Although most scholars now seem to agree that Herodotus was to some extent a didactic historian writing for the instruction of his readers, the systematic nature of his didacticism has perhaps not been fully appreciated. The *Histories*’ concluding episodes reveal at least two didactic programs or strategies: first, the reader is to be trained in the application of Herodotean thinking to events subsequent to the period covered by the narrative; second, the reader is to be warned of the moral and intellectual dangers posed by the “wonders” that have played so conspicuous a role in Herodotus’ work. The existence of these programs helps to explain several features of the last chapters of the *Histories*, including the prominent position given to the peculiar story of Xerxes and Masistes (9.108–13).

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, most students of Herodotus have accepted the proposition that the *Histories* were, at least in part, a didactic enterprise. The historian, it is now widely agreed, meant to communicate to his readers a definite world view in which history and human life are ruled by discernible principles of cosmic balance and divine retribution. In addition, it is generally accepted that Herodotus also sought to encourage his contemporaries to apply this world view to historical
events in Greece subsequent to the Persian Wars, and in particular to contemplate Athens and her empire in light of the pattern of rise, inevitable transgression and ultimate fall that is so conspicuous a feature of the Herodotean narrative.¹

The concluding chapters of the Histories—those that deal with events following on the battles of Plataea and Mycale and their respective aftermaths—have special importance for those who believe that a didactic purpose played a role in the shaping of Herodotus’ text. The end of a book is the logical place for an author to provide his readers with perspective on what has gone before and to leave them with any lessons that he especially wishes to impart. In addition, if Herodotus wanted to make a point about the nature and prospects of Athenian imperialism, we would expect that point to be underscored in the portion of the Histories that deals with the first steps in Athens’ march toward supremacy in the Aegean. Any argument for Herodotus’ didacticism that does not also deny that his work is complete must therefore give particular consideration to the way in which the historian bids his readers farewell.²

Despite the considerable attention paid in recent years to issues of both didacticism and closure in Herodotus, the extent to which the Histories’ concluding chapters seem designed to guide, the thinking of readers as the work draws to a close has perhaps not yet been fully appreciated.³ In this essay, I argue that the final

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¹. Neither of these conceptions of Herodotus’ intentions is strictly recent. Jacoby 1913, for example, believed that Herodotus wished to influence the political attitudes of his contemporaries through his narration of past events as a propagandist for Athenian greatness (355–60). On the other hand, the belief that Herodotus sought to propound general ideas of historical causation may be traced back at least as far: How and Wells (1912: 43) asserted that Herodotus’ history “is written, at any rate in part, to point a moral” (see also 48–50) and Bischoff 1932 argued that Herodotus’ world view was the decisive force in his selection and presentation of his material. Strasburger 1955 was important in casting doubt on Herodotus’ putative enthusiasm for Athens, but it was Fornara, in a work to which the present essay is deeply indebted, who most cogently synchronized the two conceptions of didacticism by arguing that the development and presentation of Herodotus’ generally pessimistic world view were inseparable from a desire to understand and explain the Archidamian War for the benefit of his contemporaries (1971a: 75–91). Since then, Raaflaub 1987, Ostwald 1991, Stadter 1992 and Moles 1996 have all made cases tending toward similar conclusions and Gould, himself a dissenter from the didactic view of Herodotus, noted twenty years ago that it had already become “almost canonical” (1989: 118). For an attempt to balance Gould’s and Fornara’s views of Herodotus, see Derow 1995. It is worth noting incidentally that the current consensus is strongly adumbrated in Lang 1944: 283–84.

². Most of the scholars cited in n.1—Bischoff, Strasburger, Fornara, Raaflaub, Ostwald, Stadter, Derow and Moles—are concerned with the didactic significance of Herodotus’ ending, as are Pelling 1997 and Desmond 2004. Other important recent studies of Herodotean closure are Herington 1991 and Dewald 1997. Needless to say, any convincing argument that Herodotus’ closing chapters provide the proper consummation to a didactic project constitutes an additional proof that the Histories as we have them are more or less complete according to the intentions of their author.

³. Most of those seeking to vindicate Herodotean didacticism have done so by stressing the natural resonances that various elements in the Histories would have for the Greeks of Herodotus’ own day. Fornara 1971a wrote that “it is Herodotus’ technique to mesh his narrative with the predictable thoughts of his contemporaries” (74) and that the knowledge and expectations of those contemporaries were “an essential presupposition for his narrative” (81). Raaflaub 1987 describes Herodotus’ use of what he calls “pointers”: “stories that in various ways, through contrast or analogy,
sections of the Histories incorporate at least two distinct “strategies” in behalf of Herodotus’ didacticism. The first of these is aimed at encouraging the reader to look for the completion of Herodotean historical patterns in events subsequent to those in Herodotus’ text, while the second seeks to define the reader’s ultimate response in resolving the tension between history and ethnography that pervades the Histories and threatens to obscure Herodotus’ fundamentally didactic intent.

Crucial to both these strategies is one of the most puzzling yet least studied passages in Herodotus, the story of the disastrous results of Xerxes’ passions for the wife and daughter of his brother Masistes (9.108–13). In addition to providing new insight into Herodotean didacticism, I hope to shed light on the reason for the prominent place given to this story at the end of Histories.

1. LOOKING BEYOND THE END: CANDAULES AND XERXES, PERSIA AND ATHENS

The story of Xerxes and Masistes marks a turning point in Herodotus’ text: the historian moves beyond the battle narratives that have occupied the previous chapters and the reader suddenly finds himself in a world of tragic fairy tale more characteristic of the early books of the Histories than of Herodotus’ accounts of the Persian Wars. Indeed, the story of Xerxes and Masistes is replete with unmistakable echoes of the Histories’ first self-contained storybook episode, the tale of Gyges and Candaules (1.8–13). Both stories begin in Sardis and both are motivated by a king’s love for a woman: Candaules falls in love (ἠράσθη, 1.8.1) with his own wife; Xerxes falls in love (ἠρα, 9.108.1 and 9.108.2) first with his
brother’s wife and then with her daughter. In both stories an innocent subordinate of the king becomes involved against his will. In both stories a wife’s implacable anger at her husband’s betrayal has catastrophic results and in both stories a man is compelled, contrary to his own volition, to do the woman’s bidding. The similarities between the stories extend even to details of language. Gyges’ exclamation, «δέσποτα, τίνα λέγεις λόγον οὐχ ὑγιέα, κελεύω με . . . » (1.8.3), finds an echo in Masistes’ words, «ὦ δέσποτα, τίνα μοι λόγον λέγεις ἁχρηστον, κελεύων με . . . » (9.111.3). In both stories, we are told that it was destined to turn out badly for a principal character: χρηταισιπομενην γάρ καναύλην ιοτασιμή (1.8.2); τη δὲ [sc. Ἀρταύνη] κακοταισιμην ιοτασιμη γὰρ ἔδεε πανοικίη γενέσθαι (9.109.2). 5

We have here, then, a kind of ring-composition, in which a story told at the end of the Histories carries us back to a similar story at their beginning. Although we have little idea of the particular sources on which Herodotus drew for these two episodes, we can be confident that the parallels between them involved significant invention on the part of the historian. But to what end? It is possible, of course, that these correspondences are merely an artistic conceit, but they seem to me to have been devised with a definite purpose in view, one that reflects Herodotus’ preoccupation with issues of transgression and retribution.

In the Gyges episode, the immediate burden of guilt falls upon Candaules. His insistence on having Gyges look at his queen naked costs him his life and his kingdom, and Herodotus leaves us little doubt about the moral significance of his fate: Gyges’ words to Candaules (1.8.3–4), the queen’s words to Gyges (1.11.2–3) and even Herodotus’ own remarks (1.10.3) all emphasize the inappropriateness of Candaules’ desires and actions. In the Masistes story, Xerxes, like Candaules, is the transgressor whose desire exceeds acceptable limits. 6 He is the one who unsuccessfully pursues his brother’s wife and finally succeeds in seducing the wife of his son. It is Xerxes, like Candaules, who makes unreasonable demands on a subordinate and pronounces an evil logos when he bids Masistes to abandon his wife. But Candaules pays the price for his transgressions, whereas Xerxes, within the framework of the story, goes unpunished; the formula κακοταισιμην γὰρ ἔδεε

5. For other striking verbal correspondences between these two episodes, see Herington 1991: 152–53. The classic treatment of the similarities between the Gyges/Candaules and Xerxes/Masistes stories in Herodotus is Wolff 1964: 55–58. See also Gammie 1986: 185–88 and Larson 2006: 236–39. These correspondences between the very first Novelle in Herodotus and the very last represent one of the clearest pieces of evidence that the work as we have it is complete.

