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HERODOTUS 9.85 AND SPARTIATE BURIAL CUSTOMS

By Paul Christesen

Summary: At 9.85 Herodotus states that after the Battle of Plataia, the Lakedaimonians buried their dead in three separate graves: one for the ἱεῖες, one for the rest of the Spartiates, and one for helots. Taken together with 9.71, this passage suggests that all of the Spartiates decorated for bravery at Plataia were priests, which seems *prima facie* improbable. The interpretive challenges presented by 9.85 have been the subject of lively scholarly debate since the eighteenth century because this passage potentially provides important evidence for Spartiates' funerary, religious, and educational customs. With an eye to facilitating future research, this article offers a detailed conspectus of the extensive collection of relevant scholarship and, in part by drawing upon evidence from the archaeological excavations of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Kerameikos, identifies one reading, which involves athetizing part of 9.85, as the preferred interpretive approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

'The passage has evoked much comment'.¹ This terse observation from R.F. Willetts' 1980 article 'Herodotus IX 85, 1-2' is an aptly laconic description of what might justifiably be called an impressively large body

1 Willetts 1980. I am grateful to Paul Cartledge, who read and commented upon an earlier version of this article; to participants in the Celtic Conference in Classics held in Montreal in July, 2017, where I presented a talk based on this article; and to the editors of and reviewers for *Classica et Mediaevalia*. The helpful comments from all of those sources provided invaluable assistance in improving the argumentation that follows. Responsibility for errors and oversights is entirely my own.

of scholarship on a brief passage in the *Histories* in which Herodotus describes the tombs of the Lakedaimonians at Plataia:²

Οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες, ὡς ἐν Πλαταιῆσι τὴν ληϊὴν διείλοντο, ἔθαπτον τοὺς ἔωυτῶν χωρὶς ἕκαστοι. Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν τριζᾶς ἐποιήσαντο θήκας· ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος καὶ Ἀμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης· ἐν μὲν δὴ ἐνὶ τῶν τάφων ἦσαν οἱ ἱρέες, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ οἱ ἄλλοι Σπαρτιῆται, ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ οἱ εἰλωτες.³

The Greeks at Plataia, when they had divided up the spoils, buried their own dead, each people separately. The Lakedaimonians made three separate burial places. In one they buried the ἱρέες, and among them Poseidonios and Amompharetos and Philokyon and Kallikrates. So the ἱρέες were in one grave, and in another the rest of the Spartiates, and in a third the helots. (9.85, trans. D. Grene, modified)

- 2 The ancient terminology pertaining to the city of Sparta and the geographical region and political unit that encompassed the city of Sparta was complex and evolved over the course of time. It is common practice in the present day to use Sparta in a broad sense and hence, for example, to write about the ‘Spartan state’ or ‘Spartan warriors’. This usage is in many ways convenient, but it is also vague and potentially misleading, not least because it implicitly equates the entire state with the city of Sparta and the relatively small group of full citizens, Spartiates, that for the most part lived in the city of Sparta. In the interests of clarity, Sparta is here given a more restricted meaning as the designation of an urban center, rather than a state or ethnicity; the geographical region in which Sparta was located is here called Lakonia; the political unit in which Sparta was located (a political unit that encompassed the regions of Lakonia and of Messenia) is here called Lakedaimon. This system of nomenclature is relatively straightforward, but it does not do justice to the full complexity of the ancient terminology, on which see Cartledge 2002: 4-5; Shipley 2004: 570-71. The precise nature of the Lakedaimonian state (whether, for instance, it can be properly classified as a *polis*) continues to be a subject of debate. The relevant issues are well treated in Ducat 2008. (See Ducat 2010 for an abridged version of the same article in English translation.) Greek words and names have here been transliterated in such a way as to be as faithful as possible to original spellings while taking into account established usages for well-known individuals and places. BCE/CE are specified only in instances where the epoch in question is not immediately evident from context.
- 3 The Greek text of the passages from Herodotus here and below is taken from Flower & Marincola 2002.

The most obvious (but, as will become apparent, by no means the only possible) translation of ἱεεῖς is ‘priests’, the specific form being understood as an Ionic dialectal variant of ἱερεύς.

The text of Herodotus 9.85 as transmitted presents two serious difficulties.⁴ First, Herodotus mentions the names of four occupants of the grave of the ἱεεῖς (Poseidonios, Amompharetos, Philokyon, and Kallikrates), and three of those men are characterized by Herodotus as the Spartiates who most distinguished themselves in the fighting:

καὶ ἄριστος ἐγένετο μακρῶ Ἀριστόδημος κατὰ γνώμας τὰς ἡμετέρας, ὃς ἐκ Θερμοπυλέων μούνος τῶν τριηκοσίων σωθεὶς εἶχε ὄνειδος καὶ ἀτιμίην· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον ἠρίστευσαν Ποσειδώνιός τε καὶ Φιλοκύν καὶ Ἀμομφάρετος Σπαρτιῆται. καίτοι, γενομένης λέσχης ὃς γένοιτο αὐτῶν ἄριστος, ἔγνωσαν οἱ παραγενόμενοι Σπαρτιητέων Ἀριστόδημον μὲν βουλόμενον φανερώς ἀποθανεῖν ἐκ τῆς παρεούσης οἱ αἰτίας, λυσσῶντά τε καὶ ἐκλείποντα τὴν τάξιν ἔργα ἀποδέξασθαι μεγάλα, Ποσειδώνιον δὲ οὐ βουλόμενον ἀποθνήσκειν ἄνδρα γενέσθαι ἀγαθόν· τοσοῦτῳ τοῦτον εἶναι ἀμείνω. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν καὶ φθόνῳ ἂν εἴποιεν· οὔτοι δὲ τοὺς κατέλεξα πάντες, πλὴν Ἀριστοδήμου, τῶν ἀποθανόντων ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ μάχῃ τίμιοι ἐγένοντο, Ἀριστόδημος δὲ βουλόμενος ἀποθανεῖν διὰ τὴν προειρημένην αἰτίην οὐκ ἐτιμήθη.

Far the best of the Lakedaimonians was Aristodemus, in my judgment, who, because he alone of the Three Hundred survived [Thermopylai], had been shamed and dishonored. After him the bravest were the Spartiates Poseidonios and Philokyon and Amompharetos. When there was some dispute about who was actually the bravest, those Spartiates who were present gave as their judgment that Aristodemus was but that he had openly wanted to die to redress the dishonor that lay on him, and that the great deeds he did that day were those of a man crazy and leaving his rank, but that Poseidonios was not seeking death in his bravery and so he was much the better man of the two. They may have urged this out of mere jealousy. All those I mentioned

4 Flower & Marincola 2002: 255.

were killed in the fight, and were decorated for honor, except Aristodemus. But Aristodemus, because he wanted to die, for the reason just stated, was not honored. (9.71, trans. D. Grene, modified)

The information provided by Herodotus, with ἱεῖες translated as ‘priests’, can be graphically represented in the form of a Venn diagram as seen in Figure 1.

Very little is known about priesthoods in Sparta prior to Roman times, during which period the rich epigraphic record attests to the existence of 28 hereditary priesthoods (some held by women) and a much smaller number of non-hereditary priesthoods.⁵ There is no obvious reason to think that the number of priesthoods in Classical Sparta was significantly higher or that there were large numbers of Spartan priests at Plataia.⁶ There were also Spartan *manteis* (Xen. *Lac.* 13.7; Plut. *Lyc.* 9.3), a hereditary caste of *mageiroi* (Hdt. 6.60) who played

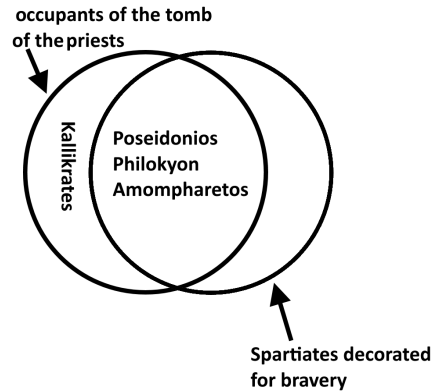


Figure 1: Venn diagram of the information supplied by Herodotus about the occupants of the tomb of the ἱεῖες and about the Spartiates decorated for bravery.

5 Spawforth 1992: 230-33. For more detail, see Hupfloher 2000: 31-211.

6 Parker 1989: 143-44 and Richer 2012: 27-28 point out that there are only two priest-hoods known in Classical Sparta, both of which were hereditary positions held by the kings. Rahe has argued that ‘Classical Sparta had a wealthy, landed aristocracy, and that aristocracy appears to have been constituted as a caste of priests’ (Rahe 1980: 386). The only evidence Rahe cites to defend that statement is Herodotus 9.85 and den Boer’s reading of that passage (on which see below). If Spartan elites were indeed a ‘priestly caste’, it is possible that significant numbers of Spartiates held a religious office of one kind or another, but if so, that practice has left surprisingly little trace in the literary and epigraphic evidence. Antony Spawforth has also posited the existence of a priestly aristocracy in Classical Sparta (Cartledge & Spawforth 2002: 152), but only in the sense that certain priesthoods were, as in Athens, hereditary within families. Kennell 1995: 14 specifically rejects the existence of a priestly aristocracy of any kind in Sparta.

a role at public sacrifices, and four *Pythioi* (Hdt. 6.57) who helped maintain Lakedaimon's close relationship with Delphi.⁷ The individuals filling these positions may have come under the heading of ἱεῖες for the purposes of battlefield burial.⁸

Given the evidence at our disposal, it seems unlikely that there were more than fifty priesthoods in Sparta at the time of Plataia or that there were more than fifty Spartiates present at Plataia who were priests or who could be counted under that heading when it came time to bury the dead.⁹ It would, therefore, be a nearly unbelievable coincidence that all three of the men decorated for bravery (Poseidonios, Philokyon, Amompharetos) happened to be priests (as would naturally follow from the fact that they were buried in the tomb of the ἱεῖες, with ἱεῖες translated as 'priests').¹⁰ The improbability of such an overlap is perhaps more obvious

7 For more detail, see Richer 2012: 253–66.

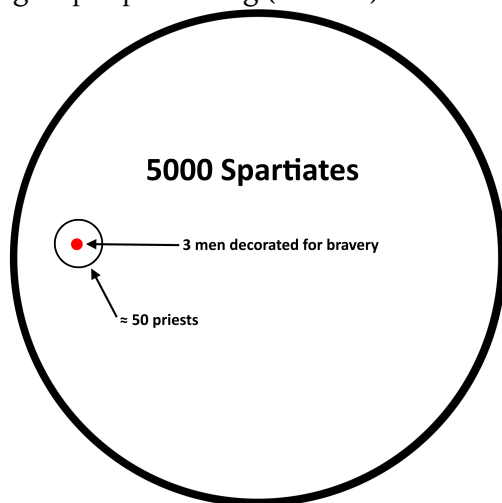
8 Lupi 2006: 193 has argued that 'had Herodotus simply wished to say that the soldiers buried in the first tomb were not really priests, but more generically "holy" men ... he would have used the term ἱοί, as he does elsewhere in his *Histories*'. However, it is entirely possible that Herodotus did in fact mean to say that the men buried in the first tomb were priests. Moreover, Herodotus seems in some instances to use the terms ἱεῦς and ἱός (as a substantive) interchangeably. See, for example, 2.54.1 and 2.56.1.

9 Some of those fifty priesthoods will have been held by women and so, by definition, not everyone holding a priesthood in Sparta could conceivably have been present in the Spartiate ranks at Plataia. Moreover, Herodotus' Demaratos states that there were 8,000 Spartiates in his time (7.234.2), and Herodotus puts Spartiate strength at Plataia at 5,000, and hence at a little less than two-thirds of their total number. We might assume, therefore, there was a maximum of fifty Spartiates at Plataia who could have been construed as ἱεῖες even if that group included religious officials other than priests.

10 The problem is neatly stated in Parker 1989: 163 n. 4.

when represented graphically; in Figure 2 the size of each circle represents each of the groups in proportion to their actual numbers. How, one might wonder, could it be that a group representing (at most) 1% of the total number of the Spartiates at Plataia produced 100% of the Spartiates decorated for bravery?

A second difficulty is the absence of any mention of a grave for the *perioikoi*. The basic sociopolitical groupings within Lakedaimonian society were Spartiates, *perioikoi*, and helots. Herodotus (9.10-11, 28) states that there were 10,000 Lakedaimonian hoplites at Plataia, 5,000 Spartiates and 5,000



perioikoi, and that each Spartiate brought with him seven helots, who served as light-armed auxiliaries. The Lakedaimonian forces engaged in a desperate battle with a numerically superior enemy and suffered casualties, though Herodotus supplies specific numbers only for the Spartiates. (He states that 91 Spartiates were killed.¹¹) One would, therefore, expect that if the Lakedaimonians made three graves, then the Spartiates, *perioikoi*, and helots would each have had a grave of

Figure 2: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates at Plataia according to Herodotus 9.85 (with ἱεῖες translated as 'priests').

11 9.70, reading Λακεδαιμονίων δὲ τῶν ἐκ Σπάρτης as Spartiates. Richer (1994: 66; 2012: 171-72) suggests an alternative reading of this phrase, namely that it anticipates 9.85 and describes Spartiates and *perioikoi* as a group that was buried in a single tomb. That is, however, difficult to reconcile with ἐκ Σπάρτης. On the Lakedaimonian casualties at Plataia, see Flower & Marincola 2002: 230-31. The figure of 10,000 Greek casualties given in Diodorus 11.33.1 is part and parcel of the wildly inflated numbers that Diodorus assigns to all aspects of the battle (e.g. 400,000 men from the Persian forces fleeing with Artabazos, 11.33.1).

their own.¹² But, according to Herodotus, two graves were dedicated to Spartiates and one to helots, leaving the *perioikoi* unaccounted for.

An important piece of information to keep in mind is that the manuscripts of Herodotus' work fall into two families, both of which begin with manuscripts from the tenth century CE.¹³ The variation among the two families is not great, and all of the manuscripts provide a text of 9.85 that differs only in minute details from one exemplar to the next.¹⁴ The difficulties with 9.85 cannot, as a result, be resolved by adopting a reading provided by one manuscript but not another.

Some sort of scholarly exegesis is therefore required in order to make sense of 9.85, and, as Willetts observed, scholars have written prolifically about this passage, starting in the middle of the eighteenth century and continuing through the present day.¹⁵ The proposed interpretations include, but are not limited to, assigning to ἰρέες the meaning of 'men who fought heroically' and emending ἰρέες to either ἰρένες (an age-class of young men in the Spartiate educational system) or ἰππέες (members of an elite Spartiate infantry unit). For obvious reasons, the varied approaches to interpreting 9.85 result in very different readings of the passage and equally divergent understandings of its significance.

This is a good moment to reconsider 9.85 on a holistic basis because it is now possible to bring into the discussion much more fully than before

12 See, for instance, Richer 1994: 64-6; 2012: 170-71. Herodotus himself was certainly aware of the *perioikoi* and their status. See, for example, 6.58, 7.234.

13 For brief overviews of the manuscripts, see Flower & Marincola 2002: 48-49; Wilson 2015b: vol. 1, ix-x. For more detailed discussion, see McNeal 1983; Rosén 1987-97: vol. 1, xxiv-lxvii. Although a certain number of relevant papyrus fragments have been published, none has as yet appeared for Book 9 (though some are expected to be published soon) (Flower & Marincola 2002: 48; Wilson 2015b: vol. 1, ix; cf. the cautionary note at West 2011: 71). None of the few published *scholia* for Book 9 (which can be found in Asheri, Vannicelli, Corcella & Fraschetti 2006: 165-67) pertain to 9.85.

14 The most complete *apparatus criticus* can be found in Rosén's Teubner from 1987-1997.

15 The relevant secondary literature cited here ranges from Wesseling's 1763 edition of Herodotus to a book of textual studies published by Wilson in 2015. 9.85 was certainly commented upon prior to 1763, but I have not made an effort to trace the earlier scholarship because it has left no discernible traces in subsequent interpretations of 9.85, whereas Wesseling's edition suggests an emendation of 9.85 that is found in Rosén's Teubner edition from 1997.

archaeological evidence for Spartiate burial practice. Numerous sources show that, starting in the mid-sixth century at the latest, Lakedaimonian soldiers who had been killed in battle were buried in *polyandria* either on the battlefield itself or in the territory of a nearby friendly community.¹⁶ Other than 9.85, however, none of those sources has anything to say about the nature of those *polyandria*. The only known and excavated Lakedaimonian *polyandria* – the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Athenian Kerameikos – was built for Lakedaimonian soldiers who were killed while on duty in Athens in 403. That tomb was first excavated in 1915 and then again in the 1930s.¹⁷ However, due to World War I and II, many of the relevant records and finds were lost, and the results of the excavations were incompletely published. With that in mind, a team from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut at Athens carefully re-examined the tomb starting in 2002, and a preliminary report of the results appeared in 2006. That report substantially revises earlier understandings of the tomb, and we are now much better equipped than before to bring 9.85 and this tomb into a productive dialog with each other.

The precise meaning of 9.85 has also taken on new importance due to the major strides that have recently been made in our understanding of burial practice in the city of Sparta. Up through the year 1995 there were less than a dozen known graves from the city of Sparta for the entire span of time starting in the Protoegeometric period and going down through the end of the Classical period, and not a single organized cemetery from that time span had been found in Sparta. As a result, our knowledge of burial practice in Sparta came almost entirely from a few, brief passages in the literary sources.

All that changed with a series of rescue excavations undertaken in Sparta since 1995, which turned up not only numerous graves, but also the first known organized cemetery that was in use in the post-Mycenaean / pre-Hellenistic period. It is now clear that during the Archaic and Classical periods the inhabitants of Sparta buried their dead both in organized cemeteries located on the periphery of the city and in small plots located in the densely inhabited portion of the urban core. The practice of burying individuals, many of whom seem to have been adults,

16 See Section 2 for further discussion.

17 See Section 2 for further details and citation of the relevant sources.

both in liminal cemeteries and in the heart of the city of Sparta raises the question of who was being buried in different parts of the city. The archaeological and epigraphic evidence from Sparta, at least at present, provide no immediate answer to that question. That, in turn, makes us reliant on literary sources.¹⁸

One possible interpretation of 9.85 is that Spartiate priests who died in combat were buried separately from other Spartiate casualties so that the Lakedaimonians killed in any given battle were placed in at least two distinct battlefield graves. That possibility is perhaps reinforced by a passage from Plutarch's *Lycurgus* (27.1-2), which sketches the restrictions placed on burials in Sparta and which includes the claim that only men who died in war and ἱεραὶ had the right to an inscribed grave marker. The meaning of ἱεραὶ has been the subject of much discussion; recent scholarship has interpreted ἱεραὶ to be female religious officials of some kind.¹⁹

As a result, one possible interpretation of Herodotus 9.85, taken together with *Lycurgus* 27.1-2, may indicate that the male and female Spartiate religious officials received special forms of burial. That in turn suggests that it was members of that group who were buried within the settled area of the city of Sparta. This would represent a major and previously unknown divergence between burial practice in Sparta and the rest of the Greek world and would provide important new information about Spartiate society. On the other hand, if the Spartiates buried in a separate grave at Plataia were men who had fought heroically, young men, or members of an elite Spartiate infantry unit (all interpretations that have been proposed and that are discussed below), then a different range of possibilities must be considered with respect to the identity of the individuals buried in the heart of Sparta's urban fabric. The interpretation of 9.85 thus has potentially significant ramifications for our understanding of Spartiate burial practices, both on battlefields and in Sparta itself.

18 On the literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence for Spartiate burial practices, see Hodkinson 2000: 237-70; Cartledge 2012. Neither of those sources discuss the results from the new excavations in Sparta, which are treated in Tsouli 2013; 2016; and Christesen 2019.

19 See Section 3.1 for further discussion.

Herodotus 9.85 is also a *locus classicus* for treatments of the Spartiate educational system. A proposed emendation from ἱρέες to ἱρένες would make 9.85 the earliest reference to age-classes in the Spartiate educational system. That emendation has been widely accepted (see Section 3.3), and, as a result, 9.85 – and the question of whether the emendation in question should be accepted – have been important components of scholarly work on Spartiate education. Those issues are, for example, explored in detail in Kennell and Ducat’s recent monographs.²⁰

Other bodies of scholarship have also made regular use of 9.85. For instance, if the ἱρέες were indeed priests, then 9.85 becomes one of the very few pieces of evidence for the number and status of Spartiate priests in the Classical period. It has, therefore, been regularly cited in discussions of Spartiate religion.²¹ In a very different vein, 9.85 is featured in an article published by Cotter in 1992 that attempts to supply an etymology for εἶρων.²²

9.85 thus stands at the intersection of several heavily-traveled scholarly pathways. Despite the efforts invested in interpreting it, this part of the *Histories* has resisted definitive exegesis, and over the course of decades and centuries, a thoroughly confusing thicket of scholarly literature has grown up around it. To extend the metaphor, the trees have multiplied to the point of obscuring the forest.

It has, as a result, become challenging for anyone interested in 9.85 to make sense of the relevant scholarship without investing a great deal of time and effort. Most of that scholarship presents a particular reading of the passage oriented toward a specific subject (e.g., Spartiate age-classes), and to the extent that overviews exist, they are distinctly incomplete in their coverage.²³ For someone encountering the interpretive challenges of 9.85 for the first time, the corpus of secondary literature is daunting and can, because it is replete with mutually exclusive hypotheses, produce more disorientation than enlightenment.

The primary purpose of this article is, so to speak, to offer a map of the forest. More specifically, the aim is to provide a wide-ranging review

20 Kennell 1995: 14-16; Ducat 2006: 94-95.

21 See, for instance, Parker 1989: 163 n. 4; Toher 1999: 118-26.

22 Cotter 1992.

23 Willetts 1980 is the most relevant example, but see also Gilula 2003 and Makres 2009.

of the various readings of 9.85 that have been suggested and of the strengths and weaknesses of each of those readings. Though the text that follows grew out of my own research on Spartiate burial practices, it is non-denominational in the sense that it is not oriented toward any specific subject.

It is important to emphasize that I make no claim to offering a new reading of 9.85 or to identifying any particular pre-existing reading as definitively preferable. Rather, the goal of this article is to streamline as much as possible the task of comprehending what has been said to date about 9.85 and, in the process, to facilitate the work of scholars interested in this part of the *Histories*. A more aspirational goal is to catalyze new research that finally cuts what has so far proved to be an interpretive Gordian knot. That said, I do, at the end of the article, highlight what I consider to be the most likely solutions to the two primary difficulties with 9.85: (1) the overlap between Herodotus' list of the bravest Spartiates and his list of the occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες, and (2) the absence of any mention of a grave for the *perioikoi*. I suggest that the phrase ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος καὶ Ἄμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης should be athetized and that the *perioikoi* were placed in the same tomb that held the Spartiate casualties who were not ἱρέες.

2. THE RELIABILITY OF HERODOTUS' ACCOUNT OF THE LAKEDAEMONIAN GRAVES AT PLATAIA

Exegesis of 9.85 is hindered by the near-total absence of other sources of information about precisely how the Lakedaimonians buried their dead on battlefields. As mentioned above, there are a sufficient number of references to show that it was habitual Lakedaimonian practice, starting in the middle of the sixth century at the latest, to bury casualties on the battlefields where they had been killed, or in the territory of a nearby friendly community.²⁴ (This stood in obvious contrast to the Athenian practice, starting in the early years of the fifth century, of bringing home

24 Pritchett 1974-91: vol. 4, 241-46.

soldiers' remains for burial in the Demosion Sema.²⁵) However, literary sources other than Herodotus have little to say about the details of Lakedaimonian battlefield burials. Pausanias, for example, describes the tombs at Plataia as follows:

Just at the entrance into Plataia are the graves of the men who fought against the Medes. There are separate graves for the Lacedaemonians and Athenians who fell, and elegies of Simonides are carved upon them. The rest of the Greeks are buried in a common tomb.²⁶ (9.2.5, trans. J. Frazer)

The relevant archaeological evidence consists solely of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in Athens (discussed in detail below). None of the tombs Herodotus mentions at Plataia have been found,²⁷ and none of the other known *polyandria* for Lakedaimonian soldiers killed in battle have been excavated. The result is that we cannot rapidly resolve the two aforementioned problems (the overlap between those decorated for bravery and the occupants of the tomb of the ἱπῆες, the absence of a tomb for the *perioikoi*) by reading 9.85 against a collection of other textual or archaeological evidence that would provide immediate insight into how Lakedaimonians were buried on battlefields.

One immediate possibility is that the two aforementioned problems with 9.85 are related in the sense that Herodotus may have simply been misinformed about the nature of the Lakedaimonian graves at Plataia and that all the Spartiates were buried in a single grave, the *perioikoi* in a second grave, the helots in a third. Within the bounds of that scenario, the listing of Poseidonios, Philokyon, Amompharetos, and Kallikrates as the occupants of the grave of the ἱπῆες is easily understood. These four

25 For the dating of the beginning of burials in the Demosion Sema and the related funerary practices, see Arrington 2010.

26 On the other ancient references to the tombs at Plataia (none of which is informative for the issues under consideration here), see Pritchett 1974-91: vol. 4, 174-75; Asheri, Vannicelli, Corcella & Frascchetti 2006: 290. For a full conspectus of the ancient literary sources for the Plataia campaign as a whole, see Wright 1904: 119-43. The major addition to the list of sources provided by Wright is the New Simonides, on which see Section 3.5.

27 Asheri, Vannicelli, Corcella & Frascchetti 2006: 291.

Spartiates are discussed in some detail in 9.71-72, indicating that Herodotus had a special interest in them. In listing the occupants of the grave of the ἰρέες, which was (in this scenario) really a common grave for all Spartiates, he simply repeated the names of four Spartiates who had died in the battle and in whom he had a special interest. As for assigning one of the three graves solely to Spartiate ἰρέες, it is entirely possible that one or more of the 91 Spartiate casualties were priests. Herodotus' two Spartiate graves would thus be a thoroughly confused description of a single grave for all Spartiate casualties that included, but was not limited to, one or more Spartiate ἰρέες.²⁸

The question then becomes whether there is reason to believe that Herodotus' account of the Lakedaimonian graves at Plataia is, at least in general terms, reliable. It would in fact be rather surprising if Herodotus went awry on this point. The entire narrative trajectory of the *Histories* finds its culmination in the Greek victory at Plataia, and the Lakedaimonians play a central role in Herodotus' description of the battle. Herodotus had every reason, therefore, to take considerable care with the details of everything pertaining to Plataia in general and the Lakedaimonians at Plataia in particular. The continuing importance of the graves of the Greek soldiers who died and were buried at Plataia is apparent in the speech Thucydides gives to the Plataians pleading for mercy from the Lakedaimonians in 427. In that speech the Plataians emphasize the regular offerings they made at the Lakedaimonian tombs (3.58.4). Moreover, Herodotus was researching and writing at a time when many of the Greek soldiers who fought at Plataia were still alive, and it seems *prima facie* unlikely that an erroneous description of the Lakedaimonian graves there could have gone unnoticed and uncorrected.

There are, nonetheless, several discrepancies between the information provided by Herodotus about the graves at Plataia and that found in other, later sources. Herodotus (9.85) lists eight distinct graves (three for the Lakedaimonians; one each for the Tegeans, Athenians, Megarians, and Phliasians; and a later cenotaph for the Aeginetans) and says that there were other cenotaphs. Thucydides (2.34.5) states that Athenian

28 I have not seen this argument laid out in the way it is articulated here, but Macan (1908: vol 1.2, 770) reaches a roughly similar conclusion with slightly different reasoning.

casualties were always buried in Athens except in the case of Marathon. Pausanias (9.2.5) mentions only three graves (Lakedaimonians, Athenians, the rest of the Greeks). Plutarch in his biography of Aristides (10-21) gives an account of Plataia that differs from that of Herodotus in a number of respects, and in his *On the Malice of Herodotus* (Mor. 871e-873d)²⁹ directly contradicts Herodotus' claim about cenotaphs at Plataia.³⁰

These discrepancies do not, either individually or collectively, present compelling reason to doubt the accuracy of Herodotus' description of the graves of the Lakedaimonians at Plataia. Thucydides' statement occurs in a passage that introduces Pericles' *epitaphios*, and, in the course of doing so, he cites Marathon as the exception to the rule that Athenians buried their war dead in the Kerameikos. Modern commentators have consistently, and reasonably, presumed that Thucydides cites the most obvious exception but makes no pretense of supplying a complete list of exceptions.³¹ Pausanias visited Plataia six centuries after the battle was fought, and, as Michael Flower and John Marincola point out, 'Paus[anias]'s statements cannot be used to correct H[erodotus], and whatever Paus[anias] saw, it was not likely the same thing that stood there 600 years before'.³²

Marincola has argued persuasively that the divergences between the account of Plataia and its aftermath supplied by Herodotus on one hand and by Plutarch on the other can be attributed in large part to Plutarch's

29 *On the Malice of Herodotus* is currently, contrary to past practice, taken to be a genuine work of Plutarch. See Bowen 1992: 2-3; Marincola 2016: 103 and n. 9. For a text and English translation, see Bowen 1992.

30 Plutarch argues that what Herodotus called cenotaphs were actual graves for casualties suffered by the forces of various cities that Herodotus disliked and hence sought to denigrate by effacing their role in the victory at Plataia. The most likely explanation of the situation is that some Greek communities buried their dead at Plataia, whereas others repatriated the remains of the casualties for burial at home. As Plataia developed into something of a national shrine, the absence of a grave there became a problem for communities that had sent forces to Plataia and that had repatriated their dead. The solution to that problem was to erect a cenotaph at the site; Aegina, for example, built a cenotaph for its Plataia dead ten years after the battle. See further the discussion in Bowen 1992: 146.

31 Hornblower 1991-2008: vol. 1, 294.

32 Flower & Marincola 2002: 254.

desire to make Plataia into a triumph of a culturally harmonious Panhellenic army over a non-Greek invader.³³ Herodotus' description of the graves at Plataia was a problem for Plutarch in that they were overt signs that the victory was due to the efforts of just a handful of Greek communities with different burial customs.

It is also important to note that Herodotus' description of the Lakedaimonian graves at Plataia is consonant with what we now know about the tomb in the Athenian Kerameikos for the men killed during King Pausanias' expedition to Athens in 403. Xenophon describes the casualties from Pausanias' expedition as follows:

And there died Chairon and Thibrachos, both polemarchs [high-ranking officers], and Lakrates the Olympic victor and other Lakedaimonians who lie buried in front of the city gates in the Kerameikos. (*Hell.* 2.4.33, trans. S. Hodkinson)

The tomb described by Xenophon has been identified with a high degree of certainty. It is located in the Kerameikos, about 100 meters north of the Dipylon Gate, alongside the western edge of the road leading from the Dipylon Gate to the Academy.³⁴ The finds from the excavations of the tomb include a number of red-figure vases produced in Lakonia (such vases are very rarely found outside of Lakedaimon³⁵). In addition, a 2.2 meter-long block (see Figure 3) with the following inscription, written retrograde and in the Lakonian alphabet,³⁶ was found 4.5 m to the east of the tomb, built into a Roman foundation wall:

33 Marincola 2016.

34 For the location of the tomb, see the useful plans of the area provided in Arrington 2010: 512, figures 2-4. The tomb is not mentioned by Pausanias in his description of the area (1.29), but it is referenced by Lysias (2.63).

35 McPhee 1986: 158 n. 37; Stroszeck 2014b: 138-40, 141 n. 17.

36 On the reasons why the inscription is retrograde, see van Hook 1932. The block with the inscription is Hymettian marble (Peek 1941: 40).

litteris singulis inter nomina scriptis
 Λ|α|[[κεδαίμονιοι]
 col. I.1 Θίβρακος
 πολέμαρχος
 col. II.1 Χαίρον
 πολέμαρχος
 col. III.1 — — —

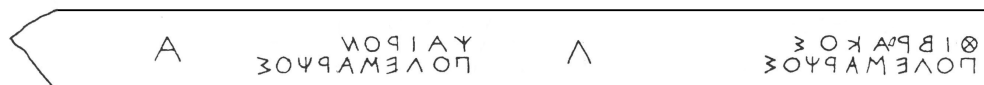


Figure 3: Drawing of inscribed block from the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Athenian Kerameikos (IG II² 11678).

