ignoring or rationalizing tales intended to “glorify” someone, as was the case with the young Cyrus.<sup>15</sup> Ever resourceful and clever, selecting and organizing his material with higher structural and thematic goals in mind, Herodotus is capable of turning even a popular story to his own ends, and challenging his audience to reflect anew upon the apparently familiar.<sup>16</sup>

We must remember this in our own inquiry about the meaning of Agariste's dream, and thus go beyond general principles of Greek thought to examine what lion cubs stand for strictly within the context of the *Histories*. Herodotus takes full advantage of the lion's ambiguity; for him, the lion cub symbolizes potential for power that will nonetheless end in frustration, failure, and destruction from “within the house”; this last is repeatedly associated with an analogous idea of unnatural birth.

In the *Histories*, the lion cub first appears in a digression explaining how the Persians were able to take Sardis. At this point, Croesus has already ignored Solon's advice to “look to the end”; instead, he has blindly

<sup>13</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 717–81. Perhaps the definitive treatment of this scene is B. M. W. Knox, “The Lion in the House,” *CP* 47 (1952) 17–25. Knox argues that the scene is transitional: The lion cub also symbolizes the temptations of *hubris* that will result in excess and death for Agamemnon. The idea also occurs in Euripides, *Suppliant Women* 1222–23, as well as Aristophanes, *Knights* 1037 and *Frogs* 1431–33, where Alcibiades is so symbolized. This is especially appropriate for perhaps the most ambivalent figure in Athenian history, and in this connection we might also recall Plutarch's anecdote about Alcibiades' desperation in a wrestling match: Bitten in violation of the rules, his opponent characterized Alcibiades' behavior as womanly, but Alcibiades likened himself to a lion (*Alcibiades* 2. 2).

<sup>14</sup> F. Solmsen, *Two Crucial Decisions in Herodotus* (Amsterdam 1974) 17 n. 48, states the matter well: “Herodotus makes clear that reporting does not imply consent or acceptance, and he repeatedly indicates his preference. Nor would I doubt that he dismissed much that he heard and ignored versions that he did not consider worth reporting.”

<sup>15</sup> Hdt. 1. 95. 1. J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire* (London 1983) 27, cleverly speculates that in his haste to “debunk” the various traditions concerning Cyrus' youth, Herodotus in fact rejected the version that seems to be the most reliably supported by the cuneiform sources, namely that Cyrus started out as the young king of Anshan.

<sup>16</sup> On structure and organization in the *Histories*, see especially H. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland 1966) and J. L. Myres, *Herodotus, Father of History* (Oxford 1953).

trusted in his material situation and, in turn, has prioritized safeguarding it. He thus attacks Persia preemptively, assuming that the Delphic oracle assured him victory in perhaps the most famous of its responses: "If you attack the Persians you will destroy a great empire."<sup>17</sup>

Now, we learn that a similar false sense of security had also helped to doom the city generations ago. With apparent nonchalance, Herodotus reports that a concubine of Croesus' ancestor, Meles, bore a lion cub that had the potential to make Sardis invulnerable, if only it were carried around the circuit of the walls. Meles, however, supposing that one spot was too precipitous for any enemy to negotiate, did not carry the cub past it. This is where the Persians gained access to Sardis, as a Lydian soldier inadvertently showed the way while retrieving a lost helmet.<sup>18</sup>

Herodotus' lack of skepticism about such an unusual birth may stem from the story's appropriateness for the historian's narrative objectives. The lion cub born into the house of Croesus is indeed the proverbial "lion in the house," beginning a process of destruction from within. Croesus, of course, is ultimately responsible for completing this process and, amongst the Greeks, the lion was indeed well known as the symbol of Lydian royalty. Moreover, it was especially associated with the very thing that spurred Croesus to self-destruction: his wealth. Not only did the lion appear on Lydian coins, but more importantly for Herodotus' narrative, a gold lion was the centerpiece of the treasures that Croesus sent to Delphi.<sup>19</sup>

In this regard too, the lion is failed potential: Croesus' generous gifts did not, as intended, buy Apollo's protection for the Lydian's life of luxury. Indeed, the oracle itself warned Croesus to give up that lifestyle voluntarily if he and his kingdom even hoped to survive.<sup>20</sup> This was not a surprising injunction, considering that Herodotus characterizes Croesus' effete habits as contrary to Lydian *nomos*; indeed, *nomoi* define culture.<sup>21</sup> Appropriately, it was only with Croesus' riches gone that Apollo preserved the one thing left to him: his very life. What finally motivated Apollo to intervene were not the material gifts, but the *pathei mathos* that Croesus at last achieved.