6. The verb ἐρωταισιμη, forms of which are used to characterize the passions of both Candaules and Xerxes, is used only two other times in Herodotus to denote sexual love, and both times the use in question is of an illicit nature. ἐρωταισιμη is used once of Mycerinus’ desire for his daughter (2.131.1) and twice of the desire of Cambyses for his sister (3.31.2, 3.31.6). The only other instance of ἐρωταισιμη in Herodotus, at 1.96.2, refers to Deioces’ desire for tyranny over the Medes. Likewise, the noun ἐρως, used of Xerxes’ desires in 9.113.2, is elsewhere used only of Ariston’s desire for the wife of his friend Agetus (6.62.1) and of Pausanias’ desire to become tyrant of Greece (5.32). Konstan, in a discussion of the Candaules story (1983: 12–13), posits that erōs in Greek thought is inherently transgressive: “its very essence is the neglect of limits.”
πανοικίη ἵππονεσθαι is applied not to the king but to Masistes’ daughter Artaýnte, and instead of Xerxes it is the innocent—the steadfast Masistes, his virtuous wife and their loyal sons—who perish. The last sentence of 9.113, with its opposition between the passion (ἔρωτα), and hence the guilt, of Xerxes and the death (θάνατον) of Masistes underscores the problem. The Gyges story sets the pattern for historical instances of transgression and retribution throughout the Histories; in the Masistes story, retribution for guilt is suddenly and disconcertingly absent.7

As Erwin Wolff realized, however, Herodotus’ contemporaries would have known that the historical Xerxes did in fact meet with a fate suggestive of divine retribution for some terrible offense: he was murdered in 465 BC in the palace coup that brought his son Artaxerxes to the throne. This event is never mentioned or, apparently, even alluded to in Herodotus, but Wolff also suggested that a satisfying connection between the injustices inflicted upon Masistes and his family and Xerxes’ subsequent murder might readily be found in the person of Xerxes’ other son Darius, husband of Artaýnte and therefore son-in-law of the murdered Masistes and his wife. Darius, Wolff noted, is named twice in the story of Xerxes and Masistes.8

According to most of our ancient sources, Xerxes was murdered by the captain of his guard, Artabanus, who afterward tricked Artaxerxes into believing that his brother Darius had done the deed. Artaxerxes then slew Darius before discovering the truth and doing away with Artabanus and his co-conspirators. Such is the report found, with some variations, in Photius’ summary of Ctesias (FGrHist 688 F13.33, 14.34), in Diodorus (11.69, 11.71.1) and in Justin’s epitome of Pompeius Trogus (3.1). A somewhat different version, in which Artabanus himself killed Darius and then assassinated Xerxes in order to avoid being punished, appears in Aristotle’s Politics 1311b38–40. These four authors are our only Greek or Latin sources

7. This is why, as Wolff (1964: 51) pointed out, “die Erzählung vom Weib des Masistes ... wird noch heute mit Mißbehagen gelesen.” Macan (1908: 812) wrote that the story has “one great defect ... from the moral point of view: it is the innocent who suffer, or who suffer most; the guilty king, the jealous and cruel queen, come off scot free.” Waters (1971: 83), rejecting Wolff’s attempt to disclose the moral element, asked, “why, if this is in the least degree a moralising story, do the innocent suffer instead of the guilty?” Aly (1969 [1921]: 201–202) found no parallels in folklore for the “hart und unerbittlich” conclusion of this episode, “den Untergang eines ganzen Geschlechts bei der Befriedigung eines berechtigten Rachebedürfnisses.” The fascinating interpretation of von Fragstein 1960, in which Xerxes is to be compared to the guiltless Gyges, fails to take full account of the Masistes story’s verbal echoes and emotional impact. (Stoessl 1959, to whom von Fragstein was responding, had claimed that “Masistes ist die einzige Person der Erzählung, die moralische Haltung hat” [488].)

8. Wolff 1964: 53–55. At first glance, the date of Xerxes’ death may seem to indicate an unacceptably long time between transgression and punishment, especially in contrast to the rapid consequences that befall Candaules. But the narrative in 9.108.2–109.1, and especially the phrase χρόνου δὲ προϊόντος, allows for the passage of an indefinite amount of time, perhaps years, between Xerxes’ return to Susa and the behavior for which he was afterwards to suffer retribution. In general, Herodotus is willing to believe that divine vengeance may delay itself for many years or may even wait to be visited upon one’s descendants.

9. The same numbering system is used for the fragments in Lenfant’s 2004 edition of Ctesias.
for the death of Xerxes before the third century AD, and it is therefore clear that the standard ancient account of Xerxes’ murder made Artabanus the assassin and also held him responsible for the death of an innocent Darius.\(^{10}\) Wolff, however, suggested the persistence of a variant tradition, based on initial reports of Darius’ guilt, in which Darius was in fact his father’s killer. The existence of such a tradition appears to be confirmed both by the terse statement of Aelian (\textit{Var. Hist.} 13.3) that Xerxes was killed by his son\(^{11}\) and by an entry to the same effect in a fifth-century BC Babylonian astronomical record.\(^{12}\) If this was the version of events best known to Herodotus and his readers, then they could have seen Darius as the avenger of his in-laws and the Masistes story would therefore anticipate Xerxes’ eventual doom.\(^{13}\)

I wish to argue that the tradition preserved by the majority of our sources—and by all the Greek sources that tell the story at any length—offers an even more striking and satisfying resolution to the moral incompleteness of Herodotus’ tale. The parallels drawn by Herodotus between the story of Xerxes and Masistes and that of Gyges and Candaules are particularly important in stimulating the reader’s expectation of some punishment for Xerxes’ transgressions.\(^{14}\) Candaules paid the

\(^{10}\) See Briant 1996: 581–84.

\(^{11}\) Lenfant 2004: F13b. Lenfant argues (265–66 n.538) that Aelian’s notice is fundamentally dependent upon Ctesias. She suggests that the discrepancy between Aelian and Photius’ summary may be the result of “une lecture trop rapide des \textit{Persica}” on Aelian’s part, or may mean that Aelian also made use of other sources in addition to Ctesias.

\(^{12}\) BM 32234 = Pinches and Strassmeier 1955: no.1419. The relevant portion of the entry, as translated by Stolper 1988, reads simply, “Xerxes’ son killed him” (196). The document in question is unpublished and the description in Pinches and Strassmeier does not allow more to be said about it. Since it was apparently unknown to Wolff, it serves as an especially strong confirmation of his hypothesis. This document is not, however, the only possible piece of fifth-century evidence: see n.16 below.

\(^{13}\) It is possible that the story of Xerxes and Masistes does contain one small allusion to Xerxes’ eventual death, in the statement that it was destined for Artaynte’s whole house to end badly (9.109.2: \textit{τῇ δὲ κακώς γὰρ ἔδει πανοικίη γενέσθαι}). The word \textit{πανοικίη} might extend, perhaps, not only to Artaynte’s parents and siblings but to her uncle, Xerxes (also her father-in-law), and to her cousin (and husband) Darius who was murdered soon after Xerxes. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this observation.

\(^{14}\) Gray (1995: 188–89 and 209–10) wishes to deny any programmatic pairing between the stories of Gyges and Masistes, and she specifically rejects Wolff’s claim that the similarities between these two stories lead one to expect that Xerxes should meet with some punishment corresponding to that of Candaules. Gray claims that other stories with similar patterns exist in Herodotus, and that in one of them, the story of Ariston’s lust for the wife of Agetus (6.62), Ariston “does not suffer much” for his transgression (188). But the extraordinarily close parallels between the Candaules-Gyges and Xerxes-Masistes stories, including even the striking verbal echoes mentioned above, go far beyond any similarities between either of these and the tale of Ariston and Agetus, nor is the position of the Ariston-Agetus story in the \textit{Histories} such as to argue for some relationship between it and the two stories of Eastern kings that stand at the beginning and end of the work as a whole. The same is true for the other story that Gray claims follows a similar pattern, that of Astyages’ overthrow by Cyrus through the machinations of his vizier Harpagus (1.107–29). Gray also implies that Wolff must be wrong because the Xerxes story ends with the failure of Masistes’ attempt to overthrow Xerxes, whereas in the Candaules and Astyages stories the king who transgresses is successfully
penalty for his when he was killed at night in his bedchamber by the captain of his guard, and it can hardly be a coincidence that this is the very way in which the majority of our sources tell us that Xerxes also died.15

The Great King Xerxes, who had invaded and nearly conquered Greece two generations before the Peloponnesian War, loomed large in the historical imagination of Herodotus’ contemporaries. Many of them probably knew—and relished—the shocking story of his demise; for some, the news of the event would have been a matter of living memory.16 Reading the text of Herodotus, fifth-century Greeks could have discovered in Xerxes’ death not only a fulfillment of the expectation that Xerxes should pay a penalty for what Masistes and his family had suffered but also a perfect consummation to the pattern of correspondences through which Herodotus had implied a link between Xerxes’ transgressions and those of a sixth-century Lydian king. In light of those correspondences the similarity between the deaths of Xerxes and Candaules would be uncanny if we failed to realize that Herodotus must have structured his narrative with the predominant Greek tradition relating to Xerxes’ murder already in mind.17

15. Artabanus’ official position as captain of the guard is mentioned explicitly only in Diodorus (τὸν δορυφόρον ἀφηγούμενον, 11.69.1) but no other source contradicts this and Justin’s description of Artabanus as praefectus tends to confirm it. The details of the time and place of the murder are found not only in Diodorus (ὑπὸ τούτου δὲ νυκτὸς ... εἰς τὸν κοιτήμανα, 11.69.2) but also in Aelian (νύκτωρ ἐν τῇ εὐνύξῃ). Again, Justin’s epitome of Pompeius is less explicit, but it tells us that Artabanus entered the palace in the evening (vesperi) and that Darius was murdered while asleep in his bedchamber in the immediate aftermath of Artabanus’ crime. The detail of the bedroom is especially noteworthy as a connection between the deaths of Candaules and Xerxes, since both transgress primarily through inappropriate desire (see n.6 above). Unfortunately, Photius’ summary of Ctesias yields virtually no concrete information about the manner of Xerxes’ assassination and focuses instead on Artaxerxes’ actions following his father’s death.