The large lambda and alpha are plausibly restored as the beginning of Λακεδαίμονιοι, and there can be no doubt about the names Chairon and Thibrakos.³⁷ There has been continuing discussion as to whether a letter that begins the next casualty name is visible on the left margin of the stone and whether that letter is a lambda or mu.³⁸ This was the first of several blocks (the inscription in its original form would have been c. 12 m long) that ran to the left of the sole extant piece of the inscription.

The tomb was discovered in 1914 and excavated in 1915 and the 1930s. Publication of the results of those excavations remained incomplete due

37 The letters are in the Lakonian rather than Ionic alphabet, hence there is what might seem to be a psi at the beginning of Chairon's name. Xenophon spells Thibrachos with a chi, whereas the inscription uses a kappa. An alternate restoration of Λάκωνες (instead of Λακεδαίμονιοι) was originally suggested and has recently been raised again in Kienlin 2003: 121.

38 On this inscription, see Peek 1941: 40-41; Matthaïou 2006; Ruggeri, Siewert & Steffelbauer 2007: 182-84. On the question of the letter on the left margin of the stone, see van Hook 1932: 291; Peek 1941: 41; Willemsen 1977: 136 (all of whom argue for a mu) as well as Pritchett 1974-91: vol. 4, 134 n. 123 (who seems inclined to read a lambda). Kienlin (2003: 116-18, 121) argues that the inscription belonged to some other monument because it was too long to fit on the tomb in question. Stroszeck, however, explicitly connects the inscription with the tomb in question ('An der korrekten Zuweisung der Inschrift zu diesem Grabbau kann kein ernsthafter Zweifel bestehen', Stroszeck 2006: 102), and the reasoning behind Kienlin's suggestion is refuted in Arrington's recent study of the Demosion Sema (Arrington 2010: 512 n. 85).

to the loss of materials (both records and finds) during World Wars I and II. The tomb was re-examined in 1961 to record the extant remains, which had been damaged since the last round of excavations and for which detailed plans were not available; the results were published in brief reports in the years that followed.³⁹ In 2002 a team, led by Jutta Stroszeck from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut at Athens, began a new series of excavations, and preliminary reports of the results began appearing in print in 2006. A final, full report has not yet been published.⁴⁰

The Tomb of the Lakedaimonians forms part of a series of tombs that are distinct from each other, but still physically proximate or actually physically connected. There has been, therefore, some discussion as to where the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians begins and ends. This task has been complicated by the facts that the tomb was built in multiple phases and that the area saw a great deal of later activity.

Stroszeck argues persuasively that the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians is the structure that, in its finished form, held the skeletons numbered 1-17 and 19-24 in Figure 4.⁴¹ She disassociates Skeletons 18 and 25 from the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians on the grounds that those burials are situated at a higher level and show significant differences in the disposition of remains (most obviously, the skeletons are aligned parallel to the street).⁴² That conclusion is reinforced by disparities in construction.

39 Ohly 1961-62; 1965: 314-22.

40 The discussion provided here is based primarily on Stroszeck 2006; Stroszeck & Pitsios 2008; and Stroszeck 2014a: 254-65, though see also Kienlin 2003; Pitt 2010: 6-7; and Marchiandi 2014. See Marchiandi 2014: 1331 for a listing of earlier bibliography.

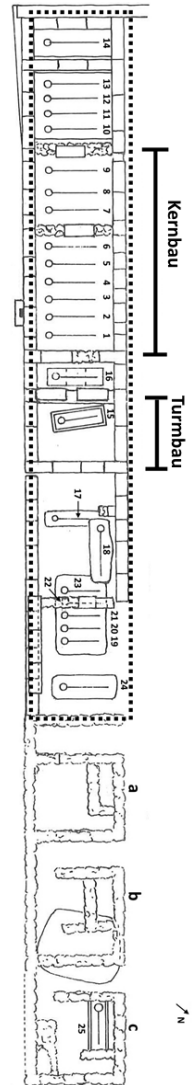
41 Kienlin 2003 decisively refutes the mooted connection between the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians and the monumental tomb, labeled by the German excavators as Staatsgrab am dritten Horos, just to the north. In some sections of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians, multiple corpses were interred in a single pit (e.g. Skeletons 1-6) and hence it is more precise, in discussing certain sections of the tomb, to talk about particular skeletons rather than particular burials.

42 Skeleton 18 seems to be a later intrusion. The structures labeled a-c in Figure 4 all seem to have been used as spaces for making offerings for the dead. Structure c was built around a pre-existing sarcophagus burial (Willemsen 1977: 137; Stroszeck 2014a: 261-62).

Figure 4: Arrangement of burials in the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Athenian Kerameikos – the edges of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians are indicated by dotted lines (based on Stroszeck 2006: 102 figure 1).

The structure around Skeletons 1-24 is built from poros ashlar blocks, whereas the structures labeled a-c in Figure 4 are built from mud brick.⁴³

It is now evident, as a result of the new excavations, that the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians was built in multiple construction phases, all of which seem to have been carried out within a relatively short space of time. In the first phase, two burial pits were made, one for Skeletons 1-6 and another for Skeletons 7-9; a mud-brick funerary structure was erected over Skeletons 1-6 and a low tumulus was raised over Skeletons 7-9. In a second phase, the mud-brick funerary structure and the low tumulus were removed, and two separate tombs were built, one for Skeletons 1-9 (the Kernbau) and one for Skeleton 15 (the Turmbau). The Kernbau was then extended to the south and the north, in order to accommodate Skeletons 10-14 and 16. (As a result, the originally separate Kernbau and Turmbau were connected.) Finally, the Turmbau was extended to the north for Skeletons 17 and 19-24. The aforementioned inscription was positioned either over the Kernbau, or over both the Kernbau and the section of the tomb holding Skeletons 10-14.⁴⁴ In the third quarter of the fourth century, a boundary stone for the



43 Kienlin 2003: 113-14.

44 The reason why the burials were made episodically but over a short period of time remains unclear. Stroszeck suggests that some men died from their wounds or that further skirmishes were fought in which the Lakedaimonian detachment suffered casualties. It is noteworthy that Skeleton 14 is situated at a higher level than Skeletons 10-13, likely because the individual that became Skeleton 14 died while the

Kerameikos was erected in the middle of the tomb's façade.

The tomb originally consisted of five courses of limestone ashlar blocks (many of which had been used in an earlier, unknown structure).⁴⁵ The topmost course of masonry was slightly set back, giving the tomb a stepped façade. The Turmbau had additional courses of masonry so that it was slightly higher than the rest of the structure (see Figure 5). The interior of the tomb was filled with earth; there is no evidence that it had a built covering of any kind. In its finished form the tomb measured 3.77 m wide, c. 24 m long, and c. 2.5 m high.

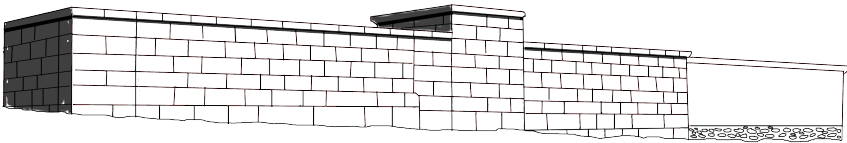


Figure 5: Schematic Reconstruction of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Athenian Kerameikos (by Michael Christesen, based on Stroszeck 2014a: 259 figure 74.12). The Tomb of the Lakedaimonians is the structure built from ashlar blocks on the left side of the drawing; the structure on the right side of the drawing (mudbrick on a fieldstone foundation) encompassed the structures marked as a-c in Figure 4. The boundary stone placed in front of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the fourth century is not shown in this reconstruction.

All of the 23 individuals interred in the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians are male, and all of the burials are inhumations; the bodies were placed in an extended supine position with their heads facing roughly east. The

tomb surrounding Skeletons 10-13 was under construction (Pitt 2010: 6-7). This suggests a compressed timeframe in which the Lakedaimonians continued to suffer casualties.

45 The area in which the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians stood had previously been occupied by the northern wing of a bathhouse and part of a pottery workshop. Those structures were destroyed shortly before the tomb was built, presumably in the course of events during the Peloponnesian War.

bodies seem to have been wrapped tightly in cloth at the time of burial, which is in accord with later literary sources stating that Spartiate soldiers were buried in their *phoinikides*.⁴⁶ The only grave good is an alabaster alabastron found alongside Skeleton 15. (A considerable amount of pottery, the remnants of sacrifices carried out during the burial process, was found in the upper levels of the tomb, but was not associated with any particular skeleton(s).)

In the present context it is particularly salient that the burials in the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians display a considerable degree of differentiation. In the initial phase, two separate burial pits were dug, and each burial pit received its own, distinct marker. In the second phase, two separate structures were built (the Kernbau and the Turmbau), one of which (the Turmbau) held a single individual who was provided with the only grave good found in the tomb as a whole and who, unlike all of the other interred individuals, was buried in a sarcophagus. Furthermore, the Kernbau was subdivided into two sections (one holding Skeletons 1-6 and the other for Skeletons 7-9) by an interior cross wall. Skeletons 7-9 were further distinguished by the fact that two stones were placed under the head of each corpse, whereas Skeletons 1-6 received just one stone each.⁴⁷ In addition, a large stone was placed on the north side of Skeleton 8 so that Skeletons 8-9 were separated from Skeleton 7. In the same vein, Skeletons 17 and 19-24 were interred at the same time, but Skeletons 17 and 24 were given spatially distinct graves, whereas Skeletons 19-23 shared a single section of the tomb.

The design of the inscription, with names of individuals interspersed among the letters spelling *Λακεδαιμόνιοι*, would naturally accommodate the listing of up to 15 casualties (presuming that one casualty name was listed on each side of each letter in *Λακεδαιμόνιοι*) and could, therefore, have included the names of all the individuals buried in the southern part of the tomb, over which the inscription was positioned, as well as

46 Ael. *VH* 6.6; Plut. *Lyc.* 27.1-2, *Mor.* 238d; though see also the cautionary comments at van Wees 2018: 221. A number of the skeletons include remains of the weapons that were the cause of death. On those weapons, see Baitinger 1999. On the *phoinikis*, see Xen. *Lac.* 11.3.

47 The stones in question probably originally supported a pillow made from perishable materials.

the name of the individual buried in the Turmbau. Even so, it is noteworthy that the names supplied at the beginning of the inscription are those of the two commanders, whose rank is clearly specified. Stroszeck suggests that Skeletons 8 and 9 (the remains of individuals who were approximately 33 years old and 50 years old, respectively, at their time of death) are the bodies of the polemarchs Chairon and Thibrakos and that Skeleton 7 (approximately 20 years old at time of death) is the body of the Olympic victor Lakrates.⁴⁸

Some caution is in order when using this tomb to help interpret 9.85. Insofar as it was built in an urban center and in an area of that urban center previously used for burials, it was sited differently from most other *polyandria* for Lakedaimonian casualties. In addition, it was built in an openly hostile community that may have imposed restrictions of various kinds on the Lakedaimonians. Finally, this tomb was constructed nearly 80 years after those in Plataia, and it is entirely possible that there was a significant element of diachronic change with respect to how Lakedaimonians buried their casualties, change of which we are unaware due to the lack of detail in the relevant sources.

On the other hand, many features of the tomb are emphatically Lakedaimonian. This is most immediately evident in the use of the Lakonian alphabet in the inscription, and the presence in the tomb of ceramics that were made in Lakonia and rarely exported.⁴⁹ In addition, the inscription on the tomb, which stretched for more than 10 meters and faced a road leading out from a busy city gate, boldly proclaimed Λακεδαιμόνιοι in large letters. There is, therefore, good reason to believe that the tomb reflects Lakedaimonian preferences and practices.

48 Spartiate Olympic victors enjoyed considerable prestige and were given the privilege of being stationed alongside the king in the Lakedaimonian phalanx (Christesen 2010; 2012: 228). Willemsen 1977 argued that Lakrates was neither a Spartiate nor buried in this tomb but rather an Athenian cavalryman who fought on the side of the Lakedaimonians. This suggestion was rejected by Moretti in the context of his magisterial research on Olympic victors (Moretti 1987: 119; cf. Moretti 1957: 109) and more recently in Kienlin 2003.

49 The vases in question came to Athens either as the personal property of the soldiers in the Lakedaimonian army unit stationed in Athens or were specially commissioned from Lakonian potters for the burial. See the discussion in Stroszeck 2006: 108-15.

A potentially relevant factor with respect to diachronic change is that the Lakedaimonian army seems to have undergone some sort of structural reform in the latter part of the fifth century (and hence between the time of Plataia and the construction of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Kerameikos). The relevant sources offer piecemeal and contradictory information that remains difficult to assemble into an entirely satisfactory whole. In general terms, however, it would appear that an important part of the army reform was the closer integration of *perioikoi* and Spartiates within Lakedaimonian military units.⁵⁰ That reform is germane to the issues under discussion here because it is possible that the shift in the organization of army units was accompanied by changes in burial practices. More specifically, the greater integration of *perioikoi* and Spartiates could have brought with it a convergence in how members of those two groups who had been killed in battle were buried. One might, for example, speculate that whereas Herodotus makes no explicit mention of burial arrangements for the *perioikoi* at Plataia, the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in Athens may have held both *perioikoi* and Spartiates.

It is, however, important to bear in mind that the Lakedaimonian soldiers buried in Athens were separated into multiple tombs with certain individuals being buried with special care, evidently on the basis of military rank (the polemarchs) or social status (the Olympic victor). For present purposes, whether the tomb in Athens held only Spartiates or both Spartiates and *perioikoi* is not a primary consideration. Rather, the key point is that the Lakedaimonians, when burying their casualties, initially built distinct tombs for different groups of individuals and treated the corpses buried in those tombs differently.

Hence the design and internal arrangements of the only excavated Lakedaimonian *polyandrion* resonate strongly with Herodotus' description of the Lakedaimonian tombs at Plataia. In both cases we encounter multiple, distinct graves for Lakedaimonian casualties from a single military engagement. That lends considerable credibility to Herodotus' claim that there were two graves for Spartiates at Plataia, one of which held a group that he (probably) designates as ἰπέες.

50 See the discussions in Anderson 1970: 225-51; Cartledge 2002: 217-20; and Lipka 2002: 255-64. Cf. Lazenby 1985: 13-20, who argues that the *perioikoi* were always only marginally important in the Lakedaimonian army.

There is, therefore, good reason to believe that Herodotus' account of the Lakedaimonian tombs at Plataia is, at least in general terms, reliable. That in turn means that the difficulties with 9.85 cannot be dismissed as the result of Herodotus being badly informed. A different explanation is necessary.

3. OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS SCHOLARLY WORK ON HERODOTUS 9.85

Most of the scholarly discussion of 9.85 has focused on one of the two problems with the passage: the striking overlap between Herodotus' list of Lakedaimonians decorated for bravery and his list of the occupants of the grave of the ἱρέες. This can, as a convenient shorthand, be called the overlap problem.⁵¹

Six basic solutions, or minor variants thereon, have been proposed for the overlap problem.⁵²

- (1) Herodotus' list of the men decorated for bravery is incomplete.
- (2) Herodotus' list of the occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες is incomplete.
- (3) ἱρέες should be emended to ἱρένες.
- (4) ἱρέες should be emended to ἱππέες.
- (5) ἱρέες should be translated as 'men who fought heroically' rather than as 'priests'.
- (6) the phrase ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδῶνιος καὶ Ἄμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης should be athetized.

51 The importance of Herodotus' work and the regularity with which it has been read and commented upon have resulted in a massive volume of scholarship. It is, as a result, impossible in the present context to provide exhaustive bibliography on every point. I have made a particular effort to cite the earliest source I could discover for any given interpretation as well as scholarship from the past two decades.

52 Other solutions have been proposed but were so problematic as to receive little attention or support. For example, Willetts 1980: 276-77 suggested an emendation to σφαιρέας/σφαιρέες, but that term is known only from much later sources and would be out of place in Herodotus' text.

As we will see, solutions (1), (2), and (3) are almost certainly untenable. The remaining three solutions are all tenable; the one that appears last in the list given above has some claim to being the most probable.

3.1 HERODOTUS' LIST OF THE MEN DECORATED FOR BRAVERY IS INCOMPLETE

The solutions listed above resolve the overlap problem by expanding one of the two groups mentioned in 9.85 (the men decorated for bravery or the men buried in the grave of the *ἱεῖες*), by making the two groups identical, or removing the link between the two groups. The first solution we will consider takes the approach of expanding the group of men decorated for bravery.

In the 1950s Willem den Boer argued that Herodotus' list of soldiers who distinguished themselves at Plataia is incomplete and that the Lakedaimonian army decorated many more men for bravery than the three listed by Herodotus.⁵³ This resolves the overlap problem because, if significantly more than three men were decorated for bravery, then the fact that three of those decorated for bravery were *ἱεῖες* becomes less problematic.

In support of this argument Den Boer pointed to Plutarch *Lycurgus* 27.1-2, which reads as follows:

Καὶ μὴν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ταφὰς ἄριστα διεκόσμησεν αὐτοῖς, πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ἀνελῶν δεισιδαιμονίαν ἅπασαν ἐν τῇ πόλει θάπτειν τοὺς νεκροὺς, καὶ πλησίον ἔχειν τὰ μνήματα τῶν ἱερῶν οὐκ ἐκώλυσε, συντρόφους ποιῶν ταῖς τοιαύταις ὄψεσι καὶ συνήθεις τοὺς νέους, ὥστε μὴ ταράττεσθαι μηδ' ὀρρωδεῖν τὸν θάνατον ὡς μαινόντα τοὺς ἀψαμένους νεκροῦ σώματος ἢ διὰ τάφων διελθόντας. ἔπειτα συνθάπτειν οὐδὲν εἴασεν, ἀλλὰ ἐν φοινικίδι καὶ φύλλοις ἐλαίας θέντες τὸ σῶμα περιέστελλον. ἐπιγράψαι δὲ τοῦνομα θάψαντας οὐκ ἐξῆν τοῦ νεκροῦ, πλὴν ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν

53 Den Boer 1954: 293-98.

ἀποθανόντων. χρόνον δὲ πένθους ὀλίγον προσώρισεν, ἡμέρας ἔνδεκα τῇ δὲ δωδεκάτῃ θύσαντας ἔδει Δήμητρι λύειν τὸ πάθος.

Furthermore, Lycurgus made excellent arrangements for their burials. First, removing all superstition, he did not prevent them from burying the dead within the *polis* and having the *mnemata* near the sacred places, thus making the youth familiar with such sights and accustomed to them, so that they were not disturbed by them and had no horror of deaths as polluting those who touched a corpse or walked among graves. Next, he allowed them to bury nothing with the body; instead they enfolded it in a *phoinikis* and olive leaves when they laid it away. When they buried it, it was not permitted to inscribe the name of the deceased, except for a man who died in war and *γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντων*. He fixed a short period of mourning, eleven days; on the twelfth day they had to sacrifice to Demeter and end their grieving. (trans. S. Hodkinson, slightly modified)

Precisely what Plutarch meant by *γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντων* is unclear, and various readings and emendations have been proposed.⁵⁴

Den Boer made the case that Plutarch was saying that only *hieroi* (whom den Boer took to be priests) who died in battle and *hierai* (whom den Boer took to be priestesses) had the right to an inscribed epitaph. (This requires reading Plutarch's *πλὴν ἀνδρὸς ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντων* in such a way that both *ἀνδρὸς* and *γυναικὸς* depend upon *ἱερῶν*.) If one accepts that only priests who died in battle received an epitaph, then only one of the three Lakedaimonian graves at Plataia, the one for the *ἱεῖες*, would have had a monument listing the names of the individuals interred therein. Den Boer is vague as to whether he thinks the grave of the *ἱεῖες* held just the four named occupants or whether there were others whose names Herodotus does not mention.⁵⁵ In either case, the overlap between those named for distinguishing themselves in battle and those named as being buried in the

54 See the discussions in Hodkinson 2000: 243-46, 260-62; Brulé & Piolot 2004; Dillon 2007.

55 Kelly 1981: 33 takes den Boer to be saying the grave had just four occupants, but den Boer never explicitly makes that claim. It is conceivable that the grave of the *ἱεῖες*

grave of the ἱπῆες becomes more readily understandable: Herodotus read the names of the ἱπῆες on the grave marker at Plataia and hence remembered them and put those names into his account of the battle, while omitting any mention of the names of the many other Spartiates who were decorated for bravery (including possibly Spartiates who were not killed in the fighting) but who were not ἱπῆες and thus whose names were not listed on the grave marker at Plataia. That would explain why Herodotus mentions Kallikrates, who was not decorated for bravery but who was, according to den Boer, a priest and hence had his name on a grave marker at Plataia.

Den Boer thus concludes that ‘there is, therefore, no question of an improbable coincidence that the four men mentioned were also priests’.⁵⁶ To return to one of our starting points, one of the two major problems with Herodotus’ account of Plataia is that it implies that a group representing (at most) 1% of the total number of Spartiates produced 100% of the Spartiates decorated for bravery. This can be represented graphically as seen in Figures 1 and 2. Den Boer’s solution – which resolves the problem by significantly expanding the number of Spartiates decorated for bravery – can be represented graphically as seen in Figures 6a-b.

held more than four individuals, all of whose names were listed on a marker over that grave, but that Herodotus chose to mention only Poseidonios, Philokyon, Amompharetos, and Kallikrates, because they were remarkable in some fashion, having distinguished themselves in battle (Poseidonios, Philokyon, Amompharetos) or standing out because of their physical beauty and untimely death (Kallikrates).

56 Den Boer 1954: 297.

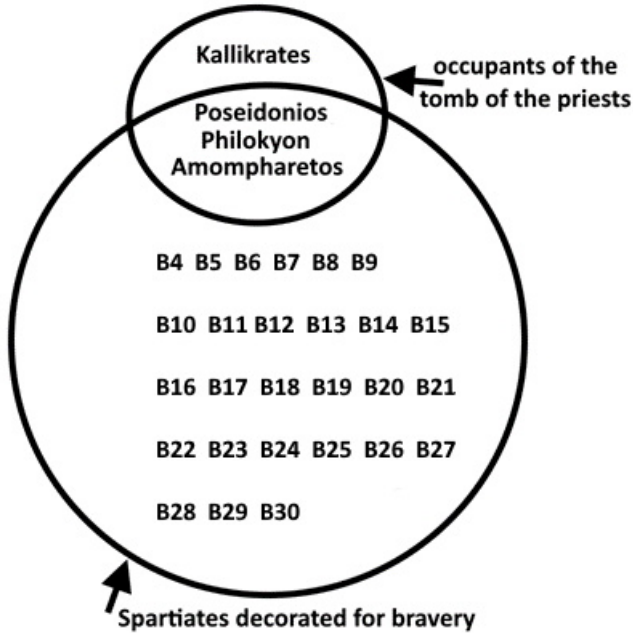


Figure 6a: Venn diagram of den Boer's description of the dead and decorated at Plataia.⁵⁷

In Figure 6a, B4-30 stand for Spartiates decorated for bravery but not named by Herodotus. The assumption that there were twenty-seven such men is made purely for the sake of illustration.⁵⁸ If thirty Spartiates were decorated for bravery, then it would not be inherently improbable

57 The relative size of the circles in this diagram are notional (i.e. not directly proportional to specific number of individuals in each group) because den Boer maintains simply that many more Spartiates were decorated for bravery than the three individuals named by Herodotus. He specifies neither the number of Spartiates he believes was decorated for bravery nor the number of occupants of the tomb of the ἱεῖες.

58 Den Boer's argument requires that the group of men decorated for bravery be large enough to explain how it included three priests, and it seems highly improbable that dozens of Spartiates were decorated for bravery, so the number of thirty is roughly in the range that works with den Boer's views on 9.85.

that three of those men, representing 10% of the total number decorated for bravery, were priests. According to den Boer, only Poseidonios, Philokyon, and Amompharetos, because they were priests, had inscribed epitaphs at Plataia, whereas the other \approx twenty-seven men decorated for bravery (who were not priests) had no such epitaph, and, as a result, Herodotus mentions only Poseidonios, Philokyon, and Amompharetos. This solves the overlap problem because only a relatively small percentage of the men decorated for bravery are priests (see Figure 6b).⁵⁹

59 Herodotus discusses Poseidonios, Philokyon, and Amompharetos at 9.71 and Kallikrates at 9.72 but nowhere mentions that any of them were priests. Den Boer says that 'This is not surprising because nowhere in Greece, including Sparta, was the priesthood of central importance...' (den Boer 1954: 297). This would appear to be at odds with the idea that holding a priesthood in and of itself made individuals sufficiently important to receive special burial at Plataia, and it is perhaps better to argue that Herodotus' focus at 9.71 is the bravery with which the individuals in question fought and hence other biographical information was excluded.

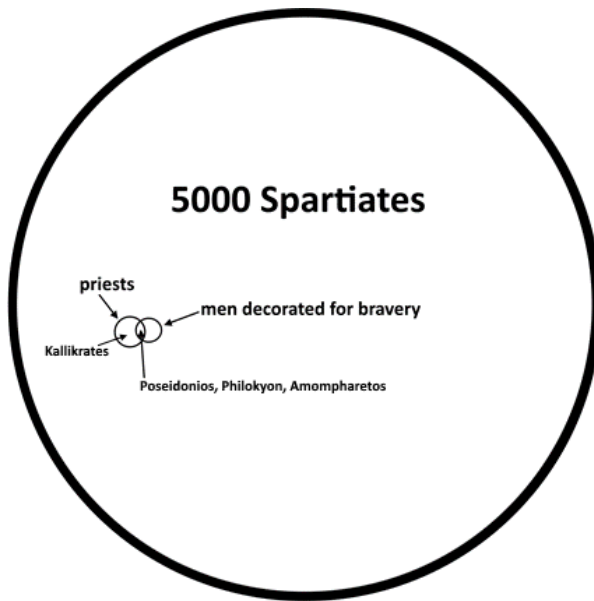


Figure 6b: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates at Plataia according to den Boer.⁶⁰

However, den Boer's reading of the Plutarch passage has not found wide acceptance.⁶¹ One immediate problem is that there have to date been found in Lakedaimon 25 inscribed epitaphs for soldiers who died in

60 The circles representing the 5,000 Spartiates at Plataia, the number of priests, and the number of men decorated for bravery are proportional to the number of individuals involved. The circles representing the number of priests and the number of men decorated for bravery are based on the assumption that there were fifty and thirty such individuals, respectively.

61 Though see Burn 1984: 541 n. 78.

war, ranging in date from the fifth century BCE through the Roman period.⁶² None of those inscriptions (the only certain Lakedaimonian inscriptions for men who died in battle) identifies the deceased as a priest.⁶³

Another difficulty has to do with the changes Plutarch made in his source material. *Lycurgus* 27.1-2 closely echoes a passage in the *Moralia*:

Τῶν δὲ ταφῶν ἀνεῖλε τὴν δεισιδαιμονίαν ἅπασαν ὁ Λυκοῦργος, ἐν τῇ πόλει θάπτειν τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ πλησίον ἔχειν τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν ἱερῶν συγχωρήσας. περιεῖλε δὲ καὶ τοὺς μiasμούς, συνθάπτειν δ' οὐδὲν ἐπέτρεψεν, ἀλλ' ἐν φοινικίδι καὶ φύλλοις ἐλαίας θέντας τὸ σῶμα περιστέλλειν κατ' ἴσον ἅπαντας. ἀνεῖλε καὶ τὰς ἐπιγραφὰς τὰς ἐπὶ τῶν μνημείων, πλὴν τῶν ἐν πολέμῳ τελευτησάντων, καὶ τὰ πένθη καὶ τοὺς ὄδυρμούς.

Lycurgus removed all superstition concerning burials, granting the right to bury the dead in the *polis* and to have the *mnemeia* near the sacred places. He also abolished pollutions. He permitted them to bury nothing with the body; but, all treating it alike, to enfold it in a *phoinikis* and olive leaves. He did away with inscriptions on *mnemeia*, except for those who had died in war, and also with mourning and lamentations. (238d, trans. S. Hodkinson)

This passage comes from the *Instituta Laconica*, an episodic description of certain Lakedaimonian institutions and practices, which is now widely understood to consist of working notes that Plutarch used in writing biographies such as that of Lycurgus. Those notes drew heavily on a Hellenistic compilation of material on Lakedaimon, a compilation that was in turn based upon an earlier, unknown treatise on the Lakedaimonian

62 A nearly complete list can be found in Tsouli 2013: 152 and n. 10. The function of these epitaphs (and more particularly, whether they marked graves or served as commemorative monuments) has been much debated. See Hodkinson 2000: 250-56.

63 It is interesting to note, in light of what is known about the Olympic victor Lakrates and his possibly special treatment in the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in Athens, that one of those inscriptions, *IG* V.1.708, dating to the third century BCE, identifies the individual being commemorated as an Olympic victor.

politeia.⁶⁴ The similarity between the two passages leaves little doubt that Plutarch reworked the passage from the *Instituta* while writing his life of Lycurgus. In so doing he introduced several changes.

The passage from the *Moralia*, on which the passage from the *Lycurgus* is based, mentions only men who died in war. The phrase καὶ γυναικὸς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποθανόντων was added by Plutarch himself and presumably applies only to γυναικός.⁶⁵ Plutarch thus is saying that all soldiers who died in battle had the right to an epitaph, not just priests, which vitiates den Boer's entire argument. Also, in *Lycurgus* 27.1-2 Plutarch seems to be discussing burial practices for individuals in Sparta itself, and there is no immediate warrant for extending Plutarch's comments to battlefield *polyandria*. There is, therefore, no compelling reason to accept that Spartan priests who died in battle were buried in a special grave that included an epitaph with their names.

A final problem is that den Boer's solution requires that the Spartiates decorated quite a large number of men for bravery.⁶⁶ This is not impossible, but the standard practice for Greek armies seems to have been to award special recognition for valor to a handful of individuals at most.⁶⁷

The difficulties with den Boer's solution are, both separately and collectively, sufficiently large as to indicate that it is untenable.

3.2 HERODOTUS' LIST OF THE OCCUPANTS OF THE TOMB OF THE ΙΠΕΕΣ IS INCOMPLETE

A different solution to the overlap problem is to expand not the number of men decorated for bravery but rather the size of the other group – the men buried in the grave of the ἱπέες. This solution involves arguing that Herodotus' list of the occupants of the tomb of the ἱπέες is incomplete. The argumentation here is relatively straightforward in the sense that

64 Hodkinson 2000: 37-43, 249-55.

65 Pritchett 1974-91: vol. 4, 244 n. 430.

66 Further reasons for rejecting den Boer's interpretation can be found in Willetts 1980: 273-75.

67 For a good overview of the relevant evidence, including a full list of relevant passages in Herodotus, see Pritchett 1974-91: vol. 2: 276-90.

τῶν in the phrase ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος καὶ Ἀμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης can easily be understood as beginning a partitive genitive. This solution has not, to my knowledge, been argued in detail but it is implicit in many translations of Herodotus. Hence, simply *exempli gratia*, Tom Holland and Paul Cartledge render Herodotus' Greek as 'The Lacedaemonians raised three tombs. In one they buried the priests, including Poseidonius, Amompharetus, Philocyon, and Callicrates'.⁶⁸ This solution can be represented graphically as seen in Figures 7a-b.