Again indeed, the "lion cub in the house" well represents the effects of Croesus' policy. Although attractive at first, material gain and imperial

<sup>17</sup> Hdt. 1. 53. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Hdt. 1. 84.

<sup>19</sup> Hdt. 1. 50. 3. Herodotus accounts for the apparent exaggeration of this offering's weight by claiming that it had been partially melted in a fire.

<sup>20</sup> Hdt. 1. 55. Croesus is derisively called a "tenderfoot"; he is told to flee Cyrus, the "mule king" (half Mede, half Persian), by running along the pebbly Hermus, thereby ruining his dainty feet and the lifestyle that they represent. By following the advice, Croesus could have painlessly fulfilled the Delphic oracle's earlier pronouncement of recompense to the Heraclids from the fifth generation succeeding Gyges (1. 13. 2).

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. S. Humphreys, "Law, Custom, and Culture in Herodotus," *Arethusa* 20 (1987) 211-20.

success become obsessive, and equally harmful ends in themselves.<sup>22</sup> In effect, such pursuits turn out to be their own undoing, in this case both for Croesus and for his nation. It is all too fitting that when the Lydians, betrayed by their king's behavior contrary to Lydian *nomos*, unsuccessfully revolt against their Persian overlords, Croesus advises Cyrus to force all the Lydians to alter their *nomoi* as well, in order to ensure that the nation will never regain any military, not to mention imperial, capability.<sup>23</sup>

The same themes underlie Herodotus' second mention of a lion cub. Another dynasty is about to be destroyed from within, and the prospect of an unusual birth is involved. In attempting to secure his power, Cambyses has already started undermining his family and his nation. Accepting a story derived from Darius' Behistun text, Herodotus reports that Cambyses feared potential rivalry of his brother Smerdis, and had him secretly killed, a preemptive murder with intentions akin to Croesus' motives for attacking Persia.<sup>24</sup> Also like Croesus, the Persian monarch has generally lived contrary to *nomos* as well, but to such a greater extent, and with such a disrespectful attitude, that Herodotus judges him mad for it.<sup>25</sup> In particular, Herodotus characterizes Cambyses' marriage to his own sister as completely inconsistent with Persian *nomos*, and sanctioned by the Persian royal judges only under coercion; now, a child has been conceived from the incestuous union. In fact, Herodotus may have been excessively eager to portray Cambyses as a flaunter of *nomos* in placing the marriage before Cambyses' successful invasion of Egypt, and in so strongly insisting that the Persian's only motive was lust; he thus discounts the possibility that Cambyses, elsewhere so hostile to Egyptian *nomos*, would want to emulate pharaonic custom by taking his own sister as wife, as was probably the case in actuality.<sup>26</sup>

Enjoying the conqueror's leisure in Egypt, Cambyses stages a fight between a lion cub and a pair of puppies. So long as one puppy was tied up, the cub easily dominated the other; but when the first puppy broke free, the two combined to kill the cub. This practically and symbolically signals the

<sup>22</sup> As the chorus of *Agamemnon* commented in the lion cub parable, "the unholy deed gives birth to many more like it" (758–60).

<sup>23</sup> Hdt. I. 155.

<sup>24</sup> For a recent edition of the text, see R. Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great, Old Persian Text* (London 1991). Darius claimed that after Cambyses "died his own death," it was not Cambyses' brother Bardiya (Smerdis) who inherited the throne, as everyone believed, but rather a double, the Magus Gaumata; this is a common name paired with a generic title. Darius dutifully killed this usurper and took power himself. This ancient equivalent of the modern "evil twin" cliché, once staunchly believed (e.g. How and Wells' commentary, I 393 n. 1), is now almost universally rejected.