16. Other than our fragments of Ctesias, we have no direct evidence for literary accounts of Xerxes’ assassination around the time of the Histories, though it is easy enough to believe that a version of the story could have appeared in the Persica of one of Herodotus’ contemporaries. (On these generally, see Fowler 1996, FGrHist 262 F11 seems to suggest that Charon of Lampsakos may have at least mentioned the death of Xerxes.) At any rate, there must have been oral accounts in circulation. One possible piece of evidence for Greek interest in Xerxes’ death—and also for the prevalence of a tradition in which Artabanus was the king’s killer—is a fragment of an Athenian bell crater from the mid-fifth century bc in the British Museum (ARV2 1171,2). It depicts a Persian (identifiable by apparel and facial features) with his arm upraised as if to strike a blow. The figure is accompanied by the inscription ΑΡΤΟΒΑ-. For details, see Hölsher 1973: 48–49 and Table 4.2.

17. Wolff 1964: 57–58. We can only guess just how much authorial tinkering on the part of Herodotus was required to create the correspondences between the two stories. If the story told about Gyges by Nicolaus of Damascus (FGrHist 90 F47), in which Gyges kills King Sadyattes in his bedchamber after falling in love with the king’s bride-to-be, reflects the account of Xanthus or some other pre-Herodotean tradition, then Herodotus may have begun with a coincidence of details in two stories of the deaths of eastern kings, one of which at least was well known to his contemporary audience. Certainly, however, other traditions about Gyges were current around Herodotus’ time: e.g., Plato Rep. 359d-360b (although Laird 2001: 12–20 argues that Plato’s Gyges story may be wholly based on Herodotus’ version). Briant 1996: 582 notes that the murder of a king in his
We must now ask why Herodotus left it to the reader to complete a ready-made pattern he had gone to such trouble to construct. Simply because the fate of Xerxes was so well known? Elsewhere, Herodotus goes out of his way to include the fates of his characters even where these were presumably just as well known and equally beyond the scope of his narrative. Such is the case, for instance, with the Spartan king Leotychides, whose exile and death at Tegea are portrayed by Herodotus as retribution for Demaratus, whom Leotychides had conspired with Cleomones to depose (6.72). Nor does Herodotus hesitate to jump far forward in time to seek divine punishment for some misdeed. For example, he adduces the deaths of the Spartan heralds Nicolas and Aneristus at the hands of the Athenians in 430 BC as clear evidence of vengeance being visited upon the Spartans for the murder of Persian envoys more than fifty years before (δὲ θείον ἐγένετο τὸ πρόγμα ἐκ τῆς μήνιος, 7.137.2). Even one of Herodotus’ three famous “unfulfilled promises” seems to be given in order to assure readers that Ephialtes, the traitor of Thermopylae, did not escape his just deserts (7.213.2–3). In general, our historian is eager to be explicit in tracing the fates of his characters and in emphasizing the operation of divine vengeance.

Furthermore, where Herodotus does omit mention of the fates met by historical figures, it does not seem to be simply because his readers would be competent to make good the omission. As Charles Fornara has argued, the absence in the Histories of any mention of the sad ends ofThemistocles and Pausanias is properly understood in terms of deliberate reticence, well calculated to ensure that the historian’s contemporaries would experience his narrative of those men’s deeds in the Persian Wars as poignantly ironic (1971a: 59–74). For example, Pausanias’ humorous comparison of Persian and Spartan lifestyles (9.82) could hardly have been read without the melancholy awareness that that heroic king would eventually surrender to the temptations of Asiatic luxury. In the case of Xerxes, however, the effect of leaving the end of the story untold is not irony. It is rather, as I have argued, that the reader has the sense of a tantalizingly incomplete pattern, a heroic couplet without the final word that will consummate the rhyme. By the end of Book 9, any reader of Herodotus is used to the cycle of divine retribution, and, if he is careful, he cannot miss the verbal and situational clues indicating that we are to see Xerxes in the Masistes story as a second Candaules.

bedchamber is a common literary motif. It was probably not altogether uncommon as a historical occurrence, and this correspondence between the deaths of Candaules (or Sadyattes) and Xerxes is therefore not surprising. The salient fact, however, is that Herodotus then chose to devise a set of other correspondences in order to suggest that the similar assassinations occurred in situations which were alike in other respects.

18. Thus Wolff 1964: “Den Tod des Xerxes selbst vorgreifend zu berichten—was hätte Herodot zu solcher Torheit vermögen sollen? Die Todes-Katastrophe des Xerxes war allen Hörern Herodots wohl bekannt” (55).

19. In particular, see Cobet (1971: 68–74) for examples of how “Herodot eine Linie bis zu dem Punkt verfolgt, an dem sich oft spät in sinnvoller Zusammenhang erfüllt” (71).
Herodotus must have felt that it was in some way preferable, this time, to force the reader to identify the sequel for himself, and I suggest that his reasons may best be understood with reference to the Sestos episode that follows on the story of Xerxes and Masistes (9.114–21). For here again, as many scholars have recognized, Herodotus is forcing the reader to seek the continuation or completion of the story beyond the stopping-point of his narrative.

Most of the account of the capture of Sestos is taken up by the story of the city’s governor Artaỹctes and his execution by Xanthippus and the Athenians for his crimes against the Greek hero Protesilas. Although Artaỹctes’ story does not parallel a single earlier episode in the Histories in the way that the story of Xerxes and Masistes does, its concluding chapters nevertheless incorporate a number of standard Herodotean signals that cumulatively tend to make the reader very uneasy about what the future will hold for the Athenians. Some of these are well known to modern students of Herodotus, but they are worth discussing in detail here.

The motive for the Athenians’ punishment of Artaỹctes is the Elaeans’ desire for revenge on behalf of Protesilas (τῷ Πρωτεσίλεω τιμωρέοντες ἐδέοντό μν καταχρησθήναι, 9.120.4). There can be no doubt that Artaỹctes has earned punishment from the gods for his crimes: he himself acknowledges as much at 9.120.2. Nor can there be any doubt that the punishment ultimately inflicted upon Artaỹctes represents in parvo Greek vengeance for the Persians’ transgression in attempting to conquer Greece. The presence of a grand scheme of historical retribution is one obvious interpretation of Herodotus’ statement (made twice, at 7.33 and 9.120.4) that Artaỹctes was killed on the very headland where Xerxes’ bridge had made contact with Europe.20

But throughout the Histories, the reader will have seen that revenge is a perilous practice for mortals. Properly, vengeance belongs to the gods, and even men who claim to seek revenge on behalf of gods or heroes often bring guilt upon themselves in doing so. This is true especially if their acts are unjustified or involve excessive cruelty. That “excessive acts of human vengeance are begrudged by the gods” is the moral of Herodotus’ story of Pherezeithe, who died horribly when worms boiled out of her living body after her harsh revenge against the people of Barca for their treatment of her son, Arcesilas (ὡς ἄρα ἀνθρώπους αἱ λίην ἱσχυράς τιμωρίαι πρὸς θεῶν ἐπίφθονοι γίνονται, 4.205).21

Even mortals who injure others in accordance with divine necessity usually thereby commit a transgression for which some penalty must be paid. Candaules’ punishment for showing off his naked wife is his murder by Gyges, but Gyges’
murder of Candaules must then be atoned for by Gyges’ great-great-grandson Croesus (1.13.2). Similarly, the immoderate success of Polycrates obviously foredooms him to a bad end (ὅτι οὐκ εὖ τελευτήσειν μέλλοι Πολυκράτης, εὕτυχεων τά πάντα, 3.43.1; cf. 3.126.1 for confirmation), but his murderer, Oroites, must likewise pay penalty for his crimes against Polycrates (καὶ Ὄροιτεα Πολυκράτεος τίσιες μετήλθον, 3.126.1). For Herodotus, acts by human beings that fulfill the divine retributive scheme are liable to involve new transgressions and create a new burden of guilt that demands retribution in turn. Indeed, this idea lies at the heart of Herodotus’ conception of the historical process. So when the Elaeans and Xanthippus seek vengeance for Protesilaus, the reader will be expected to recall that vengeance in Herodotus often involves the avenger in some new transgression.22

In fact, the details of the Athenians’ treatment of Artaýchtes tend to reinforce the idea that their vengeance is also a transgression. Xanthippus elects to punish Artaýchtes despite the latter’s recognition of his error (9.120.2–4) and his offer of compensation and ransom (ἀποινα).23 Other transgressors in Herodotus who see the error of their ways later become sympathetic figures and are generally well treated. For example, when Croesus at last appreciates and communicates to Cyrus the lessons of Solon’s wisdom, Cyrus becomes fearful of retribution (δείσαντα τὴν τίσιν, 1.86.6) and (with the timely assistance of Apollo) saves Croesus from death on the pyre.24

Even more than the decision to execute Artaýchtes, however, it is the manner of his execution that must give the reader pause. Artaýchtes is fastened alive to a plank (ζωντα πρὸς σανίδα διεπασσάλευσαν, 7.33; σανίδι προσπασσαλεύσαντες, 9.120.4) and “hung up” (ἀνεκρέμασαν, 9.120.4; ἀνακρεμασθέντος, 9.122.1) and his son is stoned to death before his eyes (9.120.4). These punishments are not only inherently barbaric, but also recall previous passages in Herodotus in which one person does wrong by doing these things to another.25 “Hanging up” is precisely

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22. This can happen even when mortals inflict punishments on the gods’ behalf, as in the story of Euenios (9.93-95): for the possible relevance of this story to the Athenians’ punishment of Artaýchtes see Stadter 1992: 792–94. It may be significant that Artaýchtes understands Protesilaus to be saying (via the portent of the fishes) that “even dead and pickled he has enough power with the gods to avenge himself [reading τίνεσθαι] on someone who does him an injustice” (9.120.3). Perhaps, as in the case of Euenios, it is best to leave the gods to defend their own rights. When Xerxes refuses to kill Sperthias and Bulis in revenge against the Spartans for the murder of his heralds, the wrath of the hero Talthybius nevertheless exacts requital by means of Sitalces and the Athenians (7.136.2–137). Cf. Apollo’s insistence in 8.36.1 that he himself is capable of defending what belongs to him.