In Figure 7a, P5-30 stand for priests buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες but not named by Herodotus. The assumption that there were twenty-six such men is made purely for the sake of illustration.⁶⁹ If thirty Spartiate priests were killed in battle, then it would not be inherently improbable that three of those men, representing 10% of the total number of priests killed in battle, were decorated for bravery. This approach is, in some sense, the opposite of den Boer's: whereas den Boer resolved the overlap problem by expanding the number of men decorated for bravery, this

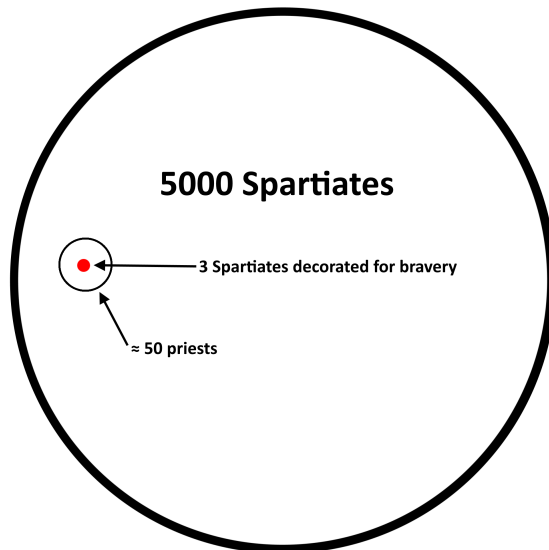
68 Holland & Cartledge 2013: 624.

69 For the argument in question to work, the group of priests killed in battle needs to be sizeable, but it cannot exceed the total possible number of priests (c. fifty), so a total hypothetical figure of thirty priests is the appropriate range.

approach resolves the overlap by expanding the number of the occupants of the grave of the ἱρέες.

Figure 7a: Venn diagram of Holland and Cartledge's (implicit) description of the dead and decorated at Plataia.⁷⁰

However, this solution to the overlap problem has two fatal flaws.



First, it creates the need to explain why priests would have suffered casualties at a staggeringly higher rate than the rest of the Spartiates at Plataia. More specifically, the assumption that there were approximately thirty priests buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες means that priests, representing at most 1% of the total number of Spartiates, suffered 33% of the total Spartan casualties (which Herodotus puts at 91).⁷¹

70 The size of the circle representing each of the groups is in proportion to their actual numbers, based upon the presumption that there were thirty occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες. (Holland and Cartledge maintain simply there were more occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες than the four individuals named by Herodotus and do not specify the number of Spartiates they believe was in the tomb.)

71 This problem could be ameliorated by reducing the hypothetical number of priests buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες, but every such reduction correspondingly brings us

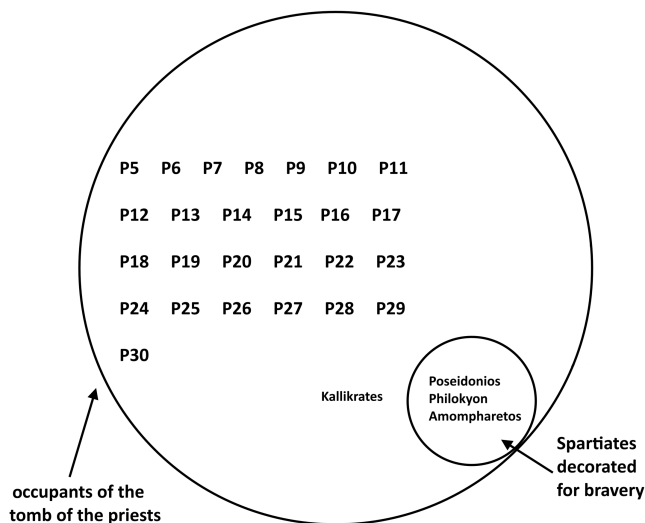


Figure 7b: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates according to Holland and Cartledge.⁷²

Second, unlike den Boer's approach, in this scenario, all of the men decorated for bravery are priests, and hence this reading of Herodotus' Greek does not resolve the question of how priests, a group representing (at most) 1% of the total number of Spartiates, could have produced 100% of the Spartiates decorated for bravery.⁷³

back to the original problem of the overlap between Herodotus' list of Lakedaimonians decorated for bravery and his list of the occupants of the grave of the ἱρέες. One could, of course, argue that Herodotus' casualty figures are not trustworthy, but to reject one detail of Herodotus' account in order to resolve a problem with another detail surely falls under the heading of special pleading.

72 The size of the circle representing each of the groups is in proportion to their actual numbers.

73 Burn 1984: 541 attempted to resolve both of these problems by arguing that Spartiate priests at Plataia performed sacrifices under a rain of Persian arrows, suffered very high casualties, and were, as a result, decorated in some numbers for bravery. This suggestion is not inherently impossible, but Herodotus characterizes Aristodemos, Poseidonios, and Philokyon as distinguishing themselves in the fighting (note the

In the absence of satisfactory resolutions to these problems, resolutions which have not been forthcoming, it is difficult to accept this solution to the overlap problem as tenable.

3.3 IPEEΣ SHOULD BE EMENDED TO IPENEΣ

Yet another solution, like the solution discussed in Section 3.2, involves expanding the group of men buried in what the text of 9.85 as transmitted labels the tomb of the ἱρέες. This solution expands that group not by translation, but rather by emendation. In the mid-eighteenth century Lodewijk Caspar Valckenaer suggested emending ἱρέας and ἱρέες in 9.85 to read ἱρένας and ἱρένες, respectively.⁷⁴ The emended words are taken to be Ionic forms of εἰρήν, a term for an age group in the Spartiate educational system that encompassed males in their late teens or some or all of their twenties.⁷⁵ It can be represented graphically as seen in Figures 8a-b.

Valckenaer's proposal to emend ἱρέας and ἱρέες to ἱρένας and ἱρένες met with wide acceptance for a long period of time.⁷⁶ The emendation is

contrast with Kallikrates articulated in 9.72), and hence it is improbable at best that they died while conducting sacrifices.

74 Valckenaer was motivated to emend 9.85 because he was troubled by the absence of explicit mentions, in any extant literary source other than 9.85, of Spartiate priests serving in the Lakedaimonian army. That objection carries less weight in the present day due to the discovery of inscriptions (see, for example, *SEG* 29.361, a casualty list from Argos dating to c. 400) that document the presence of priests and seers among the casualties from battles fought during the Classical period. Valckenaer's emendation and the reasoning behind it are reported in Wesseling's edition of Herodotus Book IX (Wesseling & Valckenaer 1763; see den Boer 1954: 289-90 and Makres 2009: 187 n. 5).

75 There are variant opinions on the years covered by the εἰρήν age-grade; see below for further discussion.

76 See, for instance, Abicht 1869-73: vol. 2, 175; Stein 1901: vol. 5, 196; Macan 1908: vol. 1.2, 770; How & Wells 1912: vol. 2, 327; Shuckburgh 1916: 53, 141; Hude 1927: vol. 2, ad loc.; Masaracchia 1978: 102. The emendation to ἱρένες is maintained in Rosén's Teubner edition from 1997 (which edition has not been met with universal warmth; see, for instance, the review in Renehan 1990). See also Cotter 1992; Lupi 2000: 47-49; 2006: 190-95.

palaeographically defensible, and Valckenaer found apparent confirmation for the emendation in the fact that a Byzantine glossary of unusual words in Herodotus includes an entry for εἰρήν, which does not appear anywhere in the text of the *Histories*.⁷⁷ He argued that the passage in question is the most logical place in the *Histories* where *eiren* would have appeared.

The logic behind Valckenaer's solution to the overlap problem is sufficiently complicated as to merit careful mapping. The starting place is the straightforward observation that, if what Herodotus calls the tomb of the ἱπέες was actually devoted to individuals belonging to a group with a substantial number of members, the claim that three members of that group were decorated for bravery becomes less problematic. Hence a first criterion for this approach to resolving the problems with 9.85 is identifying a group with a substantial number of members.

However, the group in question has to meet further criteria beyond having sufficient numbers. A second criterion is that the group needs to be sufficiently coherent and well-established that the Lakedaimonians could be expected to have buried its members as a special collectivity. A third and final criterion is that, because all three of the men identified by Herodotus as having been decorated for bravery came from that group, there must be some reason to believe that the members of the group were in a special position to distinguish themselves in the fighting at Plataia.

77 For the text of the entire lexicon, see, Stein 1869-71: vol. 2: 441-82, reprinted as Stein 1965. The Greek text of just the entry for εἰρήν can be found in den Boer 1954: 249; Gilula 2003: 83 supplies an English translation. On this lexicon, see Rosén 1962: 221-31; Asheri, Vannicelli, Corcella & Fraschetti 2006: 169-70. Stein (1869-71: vol. 2, 475) suggested that the entry in question derived from the work of Aristophanes of Byzantium and hence dated to the third or second century.

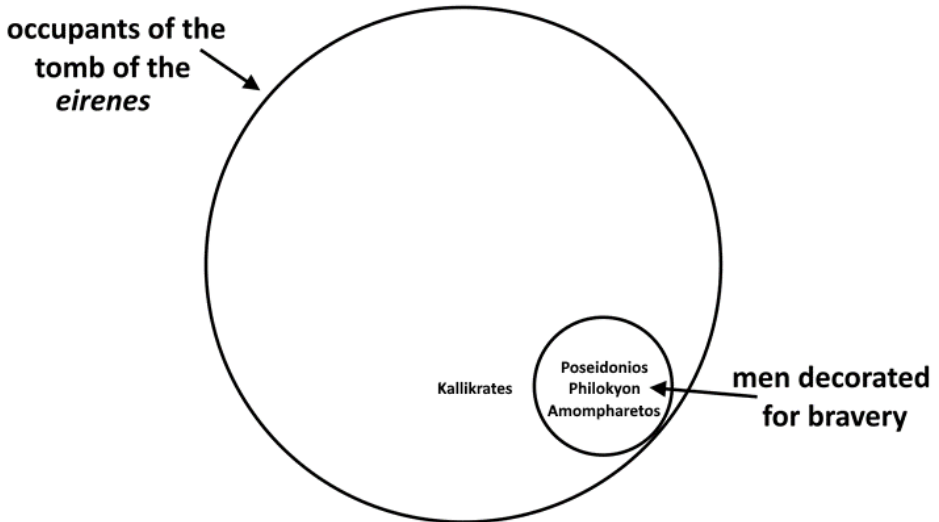


Figure 8a: Venn diagram of Valckenaer's description of the dead and decorated at Plataia.⁷⁸

The major advantages of Valckenaer's emendation include the fact that it is not only palaeographically defensible and (ostensibly at least) supported by the ancient glossary entry for εἰρήνη, but also that the *eirenes* meet all three of the criteria specified above. They were potentially numerous enough that it would not be inherently improbable that three of them were decorated for bravery,⁷⁹ and, insofar as all Spartiates participated in the highly developed educational system of which the *eirenes* formed part, it is not implausible that *eirenes* might have been buried as a group.

78 The relative sizes of the circles in this diagram are notional (i.e. not directly proportional to specific number of individuals in each group) because Valckenaer's solution for the overlap problem is agnostic about the number of the individuals buried in what he would label the tomb of the *eirenes*.

79 One might note in this regard that at Herodotus 9.12, an Argive messenger to Mar-donios announces that the Lakedaimonian army is on the march by stating that 'ἐκ Λακεδαίμονος ἐξελήλυθε ἡ νεότης'.

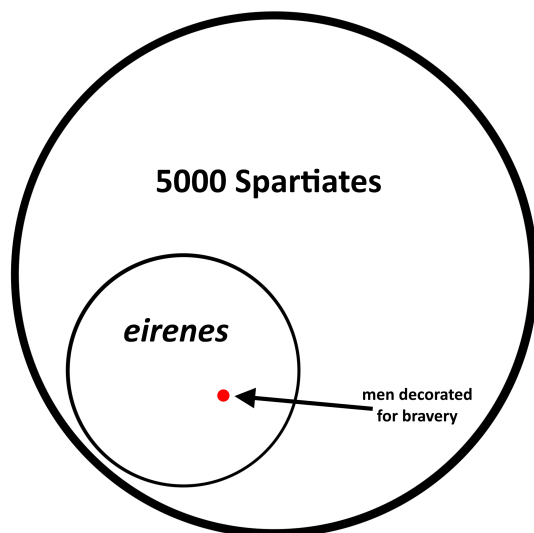


Figure 8b: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates according to Valckenaer.⁸⁰

With respect to the third criterion (being in a particularly good position to distinguish themselves on the battlefield), Ulrich Kahrstedt argued that Spartan *eirenes* were stationed in the front ranks of Lakedaimonian armies because they were the fastest runners and could make rapid sallies.⁸¹ That would, in turn, mean that the *eirenes* would have had special opportunities to distinguish themselves at Plataia.⁸² It would,

80 The relative sizes of the circles in this diagram are proportional to the number of individuals in each group, but only roughly so in that it is impossible to know the precise number of *eirenes* that could conceivably have seen service at Plataia. If in fact all male Spartiates between the ages of 20 and 29 were *eirenes*, one might assume that they comprised approximately one-third of the Spartiates at Plataia, and the diagram above reflects that assumption. Greater precision than that is impossible because the age-range of the Spartiates designated as *eirenes* is unclear (see below for further discussion), because the age-range of the Spartiates called into service for Plataia is unknown, and because *eirenes* may have been either over-represented among the Spartiates at Plataia (because they were the youngest and most energetic soldiers) or under-represented (due to concerns about ensuring that each Spartiate produced at least one male heir; see, for example, Hdt. 7.205).

81 Kahrstedt 1922: 307-8.

82 Makres 2009: 191-92.

therefore, not be entirely surprising that all three Spartiates decorated for conspicuous bravery at Plataia were *eirenes*.⁸³

Despite its numerous charms, the emendation to ἰρένας/ἰρένες has been largely rejected in more recent scholarship.⁸⁴ There are five substantive objections to this emendation. First, one might expect that if Herodotus used a technical term from the Spartiate educational system, he would have provided some sort of definition for his readers. This is Herodotus' practice elsewhere in his work. For instance, at 1.67 he discusses the actions of the Spartiate Lichas, whom he identifies as one of the Spartiate *agathoergoi*. He then immediately explains the meaning of the specialized term *agathoergoi*.⁸⁵

Second, unless a young Spartiate was an *eiren* for an extended period of time, the group of *eirenes* would not have been large enough to fulfill the first criterion listed above. Many scholars have in the past claimed that the Spartiates were *eirenes* for ten years, which would make the *eirenes* into quite a large group.⁸⁶ Both of the recent major studies of the Spartiate educational system have, however, rejected that claim. Ducat has argued that in Herodotus' time Spartiates were *eirenes* for a single year. Kennell has made the case that there was no such age group within the Spartiate educational system in the Archaic or Classical periods.⁸⁷

83 Other evidence has been cited in support of Valckenaer's emendation. For example, Lupi 2006: 194 argues that the legends on fourth-century Samnite coins that seem to refer to the Spartan village of Pitane and to Samnite border guards, who were typically young men, indicate that the unit commanded by Amompharetos, the Pitanate *lochos*, was made up of young men.

84 See, for example, Richer 1994: 66; Kennell 1995: 14-16; Toher 1999: 118-26; Hodkinson 2000: 258; Flower & Marincola 2002: 255; Gilula 2003: 82-6; Asheri, Vannicelli, Corcella & Frascchetti 2006: 291-93; Ducat 2006: 94-95; Dillon 2007: 158-59; Richer 2012: 172 as well as the discussion in Brulé & Piolot 2004: 156-57 with the accompanying notes.

85 Oliver 2017: 40-86 has argued that Herodotus' account of the Battle of Plataia is based directly on an oral version Herodotus presented in Athens. If this is true, it strengthens the expectation that Herodotus would have offered a definition of ἰρένας/ἰρένες.

86 See, for example, Tazelaar 1967: 141-43.

87 Ducat 2006: 100; Kennell 1995: 14-17.

Third, the glossary of Herodotean words, to which Valckenaer pointed for confirmation of the emendation, includes words found in authors such as Sophocles that are not found in Herodotus,⁸⁸ and a gloss from the fourteenth or fifteenth century found in a manuscript of Strabo contains comments on the word εἰρήν that closely echo the entry for εἰρήν in the Herodotean glossary.⁸⁹ This suggests that the entry for εἰρήν in the Herodotean glossary was a later insertion that had no necessary connection with Herodotus.⁹⁰

Fourth, Herodotus' account of the Battle of Plataia portrays Amompheratos, one of the four men buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες, as a senior commander in a position to argue vehemently and at length with

88 Stein 1869-71: vol. 2, 471-75. There are also issues of potential importance having to do with the fact that the lexicon in question consists of two word lists, one arranged by order of appearance in the text of the *Histories* and one arranged alphabetically. (Stein called these lists Recensio A and B, respectively.) The lists occur separately in two distinct sets of manuscripts (i.e., no manuscript contains both lists). Stein (1869-71: vol. 2, 443) argued that both lists were at some point separately copied from a lexicon that included both lists and that the extant manuscripts (four for Recensio A, nine for Recensio B) descend from those two separate, original copies. The key issue here is that the entry for εἰρήν appears only in the alphabetical list, which, unlike the order-of-appearance list, contains some extraneous entries in the sense that they pertain to words that appear not in Herodotus but in other authors. As Gilula 2003: 84 has pointed out, because the entry for εἰρήν does not form part of the order-of-appearance list, it is impossible to connect that entry securely to Book 9. Rosén 1962: 221-31 went a step farther and excluded the entry for εἰρήν from a catalog of what he considered to be genuine entries from the original version of the lexicon because it is not included in the order-of-appearance list. Nafissi, however, points out that the manuscripts with the order-of-appearance lists are incomplete in the sense that they are missing any entries for Book 9. (Presumably the original source of Recensio A was copied from a manuscript that was damaged and missing the end of the order-of-appearance list.) It is, therefore, possible that the entry for εἰρήν was originally included in the order-of-appearance list, which in turn means that the entry for εἰρήν cannot be excluded from a catalog of genuine entries from the original version of the lexicon on the grounds that it is not included in the order-of-appearance list (Nafissi 1991: 302 n. 108, followed by Lupi 2000: 48 n. 2).

89 Diller 1941.

90 Gilula 2003: 84.

Pausanias the Regent (9.53-4). It is, therefore, unlikely that Amompheros could have been of an age to be classified as an εἰρήν.⁹¹

Finally, Kahrstedt's claim that Spartiate *eirenes* formed a distinct group that regularly occupied the front ranks of the Lakedaimonian phalanx is manifestly problematic. Some passages from authors such as Thucydides and Xenophon show that, in certain circumstances, men from younger age classes were positioned in the front ranks of the Lakedaimonian phalanx so that they could make sallies from the phalanx, but the men in question are not described as *eirenes*. Xenophon, who was well acquainted with the technical vocabulary of the Spartiate educational system and army, describes these men as τὰ δέκα ἀφ' ἥβης ('the first ten year-classes'; *Hell.* 2.4.33, 3.4.23; *Ages.* 1.31), which is compatible with the view that the *eirenes* were Spartiates from age 20-29. But Xenophon also writes that, in a battle fought during the Corinthian War, the commander of a Lakedaimonian unit first ordered a charge by τὰ δέκα ἀφ' ἥβης and then, when that was not effective, ordered a charge by τὰ πεντεκαίδεκα ἀφ' ἥβης.⁹² Not only is the word *eirenes* conspicuous by its absence, but it is impossible that the τὰ πεντεκαίδεκα ἀφ' ἥβης could be the same as the *eirenes* and that, in turn, suggests that τὰ δέκα ἀφ' ἥβης and τὰ πεντεκαίδεκα ἀφ' ἥβης were ad hoc formations based on the number of years of service and hence age (since all Spartiates entered the army at the same age) rather than a pre-existing group.

Moreover, the claim that the Spartiate *eirenes* regularly occupied the front ranks of the Lakedaimonian phalanx is not compatible with the claim that they formed a distinct unit within the Lakedaimonian army (and hence were likely to be buried as a group in a separate tomb). Thucydides (5.68.2-3) states that at the Battle of Mantinea in 418 each of the smallest units (*enomotiai*) in the Lakedaimonian army was, with some exceptions, arrayed in four files with eight men in each file. (Hence each

91 Den Boer 1954: 292; Toher 1999: 119-20; Dillon 2007: 159 (among others) *pace* Chrimes 1949: 318; MacDowell 1986: 165-66; Makres 2009: 191. Den Boer raises the further objection that Kallikrates is described as an ἀνὴρ κάλλιστος and that *Xen. Lac.* 2.11 shows *andres* to be 'rigorously distinct' from *eirenes*. That may place too much emphasis on Herodotus' choice of words. Lazenby 1985: 49 raises and rightly dismisses the possibility that there were two different Lakedaimonian soldiers with the name Amompheros ('surely too much of a coincidence').

92 *Hell.* 4.5.14, 16. On these passages, see Billheimer 1946.

unit had four men in the front ranks of the phalanx.) If the *eirenes* formed a large, distinct unit within the Lakedaimonian army, then they would have been divided into smaller units, each of which consisted entirely of *eirenes* and each of which provided four complete files that stretched from the front of the phalanx to the back. The logical consequence is that if the *eirenes* served in a distinct unit and were tasked with sallying forth as a group, their departure would have suddenly and markedly reduced the width of the Lakedaimonian phalanx. That would have rendered the entire army vulnerable, and hence it is far more likely that younger Spartiates did not serve as a distinct group but rather were distributed roughly evenly among the individual *enomotiai*.⁹³

It is conceivable that the *eirenes* within each of the smaller units in the Lakedaimonian army were frequently stationed in the front ranks of the units to which they belonged and that, because this was the case at Plataia, they distinguished themselves in battle. If one assumes that the *eirenes* existed as a distinct age-class in fifth-century Sparta (as one must in this scenario), then they could well have been buried as a distinct group that included most if not all of the Spartiates who had been decorated for bravery. However, Xenophon specifically states that the front ranks of the Lakedaimonian phalanx consisted entirely of officers (*Lac.* 11.5; cf. *Thuc.* 5.66.4; *Asclepiodotus, Tactica* 2.2-3; *Ael., Tactica* 5.1-5; *Arr. Tact.* 5.4-6.6; *Wheeler* 1991: 147). This arrangement reflected the fact that the soldiers stationed in the front rows of the phalanx played a key role in the outcome of a hoplite battle, and it would have been exceedingly

93 Lupi 2006: 190-93 takes up an argument found in earlier scholarship (listed by Lupi in n. 19 on pg. 209) that Amompharetos commanded a rearguard. Lupi also argues that the rearguard in question, the Pitanate *lochos*, was in fact the 100 *hippeis* who served as bodyguards for the king and that they were, therefore, all young men who were in a position to distinguish themselves in battle. However, the argumentation that Lupi deploys to equate the Pitanate *lochos* with the king's bodyguard is implausible. For example, Lupi sees Herodotus' information about the existence of a Pitanate *lochos* as a reflection of a general understanding of the Lakedaimonian army and hence not particularly reliable. That, in turn, implies that Thucydides' flat denial (1.20.3) of the existence of a Pitanate *lochos* should be taken seriously, but Lupi goes on to argue that there was a *de facto* Pitanate *lochos*, in the form of the 100 *hippeis* who served as the king's bodyguard. In Lupi's view, all of those men came from the tribe of Hylleis, which was localized in Pitane.

odd if the commanders of the Lakedaimonian army at Plataia, faced with the existential threat posed by the Persian army, would have chosen to put the youngest and most inexperienced Spartiates (particularly if *eirenes*, as most scholars now agree, included just those Spartiates who were 20 years old) in the front rank of their phalanx.

That said, it is not impossible that (a) *eirenes* were Spartiates between the ages of 20-29, (b) at Plataia soldiers in the first ten age-classes (and hence all *eirenes*) were called upon to carry out some especially dangerous duty, and (c) the *eirenes* suffered disproportionately large casualties and made up most of the Spartiates decorated for bravery. Even if that were true, there remains the difficulty of explaining why the Spartiates would have provided a special battlefield tomb for the *eirenes* while lumping together all of the other Spartiates. As J.F. Lazenby pointed out, there is no evidence that the *eirenes* ever represented a distinct unit within the Lakedaimonian army.⁹⁴ The absence of such evidence is noteworthy because, if *eirenes* represented all male Spartiates aged 20-29 and did serve as a unit in the Lakedaimonian army, they would have represented more than a quarter of the total number of Spartiates and hence might well be expected to make some appearance in the many references to the Lakedaimonian army in action.⁹⁵ Insofar as the *eirenes* do not seem to have habitually occupied the front ranks of the Lakedaimonian phalanx or to have represented a distinct unit with the Lakedaimonian army, it is not obvious why they would get a special tomb. Even if they did distinguish themselves at Plataia, it is difficult to believe that the Spartiates would have altered their normal burial practices in response to the ad hoc dispositions made at a specific battle and given only the *eirenes* their own special grave while burying all of the other Spartan casualties in a separate grave.

Each of the difficulties with Valckenaer's emendation to ἰρένεες can perhaps be explained with some special pleading. So, for example, it is possible that Amompharetos was not an *eiren* but rather a senior commander in charge of a unit made up entirely of *eirenes* and hence was

94 Lazenby 1985: 50.

95 This presumes that Spartiates were liable for military service between ages 20-60 and takes into account the fact that some Spartiates would have died between the ages of 30-60.

buried with them.⁹⁶ That, however, requires two assumptions: (1) Spartiates were *eirenes* for 10 years (otherwise they would not have been numerous enough to explain their postulated role at Plataia) and (2) the *eirenes* were a stable, distinct unit within the Lakedaimonian army (otherwise it is not clear why they would have been buried together at Plataia). Those assumptions are not impossible, but, as we have seen, the most recent scholarship on the Spartiate educational system runs directly counter to the idea that Spartiates were *eirenes* for 10 years in Herodotus' time, and there is no evidence that there ever was a distinct unit of *eirenes* in the Lakedaimonian army.

The remaining difficulties with Valckenaer's emendation could be resolved with similarly complicated argumentation, but at a certain point the accumulated weight of the requisite special pleading becomes simply unmanageable. And of course one must bear in mind that the text being defended by means of elaborate mental gymnastics is not the text as transmitted but an emendation. If a proposed emendation can be justified only with great difficulty and other, less problematic readings are available (as will become clear below), the rational course of action is surely to abandon that emendation. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the emendation to ἰρένες should be put to the side as untenable.

96 As argued in Kelly 1981 and Nafissi 1991: 301-3. Makres 2009 has recently defended the emendation to ἰρένες by re-iterating pre-existing arguments of why the text as transmitted is not tenable and by adding one new reason to the collection of pre-existing arguments in favor of the emendation. Makres makes the case that the story of Amompharetos arguing vehemently with Pausanias is an exaggerated tale and hence Amompharetos could well have been a young man. The claim that Herodotus' story about Amompharetos is an exaggerated tale is possible but requires revisiting one of the most basic features of Herodotus' account of the Battle of Plataia, namely that the Lakedaimonians fought the Persians largely on their own because they failed to take part in a planned retreat during the night before the battle. Herodotus explains the Lakedaimonians' behavior by attributing it to Amompharetos' refusal to move his unit from its position. If Amompharetos was, as Makres suggests, a young man of no great influence, then some other explanation for the somewhat odd actions of the Lakedaimonian army must be supplied. (Makres also supplies some other, largely speculative reasons to believe that Amompharetos was a young man.)

3.4 ΙΠΕΕΣ SHOULD BE EMEDED TO ΙΠΠΕΕΣ

We now turn our attention to the three tenable solutions to the overlap problem in 9.85. The first of those solutions, like that discussed in Section 3.3, involves expanding, by means of emendation, the group of men buried in what the text of 9.85, as transmitted, labels the tomb of the *ἱπέες*. Valckenaer proposed more than one emendation to 9.85. He also suggested that *ἱπέας* / *ἱπέες* could be emended to *ἱππέας* / *ἱππέες*. This solution can be graphically represented as seen in Figures 9a-b. Ironically,

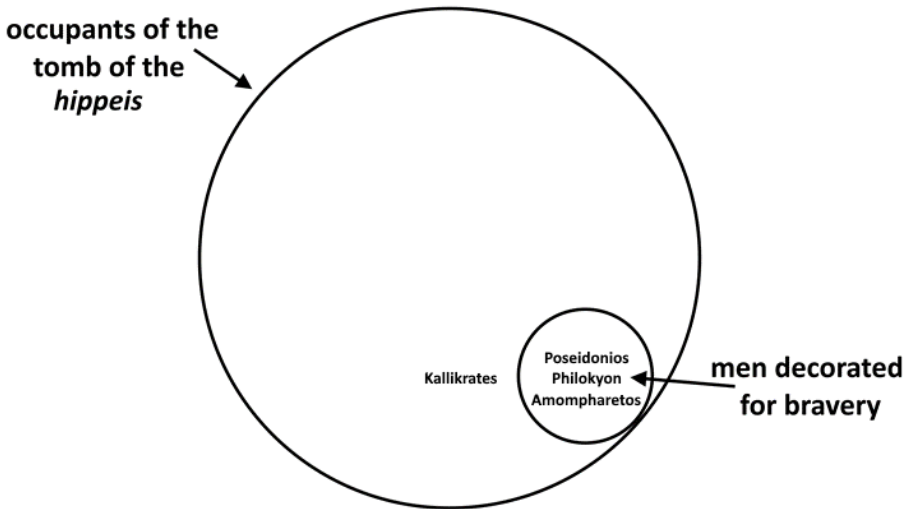


Figure 9a: Venn diagram of Valckenaer's alternative description of the dead and decorated at Plataia.⁹⁷

this emendation was never widely adopted, but is in fact much more promising than Valckenaer's other proposed emendation.⁹⁸

97 The relative sizes of the circles in this diagram are notional (i.e. not directly proportional to the specific number of individuals in each group) because Valckenaer's (alternative) solution for the overlap problem is agnostic about the number of the individuals buried in what he would label the tomb of the *hippeis*.

98 Valckenaer's emendation to *ἱππέας* is discussed in Willetts 1980: 274. This emendation has not been widely accepted, though it is adopted by Jeanmaire 1939: 546 and Lazenby 1985: 181 n. 16. Kelly 1981 and Nafissi 1991: 301-3 accept the emendation

In assessing this emendation, it is helpful to bear in mind the criteria specified in Section 3.3. In order for the proposed emendation to be feasible, the individuals buried in what the extant manuscripts call the tomb of the ἰπέες would need to come from a relatively large, well-defined group, the members of which had special opportunities to distinguish themselves in the fighting at Plataia. The *hippeis* neatly fulfill all of those criteria. They were a distinct and elite unit of three hundred Spartiates within the Lakedaimonian army and were thus numerous enough that it would not be inherently improbable that three of them were decorated for bravery.⁹⁹ They can also be plausibly identified as a group that was sufficiently coherent and well-established that the Lakedaimonians could be expected to have buried its members as a special collectivity. And, as an elite unit, the *hippeis* might well have been assigned hazardous duty at Plataia. The *hippeis* were divided into three groups of 100 men, each with its own commanding officer, and at least one such group served as the bodyguard of the king or force commander during Lakedaimonian military expeditions (Hdt. 6.5.6). Given the strong expectation that Greek commanders would be personally involved in combat, it is probable that the Spartiate *hippeis* at Plataia were in the thick of the fighting, as we know them to have been at other battles (Thuc. 5.72.4).¹⁰⁰ It would, as a result, not be entirely surprising if the three men Herodotus mentions as being decorated for bravery were all *hippeis*.

to ἰπέες and argue that Herodotus used this term to refer to the *hippeis*, the members of which were young adult males (Xen. *Lac.* 4.1-4). Kelly and Nafissi take Amompharetos to be the most senior of the three officers (*hippagretai*) in charge of the *hippeis* and hence an older man and an influential commander in a position to argue with Pausanias. They concede that Amompharetos was thus not, technically speaking, one of the ἰπέες, but make the case that Herodotus could have described the *hippeis*, including their commander, collectively as ἰπέες. This is a bit difficult to accept, however, since Herodotus himself (1.67.5, 8.124.3) uses the term ἰππῆες to refer to the *hippeis*.

99 On the *hippeis*, see Figueira 2006. The evidence pertaining to the *hippeis*, particularly with respect to the role as the kings' bodyguards, is at least *prima facie* not free from contradictions. For a reading of that evidence that differs from that given by Figueira, see Anderson 1970: 245-49.

100 One might note in this regard that, according to Diodorus 11.33.1, the Greek army awarded the prize for valor to the Lakedaimonians collectively and to Pausanias individually.