<sup>25</sup> Hdt. 3. 38. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Pace K. M. T. Atkinson, "The Legitimacy of Cambyses and Darius as Kings of Egypt," *JAOS* 76 (1956) 167–77. If one accepts the current theory that the Achaemenids were Zoroastrian, kin-marriage would be expected anyway, but this particular situation was problematic; for a discussion, see M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism II* (Leiden 1982) 75–77.

beginning of Cambyses' undoing. In practical terms, Cambyses kills his sister-wife as a result; he fears a perceptive hint in her distraught observation that, unlike the puppies, Cambyses no longer has a brother who could come to his aid in a crisis. Thus, Cambyses himself destroys his unusual, unborn child and the future of his dynasty as well, at least for the moment.<sup>27</sup>

The symbolism of the event operates in more than one way. Although the sister-wife likened Cambyses to one of the puppies, what ensues reveals that the lion cub turns out to stand for Cambyses, and the puppies the Magian brothers who are about to begin a coup against him. As the Magi's efforts depend upon one of the brothers' close resemblance to Smerdis, we realize that Cambyses' step to strengthen his position actually enables his downfall. Given the numerous ways in which Cambyses put himself in danger, it is only fitting that he completes his destruction "from within": As he prepares to go back to Persia to face the Magi, he dies from an accidental thigh wound suffered in mounting his horse.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the son of Cyrus, from whom so much was surely expected, ended up squandering his inheritance and ending Cyrus' line for good.

The third instance of a lion cub in the *Histories* only seems to confirm the symbolic messages of the first two. In a passage much ridiculed by ancient commentators, and virtually ignored by modern ones, Herodotus states that a lioness can give birth but once in her life. As it is born, the cub fiercely claws at its mother's womb, destroying the organ from inside. In its very nature of being the most powerful beast, then, the lion is too powerful for its own good; its very strength ensures that, theoretically, the species will eventually destroy itself.<sup>29</sup>

Basically, this might on the surface seem to be a gratuitous observation, occurring outside the bounds of any discrete historical episode. However, Herodotus here appeals to the general "laws of nature" regarding the lion itself as a way of grounding the "laws of history" that he is deriving with the use of the lion symbol. Nature has a way of limiting the concentration of the fanciful, and the powerful; so human behavior, which generates "historical law" and which Herodotus attempts to demonstrate as fundamentally similar across cultural boundaries (below the level of *nomos*), has a way of limiting the concentration of wealth. Indeed, Herodotus says just about as much in introducing his own view of historical

<sup>27</sup> Hdt. 3. 32. 1-2, identified as a Greek story. Confirming this conclusion, Herodotus next reports an alternate Egyptian tradition in which the sister-wife is more direct: She peels a cabbage in front of her husband, saying that he is doing the same to his house. Enraged, Cambyses kicks her in the stomach, causing both miscarriage and death.

<sup>28</sup> Hdt. 3. 64. Here, Herodotus reminds the audience that the thigh wound itself also suggests how Cambyses brought ruin upon himself. He had disgraced Egyptian *nomos* by stabbing the Apis bull in the thigh and killing it; Herodotus reports that the Egyptians understood this to be the critical event in shaping Cambyses' fate (3. 30. 1).

<sup>29</sup> Hdt. 3. 108. 4. Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 579a2, claimed that such a scenario was "ridiculous," an artificial explanation for the low numbers of the species.

causation upon rejecting the infamous “cherchez la femme” parody to open his narrative;<sup>30</sup> we can also look again to Aeschylus for the symbolic connection between the “lion in the house” and the self-destructive effects of excessive wealth in the playwright’s description of Helen as an ἄγαλμα πλούτου and the attendant choral remarks.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of Herodotus’ historical narrative, though, the placement of the digressive observation about the lioness does indeed mark a critical transition between episodic groups, one that precisely emphasizes the universality of the historian’s conclusions. Herodotus next uses the lion cub not to describe an eastern potentate, but as a symbol of an analog in Greece itself: the tyrant. In his condemnation of the institution of tyranny, the Corinthian Socles relates the history of the Cypselids. As Corinth was oppressed by an oligarchy, two oracular responses from Delphi predicted how the baby Cypselus would change the situation. The first described him as a millstone which would fall upon the rulers and bring justice to Corinth; the second, however, symbolized him as the product of an unusual birth: a lion cub born to an eagle. The cub would go on to “loosen the knees of many.”<sup>32</sup>