23. The word ἀποινα appears in Herodotus only here and at 6.79.1, and it is possible that readers would be expected to think of Agamemnon’s sacrilegious refusal to accept ἀποινα in II. 1.8–120. (At II. 9.120 the gifts offered by Agamemnon and refused by Achilles are also characterized in this way.)

24. 1.86.4–87.2. Cyrus changes his mind even though Herodotus suggests that his initial intentions in burning Croesus alive may have represented a form of piety (1.86.2).

25. On the essentially “barbaric” or “barbarian” nature of such punishments, see Lateiner 1989: 132–33, Pelling 1997, Flower and Marincola 2002: 303 and 309–10 and Desmond 2004: 34–36. Boedeker (1988: 40 including n.36), however, has suggested that these punishments may reflect
the indignity that Oroites inflicted upon Polycrates (ἀνακρεμάμενος, 3.125.4), and others who treat their enemies in this way later repent of the act. When the Amathusians hang up the head of Onesilus above their gates (ἀνακρεμέσαν, 5.114.1), an oracle warns them that it will go better for them if they instead bury the head and offer annual sacrifice to Onesilus as a hero; this they do. Darius, having crucified (ἀνεσταύρωσε) and hung up (ἀνακρεμάσθεντος) a Persian judge named Sandoces, regrets his action, realizes he has acted hastily rather than wisely (ὡς ταχύτερα αὐτός ἢ σοφώτερα ἐργασάμενος εἶη) and lets Sandoces go (7.194.1–2). It is notable that the Spartan regent Pausanias—an exemplar of virtue in Herodotus—refuses to inflict a comparable humiliation, impalement, upon the head of Mardonius in revenge for the treatment of Leonidas’ corpse at Thermopylae (9.78–79). Pausanias declares that such acts are appropriate to barbarians rather than Greeks (9.79.1) and that Leonidas has already been greatly avenged (μεγάλως τετιμωρ/εταπερισπομενη, 9.79.2).

The stoning of Artaγyctes’ son before his father’s eyes is the last instance of a Herodotean motif involving children who are killed in order to inflict some punishment upon their parents. To hurt a parent by forcing him to witness the murder of his child is nearly always portrayed by Herodotus as an act of madness and it always portends ill for those who do it. Astyages, who tricks Harpagus into eating his son (1.119), loses his throne as a result when Harpagus induces

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26. In the case of Sandoces, however, the realization by Darius of his previous good services to the Persian royal house plays an important role in the king’s repentance. It is not clear if Herodotus feels that the indignity of such a punishment is any worse when applied to a living man (like Artaγyctes) than to one who is already dead (like Polycrates or Onesilus). Certainly, Cyrus in Book 1 seems to repent especially of the fact that he had decided to consign Croesus to the flames while he was still alive (ζ/οντα, 1.86.6; cf. ζ/οντα, 7.33, in reference to Artaγyctes). In 2.121γ.1–2 the Egyptian king Rhampsinitus hangs up (κατακρεμάσαι, ἀνακρεμαμένου) the body of the thief captured in his treasury. We learn in 7.26.3 that Apollo is said to have hung up (ἀνακρεμασθεὶς, ἀνακρεμασθείσης) the skin of Marsyas at Kelainai. But no explicit moral significance seems to be attached by Herodotus to these two acts.

27. I have translated ἀνασταυρόω as “crucify” and ἀνασκολοπίζω as “impale” even though “crucifixion” as it was known to the classical Greeks seems to have been a punishment more akin to impalement than to the Roman procedure used to execute Jesus or the followers of Spartacus. That Herodotus does not see one as essentially different from the other is shown by the manner in which Lampon’s proposal to Pausanias is stated in 9.78.3. Lampon urges the Spartan king to “impale” (ἀνασκολοπίζεσαι) Mardonius’ head to pay back the “crucifixion” (ἀνεσταύρωσαν) of Leonidas’ head by Mardonius and Xerxes. ἀνεσταυρόω, in turn, is explicitly equated with ἀνακρεμάμενος in the cases of Polycrates and Sandoces. Artaγyctes’ punishment, that of being fastened to a board and “hung up” may, strictly speaking, be neither impalement nor Roman-style crucifixion but an Athenian procedure called apotympanismos which was employed during the Samian War (Plut. Per. 28.2): see Stadter 1992: 800 n.46 and Flower and Marincola 2002: 309. But this procedure still involves being “hung up.” See Desmond 2004: 34–35 for the likelihood that Herodotus wished to obscure the distinction between apotympanismos and the impalement methods of execution employed in Persia.

28. On the way in which Lampon’s proposal to Pausanias in this passage perverts Homeric language and ideals and reveals the potential for slippage between Greek and barbarian norms, see Pelling 2006: 98–100.
Cyrus to revolt (1.123–24; at 1.162.1 the meal is referred to with the phrase ἀνόμω/ιτατραπέζη/ιτατα). The Greek mercenaries who slaughter the children of Phanes in sight of their father are defeated in the battle that follows (3.11). The deaths of the children of Psammetichus (3.14–15) and Prexaspes (3.34–35) at the hands of Cambyses betoken the latter’s madness and eventual downfall. Darius, who kills the sons of Oebazus on the eve of the Scythian expedition (4.84), meets with disaster on his campaign, while Xerxes likewise fails in Greece after killing, for similar reasons, the son of Pythius (7.38–39). Again, it is Pausanias who knows better than to engage in such behavior, and though he kills the Thebans who have made common cause with Persia, he frees the sons of the Medizing Theban Attaginus (9.88).29

The presence of elements like these in the narrative of Artayctes’ fate is comparable to the echoes of Candaules and Gyges in the Masistes episode: they serve to recall patterns established elsewhere in Herodotus. And here again, Herodotus seems to be encouraging the reader to look beyond the text to seek the continuation or completion of the pattern. Based on what we have already read in Herodotus, can the Athenians hope to get away with forcing Artayctes to witness his son’s death?

Furthermore, just as the closing sentence of the Masistes episode (κατὰ μὲν τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν Εσίερ/κεω καὶ τὸν Μασίστεω θάνατον τοσα/περισσετα ἐγένετο, 9.113.2) seems designed to make the reader reflect upon an apparent disparity between crime and punishment, so here the concluding sentence, καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἔτος τοῦτο οὐδὲν ἔτι πλέον τούτων ἐγένετο (9.121), nudges the reader forward into an imagined or remembered future by prompting him to ask what happened in subsequent years.30 The use of the phrase ὡς ἀναθήσοντες in 9.121 in connection

29. Desmond 2004: 35–36 also points out that the death of Artayctes’ son recalls earlier father-son punishments in the Histories. I have listed here only those cases in which children are killed with the sole object of causing suffering to their parents. There are many other examples in Herodotus in which the killing of children is treated as something especially terrible and subject to divine and/or human retribution, but the monstroness of forcing a parent to watch his child’s murder hardly needs to be argued. For a general discussion of the motif of children’s deaths in Herodotus, see Gera 1993; she mentions specifically the recurrent themes of sons who die because of their fathers (40–41, including n.20) and fathers’ being forced to witness their sons’ murders (45 n.35). See also Renehan 2001: 179–85. An ambiguous passage for purposes of the present discussion is 3.53.7, where the Corcyraeans kill Periander’s son Lycophron in order to prevent Periander from coming to rule over them. Although Lycophron is an innocent victim, the intent behind his murder is not punitive and it therefore may or may not be significant that Periander’s revenge is thwarted and the Corcyraeans ultimately seem to get away with their crime. I have not mentioned here the story of the Scythians who murder and serve to King Cyaxares of Media the boys (παι/παδες) given into their care (1.73.3–6). The deed is vile, and the Scythians seem to escape punishment (even if their Lydian protectors perhaps do not: see Konstan 1983: 10), but the boys’ fathers are never mentioned in the story.

30. On the prospective force of this sentence, see Pelling 1997 and Moles 2002: 49. It is significant that its presence in the text has been used as an argument by those who believe that the Histories are incomplete. Lipsius 1902 pointed out that such phrases in Herodotus usually signal transitions rather than stopping-points, and Macan 1908, who believed that the Histories were
with the spoils of the campaign in the Hellespont also seems to me to be even more deliberately prospective, and perhaps even ironically so. Herodotus could very well have said that the Athenians did dedicate the spoils: instead he refers only to their intentions (actual or professed). Thus, the attentive reader is motivated to ponder what really happened to all that booty—and perhaps to the large volume of subsequent Persian booty that was to accrue to Athens as well.31

I mentioned above that many of the various disquieting and forward-looking aspects of the story of the siege of Sestos and the punishment of Artaı̂ctes have been noticed by others, and these scholars have also stressed the significance of the Histories’ open-endedness for the reader’s response.32 What has not been sufficiently appreciated is the likelihood that Herodotus uses the highly wrought story of Masistes, with its self-conscious echoing of the Gyges-Candaules story and its striking ready-made consummation, unwritten but already known to the fifth-century reader, in order to insist on the possibility of seeking endings—“looking to the end,” in the famous Solonian formulation—beyond the end of the written text.33 The Sestos/Artaı̂ctes episode that narrates the first step in the growth of Athenian power is similar if less clear-cut: it points backward to ideas and motifs that have developed significance throughout the Histories, and hints at subsequent events that Herodotus does not report. The historian once again looks to the reader to complete the narrative arc. What I am proposing is that the first episode was intended to train the reader in his proper response to the second.