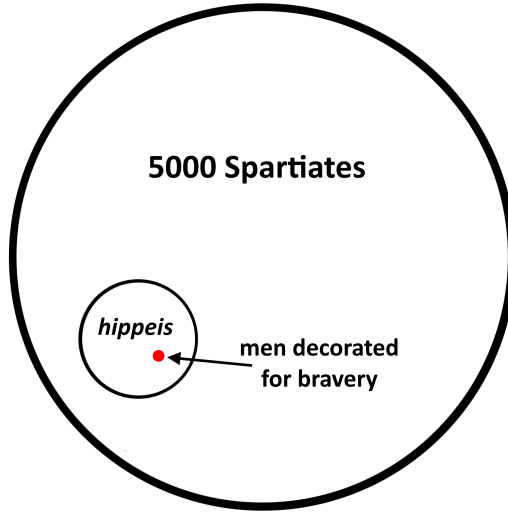


Figure 9b: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates according to Valckenaer.¹⁰¹

Emending ἱρένας / ἱρένες to ἱπέας / ἱπέες is among the more elegant suggested approaches to reading 9.85. One difficulty is that a change from ἱρέας / ἱρέες to ἱπέας / ἱπέες is perhaps less palaeographically probable than a change to ἱρένας / ἱρένες. In addition, there is the important methodological principle that emendations not needed to make a passage grammatically sound should not be adopted unless there is no plausible way to make sense of the text as transmitted. Neither of those objections is inherently fatal.

3.5 ΙΠΕΕΣ SHOULD BE TRANSLATED AS ‘MEN WHO FOUGHT HEROICALLY’ RATHER THAN AS ‘PRIESTS’

Another tenable solution involves a different approach than any of the four discussed to this point. Rather than expanding either the group of men decorated for bravery or the group of men buried in what the extant

101 The relative sizes of the circles in this diagram are proportional to the number of individuals in each group.

manuscripts call the tomb of the ἱρέες, this solution proposes a meaning for ἱρέες that makes the two groups identical. More specifically, this solution involves identifying ἱρέες as individuals who had been singled out for fighting heroically on the battlefield. This solution has its roots in the views of Hermann Diels from the early part of the twentieth century, but it has been further developed by Nicolas Richer.¹⁰² The logic here is straightforward: the overlap between Herodotus' list of the bravest Spartiates and his list of the occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες exists because the ἱρέες were not priests but individuals who had been recognized for fighting heroically. The tomb of the ἱρέες thus inevitably held the bodies of the three Spartiates decorated for bravery, all three of whom, Herodotus notes, were killed in the fighting (9.71). (The fourth Spartiate whose bravery Herodotus highlights, Aristodemos, might have been excluded because he, in a suicidal frenzy, left his position in the phalanx and was not, in the event, decorated for bravery.) This resolves the overlap problem because, from this perspective, the group of individuals buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες was, by definition, coterminous with the group of individuals decorated for bravery. This is apparent in the graphic representation found in Figures 10a-b.

In articulating this solution, Richer lays out evidence to support the idea that some Spartiate soldiers received special funerary treatment. One relevant source is the following excerpt from a passage from Aelian's *Varia Historia* that provides a list of Spartiate customs:

οἱ δὲ καλῶς ἀγωνισάμενοι καὶ ἀποθανόντες θαλλοῖς ἀνεδοῦντο καὶ κλάδοις ἑτέροις, καὶ δι' ἐπαίνων ἤγοντο· οἱ δὲ τελέως ἀριστεύσαντες καὶ φοινικίδος αὐτοῖς ἐπιβληθείσης ἐνδόξως ἐθάπτοντο.

Those fighting nobly and dying are crowned [or, bound] with olive and other branches and carried [off] with praises; those who were supremely brave were wrapped in their *phoinikis* and buried with special honors. (6.6, trans. S. Hodkinson)

102 Richer 1994: 63-70; 2012: 165-78, followed by Hodkinson 2000: 258. Diels articulated his views in a letter to Martin Nilsson and that letter was published with an explanatory note by Nilsson in *Klio* (Nilsson 1913). It was subsequently republished in Nilsson's collected works (Nilsson 1951-60: vol. 2, 369-71).

The 25 inscribed epitaphs for Spartiate soldiers who died in war as well as Plutarch *Moralia* 238d and *Lycurgus* 27.1-2 (see Section 3.1) are also relevant insofar as they show that Spartiate soldiers who died in battle were accorded a special privilege in the form of the right to erect a commemorative monument in Sparta.¹⁰³

Richer suggests that the ἱρέες were identified in an assembly held in the aftermath of each battle. The key piece of evidence in the present context is Herodotus' account of what happened after the fighting at Plataia had ended: 'When there was some dispute about who was actually the bravest, those Spartiates who were present gave as their judgment ...' (γενομένης λέσχης ὃς γένοιτο αὐτῶν ἄριστος, ἔγνωσαν οἱ παραγερόμενοι Σπαρτητέων, 9.71). This is in accord with other passages indicating that it was customary for Greek armies to identify formally and honor those who had particularly distinguished themselves.¹⁰⁴

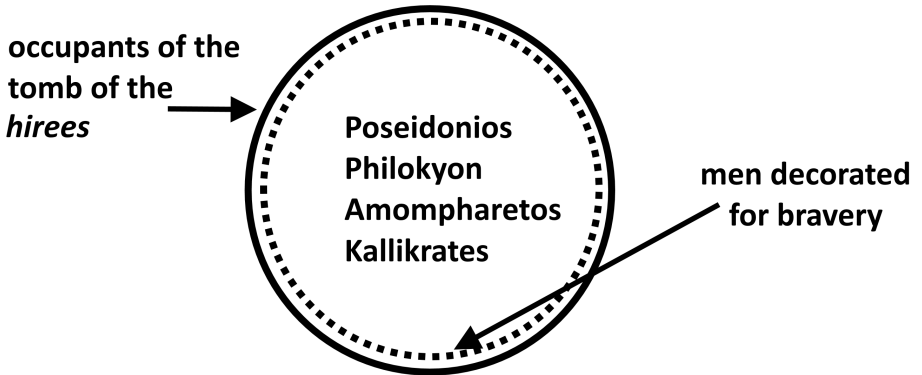


Figure 10a: Venn diagram of Richer's description of the dead and decorated at Plataia.

103 Richer also points to the Spartiates who fought at Thermopylai. The vast majority of the Spartiates who fought at Thermopylai were killed, and they were understood as having fought heroically. They received a special honor in the form of a collective epitaph that was erected either at Thermopylai or in Sparta. Insofar as all of those who died at Thermopylai were seen as having shown surpassing bravery, they were given a privilege that set them apart.

104 See, for instance, Hdt. 8.123. On this process, see Pritchett 1974-91: vol. 2, 276-90.

This solution is not, however, without its difficulties. To begin with, this interpretation requires some sort of explanation for the inclusion of the fourth named occupant of the tomb of the ἰπέες, Kallikrates, who was killed by an arrow before the Lakedaimonian army attacked the Persians (9.72) and hence not, unlike the other three named occupants of the tomb, decorated for bravery. Richer argues that Kallikrates, who is described by Herodotus as the most beautiful of the Greeks at Plataia, had distinguished himself in an earlier battle and hence merited inclusion among the ἰπέες.¹⁰⁵ This is certainly possible, particularly since Herodotus, after describing the exploits of Poseidonios, Philokyon, Amompharetos, and Aristodemos, states that:

these were the men who at Plataia were the most renowned. Kallikrates might be another but that he died outside the battle itself ... He took his death very ill and said ... that he did not mind dying ... what he minded was that he had done no actual fighting ... (9.72, trans. D. Greene)

This might be taken to mean that, based on past experience, there was reason to expect great things from Kallikrates and that he thus merited inclusion in the tomb of the ἰπέες.

A further difficulty is that Aelian is not necessarily the most reliable source for Spartiate burial customs.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the remains from the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Kerameikos (see Section 2) suggest that all of the corpses were wrapped in *phoinikides*. This is in accord with the description of Spartiate funerary practice given in *Lycurgus* 27.1-2 and directly contradicts Aelian's claim that only those fighting with supreme bravery received that privilege.

Moreover, Aelian simply states that Spartiates who had died fighting with unusual bravery received special honors, not that they were buried in a separate, special tomb. The 25 inscribed epitaphs from Lakedaimon and *Moralia* 238d and *Lycurgus* 27.1-2 pertain to burial practices in Sparta itself, not on the battlefield, and also do not provide any evidence that

105 Richer 1994: 67; 2012: 173-74.

106 Hodkinson 2000: 247-48, 254.

those who had died in battle and had been decorated for bravery were buried on the battlefield in a separate tomb.

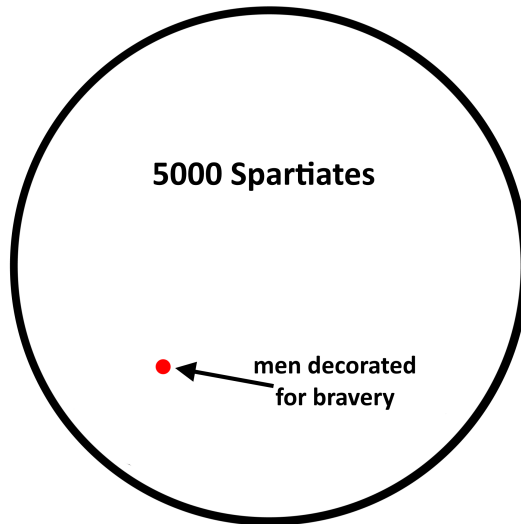


Figure 10b: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates according to Richer.¹⁰⁷

It is also not immediately evident that the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Kerameikos supports Richer's interpretation. As noted above, the inscription on that tomb begins with the names of the two polemarchs, Chairon and Thibrachos, and the next name was possibly that of Lakrates, the Olympic victor. If those are indeed the three individuals who received more careful burials in a separate tomb chamber, the most likely interpretation is that such treatment was granted on the basis of

107 The relative sizes of the circles in this diagram are proportional to the number of individuals in each group.

pre-existing military rank (the polemarchs) or social standing (the Olympic victor),¹⁰⁸ not on the basis of performance on the battlefield.¹⁰⁹

Finally and most importantly, translating ἱρέες as ‘men who fought heroically on the battlefield’ requires assigning to ἱρέες a meaning that is not entirely obvious. In his examination of the meaning of ἱρέες, Richer writes, ‘Il faudrait peut-être comprendre qu’il s’agit de “héros”’.¹¹⁰ Richer does not bring forward any evidence to justify this translation, but he does cite the work of Diels, who first proposed translating Herodotus’ ἱρέες as ‘heroes’. Diels read ἱρέες as ἠρέες, interpreted ἦρης/ἠρεύς as a Lakonian form of ἦρωες, and argued that the occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες were individuals who received *Heroenehren*. They were, therefore, literally (posthumous) heroes in the sense of being objects of worship, and it comes as no surprise that Diels says that the ἱρέες were the kings and other high-ranking Spartiates. Similarly, Arnold Toynbee, who suggested emending ἱρέες to ἦρωες (and arrived at the same point as Diels without any intermediate steps), translated the emendation as ‘canonized dead mortals’.¹¹¹

Richer diverges from Diels and Toynbee in that he takes the ἱρέες to be Spartiates who had accomplished some sort of feat that elevated their social standing above that of their peers without in any way becoming

108 Spartiate Olympic victors seem to have had what Figueira, drawing on Plut. *Lyc.* 22.4 and *Mor.* 639e, describes as a ‘presumptive claim’ to join the *hippeis* (Figueira 2006: 64; see also Hodkinson 1999: 169-70). If Lakrates did indeed receive special burial, it is conceivable that his status derived from his service among the *hippeis* and hence among the men serving as King Pausanias’ bodyguard rather than his Olympic victory. However, Xenophon describes Lakrates solely as an Olympic victor, so it seems probable that his athletic achievements were his primary claim to fame.

109 In his 2012 book, which appeared after the publication of the preliminary report on the new excavations, Richer concedes that the tomb seems to show that the polemarchs and Lakrates received special burial because of their pre-existing status rather than their performance on the battlefield. He goes on to suggest that, ‘si ces trois hommes n’étaient pas nécessairement des ἱρέες, ils étaient considérés d’une façon qui les rapprochait d’hommes d’une telle qualité’ (Richer 2012: 175). This is perhaps not an entirely satisfactory resolution to the difficulties for his interpretation of 9.85 raised by the details of the tomb.

110 Richer 1994: 66.

111 Toynbee 1969: 319 n. 4.

recipients of cultic honors. This is apparent from the facts that Richer sees Kallikrates as having become one of the *ἱεεες* before Plataia and that he puts the three individuals who received special treatment in the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians in the Kerameikos among the same group. It would stretch the boundaries of the imagination to believe that Kallikrates was worshipped as a hero while still alive, and there is no evidence that any of the Lakedaimonian dead in the Kerameikos were the objects of cult (nor does Richer claim that they were).

Richer's interpretation of 9.85 thus requires two separate assumptions: that *ἱεεες* = *ἥρης* and that *ἥρης* as used in 9.85 can be assigned a metaphorical rather than literal meaning. Both assumptions are not inherently impossible but are open to question. The equivalency Diels made between *ἱεεες* and *ἥρης* is entirely conjectural.¹¹² Furthermore, it is not immediately apparent that *ἥρης*, in the time that Herodotus was writing, was likely to have been used to describe an individual who had fought bravely. The term *ἥρωες* appears repeatedly in the Homeric poems as a sort of honorary title without any necessary religious valence, but, by the late sixth century, *ἥρωες* was used to designate divine entities that were closely linked with but also differentiated from Olympian deities.¹¹³ It is theoretically possible that the term *ἱεεες* was indeed the Lakonian equivalent of *ἥρης* and that it retained its Homeric meaning among Spartiates, but that is entirely a matter of speculation. On other hand, it is surely noteworthy that throughout the Classical period the men who died in the Persian Wars, though held up as models of virtue, are never described using the word *ἥρωες*. Indeed, fifth- and fourth-century authors seem to have made an effort to avoid using that word to describe the casualties from the Persian War.¹¹⁴

112 Brugmann 1916.

113 Bremmer 2006: 17-19.

114 Welwei 1991: 61-62; Boehringer 1996: 50; Flashar 1996: 73. One suspects that the slippage from hero in its literal sense of an object of worship to the much more metaphorical sense found in Richer's work is facilitated by the ambiguity of the relevant terms in English and French. On that ambiguity, see Loraux 1986: 364 n. 159.

It would, therefore, seem unlikely that Herodotus' ἱπῆες can, as Richer would have it, be taken to mean 'men who fought heroically'. The problems involved in Richer's approach are not new ones. When Karl Brugmann in 1916 proposed very much the same thing as Richer in arguing that 'ἱπεύς sei der lakonische Ausdruck für ἀριστεύς', his conjecture met with considerable skepticism from Johann Sitzler.¹¹⁵

Two possible variants upon Richer's line of argumentation merit further consideration. The first variant is that the ἱπῆες need not be linked to ἥρης at all and that it simply meant what Richer takes it to mean. While that is not out of the question, there is not a single clear instance of such a usage anywhere in the corpus of extant Greek texts. Moreover, ἱπῆες is derived from ἱερός, and, as Pierre Chantraine notes in the entry for ἱερός in his etymological dictionary, 'le sens general est "sacré"'.¹¹⁶ It thus requires a great deal of stretching and bending to get ἱπῆες to mean 'men who fought heroically' without the initial transformation suggested by Diels.

A second possibility is that Diels and Toynbee were correct in thinking that some Spartiates were literally heroized after Plataia and that those individuals, called ἱπῆες, were buried in a special tomb. That approach has the advantage of avoiding the complications that come with taking the ἱπῆες to be metaphorically heroic. It also meshes well with the argument put forth by Deborah Boedeker and others that all of the casualties at Plataia became the object of cult almost immediately after the fighting ended.¹¹⁷ Boedeker's work was stimulated by the publication in 1992 of lengthy fragments from an elegiac poem written by Simonides about Plataia, in which poem the soldiers who fought at Plataia are directly connected with the figures, described as *hemitheoi*, who fought at Troy. Boedeker took that connection to be a sign that the casualties at Plataia were also treated as *hemitheoi*, and, in support of that position, pointed to evidence that the tombs at Plataia were carefully tended and received annual offerings from the Plataians and that the Eleutheria, a festival

115 Brugmann 1916: 21; Sitzler 1923: 10.

116 Chantraine 1968: 457. Beekes 2010: vol. 1, 580-81 supplies a similar definition.

117 Boedeker 2001; see also Boehringer 1996: 50. For scholarship prior to 1992 that adopted a position similar to that of Boedeker, see the listing in Welwei 1991: 67 n. 9.

held in honor of the casualties at Plataia, might already have been in existence in the first half of the fifth century.¹¹⁸

One might also mention that certain individuals and groups killed in the Persian Wars received special honors in Sparta. In his tour of Sparta, Pausanias (3.12.9, 14.1) saw the tombs of Leonidas and (the regent) Pausanias as well as a shrine to Maron and Alpheios (brothers who had died at Thermopylai and whom Pausanias describes as ‘next to Leonidas himself are thought to have fought best of all the Lakedaimonians who marched to Thermopylai’) and a *stele* listing the names of all three hundred men who were killed at Thermopylai. Leonidas was also honored with a festival bearing his name.¹¹⁹ All of this could be taken as support for the idea that a limited number of Spartiates were singled out for their bravery at Plataia, labeled ἱεῖες and venerated as (literal) heroes, and buried in a special tomb (bearing in mind that it is unclear when the tomb, shrine, *stele*, and festival in question came into being).

Boedeker’s arguments have, however, been rejected in much of the more recent scholarship.¹²⁰ The emergent consensus follows Robert Parker, who takes the position that Greek cities in the Classical period buried their war dead in a fashion that resonated with the treatment accorded to heroes, ‘since no sharp divide separated funerary from heroic cult’, without making the war dead an object of cult. With the passage of centuries and the emergence of new religious practices and beliefs, those war dead eventually came, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, to be

118 There is an immediate difficulty in that Boedeker is making the case that all of the Greeks buried at Plataia were honored as heroes, whereas reading Herodotus’ ἱεῖες as designating men who received heroic honors would mean that the Lakedaimonians identified only a small subset of their number as worthy of such treatment. It is possible that two separate decision-making processes took place, one in the immediate aftermath of the battle in which the Lakedaimonians decided how to treat their own casualties, and a second one not long thereafter in which the Plataians or perhaps the members of the anti-Persian alliance as a whole decided how to honor all of the casualties.

119 The relevant evidence is reviewed in detail in Pavlides 2011: 104-16.

120 For a particularly full discussion, see Bremmer 2006, which echoes earlier scholarship including, but not limited to, Welwei 1991 and Flashar 1996: 73.

treated literally as heroes.¹²¹ From that perspective, the evidence Pausanias supplies for the special treatment of figures such as Maron and Alpheios cannot be read back into the Classical period and the connection that Simonides makes between the *hemitheoi* of the Trojan War and the casualties at Plataia is intended solely to glorify the latter by associating them with the former.¹²²

All of this goes to say that there are non-trivial difficulties in translating Herodotus' ἱρέες either as 'men who fought heroically' or as 'men who were accorded heroic honors'. That is a crucial issue because the approaches to reading 9.85 outlined by Richer on one hand and Diels and Toynbee on the other are not tenable unless one or the other translation is valid. There is, however, a sufficient degree of uncertainty in everything pertaining to the translation of ἱρέες and to the treatment of the casualties at Plataia that the ideas of Richer, Diels, and Toynbee remain tenable.

3.6 THE PHRASE ΕΝΘΑ ΜΕΝ ΤΟΥΣ ΙΡΕΑΣ ΕΘΑΨΑΝ, ΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΜΟΜΦΑΡΕΤΟΣ ΗΣΑΝ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΟΚΥΩΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΛΙΚΡΑΤΗΣ SHOULD BE ATHETIZED

The last of the three tenable solutions to the overlap problem does not involve expanding either the group of men decorated for bravery (Section 3.1) or the group of men buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες (Sections 3.2-4), nor does it involve making the group of Spartiates decorated for bravery coterminous with the group of those buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες (Section 3.5). Instead this solution, by means of athetization, removes the link between the two groups. More specifically, Joseph Blakesley, in his edition of Herodotus from 1854, proposed athetizing the phrase ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος καὶ

121 Parker 1996: 136-37.

122 The exception in this regard is likely to be Spartiate kings, who in all periods enjoyed a special standing and who seem to have been routinely heroized after their death. See Cartledge 1987: 331-43; 1988. For a different reading of the relevant evidence, see Parker 1988; 1989: 152-54, 169-70 nn. 51-57.

Ἄμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης.¹²³ This solution can be graphically represented as seen in Figures 11a-b.

The structure of the passage as transmitted is undeniably odd. Herodotus states that there were three graves, identifies the category of individuals buried in the first grave and names four occupants of that grave, and then goes on to list the categories of individuals buried in each of the three graves:

Οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες, ὡς ἐν Πλαταιῆσι τὴν λήϊν διείλοντο, ἔθαπτον τοὺς ἐωυτῶν χωρὶς ἕκαστοι. Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν τριζὰς ἐποιήσαντο θήκας [ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος καὶ Ἄμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης] ἐν μὲν δὴ ἐνὶ τῶν τάφων ἦσαν οἱ ἱρέες, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ οἱ ἄλλοι Σπαρτιῆται, ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ οἱ εἴλωτες. (9.85.2)

The third sentence, which begins with an awkwardly placed ἔνθα, seems out of place – if it belongs in the passage at all, it seems like it should follow the sentence ending with ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ οἱ εἴλωτες, since it is only at that point that the reader is made aware that there was a grave specifically for the ἱρέες.

As Nigel Wilson (the editor of the latest Oxford Classical Text edition of the *Histories*) observes in his recent series of studies on the text of Herodotus:

The sentence beginning ἔνθα is one of the most difficult in the whole work; it is awkwardly placed between what precedes and what follows, and there is much uncertainty about the category of persons referred to in the first clause. Sitzler ... found the difficulty so great that

123 Blakesley 1852-54: vol. 4, 474: 'I should almost be inclined to suspect that the whole clause, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος ... ἦσαν οἱ ἱρέες, is an addition of later times, when perhaps the additional feature of being in the bloom of youth had been added to the personal qualities of the Spartan hero'.

he wished to delete the whole sentence, and Legrand followed him.¹²⁴ In support of this view it may be argued that an interpolator could have gathered the four names from chs. 71-2 and copied from the next sentence the word indicating the category of citizens in question. And if the sentence is genuine, ἔνθα needs explanation.¹²⁵

One might, therefore, suspect that the third sentence in this part of 9.85 should be athetized as a later and confused scholiast's note that was interpolated into the text. That would result in the following text:

Οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες, ὡς ἐν Πλαταιῆσι τὴν ληϊὴν διείλοντο, ἔθαπτον τοὺς ἑωυτῶν χωρὶς ἕκαστοι. Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν τριξᾶς ἐποίησαντο θήκας ἐν μὲν δὴ ἐνὶ τῶν τάφων ἦσαν οἱ ἱρέες, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ οἱ ἄλλοι Σπαρτιῆται, ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ οἱ εἰλωτες.

The Greeks at Plataia, when they had divided up the spoils, buried their own dead, each people separately. The Lakedaimonians made three separate burial places. The *hirees* were in one grave, and in another the rest of the Spartiates, and in a third the helots.

124 Sitzler 1923: 10. Legrand edited the edition of Herodotus for the Budé series; the volume containing Book 9 was published in 1954. More specifically, Legrand bracketed the text in question but did include it in the French translation.

125 Wilson 2015a: 186-87. Wilson then goes on to argue that 'The more serious problem here arises from the MSS reading ἱρέας ... ἱρέες. That is unlikely to be right. There is no mention of priests in the narrative, and no hint that the four men named were priests. In any case it was seers, not priests, who accompanied armies'. He rejects the emendations to either ἱρένες or ἱππέες, the latter because the *hippeis* were 'an elite force of Spartan cavalry' and because 'the narrative suggests that at least Callicrates and Amompharetos did not belong to the cavalry' (187). The idea that seers, not priests, accompanied armies is refuted decisively by SEG 29.361 (an Argive casualty of list from c. 400 that includes a μάντις and an ἱαρεύς), and it is likely that some Lakedaimonians who fought at Plataia were present as part of their military duties but were also priests. The *hippeis* were indeed an elite force, but they were, at least in the period under consideration here, almost certainly infantrymen, not cavalrymen. On that point (which has also been the subject of much discussion), see Figueira 2006: 67-74 and the sources cited therein.

Insofar as there is no longer a list of the occupants of the grave of the ἱρέες, there is no longer an overlap between the list of the bravest Spartiates and the list occupants of the grave of the ἱρέες. The overlap problem is thus neatly resolved, as is apparent in Figures 11a-b.

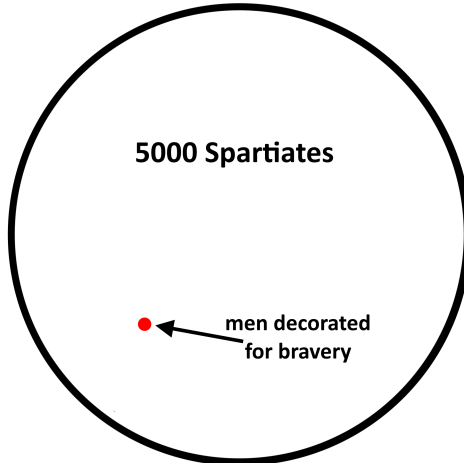


Figure 11a: Venn diagram of Blakesley's (implicit) description of the dead and decorated at Plataia.¹²⁶

If one maintains the translation of ἱρέες as 'priests', this solution requires assuming that one or more priests were among the Spartan casualties at Plataia. For reasons that do not require further discussion (see Section 1), it is unlikely that there were a significant number of priests among the 91 Spartan casualties, and it might seem surprising that the Spartiates would construct a special tomb to hold perhaps no more than one or two individuals. However, the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians at Athens shows that Lakedaimonians divided their dead into numerous groups, some of which were quite small (see Section 2). The first phase of the Tomb of the Lakedaimonians at Athens held ten individuals, one of whom was buried in a separate tomb and the other nine of whom were

126 The size of the circles representing each group is notional because Blakesley's reading is agonistic as to the number of individuals buried in the tomb of the *hires*. Blakesley's reading does not rule out the possibility that one or more individuals decorated for bravery (other than Poseidonios, Philokyon, and Amompharetos) were buried in the tomb of the ἱρέες.

separated into two distinct groups. It is, therefore, entirely plausible that one of the three Lakedaimonian tombs at Plataia held a small number of priests.

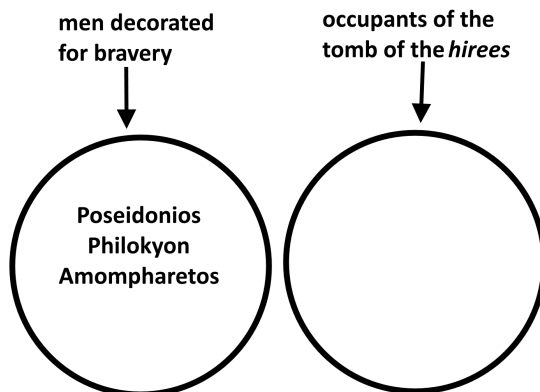


Figure 11b: The pattern of decoration for bravery among Spartiates according to Blakesley.¹²⁷

This solution also requires another, perhaps more problematic assumption, namely that a somewhat clumsy gloss was interpolated into the text at a sufficiently early date and was sufficiently widely adopted as to appear in all of the extant manuscripts. However, there are numerous passages in the text of the *Histories* as known to us that have been identified as interpolations coming from hands other than that of Herodotus.¹²⁸ For example, David Asheri, Alan Lloyd, and Aldo Corcella, in their commentary on Book 1 of the *Histories*, identify a sentence (on Gyges being mentioned in the iambic trimeter verses of Archilochus) as virtually certainly an interpolation, ‘a gloss by a reader,’ in part because the terminology used (ἐν ἰάμβῳ τριμέτρῳ) ‘is ... a technical expression of a

127 The size of the circles representing each group in this diagram is notional because Blakesley’s reading is agonistic as to the number of individuals buried in the tomb of the *hirees*.

128 There is good reason to believe that Herodotus himself made insertions into what were largely finished sections of text and hence that there are what have been called interpolations that came from Herodotus’ hand. See, for example, Hornblower & Pelling 2017: 267.

period later than Herodotus'.¹²⁹ In a similar vein, Wilson, who is in general quite cautious about athetizing passages from our text of the *Histories*, follows J.E. Powell in identifying the second and third sentences in 8.113.3 as interpolations based on a scholiast's note.¹³⁰

There is, moreover, reason to believe that already by the second century CE at least two distinct texts of the *Histories* were in circulation and that the version that has come down to us represents the less accurate of the two.¹³¹ The presence of an interpolated *scholion* in the manuscript tradition available to us would not, therefore, be entirely surprising. The end result is that here again we have a tenable but not irrefutable solution.

4. THE PROBLEM OF THE VANISHING PERIOIKOI

As mentioned in the introduction to this essay, there are two difficulties with 9.85: (1) the overlap problem and (2) the absence of any mention of a grave for the Lakedaimonian *perioikoi*. The former has been treated in detail in the preceding discussion, the latter remains to be explored.

Potentially relevant here is the reform of the Lakedaimonian army discussed in Section 2. The presumably looser integration of Spartiates and *perioikoi* in the Lakedaimonian army at Plataia, as opposed to the better documented versions of that army known from later sources such as Xenophon, could conceivably have affected both the number of casualties suffered by the *perioikoi* at Plataia and how those casualties were treated.

We can proceed quickly here because just four, relatively straightforward solutions have been proposed.¹³² First, the *perioikoi* may not have

129 Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007: 84.

130 Wilson 2015a: 169.

131 Mirończuk 2011. Stephanie West has argued, on the basis of finds of portions of the *Histories* on papyri from Oxyrhynchus, that 'our texts had already suffered significant corruption before the Hellenistic period ...' (West 2011: 70).

132 It is theoretically possible that the *perioikoi* were buried with the helots, but no scholar has, to my knowledge, made that case. Indeed, it would be difficult to believe that the *perioikoi*, free men who served as hoplites in the Lakedaimonian army, would have countenanced their dead comrades being buried with the helots.

suffered any casualties and hence had no need for a tomb. Flower and Marincola point out that Herodotus makes no mention of the *perioikoi* in his detailed account of the battle and conclude that ‘It must remain an open question ... whether perioeci participated in the battle, and, if so, whether a sufficient number died to warrant burial with the Λακεδαιμόνιοι’.¹³³ One might in this vein argue that in the Lakedaimonian army as it existed at Plataia the *perioikoi* were not tightly integrated with the Spartiates and that they were, as a result, positioned in the rear ranks of the Lakedaimonian phalanx or in an entirely separate formation well in back of a purely Spartan phalanx.¹³⁴ This, however, presumes that fully half of the Lakedaimonian hoplites present at a pitched battle had virtually no contact with a very sizable enemy force. It is, therefore, not surprising that Lazenby characterizes the idea that the *perioikoi*, because they were in the rear of the Lakedaimonian phalanx, suffered no casualties as ‘far-fetched’.¹³⁵

Second, it is possible that Herodotus was wrong on the facts and that there was in reality one grave each at Plataia for Spartiates, *perioikoi*, and

For further discussion, see Richer 2012: 171. One might, however, note, that Pausanias 1.32.3 states that the graves at Marathon included one that held both the Plataian allies of Athens and slaves. Pausanias 7.15.7 strongly implies that the dead slaves in question had been freed before the battle, so the parallel is not exact. For further discussion, see Branscome 2013: 163 n. 16 and the sources cited therein. In addition, Hunt 1997 has argued that at Plataia the Spartiates formed only the first rank of the phalanx, with the other seven ranks consisting entirely of helots. That would give the helots a major role in the Greek victory and hence perhaps a powerful claim to burial in the same grave as the *perioikoi* (both groups representing, on this occasion, important but subordinate allies of the Spartiates).

133 Flower & Marincola 2002: 255, following Cawkwell 1983: 387. See also pg. 231, where Flower and Marincola argue that Herodotus does not mention casualties among the *perioikoi* because few if any of them were killed, due to the fact that they were stationed in the rear of the Lakedaimonian phalanx.