Herodotus’ conception of the lion cub very suitably applies to the standard pattern of Greek tyranny itself, as exemplified by Plato and Aristotle, and as Herodotus himself summarized it in his very Greek account of Deioeces the Mede.<sup>33</sup> The tyrant rises as a liberator, and initially rules in splendor, with much potential for the welfare of his people; even the anti-tyrannical Herodotus must admit this about Pisistratus.<sup>34</sup> However, the tyrant soon concentrates on his own enrichment at his people’s expense, and thus eats away at his city from within, committing murders, breaking *nomos*, and indulging in excess.<sup>35</sup>

This is precisely how Cypselus’ career would proceed, and the knees loosened by that unusually born lion cub would belong both to the deserving and undeserving alike; the oracle’s customary ambiguity proves

<sup>30</sup> Hdt. 1. 5. 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Agamemnon* 741; cf. below on the next line and Herodotus’ story of Cypselus’ survival. The similarities to Herodotus’ sentiments on the fickle character of wealth are chiefly in 750–56; cf. more generally the famous outline of the process of *hubris* and *dike*, 763–81.

<sup>32</sup> Hdt. 5. 92β. 2–3. On the tyranny at Corinth and the symbolism of the oracles, see V. J. Gray, “Herodotus and Images of Tyranny: The Tyrants of Corinth,” *AJP* 116 (1996) 361–89, especially 371–76. Although Gray also understands the lion negatively, she so interprets the millstone as well, admitting that the attendant prediction of justice would thus be problematic, and thus concluding that the symbol anticipates the final result of Cypselus’ rule.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic* 8. 566b–67c and Aristotle, *Ars rhetorica* 1357b30. For Herodotus’ account of Deioeces, see 1. 96–101. It is telling that Herodotus’ first statement about Deioeces is that he made history out of a “lust for tyranny”; see note 50 below.

<sup>34</sup> Hdt 1. 59. 6. On Herodotus’ opposition to tyranny, see especially J. Gammie, “Herodotus on Kings and Tyrants,” *JNES* 45 (1986) 171–95.

<sup>35</sup> Compare also Otanes’ characterization of the tyrant in the “Constitutional Debate,” 3. 80. 3–4. This Greek perspective attributed to a Persian is fundamental to Herodotus’ views on the subject.

more than appropriate. Nonetheless, the Corinthians did figure out what the responses portended, and resolved to murder the baby Cypselus, who survived in perhaps an equally appropriate way: The infant smile which forestalled the would-be killers is the functional equivalent of the “soft glance of the eyes” with which Aeschylus’ “lion in the house” supposedly captivated the Trojans.<sup>36</sup>

This is the background against which Herodotus chooses to set the story of Agariste’s dream. Pericles’ representation as a lion cub notionally compares him to Croesus, Cambyses, and Cypselus, but the immediate context of the report makes the link even stronger. The mention of Pericles ends the digression on the Alcmaeonids, which started with an account of how the family obtained the wealth with which it could achieve prominence. We learn that it was none other than Croesus and his false sense of security that gave Alcmaeon his start. The Lydian invited his Greek guest to take as much gold as he could carry and, amused at Alcmaeon’s clever efforts to find portage methods, felt that he could afford to let Alcmaeon keep double what he had managed to pick up.<sup>37</sup>

Pericles is not the only famous Athenian leader who owes such a debt to Croesus. Miltiades’ family, too, ultimately derived its power in the Chersonese from Croesus, and it may not be mere accident that Herodotus directly follows the mention of Pericles with an account of Miltiades’ unseemly end in the Parian expedition. This is quite an important story, as it illustrates one of the fundamental lessons that Herodotus encourages his audience to learn from historical example. As the imperial nation is defeated, the victorious enemy is tempted to adopt its policy. So the Lydian counsellor Sandanis wisely predicted when Croesus contemplated attacking Persia,<sup>38</sup> and it was Croesus himself who gave the victorious Cyrus a first-hand lesson in imperialism. If he wanted to maintain his position, the Great King would have to break his initial promise of wealth to all those Persians who would follow him in overthrowing Astyages the Mede—and thereby break the Persian *nomos* of honesty—and keep all the booty of Sardis for himself, using another lie in the process.<sup>39</sup>

Here, Miltiades, fresh from keeping Athens free from Persian imperialism at Marathon, uses the opportunity to establish the habit for which Pericles’ imperial Athens would be infamous: bullying the islanders. In fact, Herodotus seems to have crafted his account of the attack on Paros so as to recall the careers of Cyrus and Cambyses. Like the former, Miltiades vaguely promises riches to all the soldiers who follow him in

<sup>36</sup> *Agamemnon* 742.