The end of that second story, of course, was not yet told when Herodotus wrote. He knew only that the Athens would build an empire that would earn her the ill will of most of the Greeks (ἐπίφθονον, 7.139.1) but, if we may judge him by

31. It is in fact the case, as I demonstrate in another publication (“Use of ὡς with the Future Participle in Herodotus as an Indicator of Unfulfilled Expectations,” forthcoming in Mnemosyne 63.1 [January, 2010]), that Herodotus elsewhere uses ὡς plus the future of the circumstantial participle almost exclusively for intentions and expectations that, for whatever reason, fail to come to fruition. Unfortunately, we have no direct historical evidence about what the Athenians did with the prizes of this campaign. For many years the belief of Amandry (1953: 104–15) that the trophies from Xerxes’ bridge (τὰ ὅπλα τ/omegaperispome/n γεφυρέων, 9.121) were dedicated in the Stoa of the Athenians at Delphi has been widely repeated, but there are excellent reasons to reject such a supposition: see Walsh 1986.

32. On the open-endedness of the Histories’ concluding chapters, see especially Dewald 1997. Flory 1987 thought that Herodotus’ intent “seems to have been to leave his readers with an uncomfortable sense of tension and transition at the end of his book rather than with the satisfaction of battles clearly and irrevocably won or lost” (83–84). Herodotus may have learned the technique of the unfinished story from Homer, for the Iliad constantly alludes to the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy—two culminating events in the story of the Trojan War and well known to the poem’s audiences—but stops short of narrating either of them. Instead, the Iliad ends with the death of Hector, which simply makes the two aforementioned events inevitable. See Murnaghan 1997: 36 and Grethlein 2006: 282–86 (with further references in Grethlein’s notes).

all that we read in the *Histories*, he certainly had little doubt as to where such aggrandizement and universal envy would lead.\(^{34}\) At any rate, he was now asking his readers to look forward not merely into the known past, but into their own futures as well.\(^{35}\)

2. DEPRECATING WONDERS: THE PRIMACY OF THE HISTORICAL MOTIVE

A second didactic strategy at the end of the *Histories* involves the deployment of a set of verbal hints that seem to caution the reader against focusing on, or being too impressed by, the wonders that have been such a prominent feature of Herodotus’ own work. In his proem, Herodotus asserted that he wrote for the purpose of preserving the memory of “great and wonderful works” (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά). The Herodotean narrative pauses frequently—especially in the first four books—for ethnographies, and a prominent feature of these is always the “wonders” or “marvels” that the historian has seen or heard tell of in the places he has visited. These wonders are often natural phenomena but may also include buildings or feats of engineering: Nitocris’ embankments on the Euphrates (1.185.3), the temple of Artemis and Apollo at Buto (2.156.1), Arabian long-tailed sheep (3.113.1), Scythian fish (4.53.3), Cyrene’s three growing seasons (4.199.1) and gold mines on Thasos (6.41.1) are all among those things explicitly identified as “wonderful” (θωμαστός; θωμάσιος) or “worthy of wonder” (θώματος ἄξιος; θωμάσαι ἄξιος).\(^{36}\) It is obvious, however, that an enormous number of things and occurrences discussed in the *Histories* fall into the category of “wonders” even if Herodotus did not feel the need to use a particular word. Surely, the Pyramids (2.124–28), the gold-digging ants of India (3.102) and the Ammonians’ “Spring of the Sun” (4.181.3–4) are included in the *Histories* on the same principles as the phenomena listed above.\(^{37}\) Even the nomoi of for-

34. On the role of envy (*phthonos*) in Herodotus, see Immerwahr 1966: 313–14.
35. The latest reasonable date for the publication of the *Histories* is 414 BC (Fornara 1971b and 1981), so it is very unlikely that Herodotus’ work was informed by knowledge of the great catastrophe that overtook the Athenians in Sicily in the following year, let alone by the ultimate fall of Athens a decade afterwards. Nevertheless, even the earliest phases of the Peloponnesian War, and indeed the two or three decades which had preceded it, would have given Herodotus ample opportunity to observe the risks Athens was prepared to run in pursuit of her imperial ambitions. (On the possible significance for Herodotus of the “first Sicilian expedition” of 427–424, see Raafeld 2002.) Even if Herodotus put down his pen for the last time in the 420s, he had already seen Athens raise herself to heights that, to his way of thinking, betokened a corresponding fall. Regardless of what one thinks of Herodotus’ intellectual sophistication, the historian is always on safe ground with the assumption that greatness cannot endure.
36. In this essay, I use the standard Ionic spelling for “wonder” words beginning with the root θομασ- (Attic θαυμασ-). In some MSS. of Herodotus, the spelling θωμασ- appears very frequently.
37. Hunzinger 1995 classifies the many different sorts of wonders in Herodotus (48–55) and goes on to discuss emotional and intellectual responses to wonder on the part of Herodotus’ characters and Herodotus himself (55–61). An earlier study of the semantics of wonder was provided by Barth 1968.
eign peoples, though perhaps a distinct category in ethnographic literature, seem to be recounted by Herodotus because of their strange or wonderful qualities: river-transport on the Euphrates is a wonder (θωμάς, 1.194.1) and Herodotus’ famous discussion of how the Egyptians do things in ways that are opposite those of the rest of mankind (2.35.2–36.4) follows closely upon his statement that that country contains more wonders (θωμάς) than anywhere else in the world (2.35.1).38

Herodotus seems apologetic when he is not able to identify many, or any, wonders in a particular region, and his inclusion of historical and ethnographic material is occasionally justified by allusion to the wonders that the peoples or cities in question have produced.39 It seems clear that the description of wonders was a major feature, and perhaps the definitive feature, of the ethnographic literature that preceded Herodotus.40 But even in strictly historical sections of the narrative, Herodotus frequently pauses to narrate miracles or marvels. The blindness of Epizelus at Marathon (6.117.2–3) is introduced as a wonder (θωμας), as is the failure of any Persian to die in the Grove of Demeter at Plataea (θωμας δε μοι, 9.65.2).41

In general, a connection seems to exist between the idea of “wonder” and Herodotus’ famous penchant for digression. Even non-ethnographic digressions are often justified or introduced by referencing the wonderfulness of what

Barth is one of several scholars who have argued that buildings in Herodotus are not wonders in the strict sense; he discerned (95–98) an implicit contrast between θωμας and θωμαια and ἔργα at 1.93.1–2 and 2.35.1. Asheri 1988 also glosses θωμαια in 1.93.1 as “qui meraviglie della natura, distinte dagli ἔργα umani” (323). Jacoby 1909, by contrast, had the impression that Herodotus’ wonders (“die θωμαια”) were “meist Bauwerke” (89). In the Histories generally, however, wonders of nature and remarkable buildings both seem to partake of the same ethnographic impulse. Further examples: in 1.194.1, the city of Babylon is implicitly described by Herodotus as the θωμαια μεγιστον of all those in the land of Assyria. In 2.175.1, the word θωμαια is applied to the propylaea built by Amasis for the temple of Athena at Sa ¨ıs. The Egyptian Labyrinth (2.148.6) and the artificial Lake Moeris adjoining it (2.149.1) are both said to furnish wonder (παρέχεσθαι θωμαια).

38. Hartog 1988: 233. Munson (2001: 233 n.4) believes that the strange customs of the Egyptians parallel rather than illustrate that country’s many wonders; she points out that Herodotus uses the explicit language of wonder in relation to customs only very rarely. Bloomer 1993 distinguishes “men’s nomoi and nature’s th¯omata” (33) but argues that the same impulse to record the exceptional lies behind Herodotus’ treatment of both those categories. On the apparent quadripartite division of the ethnographies into geography, νόμοι, θαυματα and political history, see Jacoby 1913: 331.

39. At 1.93.1 Herodotus remarks that Lydia does not offer many wonders for him to record (θωμαια ... ες συγγραφην ου μάλα ἔχει). At 4.82.1 he notes that Scythia has no wonders (θωμαια δι’ ἡ χωρῆττ’ στυγη τινι ὡς ἔχει) besides its rivers, the extent of its plain and a footprint of Heracles by the River Tyrs. By contrast, Herodotus’ statement at 2.35.1 that Egypt contains the greatest number of wonders (πλειστα θωμαια) is offered as a justification for his unusually lengthy ethnography of that country.

40. This must be inferred largely from the three passages referenced in n.39 above, but the evidence of these is sufficiently strong that it has not usually been doubted. See Jacoby 1913: 331–32 and Munson 2001: 234–35.

41. See Barth 1968: 104–107, who reaches the conclusion that “In den historischen Partien kommt immer nur das Substantiv θωμα vor, nie die davon abgeleiteten Verb- bzw. Adjektivformen” (108).
Herodotus is about to relate. Remarkably, this may be true even of material with obvious historical interest or thematic relevance: few readers will credit Herodotus’ repeated claim in 3.60 that he has gone on at such length about Samos only because the three greatest marvels of engineering among the Greeks (τρία... μέγιστα ἀπάντων Ἕλληνων ἐξεργασμένα, 3.60.1) are to be found there. But Herodotus apparently felt the need to offer such a justification. For him, whatever does not belong to the main line of the historical narrative seems to be closely identified with the idea of surprise or wonder.