134 Herodotus provides minimal details of the disposition of the Lakedaimonian soldiers at Plataia. He writes only that, ‘The right wing was held by ten thousand Lacedaemonians. Of these, five thousand were Spartiates, and they were guarded by thirty-five thousand helots – light-armed troops – seven of them arranged in the ranks for each Spartan’ (9.28, trans. D. Grene). The later sources for the battle offer no further relevant information.

135 Lazenby 1985: 181 n. 16. See also the doubts expressed in Richer 2012: 171 n. 204.

helots. Most scholars who have adopted this position have accepted Valckenaer's emendation to ἰρένες and argued that the majority of the casualties were ἰρένες; hence Herodotus was somewhat misinformed or was, somewhat clumsily, trying to say that the first grave contained all of the Spartiate casualties, most of whom were ἰρένες.¹³⁶

Third, the *perioikoi* may have been buried in the same grave as the Spartiates who were not ἰρέες.¹³⁷ This, however, runs counter to the wording of the passage, in which the occupants of the second grave are described as Σπαρτιῆται. Herodotus' preferred term for all things Lakedaimonian is in fact Λακεδαιμόνιοι; for instance, even kings such as Kleomenes and Leonidas are characterized as Lakedaimonian rather than Spartan (5.54, 8.65). Σπαρτιῆται is, therefore, quite specific, though it may be significant that Herodotus begins the description of the Lakedaimonian tombs at Plataia by writing 'Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν τριζὰς ἐποίησαντο θήκας'.

Finally, Σπαρτιῆται may need to be emended to read Λακεδαιμόνιοι, so that the occupants of the second tomb were 'the rest of the Lakedaimonians', which would include the *perioikoi*.¹³⁸ That suggestion, however, defies palaeographic probability.

5. CONCLUSION

The fact that 9.85 has been the subject of discussion for more than two and a half centuries and that no scholarly consensus has emerged in that time is a reflection of the interpretive difficulties this passage presents. It would be exceedingly bold – Herodotus might even say hubristic – to suggest a definitive resolution here. That said, it may be helpful to identify what seem to me to be the most likely solutions to both of the problems with 9.85.

136 See, for example, Stein 1901: vol. 5, 196; Macan 1908: vol. 1.2, 770; How & Wells 1912: vol. 2, 327.

137 See, for example, Legrand 1932-54: vol. 2, 68 n. 3; Richer 1994: 66; 2012: 171-72.

138 Van Groningen 1959: vol. 2, 196.

With respect to the overlap problem, I am inclined to athetize the phrase ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας ἔθαψαν, τῶν καὶ Ποσειδώνιος καὶ Ἀμομφάρετος ἦσαν καὶ Φιλοκύων τε καὶ Καλλικράτης. This is not a modest intervention in the text, but the wording of the middle section of the passage does seem to indicate the need for emendation of some kind. With respect to the problem of where the fallen *perioikoi* were buried, I am inclined to believe that they were placed in the same tomb as the Spartiates who were not ἱεῖες.

As has been the case throughout, only the former problem requires extended discussion. Athetizing the phrase starting with ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας has a claim to being the best solution to the overlap problem because it is the only solution in which the occupants of what Herodotus calls the tomb of the ἱεῖες are priests. The other two tenable solutions make the occupants either *hippeis* or individuals who had been singled out for bravery (and hence almost certainly not priests).

That is an important issue because the most obvious translation of ἱεῖες is ‘priests’, and there is independent literary and epigraphic evidence for religious officials in Lakedaimon receiving special treatment with respect to their burial. As we have seen (see Section 3.1), Plutarch *Lycurgus* 27.1-2 indicates that female religious officials were one of just two groups of Spartiates that had a right to an inscribed epitaph. In addition, there are five known inscriptions that are certain or likely to be epitaphs, all from Lakedaimon *ex* Sparta, in which women are identified as *hiera* or *hiara* (*IG* V.1.1127, 1129, 1221, 1283 and *SEG* 22.306); the earliest of these inscriptions seems to date to the Hellenistic period.¹³⁹ *Hieroi* are also known from six inscriptions that are certain or likely to be epitaphs, all from Lakedaimon *ex* Sparta (*IG* V.1.1214, 1223, 1338, 1356, 1367 and *SEG* 11.951); the earliest of these inscriptions seems to date to the fifth century.¹⁴⁰ One might add to that list *IG* V.1.711, an inscription on a small

139 Brulé & Piolot 2004: 168 n. 20, drawing on Le Roy 1961: 228-34.

140 Also relevant is *IG* V.1.1329, which appears to be an epitaph, from Leuktra in Lakonia, for a *ἱεραεύς*. This inscription, for which the *IG* does not supply a date, has been placed in the sixth (Dillon 2007: 161 and n. 49) or fifth century (Wallace 1970: 99 n. 11). Parker 1989: 163 n. 4 expresses some doubt that it is an epitaph. See also *IG* V.1.1511 (from Kalyvia tis Sochas) and *SEG* 11.923 (from Gytheion), both of which are regulations concerning cult activity and both of which date to the Roman period.

Doric epistyle block. This inscription, which reads [ὁ δεῖνα] ἡραεὺς, is dated to the second century CE on letter forms but might be a copy of an earlier text.¹⁴¹ Some caution is needed in using this collection of evidence for Spartiate burial practices because it comes from Lakedaimon *ex* Sparta. However, given the striking paucity of inscribed epitaphs from Lakedaimon as a whole,¹⁴² the existence of nearly a dozen epitaphs for Lakedaimonian religious officials seems to be significant.

There is, therefore, good evidence that Spartiate religious officials, both male and female, received special treatment when they were interred, which aligns neatly with the reading of 9.85 that results from athetizing the phrase starting with ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας.¹⁴³ One might add that the inscription on and internal arrangements of the tomb of the Lakedaimonians in Athens indicate that the clear differentiation among the burials in Lakedaimonian *polyandria* was based on pre-existing status. And of course Spartiates were renowned for their piety (see, for example, Hdt. 1.65-70; 5.42-46, 62-75, 90-3; 6.52-86, 105-7, 120). It would, therefore, not be surprising if Spartiate priests received separate burial in battle-field *polyandria*.¹⁴⁴

If the overlap problem is resolved by athetizing the phrase starting with ἔνθα μὲν τοὺς ἱρέας, some interesting conclusions follow. To begin with, rejecting Valckenaer's emendation to ἱρένες makes Xenophon's *Lakedaimonian Politeia* the earliest source for Spartiate age-classes.¹⁴⁵ That might have important ramifications for our understanding of the history

141 Brulé & Piolot 2004: 155 with n. 20, 158-59. It is possible, but by no means certain, that IG V.1.711 may have been brought to Mistra from Sparta as building material.

142 Christesen 2019: 348-52.

143 Kennell 1995: 14-16 makes the case that the creation of a special grave for ἱρέες, understood as priests, is plausible because it reflects a situation in which the three tombs at Plataia correspond to the Indo-European tripartite division into warriors, priests, and farmers.

144 One might add, on a speculative note, that the name of one of the occupants of the tomb of the ἱρέες, Poseidonios, could be taken to suggest that he had a special connection of some kind with Poseidon, perhaps as a priest. On the worship of Poseidon in Lakedaimon, see Richer 2012: 41-42, 268-69, 459-60, 630-31.

145 Kennell 1995: 14-16; Ducat 2006: 94-95. Lupi 2000 has argued (in more detail than Kennell) that the occurrences of *eirenes* in the standard texts of the *Lakedaimonion Politeia* should be expunged, which would eliminate any evidence for *eirenes* as an age-class in pre-Hellenistic Sparta.

of the Spartiate educational system. Furthermore, Spartiate priests emerge as a distinct and quite prestigious group within Spartiate society, and one might well suspect that Flower and Marincola were correct in speculating that, as was the case in Rome, Spartiates held elected or hereditary priesthoods concurrently with military commands.¹⁴⁶ Finally, the provision of a separate grave for priests at Plataia might suggest that the individuals buried within the urban fabric of Sparta in the Archaic and Classical periods were priests.

All of those conclusions must remain tentative in the absence of definitive evidence for how to read 9.85. One might hope that the publication of papyri fragments of Book 9 will definitively resolve the issue, and, as stated at the outset, the aspirational goal of this essay remains catalyzing new research that cuts once and for all this particular interpretive Gordian knot.

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146 Flower & Marincola 2002: 255-56.

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MYTHEN AUSLEGUNG, RÖMISCHE KÖNIGSZEIT UND DER TOD DES KAISER VALENS: CHRISTLICHE INTERPRETATIONEN VON OROSIUS BIS ISIDOR VON SEVILLA

Von Dirk Rohmann

Summary: Chronicles became the dominant historical genre in the transition period between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. While individual authors tended to build one on another, they also exerted considerable licence in rearranging the traditional material they found in previous compilations. Comparing Latin with Greek authors – Orosius, Isidore of Seville, Gregory of Tours, and John Malalas – the present contribution argues that all of these historical works, while summarising the history of antiquity, reflect discourses of their own day and age. These differences can be appreciated in comparing their specific views on the origin of sin in the world, on king Numa, and on the death of the Arian emperor Valens.

Für antike Historiker stellte sich schon immer die Frage, wie die Erinnerung an die Vergangenheit die Gegenwart formen sollte. Noch am Ende der Antike diskutierte Augustinus in seinem wegberaubenden eschatologischen Werk *De civitate Dei* die Einordnung des überlieferten Wissens und die Vereinbarkeit paganer Geschichtsschreibung nicht nur mit der Bibel, sondern auch mit den jüngeren Ergebnissen der Chronographie christlicher Gelehrter. Weit entfernt davon, das „heidnische“ Wissen pauschal abzulehnen, verfolgte er vielmehr den gleichen Ansatz, den er auch gegenüber den antiken Philosophen vertrat, dass nämlich die Überlieferung der antiken Historiker zwar dann abzulehnen ist, wenn sie

nicht mit dem christlichen kanonischen Wissen in Einklang steht, aber in den übrigen Fällen, und zwar nach Maßgabe des Autors, der diese älteren Schriften noch benutzt, in die Darstellung des kanonischen Wissens mit einfließen darf.¹ Augustinus steht hierbei in der Tradition der christlichen Chronik des Eusebios von Caesarea und des Hieronymus und wendet sich, wie diese, gegen ihre zeitgenössischen Gegner, welche die Widersprüche der christlichen Tradition aufzudecken gedachten.²

Wenn nun aber die Bürger des gottlosen Staates, die über die Länder zerstreut sind, sehr gelehrte Menschen lesen, von denen niemandes Autorität zu verachten zu sein scheint, und diese in geschichtlichen Ereignissen, die von der Erinnerung unserer Zeit sehr weit entfernt sind, voneinander abweichen, so können sie niemanden finden, dem sie mehr vertrauen sollten. Wir dagegen stützen uns in der Geschichte unserer Religion auf göttliche Autorität und haben somit keinerlei Zweifel, dass alles das, was ihr widerspricht, vollkommen falsch ist, wie auch nur das übrige, was in den weltlichen Schriften wahr oder falsch ist, keine Bedeutung hat für unser richtiges und seliges Leben.

Für Augustinus war diese Frage im frühen fünften Jahrhundert noch dringender, da nach der Plünderung Roms im Jahre 410 entsprechende Kritik an der christlichen Lehre gerade in Nordafrika, das als Zufluchtsort vor den Goten diente, lauter wurde.³ Zweifellos war das Werk des Augustinus für zukünftige Generationen christlicher Autoren vor allem des lateinischen Westens hoch bedeutsam. Mit dem hier angesprochenen Selektionsprozess beschreibt Augustinus eigentlich auch nicht mehr, als

1 Aug. civ. 18.41 (CCSL 48: 636-37).

2 Aug. civ. 18.40 (CCSL 48: 635): *porro autem cives impiae civitatis diffusi usquequaque per terras cum legunt doctissimos homines, quorum nullius contemnenda videatur auctoritas, inter se de rebus gestis ab aetatis nostrae memoria remotissimis discrepantes, cui potius credere debeant, non inveniunt. nos vero in nostrae religionis historia fulti auctoritate divina, quidquid ei resistit, non dubitamus esse falsissimum, quomodolibet sese habeant cetera in saecularibus litteris, quae seu vera seu falsa sint, nihil momenti adferunt, quo recte beateque vivamus.* Alle Übersetzungen sind meine eigenen.

3 Dies geht nicht nur aus *De civitate Dei* selbst, vor allem dem ersten Buch hervor, sondern auch aus der Predigt des Augustinus, *De excidio urbis*.

was die christlichen Chronisten vor ihm bereits betrieben hatten, nämlich die aus paganen Autoren kompilierten Ereignisse um das biblische Geschehen herum anzuordnen und somit zu kanonisieren.⁴ Auch die Fortsetzer der Chroniken des Eusebios und des Hieronymus sollten sich grundsätzlich an dieses Prinzip halten. Dabei haben sie aber nicht einfach bereits vorhandenes tralatizisches Material ungeprüft übernommen, sondern vielmehr im Rahmen der trotz Kanonisierung gegebenen Möglichkeiten dieses in sinnvoller Weise neu geordnet. Entscheidend dabei waren die jeweiligen Regimewechsel, also die neuen Herrscherfamilien in den germanischen Nachfolgestaaten bzw. die relative politische Kontinuität im byzantinischen Reich, wie im Folgenden anhand von Fallstudien gezeigt werden soll.⁵

Eine Analyse zentraler Autoren wie Orosius, Isidor von Sevilla und Gregor von Tours legt es nahe, dass ein und derselbe Sachverhalt der griechisch-römischen Antike oder der Archaik – obwohl die Autoren darin aufeinander aufbauten – ganz anders überliefert werden konnte und dass sich insbesondere am Beispiel des Johannes Malalas eine grundsätzlich abweichende Tradition der byzantinischen Chronistik abgrenzen lässt. Die in dieser Untersuchung besprochenen Fallstudien betreffen folgende Fragen: Wie kam die Sünde zuerst in die Welt? Wie bewerteten die einzelnen Autoren den legendären zweiten römischen König Numa Pompilius sowie die weitere römische Königszeit? Welche Interpretationsmöglichkeiten ergaben sich aus der schwierigen Quellenlage zum Tod des arianischen Kaisers Valens? Anhand dieser Themen lässt sich exemplarisch zeigen, wie das römische Reich bzw. die griechisch-römische Kultur vom 5. bis 7. Jahrhundert stufenweise unterschiedlich beurteilt

- 4 Zur literarischen Tradition der praktisch fast verlorenen vorchristlichen Chronistik und den Quellen des Eusebios, Mosshammer 1979, Adler 1989 sowie Burgess 1999; Einführungen zu den Chroniken: Zecchini 2003 sowie Jeffreys 2003. Zum Einfluss der Geschichtstheologie des Augustinus auf die historischen Werke von Isidor von Sevilla, v.a. dessen Chronik, siehe neuerdings Wood 2012: 121-28 mit älterer Literatur.
- 5 Die Auswahl dieser Fallstudien geht zurück auf ausführliche Besprechungen der hier diskutierten Quellen in mehreren von mir durchgeführten Lehrveranstaltungen. Sie sind daraufhin ausgewählt, dass sie genau diesen Sachverhalt, also die Rücksicht der Autoren auf aktuelle geopolitische und ekklesiastische Fragen, verdeutlichen sollen.

wurden und wie die einzelnen Autoren bei ihrer Kompilation tralatizischen Materials jeweils durch geopolitische oder ekklesiastische Fragen bestimmt wurden. Aller Kanonisierung zum Trotz setzten sie sich kritisch mit früheren Autoritäten auseinander und ließen sich dabei von einer Erwartungshaltung ihrer mutmaßlichen Rezipienten leiten.⁶

OROSIUS

Die Verbundenheit des Orosius zum Denken des Augustinus ist offenkundig. Sein Geschichtswerk „gegen die Heiden“, *Historiae adversus paganos*, schrieb Orosius ausdrücklich im Auftrag von Augustinus, dessen Schüler er war und von dem er es begutachten und abzeichnen ließ, wobei er das geschichtsphilosophische System von *De civitate Dei* erstmalig auf ein monographisches Geschichtswerk anwendete.⁷ Zusammen mit der Chronik des Hieronymus, die ihrerseits auf Eusebios von Caesarea basierte, waren Handschriften der Werke des Orosius sowie des Augustinus in den folgenden Jahrhunderten so dominierend, dass diese Werke das Bild der Antike maßgeblich bestimmten.⁸ Wie sich die apologetische Geschichts-

6 Grundsätzlichen Gestaltungsspielraum bei der Kompilation von tralatizischem Material zwischen einzelnen Chronisten diskutiert auch Scardino 2019. Die spezifische Interpretation der griechisch-römischen Frühgeschichte bei den Chronisten wurde nur relativ selten untersucht. Hörling 1980 sieht in der Mythendarstellung des Johannes Malalas (wenig überraschend, da generell von christlichen Autoren geteilt) einen euhemeristischen Ansatz, also eine religiöse Überhöhung historischer Personen durch die Nachwelt. Eine neuere Untersuchung zu diesem Thema ist Adler 2017.

7 Oros. *hist.* 1 pr.; 7.43.20.

8 Mindestens 275 Handschriften von Orosius sind erhalten. Die älteste, welche auch das Geschichtswerk enthält, noch aus dem 6. Jh. (Laurentianus 2.65.1). Siehe dazu Horstmann 2007. Weitere Handschriften aus dem 7. oder frühen 8. Jh. sind *CLA* II 171 und *CLA* III 328. Damit ist dieses Werk das Geschichtswerk mit den meisten Handschriften aus vorkarolingischer Zeit. Aus der Zeit zwischen 550 und 750 ist an säkularen Geschichtswerken überhaupt nur das *Breviarium* des Rufius Festus überliefert. Siehe dazu Pöhlmann 1994: 100. Die ältesten erhaltenen Handschriften des Livius und des Sallust sind im späten 4. und im 5. Jh. im Umkreis senatorischer Familien um Quintus Aurelius Symmachus und seiner Nachfolger entstanden und gehören somit

schreibung des Orosius auf Naturkatastrophen, Kriege und andere Widrigkeiten konzentrierte, um vor diesem Hintergrund die Gegenwart des ausgehenden Römischen Reiches erträglich erscheinen zu lassen, ist zu Genüge behandelt worden.⁹ Weniger beachtet wurde, was Orosius unter Einbeziehung der augustinischen Geschichtsphilosophie in seinem Werk wegließ. Beispielsweise beschreibt er die Königszeit sehr negativ und im Unterschied zu früheren Autoren als durchgängige Despotie, ohne dabei jedoch den zweiten König Numa Pompilius überhaupt namentlich zu erwähnen, galt dieser doch als wesentlicher Begründer der weitgehend überwunden geglaubten römischen Religion; ein Umstand, welcher Orosius angesichts der von ihm namentlich zitierten Quellen sicherlich noch bekannt gewesen sein muss. Darüber hinaus zeigt die Passage, dass Orosius sich ausdrücklich an ein christianisiertes römisches Publikum wendete, welchem jede Form von Königsherrschaft zutiefst suspekt war, zumal auch die germanischen Invasoren oft als Gefolgschaft von Königen organisiert waren:¹⁰

Doch wie viele Übel die Römer über einen Zeitraum von 243 Jahren durch jene Königsherrschaft ertragen haben, zeigt nicht nur die Vertreibung des einen Königs, sondern auch das Losschwören von dem Namen und der Amtsgewalt des Königs. Denn wenn lediglich der Hochmut eines einzigen inkriminiert worden wäre, wäre es angemessen gewesen, auch nur ihn allein zu verstoßen, jedoch die Königswürde für bessere Personen beizubehalten.

Anders als in der römischen Tradition vor ihm ist die gesamte Königsherrschaft und nicht nur die Tyrannis des Tarquinius Superbus also ausgesprochen negativ bewertet. Ausdrücklich ist bei Orosius die Zeit vor

noch der Antike an. Die ältesten mittelalterlichen Handschriften dieser Historiker stammen bereits aus dem 9. und 10. Jh. Siehe dazu Jahn 2007 und Pausch 2007.

9 Siehe etwa Lippold 1969: 92-105; Goetz 1980 und Van Nuffelen 2012.

10 Oros. *hist.* 2.4.13-14: *Sed Romani quanta mala per CCXLIII annos continua illa regum dominatione pertulerint, non solum unius regis expulsio verum etiam eiuratio regii nominis et potestatis ostendit. Nam si unius tantum superbia fuisset in culpa, ipsum solum oportuisset expelli, servata regia dignitate melioribus.*

der Erschaffung der Welt der Zeit seit der Gründung der Stadt Rom vorangestellt, was nachdrücklich betont, dass für Orosius das Römische Reich noch keinesfalls im Untergang begriffen war, sondern im Gegenteil für ihn eine vergleichsweise glückliche Zeit durchlebte. Anders als bei den späteren Chronisten ist für Orosius der Ursprung der Sünde in der Welt nicht mit einer bestimmten Kultur, und schon gar nicht mit der griechisch-römischen verknüpft. Sie hielt vielmehr bereits mit dem Sündenfall Einzug, während das Römische Reich von der göttlichen Providenz zur Verbreitung des Christentums bestimmt war:¹¹

Was mich selbst angeht, so habe ich beschlossen darzulegen, dass der Beginn des Elends der Menschen mit dem Beginn der Sünde des Menschen zusammenfällt ...

Daher werde ich zunächst ab der Schöpfung der Welt bis zur Gründung der Stadt Rom berichten und danach bis zum Prinzipat Caesars und der Geburt Christi, seit der die Herrschaft über die Welt unter der Gewalt der Stadt Rom geblieben ist, und zwar sogar bis hinein in unsere Zeit.

Die Unterdrückung der nizänischen Christenheit im Römischen Reich ist für Orosius gleichbedeutend mit der Invasion durch die Goten, von denen in jüngster Vergangenheit die Stadt Rom symbolträchtig geplündert wurde. Orosius verdeutlicht dies an der Person des arianischen Kaisers Valens, der bezeichnenderweise als Christenverfolger gezeichnet wird, dem Gott seine gerechte Strafe zuteilwerden ließ, als er bei der epochalen Schlacht von Adrianopel von den Goten, die er selbst in das Reich ließ, getötet wurde:¹²

11 Oros. *hist.* 1.1.4: *ego initium miseriae hominum ab initio peccati hominis docere institui ...; 1.1.14: Dicturus igitur ab orbe condito usque ad Urbem conditam, dehinc usque ad Caesaris principatum nativitatemque Christi ex quo sub potestate Urbis orbis mansit imperium, vel etiam usque ad dies nostros...*

12 Oros. *hist.* 7.33.9: *... Valens per totum Orientem ecclesiarum lacerationes sanctorumque caedes egerat ...; 7.33.18-19: Consolentur se gentiles, in quantum volunt, Iudaeorum haereticorumque suppliciis, tantum et unum Deum esse et eundem personarum acceptorem non esse vel ex hac potissimum Valentis extincti probatione fateantur. Gothi antea per legatos supplices poposcerunt ut illis episcopi, a quibus regulam Christianae fidei discerent, mitterentur.*

[...] Valens betrieb Zerfleischungen von Kirchen und Abschlachtungen von Heiligen im gesamten Osten [...]

Sollen doch die Heiden an Bestrafungen von Juden und Häretikern so viel Trost finden, wie sie wollen, solange sie nur zugeben, dass es nur einen Gott gibt und dass dieser unparteiisch ist, wie aus dieser Betrachtung des Todes des Valens besonders wirkungsvoll hervorgeht. Die Goten hatten zuvor durch Gesandte demütig darum gebeten, dass Bischöfe zu ihnen entsendet werden, um die Regel des christlichen Glaubens von ihnen zu lernen. Kaiser Valens schickte in tragischer Verworfenheit Lehrer des arianischen Dogmas. Die Goten behielten, was sie in Vorbildung an frühem Glauben empfangen. Daher geschah es nach dem gerechten Urteil Gottes, dass dieselben Menschen ihn lebendig verbrannten, die sogar erst im Tod seinetwegen aufgrund der Schuld ihres Irrtums brennen werden.

Orosius schreibt also zwar aus christlich-nizänischer, aber vor allem noch aus römischer Sicht. Ein bevorstehendes Ende des römischen Reiches hätte seiner Argumentation diametral widersprochen, stattdessen deutete er die offenkundigen Niederlagen der jüngeren Zeit als göttliche Bestrafung des Arianismus. Das römische Reich ist laut Orosius für die Sünde in der Welt nicht selbst verantwortlich, und es erschien ihm daher auch opportun, überhaupt nicht mehr an den Beginn der römischen Religion oder an deren legendären Gründer Numa Pompilius zu erinnern.

ISIDOR VON SEVILLA

Unterschiedlicher könnten Tendenz und Geschichtsbild zwei Jahrhunderte später in der Gotengeschichte des Isidor von Sevilla kaum sein. Für Isidor war entscheidend, dass die Assimilierung der romanischen Oberschicht des westgotischen Reiches mit den ehemals arianischen Invasoren seit dem Übertritt Rekkareds zum katholischen Glauben gegen Ende

Valens imperator exitiabili pravitate doctores Arriani dogmatis misit. Gothi primae fidei rudimento quod acceperere tenuerunt. Itaque iusto iudicio Dei ipsi eum vivum incenderunt, qui propter eum etiam mortui vitio erroris arsuri sunt.

des 6. Jahrhunderts erfolgreich gewesen war. Gleichzeitig arbeitete Isidor an seinen historischen Werken zur Zeit des militärischen Konflikts zwischen dem byzantinischen Reich unter Kaiser Herakleios und dem Gotenkönig Sisebut, welcher auch als Mäzen Isidors auftrat.¹³ Keine Beachtung findet daher die Bedeutung des byzantinischen Reiches bei der Zurückdrängung des Arianismus während der justinianischen Rückeroberung und bei der neuen diplomatischen Funktion des Episkopats von Rom unter Gregor dem Großen. Vielmehr sind die Goten selbst bei Isidor das von Gott auserwählte Volk, welches den rechten Glauben verbreitet:¹⁴

Doch weil Athanarich den Fritigern mit Unterstützung des Kaiser Valens besiegte, schickte er aus Dankbarkeit darüber Gesandte mit Geschenken an diesen Kaiser und verlangte Lehrer, um die Regel des christlichen Glaubens anzunehmen. Weil nun Valens ein Abweichler von der Wahrheit des katholischen Glaubens war und in der Verkehrtheit der arianischen Häresie gefangen, schickte er häretische Priester, gesellte durch frevlerische Überredung die Goten dem Dogma seines Irrglaubens zu und übertrug das krankmachende Virus mit unheilvollem Samen auf ein so berühmtes Volk, und so behielt es den Irrglauben, den dessen noch junge Leichtgläubigkeit austrank, und diente ihm lange. [...]

Sie verwüsteten Thrakien mit Schwert und Feuer, und nachdem das Heer der Römer vernichtet war, zündeten sie Valens an, der von einem Speer verwundet in ein Landhaus floh, so dass er selbst verdient

13 Zu den Hintergründen der historischen Werke Isidors siehe Wood 2012: 67-74.

14 Isid. *Goth.* 7 und 9, 2. Redaktion (MGH *auct. ant.* 11: 270-71): *Sed Athanaricus Frigidernum Valentis imperatoris suffragio superans huius rei gratia legatos cum muneribus ad eundem imperatorem mittit et doctores propter suscipiendam Christianae fidei regulam poscit. Valens autem a veritate catholicae fidei devius et Arrianae haeresis perversitate detentus missis haereticis sacerdotibus Gothos persuasione nefanda sui erroris dogmati adgregavit et in tam praeclaram gentem virus pestiferum semine pernicioso transfudit sicque errorem, quem recens credulitas ebibit, tenuit diuque servavit. [...] Thraciam ferro incendiisque depopulantur delectoque Romanorum exercitu ipsum Valentem iaculo vulneratum in quandam villam fugientem succendunt, ut merito ipse ab eis vivens temporali cremaretur incendio, qui tam pulchras animas ignibus aeternis tradiderat.*

von ihnen im zeitlichen Feuer verbrannt wurde, der so schöne Seelen dem ewigen Feuer übergeben hatte.

Das Bild des Kaisers Valens ist daher ein deutlich anderes als bei Orosius, obgleich Orosius Isidor als Vorlage diente. Denn beide Autoren kennen einzig die Version, dass Valens auf der Flucht in einer Hütte von gotischen Soldaten in Brand gesteckt wurde. Der eigentliche Historiker der Regierungszeit des Valens, Ammianus Marcellinus, hält diese Version dagegen lediglich für ein Gerücht, das von einem Soldaten gestreut wurde. Das Schicksal des Leichnams sei in Wirklichkeit ungeklärt.¹⁵ Zwar sind Orosius und Isidor sich einig, dass diese Todesart ein Beweis für die Richtigkeit der christlichen Lehre ist, doch deutet ersterer den Tod überwiegend als Vergeltung für die Verfolgung von Christen sowie für das eigene Versagen bei der missglückten Gotenpolitik, während letzterer diesen als Folge der angeblich von Valens persönlich angeordneten Missionierung der Goten zum arianischen Glauben sieht. Für Ammianus schließlich war Valens in Wirklichkeit ein christlicher Herrscher, der rigoros gegen Nichtchristen auftrat und diese unter zweifelhaften Magievorwürfen hinrichten ließ, von denen er selbst indirekt betroffen war.¹⁶ Isidor weicht hier also nicht nur von Orosius, sondern vor allem auch von der im Folgenden zitierten Chronik des Hieronymus entscheidend ab, die beide hauptsächlich in Valens den Urheber blutiger Verfolgungen nizänischer Christen des Römischen Reiches sehen, ohne dass Hinrichtungen von Christen jedoch abgesehen von den Magieprozessen belegt

15 Amm. 31.13.12-16. Zu weiteren Quellen über den Tod des Valens siehe Lenski 2002: 339-41. Die christlichen Autoren sehen im Feuertod eine göttliche Bestrafung. Zweifel an dieser Version äußern v.a. die paganen Autoren Libanios (*or.* 24.3-4; 1.179) sowie Eunapios (*VS* 7.6.9), die lediglich aussagen, dass der Leichnam unauffindbar blieb.

16 Amm. 29.1-2, bes. 29.1.24 und 29.2.4 zur eigenen Betroffenheit des Ammianus. Die Standarddarstellung der Ereignisse in der modernen Forschung ist Lenski 2002: 218-34, der allerdings die verbreitete antike Einschätzung, dass es sich um ein spezifisches Komplott gegen einen christlichen Kaiser handelt, herabspielt (S. 228, Anm. 96).

wären. Für Hieronymus war die Arianisierung der Goten daher kein bestimmendes Thema:¹⁷

Da Kaiser Valens selbst von einem Pfeil verwundet floh und wegen des zu großen Schmerzes oft vom Pferd glitt, wurde er zu einer Hütte in einem kleinen Dorf gebracht. Weil die Barbaren ihm folgten und das Haus in Brand steckten, musste er sogar auf ein Begräbnis verzichten.

Dies gilt übrigens nicht nur für Isidors Geschichte der Goten, sondern auch für seine bereits früher verfasste Chronik, welche die weltgeschichtliche Deutung des Valens in seiner Gotenmission sieht, ohne jedoch die bedeutende Schlacht bei Adrianopel überhaupt zu erwähnen.¹⁸ Isidor gehört somit auch zu den wenigen orthodoxen Autoren in der Nachfolge des Hieronymus, die das negative Bild des Kaisers Konstantin aus der Chronik des Hieronymus übernehmen. Denn schon die Chronik des Hieronymus, welche mit dem Jahr 379 endet und damit unmittelbar bevor das nizänische Christentum von Kaiser Theodosius zur Staatsreligion erklärt wurde, sieht in der Taufe des Konstantin durch Eusebios von Nikomedia dessen Übertritt zum Arianismus und somit auch den arianischen Glauben der kaiserlichen Nachfolger besiegelt. Die entsprechende Rezeption bei Isidor von Sevilla gehört zu den wenigen Stellen, wo dieser innerhalb der Kompilation den Inhalt nicht nur verkürzt, sondern durch ein ausgesprochenes Werturteil ergänzt: „Ach, was für eine Qual! Er hatte solch einen guten Anfang und nahm ein solch schlimmes Ende“.¹⁹

17 Hier. *chron.* a. Abr. 2394, AD 378 (GCS 47: 249): *Ipse imperator Valens, cum sagitta saucius fugeret et ob dolorem nimium saepe equo laberetur, ad cuiusdam villulae casam deportatus est. Quo persequentibus barbaris et incensa domo sepultura quoque caruit.* Zum Bild des Valens als Christenverfolger: Hier. *chron.* a. Abr. 2382, AD 366 (GCS 47: 245); Oros. *hist.* 7.32.