<sup>37</sup> Hdt. 6. 125.

<sup>38</sup> Hdt. 1. 71, especially section 6: “Once the Persians get a taste of our *agatha*, they will latch onto them, and it will be impossible to push them away.” The language could easily suggest a lion taking hold of a piece of meat.

<sup>39</sup> Hdt. 1. 89. For Cyrus’ promise of *agatha* to the Persians who would join him against Astyages, see 1. 126. 5.



what turns out to be an expedition for personal gain; like the latter, Miltiades dies from an accidentally self-inflicted thigh wound suffered in the wake of violating *nomos*.<sup>40</sup>

What, then, might all this imply about Herodotus' views on Periclean policy? Surely, our thoughts here must admittedly be somewhat speculative, but with these strong symbolic ties and the suggestive ordering of the narrative, it is possible to conclude that Herodotus also identifies Pericles as one who trusted too much in his situation, and who started to destroy his nation from within. Herodotus writes after the Peloponnesian War has started taking its toll, with increasing losses and misfortunes for Athens; Pericles himself had strongly advocated the war in the first place. Is Herodotus likening Pericles' war with Sparta to Croesus' with Persia? Does the historian seek, ever so subtly, to remind the audience of Pericles' confidence that Athens' power base would last in the face of Peloponnesian troop superiority, not to mention against Athens' own "allies," whose "loyalty" had to be secured by expeditions such as Miltiades'?

In this connection we are naturally inclined to remember how Pericles defended his policy to the disheartened Athenian citizenry, in the words of Thucydides: The *polis* is now virtually a tyranny, perhaps unjustly taken, but dangerous to let go.<sup>41</sup> As with Herodotus' *Histories*, the historical context of Thucydides' writing must not be forgotten, either. Pericles wound up being fined despite his attempts to rally his countrymen, and died shortly thereafter from the great plague that his war had facilitated. Perhaps it is more than coincidence that Herodotus similarly remembers Miltiades' end: Lingered from the wound caused by his imperialism, Miltiades is fined for his policy, but his death prevents him from paying; that responsibility falls to his son, Cimon.

Although Thucydides himself clearly blames the ultimate failure of Pericles' strategy on his demagogic successors, Herodotus may have regarded the situation in precisely these terms. For Pericles himself, imperial policy proved not only to be self-perpetuating, as Thucydides reports him putting it, but, in practical terms, suicidal; his death, however, prevented him from paying the full price that Athens was bound to pay. The Alcmaeonids started out as "tyrant haters," but just as Alcmaeon in fact owed his influence to Croesus, Pericles ultimately fell into the disastrous behavior by which Croesus trapped himself.<sup>42</sup>

Agariste's dream is Herodotus' final instance of lion cubs. The lion in general, though, makes one more appropriate appearance. As Xerxes' army marches through Thrace toward a supposedly easy conquest of Greece, lions

<sup>40</sup> Miltiades' promise, 6. 132; wounding and death, 6. 134. 2 and 6. 136. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Thucydides 2. 63. Cf. Cleon's similar characterization of Athens as a tyranny in 3. 37.

<sup>42</sup> For Herodotus' description of the Alcmaeonids as *μισοτιράννοι*, see 6. 121, part of the historian's infamous defense of the clan against charges of Medism stemming from the supposed shield-signal at Marathon.

emerge from the countryside and speed towards the long column, but attack only the Persian camels.<sup>43</sup> Herodotus' apparent wonder at this phenomenon may in fact be gentle encouragement for the audience to do some thinking about patterns in history. The astute listener will remember that camels allowed Persia to become an imperial power in the first place: Their unusual odor frightened off the horses of the army defending Sardis.<sup>44</sup> Otherwise, the crack Lydian cavalry surely would have turned back Cyrus' invading forces. Also, as mentioned previously, it was none other than a lion cub, the very symbol of Lydian royalty, that was supposedly supplying the ultimate power to protect Sardis from harm; the miscalculations of those symbolized, however, proved most responsible in neutralizing this power.

Herodotus may have had grand designs in choosing to relate this episode, showing how the patterns of history have come full circle, but with new players faced with the old situations and choices that caused others to stumble.<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, doom is portended for Persian imperial intentions, as now it is the camels who are chased off. On the other, the attacking lions would naturally represent the Greek defenders, and, if Herodotus' previous leonine symbology holds constant, would suggest that the Greeks, soon confronted with the many possibilities of victory, will experience frustration and failure themselves.