Scholars remain in doubt about how Herodotus’ ethnographies and digressions fit into his larger narrative of Persian expansion and the eventual victory of the Greeks in the Persian Wars. Jacoby famously insisted that the ethnographies were relics of an early stage in Herodotus’ career before the “ethnographer” became a “historian” concerned with narrating the past rather than simply describing remarkable characteristics of foreign lands and peoples. Others have argued that wonders and other ethnographic elements in the Histories serve to reinforce important aspects of the Herodotean world view, but it is generally understood that the attention given to ethnographies and wonders is to some extent problematic.

The verbal elements at the end of the Histories to which I will call attention suggest that Herodotus himself may have given some thought to the problem.

I begin once again with the Masistes episode. The occasion of the doom of Masistes and his family is a robe woven for Xerxes by his queen, Amestris. It is described as “large and intricate and a thing worth seeing” (φαλκορος μέγα τε ποικίλον καὶ θέης ἄξιον, 9.109.1). Now, this is not the first garment with fatal significance in Greek literature—there are, for instance, the poisoned chiton

42. For example, the story of Arion—the first real digression in the Histories clearly identifiable as such—is introduced as being the most wonderful thing that happened in Periander’s life (ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἔμου μέγιστον, 1.23). The digression in the Scythian ethnography on the inability of mules to be born in Elis (4.30) is introduced by ὁμολίξεξά δέ, followed by Herodotus’ explanation that “from the beginning my narrative has gone in search of digressions” (προσθήκας γὰρ δή μοι ὁ λόγος οὕτως ἐξ ἐξεργής ἐξεταζό, 4.30.1).

43. These works are not explicitly identified as “wonders” but they plainly belong to the category of ἔργα θωμαστά, along with other constructions described by Herodotus that are explicitly characterized as “wonderful.” (See my discussion above, including n.37.)

44. Cf. Hartog 1988: 234. Gould 1989 notes that “it is very revealing of Herodotus’ cast of mind that the phrase ‘I am surprised’ or the adjective ‘astonishing’ should so often introduce a parenthesis...” (58). Munson 2001: 232–34 takes the view that Herodotus’ identification of some phenomenon as “wonderful” immediately causes it to stand out from the surrounding narrative and therefore to require contextualization and explanation. In a similar vein, Bloomer 1993: 32–41 sees Herodotus’ apparent digressions (which Bloomer believes are not really digressions) as both “signal[ed] and integrate[d]” by superlatives (41); these are in turn closely connected with the idea of wonder that “characterizes and animates the progress toward the superlative” (48). For further discussion and references, see Hunzinger 1995: 63 including n.64.

45. Jacoby 1913: 279–372 (summarized at 379–80) and 380–92. His position has since been defended and elaborated by Formara 1971a: 1–36.

46. Pohlenz 1937, Cobet 1971 and Munson 2001 are notable among those who have tried to solve the problem by seeing the ethnographies and other digressions as working together with the historical narrative in the service of a larger end.
in Sophocles’ *Trachiniai* and the deadly peplos in Euripides’ *Medea*. What makes this robe remarkable, however, is the conjunction of the three epithets that are used to describe it, epithets that seem to place it squarely within the general category of Herodotean wonders.

Bigness, for instance, is closely associated throughout the *Histories* with the idea of wondrousness. In Herodotus’ proem, μεγάλα is used in association with θωμαστά, and the word appears repeatedly as a key determinant of wonder in Herodotean descriptions. Each of the embankments built by Nitocris at Babylon is worthy of wonder precisely because of its size and height (ἐξίον θώματος, μέγαθος καὶ ύψος ὅσον τι ἐστί, 1.185.3). It is easy to multiply examples like this, and the point is perhaps easiest to make with reference to comparatives and superlatives. The characterization of Lake Moeris as furnishing still greater wonder (θώματι ἐτι μέζον) than the Labyrinth is immediately followed by a relative clause giving its circumference (3,600 stades, equal to the entire seacoast of Egypt: 2.149.1). The similarly impressive length and depth of the lake are then given, along with the measurements of the pyramids situated in its center (2.149.2–3). At 4.85.2–3 the characterization of the Pontus as the “most wonderful of all seas” (πελαγεῖων γὰρ ἀπαντών τέφρῳ θωμασιώτατον) is likewise immediately followed by a relative clause stating its incredible dimensions. In a similar vein, the fact that the Phoenician mines between Ainyra and Koinyra on Thasos are μακρ/ομεγαπερισσομεναθωμασιωτατα seems to be the result of the size of the hill (ὄρος μέγα) that has been dug up (6.47). Although he does not always refer to them explicitly with the language of wonders, Herodotus is constantly taking note of things that are exceptionally big.47

ποικίλος, the second adjective used to describe the robe woven by Amestris, is, by contrast, not a common way for Herodotus to refer to wonders. In fact, it is not a common word in Herodotus as all: it occurs only eleven times in the text.48 The superlative form of the word, however, is used to describe the windings of the Egyptian Labyrinth, for Herodotus the greatest of all buildings.49 In this passage,

47. Hartog 1988: 234–37 discusses the importance of quantity in defining the idea of *thóma* (see especially 235 n.64 for a partial list of passages where *thóma* is expressed in terms of measurable size). See also Raubitschek 1939: 219–21; Barth 1968: 98–104; Hunzinger 1995: 51 and Munson 2001: 240–41. It is worth mentioning that the works of engineering mentioned by Herodotus to justify his Samian narrative (3.60) are all described solely in terms of their size. The very big tomb of Alyattes in Lydia (έργον πολλὸν μέζιον) and the big adjacent lake (μεγάλη) may or may not be implicitly described as wonders (1.93).

48. Powell 1938: 311 s.v. Of course, the word is famously associated with Herodotus through its application to him by ancient critics like Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp.* 3; *Th.* 23) and Hermogenes (*Id.* 2.12).

49. Barth (1968: 100 and 103–104) notes the significant fact that Herodotus, uncharacteristically, compares the Labyrinth favorably with other specific works of architecture: it required more labor than all the buildings of the Greeks combined and surpassed even the Pyramids, although these too were greater than all the works of the Greeks and indeed were λόγου μέζιον, “greater than words” (2.148.2–3): “Man hat den Eindruck daß H. II 148 sich mit allen ihm zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln darum bemüht, dieses Labyrinth als das absolut großartigste έργον zu schildern” (103).
the adjective is very closely connected with the idea of wonder. In fact, Herodotus calls the portion of the Labyrinth that he was allowed to see “greater than mortal works,” apparently because the fact that the corridors and convolutions of the structure were ποικιλότατοι occasioned “infinite wonder”: ὁτω τῶν μὲν κάτω πέρι σφαιρικῶν ἀκούσαντες λέγομεν, τὰ δὲ ἄνω μὲν ἔχουσα ἀνθρωπετείων ἔργων αὐτῷ ὄρμον, αὐτὶ τὰ γὰρ ἔξω ὃ ἅπα τῶν στεγών καὶ οἱ ἐπάνω διὰ τῶν ὁλου ἐντες ποικιλότατοι θόμα μυρίων παρελθόντα ... (2.148.6). 50

The only other work of architecture in the Histories connected with the adjective ποικίλος is the Pyramid of Chephren, whose foundation was λίθου Ἀἰθιοπικοῦ ποικίλου (2.127.3). But clothing that is ποικίλος also seems to be a remarkable thing in Herodotus. The herdsman of Astyages is amazed (ἐθάμβεον, 1.111.4) when he looks at the infant Cyrus’ gold and clothes, the clothes having previously been described as ἐσθήτως ποικίλου (1.111.3). ἐσθής ποικίλη is also one of the good things of Asia mentioned by Aristagoras in his effort to tempt the Spartan king Cleomenes to intervene there on the side of the Ionians (5.49.4), and indeed, clothing and draperies described by the adjective ποικίλος are among the dazzling spoils of the Persians at Plataea (9.80.2, 82.1) though in the first passage this loot is overlooked because of the abundance of even richer booty. Clearly, some quality of wonderfulness or impressiveness attaches to this adjective. 51

The third and most striking epithet used to describe the robe is θέης ἄξυς. Of course, it is of the essence of wonders that they are “worth seeing.” This phrase, ἄξυς θέης, and the compound adjective ἄξυοθέητος occur thirteen other times in the text of the Histories, seven times in close connection with the size of the object concerned. 52 Other than the robe of Amestris, all of the objects described by Herodotus in this way are either notable works of art dedicated in temples or great marvels of engineering and architecture. There are two exceptions to this. One is the corpse of the Persian Masistius (θέης ἄξυς μεγάθεος εἵνεκα καὶ κάλλεος), which the soldiers left their ranks to see (9.25.1). The second is the Pontus, described as ἄξυοθέητον precisely because it is the most wonderful

50. For discussions of the Labyrinth as a wonder, see Barth 1968: 100 and 103–104 and Munson 2001: 241–42. Konstan 1987: 69–70 n.21 believes that it was the size of the Labyrinth and the number of its rooms that impressed Herodotus in this passage, and there can be no doubt that this was also a consideration (but see also Vernant 1987: 81).

51. Although most works of art and architecture probably aroused wonder in Herodotus and his contemporaries mainly by virtue of their size and the cost of their materials (Raubitschek 1939), Herodotus also takes notice of artistry and technical skill. For examples (including the robe woven by Amestris) and further references, see Barth 1968: 98–100. It seems likely from the description at 3.47.2–3 that the “worthy of wonder” thôrakês that Amasis of Egypt sent to Sparta and Lindos (see no.53 below) could fairly be described as ποικίλοι.