18 Isid. *chron.* 349 (MGH *auct. ant.* 11: 468).

19 Der Text des Hieronymus (*chron.* a. Abr. 2353, AD 337 = GCS 47: 234) lautet: „Konstantin wurde ganz am Ende seines Lebens von Eusebios von Nikomedia getauft und wandte sich der Arianischen Lehre zu, so dass von dieser Zeit an bis in die Gegenwart Kirchenraub und Zwietracht des ganzen Erdkreises die Folgen waren.“ (*Constantinus extremo vitae suae tempore ab Eusebio Nicomedensi episcopo baptizatus in Arrianum dogma*

Dieses Urteil zeigt, dass für Isidor der arianische Glaube noch eine echte Bedrohung darstellte und er zudem die arianische Vergangenheit des Westgotenreiches apologetisch relativieren wollte, indem er den ersten christlichen Kaiser der Römer ebenfalls als gefallenen Christen ansah.

Mit Valens kam also die Sünde zum Volk der Goten, doch in die Welt kam sie nach Isidor bereits mit der griechisch-römischen Kultur. So schreibt Isidor den paganen Kultus, Tieropferungen und die Verehrung von Jupiter in enger Anlehnung an die Chronik des Hieronymus dem legendären Gründer von Athen zu:²⁰

Zu gleicher Zeit gründete Cecrops Athen und nannte die Menschen in Attika Athener nach dem Namen der Minerva. Der war auch der erste, der einen Stier opferte und befahl, Jupiter im Opfer anzubeten.

In seiner Beurteilung der Rolle des zweiten Königs von Rom, Numa Pompilius, weicht Isidor sogar nicht nur von Orosius, sondern auch von Hieronymus deutlich ab.²¹ Denn die christlichen Historiker vor Isidor vermeiden es, Numa explizit in Verbindung mit dem römischen Kultus zu bringen, während ein guter Teil auch der ältesten Handschriften der Chronik des Isidor Numa ausdrücklich als den Erfinder „der falschen Götter“ auflistet:²²

declinat, a quo usque in praesens tempus ecclesiarum rapinae et totius orbis est secuta discordia.) Isidor übernimmt den ersten Teil und ersetzt den nicht mehr zeitgemäßen Nebensatz (*a quo usque ...*) mit der Interjektion *heu pro dolor!* *bono usus principio et fine malo* (Isid. *chron.* 334, *MGH auct. ant.* 11: 466).

20 Isid. *chron.* 49-50 (*MGH auct. ant.* 11: 434): *eodem tempore Cecrops Athenas condidit et ex nomine Minervae Atticos Athenienses vocavit. Iste etiam bovem immolans primus in sacrificio Iovem adorare praecepit.* Parallelquelle bei Hier. *chron.*, pr.; a. Abr. 466/471 (*GCS* 47: 12; 41b).

21 Zum Isidors Bild der Königsherrschaft in den *Sententiae*, den *Etymologiae* und dem vierten Konzil von Toledo siehe auch Wood 2012: 138-47.

22 Isid. *chron.* 152 (*MGH auct. ant.* 11: 444): *Per idem tempus Romanis praeuit Numa Pompilius, qui primus [pontifices et] Vestales virgines instituit [falsorum deorum numerositate civitatem implevit].* Orosius erwähnt Numa nur beiläufig und als historisches *exemplum* (3.8; 4.12), während Hieronymus (beginnend mit Hier. *chron.*, a. Abr. 1302 = *GCS* 47: 91a) ihn zwar aufführt, aber nicht seine Funktion als Begründer der römischen Religion.

Während dieser Zeit herrschte über die Römer Numa Pompilius, welcher als erster die Priester und vestalischen Jungfrauen eingeführt und die Stadt mit einer großen Zahl falscher Götter gefüllt hat.

In diesem Urteil zeigt sich deutlich, dass Isidor nicht länger für ein römisches Publikum schrieb, dem das Christentum gewissermaßen als dessen ureigene Berufung vor Augen gestellt worden sollte. Ebenso wie etwa das Reich der Hunnen, von Isidor als „Geißel Gottes“ verunglimpft, oder das arianische Vandalenreich erscheint das Römische Reich nunmehr als historischer Irrtum,²³ ein Vorwurf, der sich übrigens auch in den von Isidor eigenständig verfassten Teilen zur jüngeren Geschichte fortsetzt, in denen er die byzantinische Welt unter Justinian sehr entgegen dessen Selbstdarstellung zu den überwundenen Häresien zählt.²⁴ Das Frankenreich ist dagegen bezeichnenderweise in den historischen Werken des Isidor noch nicht einmal erwähnt. Isidor war wohl diplomatisch genug, die katholischen Bischöfe aus dem benachbarten Osten nicht mit ähnlichen Strategien der Ausgrenzung und eigenen Auserwähltheit zu verärgern.

GREGOR VON TOURS

Damit sind wir bei dem etwas früheren Gregor von Tours (538-594) und dem von ihm vermittelten Bild der römischen Vergangenheit angekommen. Als Angehöriger der katholischen, galloromanischen Oberschicht war es weder sein Anliegen, gegen die spezifisch griechisch-römische Prägung des Paganismus zu polemisieren noch einen Konflikt mit der by-

23 Die Perser und Hunnen als „Geißel Gottes“: Isid. *Goth.* 28-29, 2. Redaktion (*MGH auct. ant.* 11: 278-79). Die *Historia Wandalorum* ist ediert in *MGH auct. ant.* 11: 295-300.

24 Isid. *chron.* 397 (*MGH auct. ant.* 11: 397): „Justinian regierte 39 Jahre lang. Der nahm die Häresie der Acephali an und zwang alle Bischöfe in seinem Reich dazu, entgegen dem öffentlichen Beschluss des Konzils von Chalcedon die drei Kapitel zu verurteilen.“ (*Iustinianus regnavit ann. XXXVIII. Iste Acefalarum haeresim suscepit atque in proscriptionem synodi Calchedonensis omnes in regno suo episcopos tria capitula damnare compellit.*). Zu Isidors Polemik gegen das zeitgenössische oströmische Reich und die Häresie der Acephali („Kopflösen“, d.h. ohne Gründer) vgl. auch Wood 2012: 212-17.

zantinischen Herrschaft heraufzubeschwören. Als einziger der überlieferten christlichen Chronisten und Historiker aus Spätantike und Frühmittelalter hielt er es vielmehr für notwendig, noch in den 590er Jahren seiner Universalgeschichte ein katholisches Glaubensbekenntnis voranzustellen, um sich insbesondere von dem noch überwiegend arianischen Westgotenreich abzugrenzen. Von seinen Vorlagen Hieronymus und Orosius weicht Gregor außerdem entscheidend darin ab, das er den Beginn der Sünde, also der paganen Kultausübung, mit dem persischen Zarathustra ansetzt, um somit im Weiteren die Bekehrung des Chlodwig vom Heidentum umso strahlender erscheinen zu lassen:²⁵

Noah hatte also nach der Sintflut drei Söhne, Sem, Ham und Jafet. Von Jafet stammen die Nationen ab, ähnlich auch von Ham und von Sem. Und von diesen, wie die alte Geschichte sagt, ist entsprungen das Menschengeschlecht unter dem gesamten Himmel. Der Erstgeborene aber von Ham war Kusch. Dieser war durch die Lehre des Teufels der erste Erfinder der Zauberkunst in ihrer Gesamtheit sowie des Götzendienstes. Er hat auf Anstiftung des Teufels als erster ein Standbild aufgestellt, um es anzubeten. Er zeigte auch mit falscher Macht den Menschen, dass die Sterne und das Feuer vom Himmel fallen. Er ging nach Persien über. Die Perser nannten ihn Zarathustra, das heißt lebendiger Stern. Weil sie von ihm auch die Gewohnheit angenommen haben, das Feuer anzubeten, verehren sie ihn als Gott, obwohl er selbst durch göttliches Feuer verzehrt wurde.

Es gibt bei ihm Begründer weder des griechischen noch des römischen Kultus. Im Gegenteil erwähnt Gregor aus der vorchristlichen Geschichte des Römischen Reiches lediglich den ideologisch unverdächtigen sechs-

25 Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 1.5 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 7): *Habebat ergo Noe post diluuium tres filius, Sem, Cham et Iafeth. De Iafeth egressae sunt gentes, similiter et de Cham sive de Sem. Et, sicut ait vetus historia, ab his dissimatum est genus humanum sub universo caelo. Primogenitus vero Cham Chus. Hic fuit totius artis magicae, inbuente diabolo, et primus idolatriae adinventor. Hic primus staticulum adorandum diabuli instigatione constituit; qui et stellas et ignem de caelo cadere falsa vertute hominibus ostendebat. Hic ad Persas transiit. Hunc Persi vocitavere Zoroastren, id est viventem stelam. Ab hoc etiam ignem adorare consuiti, ipsum divinitus ignem consumptum ut deum colunt.*

ten König Servius Tullius sowie gleich im Anschluss Julius Caesar als Begründer der Monarchie. Es fehlen also der erst von Isidor als Begründer des römischen Paganismus verunglimpfte König Numa Pompilius, der allen römischen Autoren verhasste siebte König Tarquinius Superbus, dessen Gewaltherrschaft zum Sturz des römischen Königtums führte, sowie die gesamte republikanische Zeit, während derer Rom zur Weltherrschaft aufstieg. Gregor ging es also darum, die germanische Tradition der Königsherrschaft als gottgegeben und alternativlos darzustellen, jedoch ohne die romanische Oberschicht, der er selbst angehörte, zu verprellen, und nahm dafür einige Verkürzungen und logische Sprünge in Kauf.²⁶

Zur Zeit des Moses herrschte bei den Argivern der siebte König Tropas, in Attica der erste König Cecrops. [...] Zu der Zeit, in der Amon über Judäa herrschte, als die Gefangenschaft in Babylonien eintrat, war bei den Macedoniern Argeus Herrscher, bei den Lydern Gyges, bei den Ägyptern Vafres, in Babylon Nebukadnezar, der sie in die Gefangenschaft führte, und bei den Römern der sechste König Servius. Nach diesen war der erste Kaiser Julius Caesar, der die Monarchie über das ganze Reich innehatte.

In noch größerem Umfang als Isidor das Westgotenreich erschien Gregor die Frankenherrschaft als die eschatologische Verwirklichung der göttlichen Providenz. Mit der einzigen Ausnahme der Geburt von Jesus Christus unter Augustus verzichtete Gregor darauf, nach römischen oder byzantinischen Kaisern zu datieren.²⁷ Der Tod des Kaisers Valens auf dem Schlachtfeld ist eine göttliche Bestrafung nicht für seinen Arianismus,

26 Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 1.17-18 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 16): *Tempore Moysi apud Argivus regnabat septimus Tropas; in Attica Caecros primus ... Tempore quo Amon regnabat super Iudeam, quando captivitas in Babilonia abiit, Macedoniis praeerat Argeus; Laedorum Cyces; Aegyptiorum Vafres; apud Babiloniam Nabuchodonosor, qui eos captivos abduxit; Romanorum sextus Servius. Post hos imperator primus Iulius Caesar fuit, qui tutius imperii obtenuit monarchiam.* Bereits in der christlichen Urchronik des Eusebios, die Gregor nur mittelbar über Hieronymus kannte, wurde die Zeit der römischen Republik großzügig übergangen: Euseb. *chron.* (Karst, 141-42).

27 Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 1.19 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 17): *Anno XLIII imperii Augusti dominus noster Iesus Christus [...] natus est.*

sondern lediglich für die Christenverfolgung im Römischen Reich, welche praktisch das alleinige Interesse Gregors an der Römischen Geschichte mit besonderem Bezug auf Gallien darstellt:²⁸

Als sie von den Goten in der größten Niederlage geschlagen wurden und Valens von einem Pfeil verwundet floh, betrat er eine kleine Hütte, weil die Feinde ihn bedrohten, doch wurde diese kleine Hütte über seinem Kopf in Brand gesteckt, und er musste auf das erhoffte Begräbnis verzichten. So wurde endlich die göttliche Rache wegen des vergossenen Blutes der Heiligen herabgesendet und vollzogen.

Von den römischen Kaisern des 5. Jahrhunderts erwähnt er einzig den kurzlebigen Kaiser Avitus des Jahres 455 und 456, da dieser selbst der galloromanischen Oberschicht angehörte. Gregor unterschlägt dabei, dass Avitus trotz erfolgreicher Asylsuche in der Kirche eines gallischen Märtyrers von seinen Nachfolgern hingerichtet wurde, wie die römischen Autoren übereinstimmend berichten.²⁹ Nach Gregor starb Avitus vielmehr auf der Reise, denn andernfalls hätte Gregor die Wunderkraft des gallischen Märtyrers öffentlich in Frage gestellt.³⁰ Wenige byzantinische Kaiser sind erwähnt, aber nicht, wie bei Isidor, als „Römer“, sondern als „Kaiser von Konstantinopel“.³¹ Zum Schluss soll daher die oströmische Perspektive vorgestellt werden.

28 Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 1.41 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 28): *Cumque a Gotis internitione maxima caederentur et Valens sagitta fugiret sauciatus, parvum tugurium adgressus, imminentibus hostibus, super se incensam casulam, optatam caruit sepulturam. Sicque ultio divina ob sanctorum effuso sanguinem tandem emissa processit.*

29 Hyd. *chron.* 183 (s.a. 456) (MGH *auct. ant.* 11: 186); *chron. Gall.* 511, no. 628 (MGH *auct. ant.* 9: 664); *Auctarium Prosperi Hauniensis* 456 (MGH *auct. ant.* 9: 304); *Evagr. hist. eccl.* 2.7; Johannes von Antiochia frg. 225 (Mariev, 412); Theophanes, AM 5948 (de Boor, 109).

30 Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 2.11 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 60-61). Verkürzte Darstellung bei Vict. Tonn. *chron.* 456 (MGH *auct. ant.* 11: 186).

31 In der Kombination *imperator* und *urbs Constantinopolitana* etwa bei Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 2.34; 4.40 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 82; 171). In der Zeit nach dem Untergang Westroms bezieht sich *Romanus* bei Gregor auf die Stadt Rom, z.B. Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 4.26; 10.31 (MGH *SS rer. Merov.* 1.1: 158; 526; 537).

JOHANNES MALALAS

Ein byzantinischer Chronist wie Johannes Malalas (ca. 491-578), der abschließend betrachtet werden soll, hatte natürlich eine ganz andere Geschichtsauffassung. Seine Darstellung der archaischen Zeit von der Erschaffung der Welt an basiert nicht nur nach Selbstaussagen auf einer weit größeren Quellengrundlage, sondern zeigt auch, dass sich für Johannes der Anteil des Römischen Reiches an der Sünde in der Welt weit- aus vielschichtiger darstellt als für die lateinischsprachigen Autoren des Westens.³² Gleich den ersten Ausdruck göttlicher Rache im ersten Zeitalter, das mit Adam und Eva beginnt, lässt Johannes gegen die Giganten im Land der Kelten richten.³³

Zu dieser Zeit sandte Gott einen Feuerball vom Himmel gegen die Giganten im keltischen Land und verbrannte es und sie.

Keine einzige der von ihm benutzten Quellen kennt diese Tradition.³⁴ Da griechische Autoren seit Herodot mit den Kelten Völker in Gallien und im Westen verbinden, grenzt Johannes bereits die griechisch-byzantinische Tradition von den germanischen Nachfolgereichen ab.³⁵

Der hellenistische Paganismus als solcher ist keineswegs synonym mit der Erbsünde. Zwar schreibt Johannes den Beginn der griechischen Philosophie der Liebesgöttin Aphrodite zu.³⁶ Doch ist der Begriff der Philosophie als solcher nicht negativ besetzt, sondern erst deren Aufteilung in falsches partielles Wissen, so wie auch Aphrodite in der Chronik des Johannes ihre Liebe teilt und dafür, wie die falschen Philosophen durch Kaiser Justinian, vom ägyptischen König Helios im Triumph aufgeführt

32 Neuerer Überblick zum Forschungsstand der Quellen des Johannes Malalas: Carrara & Gengler 2017. Zu einer knappen Forschungsgeschichte und einigen neueren Ansätzen zu Johannes Malalas vgl. neuerdings auch Meier, Radtke & Schulz 2016.

33 Johannes Malalas 1.3 (Dindorf, 7): Ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις τούτοις σφαῖραν πυρὸς ἔπεμψεν ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν κατὰ τῶν ἐν τῇ Κελτικῇ χώρᾳ γιγάντων καὶ ἔκαψεν αὐτὴν καὶ αὐτούς.

34 Siehe dazu den Kommentar von Jeffreys 2017: 61, ad locum.

35 Hdt. 2.33; 4.49.

36 Johannes Malalas 1.9 (Dindorf, 13) nennt als erste Philosophin Aphrodite.

wird.³⁷ Ebenso wird der Begründer des im frühen Christentum verhassten Automatismus – jener Lehre also, welche von Eigenbewegungen der Elemente ausgeht und somit die Schöpfung ausschließt – bei Johannes sogar von Kadmos, dem Schwiegersohn der Aphrodite und legendären König von Theben, zeitweilig in die Verbannung geschickt:³⁸

Kadmos [...] rief aus dem Exil Teiresias zurück, der ein boiotischer Philosoph war, ein Jäger, der reich war an Geld, Ansehen und Weisheit. Er war es, der bei den Griechen das Dogma einführte, dass das Universum sich automatisch bewegt und die Welt ohne göttliche Vorsehung entstanden ist. Die Priester verschworen sich gegen ihn, und er wurde verbannt in den Tempel des daphnischen Apollo, da er das Verständnis einer Frau hatte [...]

Die bei christlichen Autoren durchweg negativ besetzte Bilderverehrung in der griechischen Tradition wird von Johannes apologetisch relativiert. Was ihre Entstehung angeht, so beruft er sich zwar ausdrücklich auf die Autorität von Eusebios von Caesarea, dem Pionier der christlichen Chronik. In der nachfolgenden Auseinandersetzung, in der Johannes diese Bilderverehrung als ein Missverständnis ansieht, weicht er aber jedenfalls von Eusebios ab.³⁹ Auch hierin spiegeln sich Diskurse aus der späten Regierungszeit des Justinian, als eine kaiserliche Förderung der Bilderverehrung im christlichen Sinne einsetzte und christliche Autoren damit begannen, diese zu rechtfertigen.⁴⁰

37 Johannes Malalas 1.9; 2.2 (Dindorf, 13-14; 24); zu den Philosophen unter Justinian: Johannes Malalas 18.136 (Dindorf, 491).

38 Johannes Malalas 2,23 (Dindorf, 40): Κάδμος ... ἀνεκαλέσατο δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐξορίας τὸν Τειρεσίαν, Βοιωτίον ὄντα φιλόσοφον, τὸν θηρολέτην, ὄντα πλούσιον καὶ χρήμασι καὶ ἀξία καὶ σοφία. ὅστις παρεισήγαγε δόγμα τοῖς Ἕλλησι τὸ αὐτομάτως φέρεσθαι τὰ πάντα καὶ ἀπρονόητον εἶναι τὸν κόσμον· καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς συνεσκευάσαντο αὐτόν, καὶ ἐξωρίσθη εἰς τὸ ἱερόν Δαφναίου Ἀπόλλωνος, ὡς γυναικῶδεις ἔχων φρένας... Zum Automatismus siehe Rohmann 2016: 104-16.

39 Johannes Malalas 2.43-45 (Dindorf, 53-56). Seruch wird von Eusebios nur in der Chronik erwähnt. Malalas bezieht sich daher auf Euseb. *Chron.* (Karst, 42) und den Turmbau zu Babel, nicht im eigentlichen Sinne auf den Ursprung der Bilderverehrung.

40 Zur Bilderverehrung siehe Meier 2003: 550-56.

Besonders deutlich wird die byzantinische Selbstdarstellung des 6. Jh.s wiederum in den Interpretationen zum römischen König Numa Pompilius und zu Kaiser Valens. Wie bereits die früheren lateinischsprachigen Autoren verzichtet Johannes Malalas darauf, Numa als den Begründer der römischen Religion zu beschreiben. Anders als diese folgt er aber der älteren griechischen Tradition, nach der bereits der zweite römische König – und damit die frühe römische Kultur in ihrer Gesamtheit – durch griechische Elemente entscheidend geprägt wurde: denn Numa habe das urrömische Symbol der Toga direkt von einer Gesandtschaft aus Griechenland erhalten.⁴¹ In seinem Bild von Kaiser Valens weicht Johannes schließlich noch weitaus entscheidender sowohl von seinen Vorlagen als auch von den lateinischen Autoren ab. Für Johannes, in dessen Welt zwar die Goten, aber nicht der arianische Glaube eine Bedrohung mehr darstellten, war Valens überraschenderweise ein Kriegsheld, der die Goten entscheidend schlug und schließlich bei Adrianopel zwar in einer freistehenden Hütte auf einem Feld, aber nicht während der Schlacht, sondern während der Besichtigung von Waffenlagern heimtückisch ermordet wurde:⁴²

Und es herrschte der göttliche Valens, der Bruder des strengen Valentinian, ein Mann, der in Kriegen herausragendes leistete. Er wurde ausgerufen von dem Senat von Konstantinopel im Jahre 412 nach der antiochenischen Ära. Denn als sein Bruder Valentinian starb, war Valens nicht in Konstantinopel, sondern sein Bruder hatte ihn noch zu seinen Lebzeiten nach Sirmium geschickt, um gegen die Goten zu kämpfen. Diese besiegte er mit Gewalt und kehrte dann zurück. [...]

41 Johannes Malalas 2.10 (Dindorf, 33-34).

42 Johannes Malalas 13.34-35 (Dindorf, 342-43): Καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θειότατος Βάλης ὁ ἀδελφὸς Βαλεντινιανοῦ τοῦ ἀποτόμου, ὁ γενναῖος ἐν πολέμοις, ὑπὸ τῆς συγκλήτου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀναγορευθεὶς, ἔτους ιβ' κατὰ Ἀντιόχειαν. ὅτε γὰρ ἐτελεύτα Βαλεντινιανὸς ὁ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφὸς οὐκ ἦν ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ὁ Βάλης, ἀλλ' ἦν πέμψας αὐτὸν ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ πολεμῆσαι εἰς τὸ Σίρμιον πρὸς τοὺς Γότθους, οὐστὶνας νικήσας κατὰ κράτος ὑπέστρεφεν ... ἐτελεύτησεν δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς Βάλης ποιήσας πρόκενσον εἰς Ἀδριανουπόλιν τῆς Θράκης, ἀπελθὼν κτίσαι φαρβίκα ἐκεῖ *** οἶκον πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐν ἀγρῷ ἐτέρῳ τοῦ οἰκίματος τοῦ ἀγροῦ ἀδίλως ἀναφθέντος καὶ ἀναφθέντων τῶν σκαλῶν νυκτὸς ἀπώλετο.

Valens selbst starb, während er eine Reise nach Adrianopel in Thracien unternahm, wobei er auf dem Weg war, Waffenlager zu errichten † ein Haus vor der Stadt auf einem anderen Feld, wobei das Haus auf dem Feld von unbekannter Hand in Brand gesteckt wurde und die Treppen bei Nacht angezündet wurden, und er starb.

Der Text enthält laut der Übersetzung von Jeffreys et al. sowie der neueren Edition von Thurn eine *lacuna*, die darauf hindeuten könnte, dass spätere Kopisten einen Teil des Textes von Johannes Malalas über die Todesumstände von Valens nicht überliefern wollten.⁴³ Man kann dies vielleicht damit erklären, dass der arianische Kaiser hier zu positiv bewertet wurde.

Im Ergebnis lässt sich festhalten, dass die christlichen Chronisten des 5. bis 7. Jh.s noch deutlich in der antiken Tradition standen, Universalgeschichte zu schreiben, und zwar bezogen auf die aktuelle politische Situation. Antike Universalgeschichte verband sich dabei mit christlichen eschatologischen Elementen. Auf die lateinischen Autoren hat nicht nur die Lehre der Weltzeitalter des Augustinus gewirkt, sondern auch das von diesem formulierte Prinzip, die Überlieferung in den weltlichen Schriften – im 6. und 7. Jh. waren dies Hieronymus und Orosius – mit dem kanonischen Wissen der jüdisch-christlichen Tradition zu vereinbaren. In diesen Abweichungen von den antiken Quellen in Bezug auf alle Weltzeitalter zeigt sich die Eigenständigkeit der frühmittelalterlichen Chronisten innerhalb ihrer Kompilationsarbeiten und zugleich das jeweilige Weltbild. Meinungsunterschiede bestanden insbesondere in der Frage, wie die Sünde in die Welt kam, wie die griechisch-römische Bilderverehrung zu bewerten ist, und welche konkrete Bedeutung der Tod des Valens in der göttlichen Providenz erfüllte. Orosius, Isidor von Sevilla und Gregor von Tours nahmen in diesen Fragen jeweils eigenständige Positionen ein, mit denen sich stufenweise verschiedene Erinnerungskulturen der römischen Vergangenheit verbinden. Kirchenpolitisch fallen zudem große Unterschiede in der historischen Bewertung des Arianismus auf, der entweder als längst überwunden oder noch den gegenwärtigen Diskurs bestimmend wahrgenommen wurde. Die Chronik des griechisch-

43 Jeffreys, Jeffreys & Scott 1986: 186; Thurn 2012: 265.

sprachigen Johannes Malalas unterscheidet sich in allen diesen Fallstudien deutlich. Bei Malalas liegt keine Abgrenzung zu der griechisch-römischen Vergangenheit vor, sondern vielmehr die apologetische Tendenz, die antike griechische Geistesgeschichte mit der biblischen Lehre zu vereinbaren.

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L'ÉNIGME INCARNÉE: MÉLIOT DE LOGRES DANS LE HAUT LIVRE DU GRAAL

Par Jean-François Poisson-Gueffier

Summary: The *High Book of the Grail*, also known as *Perlesvaus*, after its main character, an analogon of Perceval who evolves in a universe of blood and violence, is a French Arthurian prose romance of the 13th century. The principle of imperfection on which this romance is set encompasses its narrative composition, the consistency of its allegorical meaning, and the poetics of character. Meliot de Logres can be called an *énigme incarnée*, as its representation does not tend towards unity, but towards destruction. He is an enigma because of its numerous narrative functions (*alter Christus*, a man in distress, knight ...), and its symbolical power (he is 'de Logres', which suggests a moral signification, he embodies spiritual greatness that the romance does not develop). The semiological analysis of this secondary but important character is a way to understand the many problems aroused by the scripture of the *High Book of the Grail*. Meliot is not only a double: through him, we can see the complexity and intricacy of the romance as a whole.

D'un nouveau personnage inventez-vous l'idée?
Qu'en tout avec soi-même il se montre d'accord:
Et qu'il soit jusqu'au bout tel qu'on l'a vu d'abord.

Boileau, *Art poétique*, v. 124-126.

Ces vers de Boileau suffiraient à eux seuls à mesurer la solution de continuité entre l'esthétique du récit médiéval et celle de la tragédie classique. Ces deux univers irréductibles relèvent de conceptions incommensurables de la littérature: une littérature du *bel animal* qui égale la

perfection formelle à la perfection organique d'un être vivant; une 'littérature' entre guillemets, de rigueur depuis les réserves de Paul Zumthor,¹ et qui accorde à la cohérence des parties et du tout une importance relative. Si certains critiques, comme Jean Frappier avec *La Mort Artu*, ont abordé le récit médiéval par le prisme de la tragédie classique, cette lecture ne peut désormais constituer une clé herméneutique viable.²

Ces vers n'en mettent pas moins en perspective l'une des particularités du roman arthurien: la métamorphose perpétuelle de figures dont les traits généraux sont tempérés, exaltés ou déplacés. La logique du personnage romanesque doit alors être lue à la dimension d'un vaste parcours qui, d'un roman à l'autre, d'un cycle à l'autre, va d'approfondissements en reniements,³ chaque personnage semblant doté d'une existence archétypale, en métamorphose constante.

Ainsi pensée, la poétique du personnage arthurien ne connaîtrait d'évolution que dans le temps long d'une tradition qui se prolonge jusqu'au XV^e siècle.⁴ De telles vues seraient incomplètes, car cette fragmentation du personnage (entendu comme 'morphème discontinu')⁵ se prolonge dans l'élaboration par le récit de portraits éclatés. La théorie du personnage romanesque définie par Philippe Hamon pose les cadres d'une réflexion extensible au domaine médiéval:

la 'signification' d'un personnage (et ici nous opposons sens à signification, un peu comme Saussure oppose sens à valeur), ne se constitue pas tant par répétition (récurrence de marques) ou par accumulation (d'un moins déterminé à un plus déterminé), que par différence vis-à-vis des signes de même niveau du même système, que par son insertion dans le système global de l'œuvre. C'est donc différentiellement, vis-à-vis des autres personnages de l'énoncé que se définira avant tout un personnage.⁶

1 Zumthor 1987.

2 Greene 2002: 264-65.

3 Moran 2014b; Moran 2012: 13-25.

4 Connochie-Bourgne 2007; Milland-Bove 2006; Latimier-Ionoff 2019.

5 Hamon 1972: 98.

6 Hamon 1972: 99.

Ces considérations prennent sens et s'éclairent d'une lumière non moins vive si l'on considère l'être, le faire et l'importance hiérarchique censés former au sein de chaque univers romanesque distinct une forme de permanence, voire de fixité, lesquelles connaissent deux procédures d'altération. La première est liée à la quête et à l'initiation, qui induisent une transformation progressive s'achevant sur une transfiguration. Le nice gallois du *Conte du Graal* et le chevalier ayant recouvré le sens de la spiritualité au terme d'une longue errance sont deux figures qui ne se recouvrent pas. Le personnage se mesure de manière différentielle par rapport aux personnages de la cour, acquérant un renom transitoire, puis s'abandonnant dans l'oubli de Dieu et la déréliction. Sa construction peut être circonscrite à une suite d'états qui le *distinguent*, de lui-même comme de l'autre.

La deuxième procédure d'altération de la linéarité du portrait tient à introduire une discontinuité, à disposer des signes fragmentaires, de manière à ce qu'ils ne construisent pas une totalité cohérente, mais un piège herméneutique. Faire voler en éclats leur unité psychologique comme leur fonctionnalité initiale confère à certains personnages l'apparence d'une énigme. À cet égard, Méliot de Logres, dans le *Haut Livre du Graal*, ne relève plus d'une unité de signification, constituée progressivement par le récit, mais d'une dynamique de déconstruction. *A priori* formé d'une somme de paroles, d'actes et de traits, le personnage tend vers une unité de déterminations et de sèmes convergents. La construction du personnage de Méliot présente la singularité de tendre moins vers l'unité que vers l'éclatement.