In this regard, perhaps we might think of a mighty sailor from Troezen, the finest of his crew, whose opportunity to demonstrate his prowess for battle was stolen by the flight and ensuing surrender of his ship. The Persian captors sacrificed him as the fruit of their victory, and Herodotus muses how much this fate was connected with his name: Leon.<sup>46</sup> We ourselves might similarly wonder about a more recognizable casualty of the war: Leonidas. But how might his famous stand with the three hundred at Thermopylae, mentioned at the start of this article in connection with frequently cited examples of positive leonine symbolism, be considered a failure?

Thermopylae was chiefly remembered not so much as the defense of territory, but as the defense of a way of life. Herodotus impresses this on the audience by prefacing the battle with a forceful scene, in which the Spartan defector Demaratus praises his countrymen's obedience to *nomos* to an incredulous Xerxes, and by concluding with the similar sentiments of the epitaph at the battle site. Clearly, the determination of Leonidas' men at

<sup>43</sup> Hdt. 7. 125–26.

<sup>44</sup> Hdt. 1. 80. 3–6.

<sup>45</sup> Here, we might see some elements of Anaximandrian *tisis* discussed by Gould (above, note 11) 85, but Herodotus subordinates simple "tit-for-tat" to a larger system. Once again, we should make reference to Herodotus' opening principle that "happiness never stays in the same place" advanced in refuting the "cherchez la femme" theory (1. 5. 4): Herodotus rejects a strictly bilateral model of "punch, counterpunch" between "east" and "west" in favor of a progressive chain of similar behavior patterns spread by contact.

<sup>46</sup> Hdt. 7. 180.

Thermopylae showed the potential, if not the very virtue, of the Greek cause. But although the Greeks were later able to achieve victory in the military sense, did they follow up this promising beginning in moral terms?

We have seen how Miltiades' actions after Marathon turned Athens on the wrong path in the wake of its great national victory; Herodotus also makes sure to report how the other Athenian military hero, Themistocles, used his triumph at Salamis in exactly the same manner, with self-serving attacks on Andros and other islands.<sup>47</sup> These expeditions were launched in the wake of an even more hypocritical speech: The Athenians would have otherwise continued to pursue the fleeing Persians, but counted Themistocles wise for warning them *not* to repeat the imperial mistakes of the Persian foe! Themistocles cleverly said virtuous words for a villainous reason: He wished not to save the Athenians, but to do Xerxes a favor, in case he ever needed one in return; Herodotus reminds the audience that Themistocles would indeed defect to Persia.<sup>48</sup>

As for Sparta, Leonidas' example in the opening battle of the campaign must be viewed in comparison with that of the Spartan commander who led the Greeks to victory in the final battle: Pausanias. On the surface of it, the end seems to be quite fitting. In his moment of victory, Pausanias is shown steadfastly refusing exhortations to violate *nomos*, and exhibiting his devotion to it: For the amusement of the Greek army, he had the captured Persian chefs prepare a Persian-style banquet alongside an offering of typical Spartan fare. With a laugh, he asked why the Persians, whose baggage train alone had amazed the Greeks, would go to so much trouble to conquer such penurious folk.<sup>49</sup>

To leave the analysis at that, though, would ignore the narrative context in which Pausanias is situated. The Spartan's two preceding appearances have already shown the audience how Pausanias would act after Plataea. In the first instance, Herodotus quite simply says that Pausanias wanted nothing other than to be a tyrant ruling Greece, although he doubts whether the Spartan secured betrothal to a cousin of Darius for that end.<sup>50</sup> In the

<sup>47</sup> Hdt. 8. 111–12. Themistocles is described as suffering from *pleonexia*, a word commonly applied to Athenian imperial behavior in the fifth century; significantly, Cyrus is also so characterized as he fatally overreaches himself in the Massagetan expedition (1. 206). See K. Raaflaub, "Herodotus, Political Thought, and the Meaning of History," *Arethusa* 20 (1987) 221–48, especially 227–29.

<sup>48</sup> Hdt. 8. 109. 5; Fornara (above, note 6) 70–71 argues that Themistocles was not deceiving the Athenians, but simply trying to fool Xerxes as he had done before Salamis (8. 75. 2–3).