52. ἄξυοθέητος: 1.14.3, 1.184, 2.111.4, 2.163.1, 2.176.1, 2.176.2, 2.182.1, 3.123.1, 4.85.1, 4.162.3. ἄξυς θέης: 1.25.2, 9.25.1, 9.70.3. Passages where the size of the object is referenced in close connection with its “see-worthiness”: 1.25.2, 2.111.4, 2.163.1, 2.176.1, 2.176.2, 4.85.1–2, 9.25.1. Konstan 1987, discussing the predilection of Persians in Herodotus for extrinsic standards of value, notes a connection between the passion for observation and the impulse to quantify (see especially 62–68).
(θωμασιώτατον) of all seas (4.85.1–2). Although this is the only case in which the idea of being worth seeing is explicitly connected with the idea of wonder, it is evident that all occurrences of this idea in Herodotus refer to things that arouse wonder in the strict sense of the word.⁵³

What is remarkable about the use of the phrase θέης ἄξιοι to refer to the robe Amestris gives to Xerxes is that in all other cases where this phrase or the adjective ἄξιοθέητος appears Herodotus states or implies that he has actually seen the thing thus described. The one exception is the corpse of Masistius, in which Herodotus uses the phrase to explain why the dead body was displayed to the army, and why the soldiers rushed to look at it. It seems extremely unlikely, however, that our historian actually laid eyes on this robe (assuming it existed in the first place), and his incongruous use of this phrase, along with μέγα and ποικίλον, suggests that he is instructing us to see this piece of clothing as a sort of quintessential Herodotean wonder.⁵⁴

So wonderful is the robe, in fact, that neither Xerxes nor his daughter-in-law Artāynte can resist its appeal. He delights in it, and he cannot resist showing it off to her (9.109.1). She in turn is so delighted by the prospect of owning it that she chooses it over cities, an army and limitless gold, and upon finally getting it she glories (ἀγάλλετο) in its possession (9.109.2–3). But the consequences of her desire are disastrous, and both Xerxes and Artāynte are made to pay dearly for their fascination with this marvelous garment.⁵⁵

The robe, then, is dangerous as well as wonderful, and this combination of qualities takes on a new significance when we consider a striking aspect of the language used in the very last chapter of the Histories, where Herodotus tells the story of the emigration proposal put before King Cyrus by some of the Persians

⁵³ Two cases involving ἄξιοθέητος besides that of the Pontus provide special confirmation of this. At 1.184, the χώματα of Semiramis are described as ἄξιοθέητα. At 1.185.3, each χώμα built by Nitocris is ἄξιον ἰώματος, and it is hard to imagine that Herodotus is drawing some subtle distinction between the two engineering projects in question (pace Barth 1968: 98, who thinks they are both wonderful, but for different reasons). In addition, at 2.182.1 the linen thòrαx dedicated by Amasis at Lindos is described as ἄξιοθέητον. At 3.47.3, a thòrαx to which the one at Lindos is similar or identical (τοιούτος ἐτέρος) is described by means of the phrase θωμάσαι ἄξιοι. On the etymological and substantive connections between θέα and χωμαμα, see Hunzinger 1995: 50 (including nn.20 and 21). Barth 1968: 98–100 sees θωμάτος ἄξιοι, ἄξιοθέητος and ἄξιαπήγητος in Herodotus as virtually equivalent: “man meinen könne, es handele sich um Synonyma...” (98).

⁵⁴ Even without the presence of these three adjectives to call attention to the robe, its importance for the unfolding of the story of Xerxes and Masistes and the extraordinary feelings of possessiveness that it excites invite the reader to view it as having symbolic significance. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983: 29) suggests that Herodotus’ story is based on a Persian oral tradition in which the robe was equivalent to a royal robe that only the Great King could wear; Artāynte’s flaunting of the robe would therefore constitute a rebellious claim to the kingship on her husband’s behalf. Gray (1995: 206) sees the robe as “a sign of [Amestris’] luxurious orientalism.”

⁵⁵ Chiasson 1983 points out that the word περιχαρής, which Herodotus employs in 9.109.3 to describe Artāynte’s pleasure in acquiring the robe, is used in the Histories exclusively to refer to “the short-lived joy of characters who are doomed to grief or disappointment of some kind” (115). See also Flory 1978: 150–51 on the use of περιχαρής in this passage.
(9.122). In this passage the reader encounters three words formed from the root \( \theta \omega \mu \alpha \) in rapid succession. The sudden pile-up of \( \theta \omega \mu \alpha \)-vocabulary seems rather contrived, and it is very difficult not to suppose that these words were introduced by the historian with the intention of somehow calling attention to the idea of “wonder” or “admiration.”

In 9.122.2, the Persians who propose emigration allege that, having occupied a new and better land, they will be admired more by more people: \( \pi \lambda \varepsilon \sigma i \varepsilon \sigma \omicron \mu \eta \sigma \alpha \sigma \tau \omicron \tau \omicron \varepsilon \rho \omicron \iota . \)\(^{57}\) Indeed, this is the explicit reason given for the proposed removal, and it is a rather strange one: we would expect the proponents of emigration to focus instead on the prospect of an easier living.\(^{58}\) Herodotus then tells us that Cyrus, reacting to this proposal, “did not marvel at it”: \( \omicron \upsilon \ \theta \omega \mu \alpha \sigma \alpha \varsigma \zeta \nu \tau \omicron \lambda \omicron \gamma \omicron \nu \) (9.122.3). This, too, is a slightly unusual use of \( \theta \omega \mu \zeta \omicron \). Normally in Herodotus, to wonder at what someone says is to disapprove of what he is saying; at a minimum, it is to be surprised.\(^{59}\) Here, while the negation of the verb may mean that Cyrus is *not* surprised (which would seem to deserve some comment given the extraordinary nature of the proposal), it more likely means that Cyrus is not impressed.\(^{60}\) He tells the Persians to do as they will, but if they carry out the proposed move, they must be prepared to exchange supremacy for subjection. From soft lands, says Cyrus, come soft men, and it is not at all characteristic of the same land to yield both wonderful fruit and men who are good at war (\( \omicron \upsilon \ \gamma \alpha \rho \ \tau i \ \tau \iota \varsigma \kappa \upsilon \varsigma \varsigma \zeta \varsigma \varsigma \varepsilon \nu \epsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma 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The verbal pattern in 9.122 is striking, and even more remarkable for the fact that this emphasis on wonder in the very last chapter of the Histories recalls the ἔργα θωμαστά of the book’s proem. Most remarkable of all, however, is the evident tendency of the three “wonder words” in 9.122: what is “admirable” or “wonderful” (θωμαστός) is being deprecated and equated with servitude. The wisdom of Cyrus, on the other hand, lies in the fact that he does not marvel at the amazing idea laid before him.

It has often been observed that this final chapter sounds a chord whose notes have been heard many times throughout the Histories. The idea that tough lands engender tough men while luxurious regions breed slaves is connected with the whole complex of Herodotean ideas about the divine process of balance and commensuration that determines the course of history, as we can perhaps best see in Solon’s remark that neither men nor lands can provide all things for themselves (1.32.8). But the passage’s stress on τὸ θωμαστόν sounds another note as well, suggesting that one of the factors determining the doom of empires is a deleterious desire to accomplish and possess that which may be regarded as “wonderful.” Here, the conditions for national power and independence are explicitly opposed both to a project that is intended to render the Persians more wonderful (θωμαστότεροι) in the eyes of others and to the possession of a land bearing wonderful fruit (χαρπὸν θωμαστόν).

The robe in the Masistes story may now appear in a new light, and the significance of the gifts turned down by Artaínte in favor of the robe may be more fully revealed. It is remarkable, to say the least, that Xerxes’ daughter-in-law should refuse his offers of cities, infinite gold and an army that none but she should command. The point is that the wonderful robe—which turns out to bring only doom for Artaínte’s whole family—was more desirable to the girl than political or military power and all the advantages of empire. Cyrus’ contemporaries in 9.122 are also urging, unbeknownst to themselves, that Persia

61. See, e.g., Bischoff 1932: 78–83.
62. The offer to give a young woman exclusive command of an army may be regarded by some readers as implausible even as a matter of mere storytelling. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988 suggests that Artaínte is being offered not the army itself but the territory (and therefore the revenues) that it controlled. In this case, the offer of the army would be essentially similar to the offers of cities and money. Sancisi-Weerdenburg acknowledges that “no specific cases are known of the handing out of territory in terms of a military organization” (373) but regards the practice as “sufficiently attested by Herodotus’ casual remark in IX 109” that an army is a very Persian gift. In general, however, she doubts the historicity of the offer (374).
63. Artaínte’s opposite number in the Histories is Syloson, whose readiness to part with his beautiful cloak represents an instance of divine good fortune (τὴν τύχην χρεώμενος, 3.139.3), garners him the offer of limitless gold and silver from Darius (χρυσόν καὶ ἄργυρον ἄπλετον, 3.140.4; cf. χρυσὸν ἄπλετον, 9.109.3) and ultimately wins him the island of Samos (3.149). Another interesting comparandum is the case of Pheretime, who asks King Euelthon of Cyprus for an army and instead receives gifts the king feels are more appropriate for a woman: a golden spindle, a distaff and wool (4.162.2–5).
ought to sacrifice not only her newly won supremacy but also her freedom purely for the sake of that which is wonderful.