Hélène Bouget a donné sens, à partir d'une lecture allégorique, à l'énigme que représente un personnage progressivement 'délivré de toute *senefiance* obscure: si Méliot entre dans le roman par le biais de l'*integumentum*, il y trouve ensuite pleinement et uniquement sa place en tant que personnage romanesque', car 'le second degré de fiction exigé ne se manifeste pas vraiment, et le voile trop opaque finit paradoxalement par disparaître au profit de l'imaginaire et du romanesque pur'.⁷ Cette lecture se fonde ainsi sur une solution de continuité entre les premières apparitions du personnages et les suivantes. À l'approche allégo-

7 Bouget 2011: 49-52.

rique, nous préférons une approche herméneutique entée sur les principes énoncés par Leo Spitzer: ‘observer d’abord les détails à la superficie de chaque œuvre’, les ‘grouper’, les ‘intégrer’ à un ‘principe créateur’ et ‘finalement revenir à tous les autres domaines d’observation pour voir si la forme interne qu’on a essayé de bâtir rend bien compte de la totalité’.⁸

Méliot n’apparaît que dans le *Haut Livre du Graal* (XIII^e siècle) et, de manière plus insignifiante et sporadique, dans *Le Morte d’Arthur* de Malory (1485). Le *Haut Livre du Graal*, également nommé *Perlesvaus* d’après le nom du héros éponyme, *analogon* de Perceval, présente un univers en proie au chaos et à la violence. Dans ce ‘poème barbare’,⁹ le meurtre de la mère de Méliot sous les coups de son père précède sa première évocation, dans un ermitage auprès de son oncle, *car ne onques puis li vallés ne volt estre avoec son père, que sa mere fu morte, car il seit bien qu’il l’ochist a tort* [depuis que sa mère est morte, le garçon n’a plus voulu rester avec son père, car il sait bien qu’il l’a tuée à tort] (V, 270, 7-9).¹⁰

Il est représenté à la fois comme symbole christique et comme figure relevant des merveilles¹¹ sous les traits d’un *enfant qui chevauchoit* [chevauchait] *le lion* (V, 270, 1). Devenu l’homme lige de Gauvain, Méliot règne sur des terres menacées par les prétentions impérialistes d’autant de *figuræ diaboli*. S’inscrivant ainsi dans l’entrelacs des outrages, des vengeances et des morts qui fonde le récit, le lion est tué par Clamados des Ombres, lequel est tué par Méliot, tandis que le père de Méliot est tué par Nabigan des Roches. Dans les branches suivantes, Méliot et Gauvain viennent alternativement au secours l’un de l’autre. *Ocis en traïson* [tué par trahison] par Brudan, *car Melioz ne se donnoit garde de lui* [car Méliot ne se méfiait pas de lui] (XI, 1040, 7-8), il meurt sous les coups de Lancelot dans *Le morte d’Arthur*, avec une dizaine d’autres chevaliers venus le surprendre dans la chambre de Guenièvre.

8 Spitzer 1970: 60.

9 Lods 1973: 516.

10 *Haut Livre du Graal* 2007. Les références des citations au *Haut Livre du Graal* dans notre étude feront apparaître successivement le numéro de la branche en chiffres romains, puis le numéro de la page et celui des lignes citées. Les traductions en sont également issues.

11 Ferlampin-Acher 2003: 12-13 montre que la merveille repose sur une perception à laquelle succède admiration ou étonnement.

Le premier paradoxe qui fonde l'insertion du personnage dans l'espace fictionnel du *Haut Livre du Graal* tient à son nom. Logres est le nom du royaume d'Arthur, et nul autre personnage ne porte cette particule. L'éminence nobiliaire et symbolique de Méliot est perceptible en creux, alors même que sa fonction narrative le maintient dans les marges que lui concèdent Perlesvaus, Lancelot et Gauvain, triade de *bons chevaliers* engagés dans des quêtes spirituelles et terrestres. Homme lige de Gauvain, Méliot est ainsi placé en position de subordination. Cette éminence est présente dans l' 'épigraphie' de son 'nom propre',¹² lorsque l'ermite révèle à Gauvain que *sa mere fu fille a un riche conte del roiaume de Logres* [sa mère était la fille d'un puissant comte du royaume de Logres] (V, 272, 3-5). Cette alternance de l'élévation et de l'abaissement a été tôt relevée par R. H. Wilson, en un propos empreint de paradoxe:¹³

Meliot de Logres is a highly important personage in the *Perlesvaus*, but is otherwise unknown in Arthurian romance. His name appears on a number of other occasions in Malory, but in each case, he is only mentioned briefly, with no reference to his character in the *Perlesvaus*.

'Figure très importante',¹⁴ certes, mais dont la nature peine à être élucidée. Cette importance relève-t-elle du domaine narratif et actantiel, du domaine allégorique et symbolique? Cette première ambiguïté est révélatrice des problèmes d'interprétation que pose un personnage dont la résonance allégorique, qui emplit sa première évocation, semble se perdre dans la suite de l'œuvre. Alors qu'au seuil de la branche V, la typologie assimilait sa figure d'enfant à celle du Christ, cette image première semble infuser les branches ultérieures en l'absence du moindre signe prolongeant cette lecture: si la trilogie de Robert de Boron instaure

12 Cette expression est empruntée à Hamon 1998: 136-37, et définie en ces termes: 'Le nom propre, surtout, peut être un personnage sémiologique, plus ou moins isolé ou regroupé avec d'autres, lisible ou illisible, que l'on rencontre, un objet dit, écrit ou inscrit, doté d'une plus ou moins grande autonomie, souvent mis en relief, mis en position détachée, mis en position ou en statut d'épigraphe à l'intérieur même du texte'.

13 Wilson 1932: 17-18.

14 L'origine de son nom, élucidée par Nitze et Jenkins, en atteste: vol. 2, 240.

le principe narratif d'une 'parabole continuée',¹⁵ le *Haut Livre du Graal* présente avec Méliot de Logres une 'parabole intermittente',¹⁶ dont les impressions premières accordent néanmoins au personnage un prestige diffus.

De telle sorte que Méliot de Logres ouvre une brèche théologique vers un au-delà du sens, vers un au-delà circonscrit ensuite dans l'univers de référence de la fiction arthurienne, de l'aventure et des périls. Cette importance semble ainsi relever du miroir aux alouettes et ne se fonder que sur des conjectures que la lettre du texte ne confirme ni n'infirme.

Le deuxième paradoxe, qui recoupe en partie le premier, tient à sa position au sein de l'antagonisme des figures électives et réprouvées. *Bons chevaliers et sages et loiaus* [bon chevalier sage et loyal] (X, 906, 17-18) selon Lancelot, chevalier préféré de Gauvain (X, 842, 14-15), Méliot de Logres est entouré d'une aura qui semble le verser dans la caste des figures électives. Cette stabilité des traits axiologiques relève de l'illusion si l'on considère le lignage dans lequel il s'inscrit, marqué par une rupture axiologique et allégorique. Axiologique, car le père accomplit un uxoricide dont la légitimation apparaît en contradiction avec la lettre de l'épisode, la mère étant alternativement une épouse courtoise convaincue à tort d'infidélité et une figuration de l'Ancienne Loi devant être abattue. Par-delà ce vacillement des valeurs portées par le lignage, se dessine une trajectoire allégorique.

La lecture typologique ne peut néanmoins être élargie à l'ensemble d'un roman qui attribue à Méliot de Logres des actes et paroles moins immédiatement lisibles que les *res gestae* des *bons chevaliers*. La logique heurtée, alternativement allégorique et littérale, qui fonde l'évocation de Méliot, opacifie sa représentation. Si sa nature intrinsèque relève de l'énigme, une translation du regard porté sur son *faire* est susceptible de lui donner sens. Envisagé dans son 'autonomie différentielle', car il appartient à cette catégorie de personnages secondaires 'qui apparaissent toujours en compagnie d'un ou de plusieurs personnages, en groupes fixes à implication bilatérale, alors que le héros apparaît seul',¹⁷ Méliot s'éclaire, se donnant comme une éternelle figure du double.

15 Strubel 2009: 158-61.

16 Strubel 1989: 267.

17 Hamon 1972: 91-92.

1. MÉLIOT ET LES APORIES DE LA SENEFIANCE.

Méliot donne à percevoir les contradictions inhérentes au dispositif allégorique instauré dans le *Haut Livre du Graal*, cette 'allégorie imparfaite' à laquelle est préférable le concept plus souple d' 'allégorisation': 'of allegory, there is none in the *Perlesvaus*; but of allegorization, there is a great deal'.¹⁸ Non seulement, *sensus litteralis* et *sensus spiritualis* ne se recourent pas à la manière de la *Queste del Saint Graal*, mais ils semblent soumis à un principe pendulaire. La poétique du personnage relève d'une 'double cohérence', l'envisageant comme une entité narrative appartenant 'tantôt' aux 'êtres ordinaires', 'tantôt' aux 'figures allégoriques', ce qui 'exige qu'intervienne à un certain moment l'énoncé d'une *senefiance*'.¹⁹ La *senefiance* de l'enfant chevauchant un lion advient au Château de l'Enquête, acmé spirituel donnant sens aux premières aventures de Gauvain:²⁰

– Jo m'esmerveil, fait mesire Gauvain, molt durement d'un enfant qui chevauchoit un lion en un hermitage, et n'osoit nus aproismer le lion se li enfés non; et n'avoit pas plus de .vii. ans, et li lions estoit molt crueus; li enfés avoit esté fius a la dame qui por moi fu ochise. – Molt avés fait grant bien, dist li maistres provoires, qui le m'avés ramenteü. Li enfés signefie le Sauveor del mont qui nasqui en la viés loi et fu circuncis, qui s'umilia vers tot le mont et li lions qu'il chevauchoit signefie le monde et le pule qui dedens est, et bestes et soisaus que nus ne porroit justisier ne gouverner se sa vertu non. (VI 332, 6-17).

[– Je suis tout à fait perplexe, continua monseigneur Gauvain, à propos d'un enfant qui chevauchait un lion dans un ermitage, alors que personne d'autre que lui n'osait approcher le lion; il n'avait pas plus de sept ans, et le lion était d'une grande férocité; l'enfant en question se trouvait être le fils de la dame tuée par ma faute. – Vous avez fort bien fait de me rappeler cet épisode, remarqua le maître des prêtres: cet

18 Kelly 1974: 98; Strubel 1989: 162, définit l'*allegorization*, comme 'un sens second, rétrospectif, et polysémique'.

19 Dubost, 1994: 196.

20 Bouget 2011: 49-52.

enfant représente le Sauveur du Monde, né dans la Vieille Loi et circoncis, qui fit preuve d'humilité devant le monde entier, tandis que le lion qu'il chevauchait signifie le monde et l'humanité qui l'habite, et les bêtes et les oiseaux que sa seule puissance était capable de maîtriser et de dominer.]

Méliot de Logres est alors conçu comme un *alter Christus*. Cette allégorèse, en apparence moins problématique que celle qui préside à l'explicitation de la mort de sa mère, modèle le personnage selon un principe allégorique et lui accorde une valeur. Ces premiers éléments de caractérisation sont versés en un creuset à partir duquel prend forme le personnage. Le devenir de Méliot dans l'espace de la fiction est ensuite marqué par des dispositions chevaleresques qui dessinent une autre figure, et ce d'autant plus que son action relève bien plus de la chevalerie *terriene* que de la chevalerie *celestielle*.²¹ Le plus haut sens allégorique de l'enfant au lion correspond à l'évocation du personnage 'in a somewhat formulaic way', de sorte qu'il devient 'almost a walking Idea'.²² Thomas Kelly a approfondi la dimension allégorique de Méliot, qu'il considère comme 'an excellent illustration of how the author's general purpose is reflected in the allegorical agency of the story':²³

To be sure, the author here uses a romance situation to allude to important events in Christ's life – the Nativity and Circumcision – and thereby to familiar Christian doctrines. We are not, however, being directed by the author to find a Nativity-scene in disguise; for it is the meaning of Christ's birth, rather than the details of the historical events, which is central in the passage. R. Tuve suggests that Méliot de Logres is connected symbolically with the 'li Sauverres du monde' apparently for 'the suggestion of innocence in harmonious control over the very symbol of strength and power and because Christ-Leo-Majesty is an ancient association to figure the victorious New Law'.²⁴

21 Valette 2008: 682-706.

22 Kelly 1974: 96.

23 Kelly 1974: 95.

24 Kelly 1974: 96-97.

'Leçon de catéchisme en image et en mouvement',²⁵ la première rencontre de Gauvain et Méliot est certes parée de toutes les couleurs de l'allégorie. Les branches suivantes attestent néanmoins l'obligation d'une lecture projetée 'littéralement et dans tous les sens'. La formule rimbaldienne trouve un écho dans l'étude d'un personnage dont le sens se joue entre un au-delà et un en-deçà: au-delà, vers une représentation de l'enfant en Christ salvateur, en-deçà, à travers une carrière chevaleresque qui n'accède jamais aux ambitions purement spirituelles de son portrait initial.

'Littéralement', car Méliot devient un chevalier dont les terres sont menacées, à l'instar des nombreuses dames et demoiselles *desconseillées* qui jalonnent le parcours des *bons chevaliers*. 'Dans tous les sens', car le chevalier qui succède à l'enfant semble arraché au monde de l'allégorie et ne se comprendre qu'en une seule dimension. À moins que la faille temporelle dont Nitze a délimité les contours ne soit passible d'une autre interprétation:

'On l'apele Melio de Logres'. The knight with the lion is thus Melio, who had already been associated with the lion in 1573: .i. enfant qui chevauchoit un lion. But it is to be noted that the child of seven has now grown to full manhood. On the other hand, Gauvain's seeing him as a child and the present episode both fall within the one year period of respite for the Vaux de Kamaalot; cf. 1199, '*devant .i. en e i. jor n'a mes li chastiax garde, ne la terre a la dame, de moi ne d'autrui*' with 5248, '*or est li termes aprouchiez que je eüsse mun chastel perdu*'; cf. also 5294. Hence the chronology of P, while sometimes meticulously careful (cf. Note 70), at other times is very loose.²⁶

Littéralement, le passage de l'enfance à l'âge d'homme peut apparaître comme une solution introduite dans la continuité temporelle de la *fabula*. La dimension allégorique et merveilleuse du personnage n'en serait que plus notable, alors même qu'à contre-courant, cette accession à l'ordre de la chevalerie s'accompagne d'une déperdition symbolique. L'invraisemblance chronologique (dans un univers marqué par le merveilleux

25 Frappier 1966: 29.

26 *Perlesvaus*, éd. Nitze, vol. 2: 287.

breton et dont la vraisemblance ne constitue pas un impératif hypothétique) relève d'une conception du temps comme milieu indéfini et homogène, dans lequel se situent êtres et choses, et marqué à la fois par la continuité et la succession. Méliot, dont la composante divine est ouverte dans l'assimilation au Christ, pourrait tout aussi bien se soustraire à l'emprise du temps. Cette temporalité précipitée,²⁷ signe du *lapsus memoriae* d'un conteur oublieux ou d'une prodigieuse accélération venant rompre la conception linéaire du temps eschatologique, ne relève sans doute d'aucun de ces cas de figure.

Déceler en Méliot un personnage susceptible de métamorphoses, non seulement referme la brèche théologique ouverte par l'empreinte qu'il pourrait avoir sur le temps de la fiction, au profit d'une aptitude à incarner en lui-même ces temporalités multiples. *Puer senex*, Méliot accomplit des gestes d'une force symbolique qui excède très largement l'âge de raison: alors qu'il n'a pas encore sept ans, *li vallés descent del lion et fiert d'une corgie et le maine en se cave et fait l'uis fermer, qu'il ne puist fors issir* [le garçon descendit du lion et, à coup de fouet, il le conduisit dans sa fosse, puis fit fermer la porte pour l'empêcher de ressortir] (V, 270, 20-22) puis *li enfes s'agenoille devant lui si li tent ses mains. - Sire, esgardés grant pitié, fait li hermites; il vos offre son omage!* [l'enfant se mit à genoux devant lui et lui tendit ses mains: 'Seigneur, regardez, n'est-ce pas émouvant? dit l'ermite, il vous offre son hommage!'] (V, 270, 28-30).

L'importance du personnage de Méliot se mesure ainsi à l'aune de sa dimension allégorique comme de son action dans la diégèse. Chevalier qui porte en lui *molt cortoisie et valor* [autant de courtoisie que de vaillance] (VII, 410, 13-14), Méliot joue un rôle-clé dans la délivrance de Gauvain et d'Arthur assiégés par les chevaliers d'Anuret: *il ne s'en fussent ja parti sain ne entier quant Melio de Logres vint soi quinzime de chevaliers, qui avoit oï les noveles de monseignor Gauvain, que on avoit asis en un chastel* [ils ne s'en seraient jamais tirés sains et saufs si Méliot de Logres n'était arrivé avec quatorze autres chevaliers; il avait entendu des nouvelles sur monseigneur Gauvain, dont on disait qu'il était assiégé dans un château] (X, 840, 22-25). Le geste salutaire de Méliot inverse leur *meschief* [situation critique] (X, 840, 25) et lui acquiert un renom dont Perlesvaus, qui

27 Il est permis, sur ce point, de ne pas rejoindre le constat de Gallais 1966: 892: 'Ne cherchons aucune logique, du point de vue de la chronologie.'

avoit oï parler maintes foiz de Meliot de Logres, e de sa chevalerie e de sa grant valeur [il avait à plusieurs reprises entendu parler de Méliot de Logres, de sa prouesse et de ses grandes qualités] (XI, 1040, 26-28), se fait l'écho.

L'oraison funèbre à laquelle se livre la demoiselle à la coupe d'or après la libération symbolique du Château du Noir Ermite modèle la *memoria* du personnage, entendue comme 'souvenir que les vivants gardaient d'un défunt'.²⁸

si avint chose en cel point que Brudans, li filz de la sereur Brien des Illes, ocit Meliot de Logres, le plus cortois chevalier e le mielz vaillant qui fust o roiaume de Logres, si en est Messires Gavains si dolanz q'il ne set conroi de soi meesmes, car Melio l'avoit rescoux de mort .ii. foiz, e le roi Artu une. Il estoit hom liges Monseigneur Gavain, si vos pri e requier de par lui que vos ne recevez mie la cope se vos ne le devez vengier, car il estoit amez de tote la cort, e si n'i avoit gueres hanté. Brudans l'ocist en traïson, car Melioz ne se donnoit garde de lui (XI, 1038, 29-32 et 1040, 1-8).

[Il se produisit alors que Brudan, le fils de la sœur de Brien des Îles, mit à mort Méliot de Logres, le plus courtois des chevaliers du royaume de Logres et celui qui avait le plus de valeur, et monseigneur Gauvain en fut si affligé qu'il ne savait plus quoi faire de lui-même, car Méliot l'avait sauvé deux fois de la mort, tandis que le roi Arthur l'avait sauvé une fois. Il était l'homme lige de Gauvain, aussi vous prierai-je et vous ferai-je la requête de ne pas accepter la coupe si vous ne vous obligez pas à le venger, car il était très aimé de toute la cour, qu'il n'avait pourtant guère fréquentée. Brudan l'a tué par trahison, car Méliot ne se méfiait pas de lui.]

L'évocation de Méliot dans le discours de la demoiselle conjoint trois aspects fondamentalement hétérogènes. La mention du *plus cortois chevalier* ne s'élève pas au-dessus de ce lissé d'excellence propre à l'esthétique chevaleresque et courtoise, dans laquelle le superlatif devient norme absolue. Méliot de Logres est ainsi conçu comme une incarnation de l'archétype du chevalier arthurien, degré zéro d'une écriture de l'excellence

28 Lauwers 1997: 125.

aristocratique, de laquelle il se démarque par une série d'épreuves. La fonction d'adjuvant, accomplie auprès d'Arthur et de Gauvain, révèle la convergence entre une haute extraction marquée dans son nom, et la préservation du Royaume de Logres. Méliot conjoint ainsi un pôle neutre, un pôle positif et un pôle négatif, sensible dans l'interruption du discours sur la mention des *circumstantiae* de sa mort.

Mort infligée *en traïson* par une figure réprouvée, mort qui échappe à la sphère du savoir et de l'intuition, et qui dès lors semble frappée de malédiction. Comme l'a montré Philippe Ariès, la mort ne s'abat pas, dans la littérature médiévale, à la manière de la foudre, mais après l'interprétation de signes, qu'ils soient merveilleux comme ceux qui, célestes, annoncent la mort de Pendragon, ou inscrits dans la chair. L'appréhension du personnage de Méliot est compliquée par l'épisode de sa mort relevant, selon les catégories de la pensée médiévale, de la *mors repentina*:

Pour que la mort fût ainsi annoncée, il fallait qu'elle ne fût pas subite, *repentina*. Quand elle ne prévenait pas, elle cessait d'apparaître comme une nécessité redoutable, mais acceptée, bon gré mal gré. Elle déchirait alors l'ordre du monde auquel chacun croyait, instrument absurde d'un hasard parfois déguisé en colère de Dieu. C'est pourquoi la *mors repentina* était considérée comme infamante et honteuse.²⁹

Ainsi replacée dans une perspective axiologique, la mort de Méliot est à la source de la formation d'un précipité, au sens chimique: advenue parce qu'il *ne se donnoit garde* de Brudan, elle ajoute un élément hétérogène à un portrait originellement scindé entre la lettre et l'esprit. Couronnement de l'existence dans la pensée chrétienne, accession glorieuse aux Royaume des Cieux, la mort ne reflète plus les principaux traits d'une existence allégorique et sublunaire. L'esthétique de la surprise qui semble présider à l'écriture d'un récit qui 'privilégie une autarcie fictionnelle [...] fondamentalement inhabituelle pour son époque'³⁰ sacrifie ainsi la linéarité de son devenir.

Méliot semble, en première instance et par-delà les lectures allégoriques concentrées sur sa première apparition, échapper à tout mode de

29 Ariès 1977: 18.

30 Moran 2014a: 68.

lecture foncièrement unitaire. Son unité ne semble résider que dans l'éclatement, ou dans la diversité de ses sens. Plutôt que de viser à une convergence, le récit semble envisager alternativement et de manière pour ainsi dire autonome le *sensus litteralis* et le *sensus moralis*. La métamorphose se révèle alors comme l'un de ses traits notables, car plus encore que sa croissance défiant tout développement organique, les rôles actantiels qui lui sont confiés couvrent un empan très large, bien plus que toute autre figure apparaissant dans le *Haut Livre du Graal*: tout à tour chevalier de haute volée, *Salvator mundi* et sauveur d'Arthur et de Gauvain, ou réduit à un état d'impuissance dans un monde gagné par le chaos et l'abandon des principes élémentaires d'appartenance et de possession. Fondamentalement *bifrons*, un visage orienté vers l'au-delà de la fiction, l'autre vers la souveraineté sur ses biens et ses terres, il réunit les principes du spirituel et du temporel.

2. MÉLIOT OU LA QUESTION SANS RÉPONSE.

La question imprononcée et qui aurait porté en elle les germes d'un rétablissement du monde arthurien dans le prestige que lui accordaient les romans christianiens constitue un *leitmotiv* générateur et catalyseur des aventures du récit. La dynamique de la quête en procède, mais une part du sens demeure irréductiblement en suspens.³¹ Le Graal reste un 'signe imaginé'³² et seules les figures d'Élu parviennent à en percer les secrets. Le décalage entre la scène du Graal ou le discours du Graal et les tentatives de réponses apportées enclot une part essentielle de l'énigme qui entoure la fiction, autour d'un *mundus occultus* envisagé à la fois comme tension continue vers un au-delà du sens et comme un plafond de verre au-delà duquel aucune âme ne saurait *in vivo* s'élever: *quod ille mundus intelligibilis est occultus mentibus humanis* [car le monde des idées est caché à l'esprit des humains].³³

31 Bouget 2011: II, 2. 'Au rendez-vous manqué des questions'.

32 Séguy 2001.

33 Bonaventura 1901: 23 [évoquant le *Contra Academicos* de saint Augustin].

À la question qui, prononcée *in absentia*³⁴, reçoit une réponse d'un autre ordre – réponse en forme d'accusation à l'encontre de Perceval dans le *Conte du Graal* et de Gauvain dans le *Haut Livre du Graal* – correspond la question qui, pour être posée, ne reçoit aucune réponse – l'*unanswered question* qui a inspiré au compositeur Charles Ives un nocturne mystique. Méliot de Logres, dont le portrait s'élève sur la base de contradictions irréductibles, enclot ainsi une part de l'énigme du récit. Charles Méla, commentant l'inversion des principes de présentation du lignage dans le discours de Marin le Jaloux, a ainsi fait émerger un questionnement auquel la lettre du récit n'apporte pas de réponse:

Pourquoi [Lancelot] est-il justement couplé à Méliot de Logres (l. 7049)? Et pourquoi, vaincu par Lancelot et le conjurant, Marin avait-il, en ces termes, décliné son identité: 'L'en m'apele Marin de Chastel di Gomaret. Si sui pere Melio de Logres (l. 3489)' [On m'appelle Marin du Château du Gomoret. Je suis le père de Méliot de Logres]? Quelle fonction remplit ici Meliot? À quelle terreur permet-il de parer?³⁵

Au fils se présentant comme le descendant du père, le cède l'image d'un père qui ne retire de prestige que du fils engendré dans les entrailles de son épouse abattue. L'on perçoit dès lors à quel point l'énigme que constitue Méliot est doublement liée à la question (tant celle que pose le texte que celles qu'il induit à travers sa lecture) et au lignage³⁶ (dont le sens échappe en grande partie). La question posée par l'ermite à Gauvain est à cet égard emblématique: *Sire, fait li hermites, veés ichi ma joie de cest enfant! Veïstes vos onques mais nul si bel de son aage?* [Seigneur, dit l'ermite, voyez cette enfant, qui est toute ma joie! En avez-vous jamais vu d'aussi beau à son âge?] (V, 268, 20-23). L'appréhension par la vue de la merveille de l'enfant qui *chevauchoit* [chevauchait] *un lion* (V, 268, 19-20), que Gauvain

34 Bouget 2011: 119: 'Il semble que jamais, ni dans *Le Conte du Graal*, ni dans le *Perceval en prose*, ni dans les *Continuations*, les questions du Graal et de ses satellites ne soient des interrogations directes. Certes elles accèdent à une parole transposée comme le narrateur souhaite que le lecteur croie qu'elle ait été prononcée, mais cette parole ne semble pas autoriser l'interrogation directe. L'énigme suit un cheminement de la pensée à la parole qui dénote une subjectivité du sujet interrogé.'

35 Méla 1984: 148.

36 Serp 2015.

*esgarde [...] molt volentiers [eut grand plaisir à voir] (V, 270, 1) est à l'origine d'une question aux orientations multiples. Envisagée d'un point de vue purement rhétorique, elle enclot une réponse implicite; envisagée à partir du modèle scripturaire, la question prend une épaisseur nouvelle. Méliot étant l'*analogon* du Christ enfant, l'épisode crucial du séjour parmi les docteurs (*Luc*, 2, 41-50) livre l'une des clés de sa précocité tout en accentuant sa dimension énigmatique.*

La lettre du texte arthurien et du modèle scripturaire comporte des unités sémantiques partagées: Jésus est resté à Jérusalem 'à l'insu de ses parents' (2, 43), Méliot s'étant détourné de la violence et de l'injustice d'un père désormais honni; la précocité du Christ s'exerce dans l'ordre d'une parole souveraine ('et tous ceux qui l'entendaient étaient stupéfaits de son intelligence et de ses réponses', 2, 47) celle de Méliot dans l'ordre de l'action. Le motif de la question suspendue structure également la fin de l'épisode néo-testamentaire: 'Pourquoi donc me cherchiez-vous? Ne saviez-vous pas que je dois être dans la maison de mon Père? Mais eux ne comprenaient pas la parole qu'ils venait de leur dire' (2, 49-50). Le sens, dans les deux textes, se dérobe irréductiblement, le Christ posant des questions dont la portée n'est pas mesurée, Méliot étant l'objet d'une question qui, ramenée au cadre du roman arthurien, manifeste le caractère fantastique de son appartenance à l'un ou l'autre monde, et une forme d'ambiguïté qui évoque les problèmes d'interprétation soulevés par la *Queste*. De manière transitoire, la dimension évangélique de Méliot dans l'épisode du Christ enfant ouvre des perspectives herméneutiques et engage un questionnement qui rejoint l'étude de Galaad dans la *Queste*.

Dominique Boutet, dans *Poétiques médiévales de l'entre-deux, ou le désir d'ambiguïté*, a ainsi envisagé la question du 'statut' que l'on peut 'accorder au personnage' de Galaad et au 'texte même', à partir du rapport que la fiction arthurienne entretient avec le modèle scripturaire. À cette aune, 'leur rapport se place sur le mode de la post-figuration', 'il est exclusivement emblématique, il s'agit d'un rappel, non d'un accomplissement: les événements relatés par la fiction se produisent en mémoire du Christ, [...] mais avec l'idée que le *renouvellement* de cette *similitude* avec le Christ

doit servir de modèle pour transformer les cœurs'.³⁷ La *similitude* qui gouverne le rapport spéculaire de Galaad et du Christ confère à la *Queste* une cohérence – l'ambiguïté portant sur la sacralité d'un texte valant comme fiction aux résonances sacrées ou texte sacré – à l'inverse du *Haut Livre du Graal*:

Le fils naquit dans la Loi judaïque comme Meliot de Logres, qui le représente, en la Dame de la fontaine, à jamais morte. Mais cette identification reste extérieure; dans un cas on parle par métaphore (être nourri dans la Loi), c'est un lien de langage, et dans l'autre, de chair. Or il ne s'agit pas de comparer mais d'échanger: l'opération n'est pas de nature intellectuelle mais économique, dirions-nous à notre tour par métaphore. L'auteur recherche plus l'interpénétration que l'interprétation. Il faut que la comparaison s'efface, pour que vive le fantasme!³⁸

La question initiale de l'ermite à Gauvain préfigure le défi herméneutique que représentent plus largement Méliot et le sens de la fiction. Méliot de Logres ne s'inscrit dans aucun des fondements théoriques et critiques permettant de lire l'allégorie médiévale. Envisagé comme réalité sensible, signe d'une vérité d'un autre ordre, le personnage demeure, à l'instar du 'haut livre', une énigme ouverte. Ramené à sa fonction dans le récit et à des considérations moins symboliques que narratives, l'unité du personnage semble résider dans son statut de double.

3. MÉLIOT, FIGURE DU DOUBLE.

La poétique du personnage de Méliot excède la triade dynamique du *sensus litteralis, moralis* et *mysticus* pour refléter l'ensemble des figures romanesques. Méliot ne s'entend, à travers ses métamorphoses, que comme l'*analogon* transitoire de chacune des catégories de personnages (à la seule exception des figures réprouvées). En quelque sorte dépourvu de centre de gravité, il intervient à des instants-clés du récit et apparaît

37 Boutet 2017: 381.

38 Méla 1984: 148.

comme un principe de redoublement. Double de Gauvain, dont il est l'homme lige, il est également le double de Perlesvaus. Méliot et la figure de l'Élu ont en partage la couleur blanche de leur écu.³⁹ L'écu de Perlesvaus est plein de couleur blanche, son écu familial étant de sinople à un cerf blanc et celui de Joseph d'Arimathie, bandé d'argent et d'azur à la croix vermeille et à la boucle d'or.

La relation de Gauvain et Méliot est frappée au sceau d'une loyauté et d'une fidélité dont la nature relève de l'énigme, la culpabilité de Gauvain dans la mort de sa mère ayant été rappelée à quatre reprises. Si Méliot est le garant de l'intégrité de Gauvain, son lignage est porteur d'une faute originelle que rien ne saurait entièrement rédimier. Le meurtre de la dame du Gomoret par son époux, Marin le Jaloux, suite aux allégations d'infidélité, dignes d'un Iago, proférées par un nain, demeure comme une ombre portée:

L'auteur du *Perlesvaus* essaie certes de réhabiliter Gauvain, mais dans le contexte d'un roman du Graal, la réhabilitation est rarement complète: il reste toujours la différence, la distance, si essentielle pour tous les romans du Graal, entre le héros et les autres.⁴⁰

La figure de Gauvain constitue un pôle d'attraction qui détermine et centre chacune des actions de Méliot, lequel déclare à cet égard *qu'il n'iert mais a aisse si saura ou mesire Gauvain est* [il ne serait jamais tranquille avant de savoir où se trouvait monseigneur Gauvain] (XI, 974, 10-11). Si le parcours chevaleresque des bons chevaliers est placé sous le signe de l'aventure (qui implique le péril et le hasard) et de la quête (qui privilégie par-delà les épreuves un tracé linéaire), celui de Méliot marche dans le sillage de Gauvain. Ce mimétisme prend la forme d'un désir de réunion (Gauvain est l'horizon qui guide les pas de Méliot)⁴¹ et d'une imitation. À l'instar du neveu d'Arthur, Méliot de Logres contribue à l'abolition de

39 Pastoreau 1978: 15: 'le port d'un écu monochrome par les jeunes chevaliers pendant l'année qui suit leur adoubement est en effet un thème cher à l'héraldique littéraire du XIII^e siècle.'