<sup>49</sup> Hdt. 9. 82. The sentiment reminds the audience of Sandanis' assessment of the discrepancy between Lydian and Persian wealth in 1. 71: Lydia had everything to lose and nothing to gain in attacking the backward Persians. As mentioned above, Cyrus wound up adopting Croesus' behavior despite earlier intentions (1. 89, 1. 126. 5); this in itself is enough to suggest the aftermath for Pausanias, in addition to the more directed textual cues to which our discussion now turns.

<sup>50</sup> Hdt. 5. 32. Even in arguing that Herodotus attempted to exculpate Pausanias from allegations of treason, J. A. S. Evans, "The Medism of Pausanias: Two Versions," *Antichthon* 22 (1988) 1–11, agrees that Herodotus' language technically indicates skepticism only about

second, Herodotus cites no less than Pausanias' *hubris* as an Athenian pretext for stripping him of his command and finally embarking on the awaited imperial campaign against Persia.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, Herodotus shrewdly closes the *Histories* shortly thereafter with an anecdote that turns out to be a parallel to Pausanias' situation. Fresh from his victory over Astyages, Cyrus adamantly refuses to yield to a suggestion that he use his newly won power to abandon the poor, mountainous Persian homeland and pursue an imperial policy in the rich, fertile plain.<sup>52</sup> From the course of history as Herodotus has related it, the audience knows that Cyrus failed miserably to adhere to this stance. From its own experience, the audience would likely know Pausanias—regardless of his actual guilt of “Medizing”—as Thucydides (and later Plutarch) portrayed him: a man who, like Cyrus, fell prey to the temptations that Sandanis had so correctly foretold. Once exposed to Persian imperial riches, he went over to Persia, coveting tyrannical power and enjoying the very finery which he had mocked.<sup>53</sup> In other words, Herodotus' account of Pausanias in the aftermath of Plataea was calculated to affect the Greek audience in much the same way as a tale recounting the heroic exploits of Benedict Arnold at Saratoga would affect an American one. In the end, then, Leonidas' stand for Greek *nomos* was nullified by Pausanias' ultimate rejection of it.

Herodotus' lion cub is indeed an ambiguous symbol that readily lent itself to the historian's purposes. It cleverly ties apparently disparate episodes together and, more importantly, suggests how historical data can be interrelated to draw conclusions for the future. The analogous portraits of the great majesty, but excessive ferocity of the lion cub preceding Agariste's dream, and the examples of frustrated promise following the scene infuse the brief mention of Pericles as lion cub with greater significance.

Herodotus thus expects his information about the relatively unfamiliar to direct his audience to use its own knowledge in reflecting upon the familiar.<sup>54</sup> Domestic propaganda is turned back on itself, as the audience is

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the betrothal, and not about Pausanias' “lust for tyranny”; however, Evans does add that Herodotus “was probably equally skeptical of the allegation of tyranny.” On the connection between lust and tyranny in the *Histories*, see D. Lateiner, “No Laughing Matter: A Literary Tactic in Herodotus,” *TAPA* 107 (1977) 173–82, 181 n. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Hdt. 8. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Hdt. 9. 122.

<sup>53</sup> Thucydides 1. 128–30; Plutarch, *Aristides* 23 and *Cimon* 6. Compare the accounts of Themistocles' behavior in Persia, Thucydides 1. 138 and Plutarch, *Themistocles* 27–29.

<sup>54</sup> J. Schwartz, “Hérodote et Périclès,” *Historia* 18 (1969) 367–70 and J. A. S. Evans, *Herodotus, Explorer of the Past* (Princeton 1991) 93–94, suggest that Herodotus' report of Lycian *nomoi* concerning legitimate births (1. 173. 5) may also have been so directed against Pericles. The historian emphasizes that not even the leading Carian male citizen could have his offspring by a foreign wife or concubine considered legitimate; Pericles had gone to great lengths to enroll his son by Aspasia, contrary to Athenian *nomos*. On Herodotus' use of

encouraged to re-evaluate the great Pericles and his policy. As with tyranny itself, bad ends can and do come from good beginnings. Perhaps it is not too late for Herodotus' audience, citizens of the "tyranny of Athens," to heed Solon's advice to "look to the end."

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eastern despots and Greek tyrants in patterning a model of interpretation for the audience, see D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto 1989) 166–79.