This didactic opposition between desire for wonders on the one hand and political power and freedom on the other echoes, forcefully and synthetically, themes that have asserted themselves throughout the *Histories*. Coveting the wonderful may be another example of coveting what is not one’s proper possession. At the beginning of the *Histories*, Gyges attempts to refuse to look at Candaules’ wife by asserting the principle that one should regard (only) what is rightfully one’s own: \(σκοπέειν \tauινά \ τά \ έωυτο\) (1.8.4); this precept, Gyges says, is among the “beautiful things” (\(τά \ καλά\)) which were discovered by men long ago and from which one ought to learn. But throughout the *Histories*, characters and nations fail by paying excessive attention to, and desiring, things that they have no business with. Over and over, our historian seems to emphasize the need to set a limit to one’s attentions or desires. This theme is most apparent, of course, in Herodotus’ many accounts of disastrous attempts at imperial expansion, but variations on it are common enough even when Herodotus is speaking of individuals rather than nations.\(^64\)

The stories of Artaýnte and the robe and the emigration proposal put before Cyrus in 9.122 add a new dimension to this theme, namely the idea that the transgression signified by excessive desire is somehow specifically connected to the idea of the wonderful. It seems to be desire to possess the wonderful that drives both Artaýnte and the Persians represented by Artembares to seek what it is dangerous for them to have. Nor is this surprising: as we have seen, the idea of wonder in Herodotus is associated with qualities like size (\(μέγα\)) and visual appeal (\(ποικίλον \ καὶ θέης \ άξιον\)), and these same qualities, as David Konstan has shown, are closely connected in the *Histories* to excessive desire.\(^65\) Christine Hunzinger, meanwhile, has amply demonstrated the potentially seductive nature of wonder, not only in Herodotus but in other archaic and classical Greek literature as well (1995: 59–61). She argues that in Herodotus the seductions of wonder can lead to desire, transgression and ultimate doom: “Certains récits montrent que les merveilles suscitent le désir, et le désir, la transgression” (59). Like me, Hunzinger (68–70) sees the \(θέμπεμαι\) language of 9.122 as Herodotus’ attempt to conclude his work by defining the reader’s proper reaction to wonders, including those contained in his own book: “il ne faut pas désirer posséder ces merveilles,

\(^64\) Lateiner 1985: 96–97 and 1989: 141 succinctly characterizes this Herodotean theme.

\(^65\) Konstan 1983 (especially pp. 15–19) and 1987 (passim). Although Konstan is willing to accept the existence of a relationship between \(θέμπεμαι\) and \(θέμα\), he suggests that “the idea of sheer quantity seems largely to usurp that of the marvelous in the majority of occurrences. . . . It is as though the verb had suffered a semantic de-wonderment, or as though the marvelous had, in one of its aspects, been reduced to a fascination with large numbers” (1987: 69–70 n.21). Travis 2000 also emphasizes the connection between seeing and transgressive desire in the *Histories*: “the object of desire, whether the queen, the treasury, or a land of luxury, whether looked at or schemed at, poses a deadly threat to him who desires it. Cyrus’ solution in Book 9 is the solution Gyges proposes to Candaules: don’t look at what isn’t yours” (356).
de peur de perdre sa liberté” (70). On the whole, it seems likely that Herodotus perceived a connection not only between wonderful fertility and slavery (as in 9.122.3) but between any immoderate pursuit of what is wonderful and ultimate doom. It is perhaps worth mentioning that for Herodotus it is the Scythians, who live in a land almost bereft of wonders (4.82), that have made the single greatest of human discoveries (ἔν μὲν τὸ μέγιστον τῶν ἀνθρωποὶ· ἰμματῶν σοφῶτατα πάντων ἐξεύρηται, τὸν ἡμεῖς ὑμεῖς): a means of preserving their freedom against all invaders (4.46.2).

But it is in light of the role played by the wonders in the content and structure of the Histories that Herodotus’ connections between wonder and transgression, and therefore between wonder and slavery, may be most significant. I mentioned above that readers have long regarded as problematic the space and attention given to wonders that seem to have no direct bearing on the main thrust of the historical narrative. Certainly there are aspects of the ethnographies and digressions that echo key Herodotean themes and serve to reinforce messages implicit in the cyclical stories of Lydian, Median and Persian growth and decline. But however much the practice of “telling wonders” might be co-opted by the historian, Herodotus surely recognized that it could, potentially, pose a danger to his deeper purpose. For not only might Herodotus’ accounts of wonders excite the acquisitive passions of his audience, but perhaps a reader overly dazzled by those accounts might fail, despite the historian’s best efforts, to appreciate his lessons about historical cause and effect.

66. Hunzinger concludes that Herodotus wishes to distinguish between “material” or “natural” wonders (like the “wonderful fruit” in 9.122) and wonders of human valor and achievement: “on ne saurait posséder le θομάσιον et être soi-même un θομάσιον” (69). Pelling 1997 draws on Stephen Greenblatt’s Marvelous Possessions (Oxford, 1991) for the observation that wonder “is something which initially numbs other responses; but soon wonder creates the preconditions for a range of further steps. Some choose to respect and leave unmarred a distant culture, but some (actually more, many more) prefer to go attack and take over. . .”

67. Even apart from the temptation to greed or imperialism that wonders create, to be wonderful or possess wonders is to mark oneself as outstanding, and to be outstanding in Herodotus is to be doomed to decline at the hands of gods and men. The principle of divine envy in particular is explicitly set forth in the words of Solon to Croesus (1.32.1), of Amasis to Polycrates (3.40.2), of Artabanus to Xerxes (7.10ε, 7.46.4) and of Themistocles to the Athenians (8.109.3). See also Immerwahr 1966: 313–14 on divine and human envy. Some scholars, however, feel that the role of ἐχθρος, particularly divine ἐχθρος, as a cause of events in Herodotus has been overstated: see Lateiner 1989: 196–97 and 280–81 (notes) and Harrison 2000: 40 n.26 for discussion and references.

68. Here too my conclusions are to some extent anticipated by Hunzinger 1995, who argues that Herodotus uses the allure of the wonders he narrates to attract an audience but ultimately distinguishes between specious wonders that lure men and nations to their doom and “les vraies merveilles, celles de l’histoire humaine et du récit qui les ordonne; c’est dans l’œuvre, dans le récit des έργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, exploits, monuments, et singularités étonnantes du monde, que le θομάσιον trouve une place inoffensive” (70). Travis 2000 also believes that Herodotus puts the reader in the position of being tempted and endangered by the things that he displays.

It might perhaps be objected that if Herodotus in his last chapters really intended a reflection on his own practice of narrating wonders, he would have used some form of the adjective θομάσιος, which has generally been believed to be the strict “ethnographic” designation for wonders, in
For all Herodotus’ apparent delight in the fabulous and marvelous, his underlying system of thought remains a sober one, pessimistic about the capacity of men and nations to avoid transgression and nemesis or to achieve enduring greatness.69 The Histories’ recurring themes are formulations of this pessimism, and it seems possible—and this must be speculation—that the parable of the robe in the Masistes story and the strange and striking recurrence of θωμάσιος-words in 9.122 reflect a desire to leave the reader a strong hint about the proper attitude toward wonders, and to contrast the natural human desire to impress—and to be impressed—with the deeper considerations that are the real focus of the Histories: the rise and fall of cities and empires, the dangers of prosperity and the relative desirability of freedom and servitude.70

CONCLUSION

The didactic strategies in the last chapters of the Histories illustrate the extent to which Herodotus sought to guide the reader’s thinking as the end of his book approached. In the Masistes episode and the account of the punishment of Artayctes, he compelled the reader to seek the completion of carefully crafted Herodotean patterns beyond the limits of the text, and thereby attempted to ensure that his audience had fully internalized his lessons about the historical inevitability of transgression and fall. With the language used to describe the robe woven by Amestris and the ostentatious repetition of θωμάσιος-words in 9.122, he encouraged the reader to see wonders—and even his own digressions on

69. This Herodotean pessimism is lucidly characterized by Fornara 1971a: 77–81 and Romm 1998: 59–76.

70. It is worth remarking that in the generation before Herodotus Pythagoras had apparently asserted that one of the things that had accrued to him from philosophy was μηδὲν θαυμάζειν (Plut. Mor. 44B). This spirit in early Pythagoreanism seems to have been the seed of Democritean athambeia (called ἀθαυμασία by Strabo [1.3.21]), and of the more far-reaching ataraxia and apatheia of the Epicureans and Stoics, respectively. It also seems to echo in Roman writers of the Golden Age (e.g., Cic. Tusc. Disp. 3.30; Hor. Epist. 1.6.1), though their nil admirari is never to my knowledge specifically attributed to Pythagoras. Herodotus certainly had some acquaintance with and respect for Pythagorean thought as a result of his sojourns in Samos and Magna Graecia (2.81.2, 4.95.2), but one can only speculate as to whether Herodotus’ distancing of himself from wonder at the end of his Histories could have in any way been influenced by Pythagoras’ phrase or its manifold reverberations among the Pythagoreans and others.
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wonders—as problematic and perilous enticements to neglect what he saw as the central fact of history: the ultimate instability of prosperity and power. He thereby sought to make sure that his readers would view the world and his text not merely as sources of delight, but as schools of cause and effect.

Herodotean didacticism is implicit rather than overt, but within the artistic limits of the author’s reticence, it becomes in the last chapters of the Histories almost pedagogical in its forcefulness and focus, its desire deliberately to instruct the reader in his proper response to what he reads and experiences. The apparent presence of such didactic intent tends incidentally to confirm the belief that the Histories stop at or near the endpoint chosen for them by their author. More importantly, however, it suggests to us a Herodotus whose clarity of purpose and authorial subtlety can hardly be overestimated.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


71. Cf. Moles 1996: 279: “Why, then, does Herodotus use signals rather than explicit statement? . . . Because signals are things which his readers, contemporary and modern, must interpret for themselves” (italics mine). Herodotus, I claim, wishes to train his readers in the interpretation of such signals. The ability to interpret them indicates that the reader has learned Herodotus’ lessons, and can thereafter apply those lessons to the interpretation of history itself.