40 Busby 1984: 96.

41 Méliot s'absente ainsi pour *querre monseignor Gauvain de qui il tient sa terre, car il l'a molt chier* (VII, 414, 1-2).

mauvaises coutumes, qui est 'à la fois une aventure de délivrance, sinon de rédemption'.⁴² Méliot intervient ainsi auprès d'une demoiselle condamnée par le Chevalier de la Galère à garder pendus quarante jours durant les corps de deux chevaliers martyrisés en vertu de leur foi et enterre les corps. Les paroles d'admonition adressées au Chevalier de la Galère font écho à celles que prononcent les *bons chevaliers* au gré de leurs propres aventures: *Par mon chief, fait Melios, vostre n'estoient il mie, ainz chevaliers Dieu, si avez fait grant outrage, que si vilainement les aviez pendus* [Sur ma tête, rétorqua Méliot, ils ne vous appartenaient pas, mais ils étaient des chevaliers de Dieu, et c'est un abus scandaleux que vous avez commis en les pendant de façon si ignoble!] (XI, 980, 4-7).

La spécularité préside également à l'épisode au cours duquel Méliot détache Gauvain, attaché à un poteau et condamné à être dévoré par un lion: *Melio, fait mesire Gauvain, vos m'avez delivré de mort cest foiz et autres, ne onques mais n'oi acointance a chevalier qui tant me vausist en si poi d'eure comme fait la vostre!* [Méliot, vous m'avez sauvé la vie cette fois-ci, comme à d'autres reprises; jamais jusqu'à présent, je n'ai entretenu avec un chevalier de relation qui m'eût été bénéfique en si peu de temps comme celle que j'ai avec vous!] (XI, 984, 20-23). Bien plus qu'une représentation de l'*auxilium*, cette scène reconfigure les rôles actantiels: Méliot est le double des chevaliers venant au secours des demoiselles *desconseillées*, et Gauvain est placé dans une situation qui évoque celle de la demoiselle menacée d'être jetée dans une fosse aux serpents (XI, 950-54). La fonction de Méliot auprès des bons chevaliers prend ainsi des formes contrastées: substitut, binôme, double. Quand Arthur et Gauvain sont menacés par sept chevaliers, *Lancelot et Melio de Logres lor delivrerent le passage; li chevalier s'en partirent, que plus n'oserent demorer* [Lancelot et Méliot de Logres leur libérèrent le passage, et les chevaliers rompirent le combat, n'osant demeurer plus longtemps] (IX, 774, 8-10), quand Méliot est blessé et *gist en une molt riche chambre* [dans une somptueuse chambre] (X, 904, 21), il demande immédiatement comment se porte Lancelot, alors que lui-même est au plus mal.

De manière réversible, Méliot se tient alternativement de l'un et l'autre côté du miroir de la chevalerie arthurienne. Disciple et émule de Gauvain, il n'en demeure pas moins l'objet d'une sourde angoisse, liée à

42 Köhler 1960: 392.

la préservation des terres qui lui ont été concédées. Menacé par les *figurae diaboli* qui plongent dans les ténèbres le royaume de Logres, il incarne cet autre versant du personnel dramatique que représentent les figures *desconseillées*. Cette menace se renouvelle, revient de loin en loin comme de proche en proche, devenant un véritable *leitmotiv*: *cho n'est mie un chemins par chi, ains est une tere par defois que l'on vielt tolir mon seignor, et por le venue de ses anemis laissoit om le lion fors de la chaienne* [ce n'est pas ici un passage, c'est une terre en défens que l'on cherche à enlever à mon seigneur, et c'est pour parer à l'arrivée de ses ennemis que l'on avait laissé le lion en liberté, sans sa chaîne] (VII, 412, 30-31). Dans le dense réseau de communication que forme la parole vive des chevaliers durant leurs brèves rencontres, l'évocation des menaces impérialistes à l'encontre de Méliot résonne d'une voix l'autre (VIII, 556, 5-9 et IX, 770, 2-5).

CONCLUSION

Le principe d'imperfection 'baroque'⁴³ qui préside à l'écriture du *Haut Livre du Graal* et s'étend de la *semblance* à l'ordre de la *senefiance*, altère en profondeur la poétique du personnage romanesque. Aux figures monolithiques de la *Queste del Saint Graal*, roman de 'l'élimination progressive des indignes',⁴⁴ le cède un ensemble de personnages secondaires qui en partie échappe au filtre de l'herméneutique. À l'instar de sa mère, qui prend au Château de l'Enquête une épaisseur allégorique confinant à l'opacité irréductible, Méliot de Logres prend place dans une esthétique de la 'parabole intermittente'. Cette intermittence est le reflet de l'instabilité d'un monde fictionnel parcouru de failles sémantiques et symboliques. À cet égard, l'approche du personnage à travers des méthodes relevant du modèle sémiologique se révèle à la fois riche de potentialités et aporétique.

Riche de potentialités, car aux figures archétypales et stéréotypées du roman arthurien se substitue une construction hétérogène du personnage, qui gravite autour des figures prééminentes et se donne comme un prisme qui dévie et décompose toutes les unités actantielles du récit. De

43 Payen 1968: 434.

44 Strubel 2002: 159.

cette hétérogénéité, marque de l'imperfection d'une œuvre que l'on peut en bonne part considérer comme un laboratoire d'expérimentation narrative, procède cette contradiction à valeur aporétique, qui laisse en un éternel suspens le sens du personnage. Et ce à l'inverse des trois *bons chevaliers*, dont la fonction dans le récit est nettement circonscrite: en Perlesvaus, 'le motif de la conversion double celui de la vengeance' dans un 'Haut Livre' qui 'se présente comme un mythe de rédemption où se trouveraient amalgamées la lecture littérale et la lecture anagogique de données très anciennes. Perlesvaus est, en somme, le double allégorique de Perceval; mais, ajoutons-le, d'un Perceval vengeur des siens'.⁴⁵ Le personnage de Lancelot, également fondé sur un syncrétisme culturel, tend vers l'unité, comme l'a montré Micheline de Combarieu du Grès:

Avec Lancelot, ce n'est pas un '*essemble*' qu'il trace, c'est un personnage qu'il (ré)invente, vrai personnage de roman s'il en est, partagé, loyal et traître, aimant Guenièvre et se dévouant pour Arthur – qu'il trahit – et pour Dieu – dont il est '*omecides*'. Mais héros de roman médiéval, c'est-à-dire non pas partant à la dérive de ses contradictions, mais au contraire se fondant sur elles, espérant que ces oppositions pourront se résoudre dans la convergence – c'est Nicolas de Cues, avec beaucoup d'avance – non pas dans le royaume d'Arthur qui est celui de la dissemblance, du péché, mais dans celui de Dieu, quand la ressemblance aura été retrouvée, quand Guenièvre, Arthur et Dieu seront devenus trois faces du même amour, celui 'qui meut le soleil et les autres étoiles'. Tout cela non pas formulé comme assuré mais comme une espérance et un pari – Lancelot face à l'ermite, Lancelot sur la tombe de Guenièvre. L'auteur de Perlesvaus, lui aussi, '*redit tot e'*'.⁴⁶

Le personnage de Gauvain, 'bien plus admirable que celui présenté dans la plupart des romans arthuriens de l'époque',⁴⁷ relève également d'une construction pleinement unitaire, bien que cette réfection symbolique et morale constitue un hapax. Si le conteur du *Haut Livre du Graal* renouvelle

45 Saly 1994: 159-60.

46 Combarieu du Grès 2000: 428-29.

47 Busby 1984: 96.

la représentation des *bons chevaliers* et leur accorde des traits qui les distinguent fondamentalement de leurs *alter egos* respectifs, cette réappropriation tend vers l'unité. Chaque figure est ainsi recomposée selon de nouvelles règles narratives et en vertu d'un dessein idéologique propre. Là où Perlesvaus, Lancelot et Gauvain sont recomposés, Méliot est décomposé et ne constitue jamais un faisceau de signes parfaitement lisibles.

Or, comme l'a énoncé Philippe Hamon, 'considérer *a priori* le personnage comme *signe*, c'est-à-dire choisir un *point de vue* qui *construit* cet objet en l'intégrant au message défini lui-même comme une communication, comme composé de signes linguistiques [...], cela impliquera que l'analyse reste homogène à son projet et accepte toutes les conséquences méthodologiques qu'il implique'.⁴⁸ À cet égard, Méliot se construit comme un signe protéiforme, alternant, excluant, conjuguant formes et sens.

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48 Hamon 1977: 117.

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REVISITING THE PYLOS EPISODE AND THUCYDIDES' 'BIAS' AGAINST CLEON

By Anastasios Nikolaidis

Summary: The Pylos episode, ending with the capture of almost 300 Spartans who had been cut off on the Sphacteria island, was the first major setback suffered by Sparta during the Peloponnesian war and, at the same time, the first major – and more importantly – unexpected success of Athens, in Peloponnesian territory at that. Without overlooking the military side involved, this paper will primarily focus on the political aspects of this enterprise in an attempt (a) to assess and evaluate Thucydides' attitude to the protagonists of this episode, Cleon, Nicias and Demosthenes, (b) to better understand the historian's political stance and judgement through the vocabulary that he employs, and (c) to show that his notoriously presumed bias against Cleon is poorly substantiated and, insofar as it may occasionally occur, it does not interfere with his respect for historical truth.

Thucydidean scholarship is unanimous, I think, on the importance of the Pylos affair. The Sicilian expedition aside, no other single episode of the war takes up almost one third of a book, and to no other single episode does Thucydides return time and again, however briefly, in three more books.¹ Apart from its very interesting military aspects, this affair provides insights into the character, abilities, and the whole personality of such significant protagonists as Nicias, Cleon and Demosthenes, thus allowing us (a) to assess and evaluate Thucydides' attitude to these men, and (b) to explore the historian's political judgement through some de-

1 From the 135 chapters of book 4, almost all of the first 46 concern the Pylos affair. But see also 5.14.3, 24.2, 34.2, 56.3, 110.2; 6.105.2; 7.18.3, 26.2, 71.7, 86.3.

tails that he stresses or omits as well as through the diction that he employs. But first, let us briefly be reminded of the circumstances that led to the Pylos episode.

After the Athenian commander Demosthenes had somehow fortified Pylos in the spring of 425, the Spartans decided, *inter alia*, to put more than 400 soldiers on Sphacteria, the oblong island that closes the bay and the big harbour opposite the mainland, and block the entrances to it, so that the Athenians would not be able to support the men of their makeshift fort there. The Athenian fleet, however, entered the bay, defeated the Spartans in a decisive sea-battle, and blockaded their soldiers on Sphacteria (4.14). Confronted with this calamity and greatly concerned for the safety of their marooned men, the Spartans sent an embassy to Athens with a general peace offer culminating in a proposal for a formal alliance between the two cities.²

Thucydides bluntly recognizes that his compatriots, now having the upper hand, believed that they could obtain the peace of their choice any time they wished, and so they were greedy for more, as the Spartan envoys had feared they would and had tried to admonish them and talk them out of their avidity;³ toward which, he adds, they were mainly incited by Cleon, a popular leader of that time with exceptional influence upon the multitude (4.21.3: μάλιστα δ' αὐτοὺς ἐνήγε Κλέων ὁ Κλεινέτου, ἀνὴρ δημαγωγὸς κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον ὧν καὶ τῷ πλήθει πιθανώτατος).⁴ The Athenian counter-proposals, therefore, were heavy

2 See 4.17-20, esp. 19.1, and cf. also Ar. *Pax* 1082, and de Romilly 1963: 187.

3 Cf. 4.17.4 and 21.2. *A fortiori*, the Athenians were reaching out for more after they had captured the Spartans of Sphacteria; cf. 4.41.4: οἱ δὲ μειζόνων τε ὠρέγοντο καὶ πολλάκις φοιτῶντων (Spartan envoys kept coming to Athens to solicit peace) αὐτοὺς ἀπράκτους ἀπέπεμπον. See also below n. 9.

4 This description *per se* (as well as 4.22.2: Κλέων δ' ἐνταῦθα πολλὸς ἐνέκειτο [= pressed hard]) is, unwarrantedly in my view, regarded by Woodhead 1960: 311 as an indication of Thuc.'s bias against Cleon. For a politician to exert influence through his persuasiveness is not a fault, and thus *piشانōtatos* is not a derogatory term (*pace* John Finley 1940/1967: 285/154; Westlake 1968: 8; Dover 1973: 36; Kagan 1974: 234 n. 53), but rather a complimentary one; cf. also Hornblower 1991: 420 ('not an unflattering word') and Rhodes 1998: 220. As for δημαγωγός, a *harpax* in Thuc. (plus δημαγωγία in 8.65.2), even though this term was perhaps still free from the sinister connotations it subsequently acquired (see Westlake above), it can hardly be regarded, *pace* Gomme 1956b: 461-62, as a respectable one; the quotation from Ar. *Eq.* 191-93, which Gomme

on the Spartans, yet their envoys agreed to discuss them all the same; not openly and in front of the whole assembly, though, but in a private session with the representatives whom the Athenian assembly would appoint; a quite reasonable request, given that the interests of the Spartan allies were also involved in these talks (4.22.1). Cleon, however, persuaded the Athenians to reject this request and even accused the Spartan envoys of duplicity. The latter eventually realized that the Athenians had no intention to grant their proposals on tolerable conditions and left Athens.⁵ Interestingly, we hear nothing of Nicias in connection with this Spartan embassy, and generally Thucydides' account gives the impression that the Athenian mood was so openly warlike that Cleon simply took advantage of this mood and perhaps exacerbated it even more. This might also explain why Thucydides chose not to provide the Athenian counter-speech to the Spartan proposals; finding, that is, the arguments of the envoys weak and unconvincing – let alone the unbearably didactic tone of their speech which probably made their rejection easier – and Nicias' (?) counter-arguments in favour of accepting the Spartan peace offer not particularly compelling either, Thucydides decided against taking down Cleon's spectacular show of belligerence and his easy public triumph.⁶ Yet, other sources suggest that the situation may not have

himself adduces, seems to suggest the opposite, I think. Cf. also Classen & Steup 1900: 45; Moses Finley 1962: 4-5; 1972: 56, 58, and John Finley 1967: 154-55. At Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.7 *demagōgos* is already a derogatory term.

5 See Kagan's 1974: 231-38 relevant account and cf. Westlake 1968: 65-66.

6 Cf. Cornford 1971: 125 and Hornblower 1996: 170 (Thuc. 'was unwilling to dwell on Cleon's victory in the debate'). Most scholars, on the basis of 4.21.2, 27.2, 5.14.2, believe that Thuc. favoured the acceptance of the Spartan proposals: Adcock 1927: 233-34; Finley 1942: 194-95; de Romilly 1963: 172-77; Westlake 1968: 68-69 and n. 1; Kagan 1974: 232; Rhodes 1998: 220. Yet this does not necessarily mean that Thuc. was convinced by the Spartan arguments, as Gomme 1956b: 460 and Connor 1984: 113 n. 10 point out. It may be worth noting also that 5.14.2 (μετεμέλοντό τε ὅτι μετὰ τὰ ἐν Πύλῳ καλῶς παρασχόν οὐ ξυνέβησαν – 'they regretted not having come to terms [sc. with the Spartans] when a good opportunity arose after the events at Pylos'), may well be an *a posteriori* assessment and, in any case, it reflects the Athenian feelings and mood in 421, not in 425. On the other hand, Marshall's 1984: 20, 28 and 32 view that 'Thucydides really wishes Sparta had won, and regards the Athenian victory [sc. at Pylos-Sphacteria] as *aischron*', is extreme and totally groundless.

been so clear-cut: Plutarch, to begin with, implies that Nicias was in favour of the Spartan peace offer, contrary to Cleon who urged the Athenians (and eventually persuaded them) to reject it (4.22.2).⁷ Then we have a fragment of Philochorus suggesting that the assembly was divided over Cleon's negative recommendation, but the supporters of war prevailed in the end.⁸ Philochorus' fragment in its entirety is indeed somewhat muddled, as Westlake (1968: 69 n. 2) and Hornblower (1996: 177) note, but it cannot be ignored. Aristophanes' *Peace*, produced in 421, might refer to this ambivalent assembly meeting,⁹ and the ancient scholiast here seems to agree with Philochorus' information.¹⁰

- 7 Cf. also Plut. *Nic.* 7.2: ἀπέωσαντο δὲ Κλέωνος ἐναντιωθέντος οὐχ ἥκιστα διὰ Νικίαν· ἐχθρὸς γὰρ ὦν αὐτοῦ, καὶ προθύμως ὀρῶν συμπράττοντα τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις, ἔπεισε τὸν δῆμον ἀποψηφίσασθαι τὰς σπονδὰς (the Athenians 'repulsed [the Spartan embassy] because Cleon, chiefly because of Nicias, spoke against it; for Nicias was his political enemy and, as he saw him zealously cooperating with the Lacedaemonians, persuaded the popular assembly to reject the truce' – transl. Perrin [Loeb]).
- 8 Jacoby 1954: 407 (on 328F128): Κλέωνος δὲ ἀπειπόντος ταῖς διαλύσεσι στασιάσαι λέγεται τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ... ἐνίκησαν δὲ οἱ πολεμεῖν βουλόμενοι. Rhodes 1998: 221 also refers to Philochorus, but regards his information as 'unlikely to be right'.
- 9 Cf. *Pax* 211-19, 665-67 (ἐλθοῦσά φησιν αὐτομάτη μετὰ τὰν Πύλω / σπονδῶν φέρουσα τῇ πόλει κίστην πλέαν ἀποχειροτονηθῆναι τρις ἐν τῆκκλησίᾳ – 'when, after the events at Pylos, she [sc. *Peace*] came here of her own accord offering to the city a basket full of treaties, she was voted down three times in the assembly') and cf. de Romilly 1967: 178 (on 4.21.2), Gomme 1956b: 461 ad loc., and Lewis 1992: 416. See also Ar. *Eq.* 668-74, 794-97, and cf. Neil 1901: 115. Yet Sommerstein 1985: 164 and Olson 1998: 111 hold that the above lines from *Pax* and *Equites* refer to Thuc. 4.41.3-4 and the later pacific attempts of the Spartans. Cf. also Gomme 1956b: 482 and Hornblower 1996: 197.
- 10 Jacoby's remarks (above n. 8) that Thuc. 4.21.2 only seemingly conveys the impression that the mood of the assembly was uniform (cf. also Hornblower 1996: 177) and that 'the report as a whole shows that opinions were divided, and Cleon was obliged to speak twice' are not very cogent. Cleon did speak twice indeed, yet not in this but in the following assembly (4.27-28) and only after he was somehow impelled to accept the command; not because the opinions were divided. Flower 1992: 42-45, 46-47, 49, 56-57 argues that the unclarity over the situation is due to the fact that Thuc. failed to record the assembly that had discussed Demosthenes' request for reinforcements and had voted the Pylos campaign to Nicias. Hornblower 1996: 170 adopts Flower's suggestion, but Gomme's (1956b: 468) explanation at 4.28.3 renders it unnecessary: 'Nicias, as *strategos*, would have good claim to their command' (sc. of the reinforcements that might be sent) and so no special assembly was needed for that; cf. also Classen &

Be that as it may, after the rejection of the Spartan peace proposals, the war was resumed, but concerning the situation at Pylos a stalemate ensued. The Athenian blockade of Sphacteria proved not entirely successful, while the besiegers themselves were also harassed by the scantiness of food and water in an uninhabited and rather barren place. Upon realizing the distress of their army and in view of the winter (which would naturally make things worse), the Athenians repented having rejected the Spartan peace offer (4.27.2: καὶ μετεμέλοντο τὰς σπονδάς οὐ δεξάμενοι),¹¹ and Cleon could easily figure out that it was he whom they were mostly blaming for their current predicament.¹² So, when another assembly met to discuss the situation, he first denied that the conditions in the Athenian camp were so distressful as reported; but, challenged to go and see things for himself, he dismissed this mission as a waste of time and proposed instead that they should immediately send out reinforcements, land on Sphacteria and capture the Spartans there. It was an easy matter, he added, pointing at Nicias, and something that our generals should have already done, if they were real men, and, in any case, this was what he himself would have done, had he been in their place.¹³

Some critics now have overinterpreted, I think, if not misinterpreted, Thucydides in this passage. Hornblower (1996: 186), for instance, commenting on Cleon's realization that the Athenian discontent was being directed against him (naturally of course, since it was he who had thwarted the acceptance of the Spartan peace proposals), adopts Mabel

Steup 1900: 62. Philochorus' fragment suggests, then, that, despite his persuasiveness, Cleon's victory was not so easy as Thuc. allows us to suppose (incidentally, neither in the Mytilenean debate was Cleon in the end persuasive; see 3.49.1).

11 As they also repented for a similar reason at 4.41.3-4 and 5.14.2. Thuc. disagreed and criticized his compatriots for all these rejections of peace which he regarded as a major strategic blunder (see esp. 5.14.2), according to Olson 1998: xxvi and 112. See also de Romilly 1963: 177, 186-87, where she argues that Thuc. gradually changed his views and became more of a pacifist, whereas he initially approved of Pericles' imperialistic policies and his firm opposition to Sparta. But see also n. 6.

12 So also Grote 1872: 247.

13 4.27.5: καὶ ἐς Νικίαν τὸν Νικηράτου στρατηγὸν ὄντα ἀπεσήμαιεν ... ῥάδιον εἶναι παρασκευῆ, εἰ ἄνδρες εἶεν οἱ στρατηγοί, πλεύσαντας λαβεῖν τοὺς ἐν τῇ νήσῳ, καὶ αὐτὸς γ' ἄν ἦρχε, ποιῆσαι τοῦτο. For a similar appeal to manliness cf. 3.14.2 and see also below n. 54.

Lang's (1995) observations on Thucydides' technique to ascribe motives through the use of participles, and regards the use of the participles γνούς, ὄρων, ὠρμημένους below as evidence of Thucydides' arbitrary attribution of motives, and by extension as evidence of his bias against Cleon (4.27.3):¹⁴

Κλέων δὲ γνούς αὐτῶν τὴν ἐς αὐτὸν ὑποψίαν περὶ τῆς κωλύμενης τῆς
 ξυμβάσεως ... 27.4: καὶ γνούς ὅτι ἀναγκασθήσεται ἢ ταῦτ' ἀλέγειν οἷς
 διέβαλλεν ἢ τ' ἀναντία εἰπὼν ψευδῆς φανήσεσθαι, παρήνει τοῖς
 Ἀθηναίοις, ὄρων αὐτοὺς καὶ ὠρμημένους ... στρατεύειν, ὡς χρῆ, ... εἰ
 δὲ δοκεῖ αὐτοῖς ἀληθῆ εἶναι τὰ ἀγγελλλόμενα, πλεῖν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας.

But Cleon, knowing that their suspicions were directed against him because he had prevented the agreement ... 27.4: and realizing now that he would either be obliged to bring the same report as the messengers whose word he was impugning, or, if he contradicted them, be convicted of falsehood, he advised the Athenians, also seeing that they were now somewhat more inclined to send an expedition, that ... if they themselves thought the reports to be true, to send a fleet and fetch the men (transl. Smith [Loeb] slightly modified).

But 'The idea of Cleon confiding his thoughts and plans to Thucydides seems absurd', Lang (1995: 50) argues, Thucydides could not have known what Cleon had in mind, and so by writing 'Κλέων γνούς' and 'Κλέων ὄρων', he arbitrarily ascribes concrete motives to him. Almost thirty years earlier Westlake (1968: 72) also remarked that Thucydides 'tacitly claims to see into the mind of Cleon and to know precisely why he acted as he did at each stage of the [Pylos] debate'. And Woodhead (1960: 313), one of the most eminent admirers of Cleon, made the same diagnosis

14 Hornblower 1996: 185: 'One of Thuc.'s least objective sections'. Cf. also Lewis 1992: 417 ('redolent of bias and dislike'), and Westlake 1968: 70 (Thuc. purposely expatiates on the Pylos episode, because it affords 'the opportunity of underlining the personal failings of Cleon'; cf. also p. 75). Yet Grote 1872: 246-48 and Gomme 1956b: 468 (on 4.27.4) see no bias against Cleon on the part of Thuc. here (and with justice so).

even earlier.¹⁵ To my mind, however, the situation is so clear that no psychologist or Sherlock Holmes is required here to perceive the self-evident; for it was absolutely natural and expected that Cleon should have felt (γνοῦς) the tide of opinion moving against him, after the news about the multiple distress of the Athenian army at Pylos had reached Athens.¹⁶ Thus, Cleon's first, almost instinctive, reaction was to deny the veracity of the report, then, challenged to go and inspect the situation himself, he realized (γνοῦς) that the report might be true after all and so he refused to go, while seeing (ὄρῶν) in the sequel that the Athenians were inclined to send an expedition anyhow (ὄρμημένους ... στρατεύειν),¹⁷ he urged them to do this right away; exactly as he had inflamed their belligerent mood one month or so earlier with the Spartan embassy pleading for peace.¹⁸ Almost anyone present at that assembly could deduce all this, regardless of his feelings or opinion about Cleon; logical deductions after all are legitimate and do not necessarily indicate prejudice,¹⁹ and if Thucydides was present at that assembly, as it is very probable that he was,²⁰ he was an eyewitness of Cleon's reactions and the successive shifting of his position and simply described them; he did not need to discover and

15 Similarly Dover 1973: 31 and Kagan 2009: 133. But see below n. 24.

16 See also Lewis 1992: 417.

17 Why were the Athenians now inclined to send an expedition? Apparently because, contrary to Cleon's (probably) sham protests (see below pp. 139 and n. 63), they believed the messengers' reports from Pylos (4.27.3: οὐ τάληθῆ ἔφη [sc. Cleon] λέγειν τοὺς ἐξαγγέλλοντας. Παραينوῦντων δὲ τῶν ἀφιγμένων, εἰ μὴ σφίσι πιστεύουσι, κατασκόπους τινὰς πέμψαι...), who in all likelihood must also have requested reinforcements; see below n. 66.

18 Cf. 4.21.2-3 and see de Romilly 1963: 203 with n. 1 and 174 with n. 2. The chronological sequence of the main Pylos events, as can be gathered from 4.39.1-2 and other calculations is the following: Late May-beginning of June: The Athenian victory in the bay and the start of Sphacteria blockade (Wilson 1979: 126; Gomme 1956b: 478: not earlier than May 25-30; cf. also p. 719). First fortnight of June: Spartan envoys in Athens unsuccessfully soliciting peace. Middle July: The assembly meeting that decides to send Cleon to Pylos (Gomme 478: c. July 28). Beginning of August: The final victory and the surrender of the Spartans (August 1, according to Wilson: 126; August 5-10, according to Gomme: 478 and 487). On these chronological estimates cf. also Rhodes 1998: 232 (on 39.1).

19 See, for instance, Westlake 1968: 79 n. 2.

20 Cf. Woodhead 1960: 315 and Westlake 1968: 73 n. 1.

attribute motives, because Cleon's intentions and corresponding behaviour unfolded in the broad daylight and were therefore public and visible to all. As Westlake (1968: 73) remarks, Thucydides "may well be perfectly right in his interpretation of each move by Cleon throughout this episode; the available evidence certainly does not provide adequate grounds for believing that any of his interpretations must be wrong", regardless of the fact that one could also argue for different interpretations, as Westlake himself does in the sequel.²¹ *Pace*, therefore, the opinion of the scholars who defend Cleon and find fault with Thucydides here, I think that Gomme's (1956b: 468) reading of the same passage is more trenchant and right on the mark: 'There was no question', he notes (on 4.27.4), 'of Cleon's leading the people or opposing them; he observed which way the wind was blowing before making his proposal'.²²

The foregoing observations are not intended to question the usefulness of Lang's study; for participial motivation is indeed a feature of Thucydides' narrative technique, as Lang 1995: 53 has convincingly established. Yet the motivation of an action, whether emerging from mere observation or from elementary reasoning, is often fairly obvious and does not necessarily presuppose direct factual knowledge or reading the doer's mindset, as Lang (1995: 50-51) seems to postulate. If either of the latter was inescapably required, passing judgements would become almost impossible in many cases; and insofar as there are cases where the motives of individuals are entirely obvious or may legitimately be inferred from their recorded actions or from the situation in which they

21 Sure, Westlake 1968: 73-74 notes that there are more interpretations of Cleon's behaviour, but this does not prove that the historian's one was dictated by his bias against Cleon. All interpretations are subjective after all (see Westlake's protest on p. 73n. 1), but their trustworthiness is tested on the criterium of their logical coherence and plausibility; see Westlake 1968: 79n. 2.

22 Cf. also Marshall 1984: 21. That Cleon's proposal was 'eminently sensible', as Gomme above adds, is a completely different matter, of course.

were involved or from subsequent developments, as Westlake convincingly argues elsewhere,²³ I cannot see why Cleon's motives on the episode above may not belong to one of these cases.²⁴

However – to return to the second Pylos debate – no decision has been taken as yet and Cleon faces, during the same assembly meeting, a second and far more important challenge. At first, he was asked, as we saw, to go and check for himself if the reports from Pylos were true, but this challenge he smartly eluded by overriding the desire of the multitude to send an expedition; yet now that Nicias, whom he had practically called a coward (see n. 13), offers to resign his command and urges him, along with the crowd of Cleon's own supporters, we may guess, to take any force he

- 23 For motives deducible from recorded actions see Westlake 1989: 201, 205, 210; deducible from the context or pertinent situations see 201, 204, 222n. 24; deducible from subsequent developments see Westlake 1947: 28 with n. 1; cf. also 4.79.2 and 83.1, 6. Elsewhere Westlake 1962: 283-84 maintains that Thuc. does not as a rule 'give information about the motives and feelings of individuals based upon mere surmise or even upon inference from his knowledge of their character' (with the exception of Cleon and Nicias though; see id 1980: 333 n. 3 and 1968: 69-85, esp. 83 and 93-6). He must be right in most cases, but since the sources of Thuc.'s information are not always verifiable, the possibility that some of his judgements may rely on mere surmise or inference from knowledge of the character of the personage concerned cannot be ruled out; see also id. 1989: 201, 207; Dover 1973: 31, and also next note.
- 24 Another source for discerning motives and intentions is good information: with reference to the moderate terms which Brasidas offered to the people of Amphipolis, for example (4.105.2, 108.2), Westlake 1962: 283 believes that they were moderate because the Spartan commander had heard about Thucydides' mining interests in the area and feared that his arrival with ships from Thasos would stiffen the will of the Amphipolitans to resist (4.105.1); this, Westlake argues, must be 'an authentic report of what Brasidas thought', as our historian was 'remarkably well-informed about the motives and feelings of Brasidas on many occasions' (see p. 284 n. 2 and cf. Westlake 1980: 334). Yet it is not at all certain that this information was derived directly from Brasidas (see p. 333 n. 3 and 339: 'Direct contact between Thucydides and Brasidas seems unlikely'; cf. also Westlake 1989: 205; apparently a change of mind after 1968: 148), whom Thuc. may have met and questioned while in exile (so Adcock 1927: 243 and Proctor in Westlake 1989: 205 n. 14). True, Thuc. to be sure never inquired of Cleon about his motives and intentions, as he might have done with Brasidas; but why, if his own judgement and percipience as an eyewitness at that crucial assembly of 425 were not enough, could he not have been informed about them through Demosthenes, a close collaborator of Cleon and one of Thuc.'s sources (see below p. 150 and n. 65), or some other friend or supporter of Cleon?

wanted, sail to Pylos, and try to do better himself, Cleon could not evade any longer despite his initial refusal.²⁵ Thus, not only does he accept the command, but also he promises, apparently to everyone's astonishment that, within the following twenty days he will either capture and bring the Spartan garrison of Sphacteria to Athens alive or slay them all on the spot; and this without taking a single Athenian soldier with him, except some light troops that happened to be in Athens at that time and 400 archers from other places (4.28.4).²⁶ Cleon's frivolous promise (κουφολογία), so unnecessarily specific,²⁷ even made the Athenians laugh, Thucydides tells us, but the sound-minded (*sōphrones*) among them took pleasure in the thought that they would profit from either eventuality:

25 4.28.2-4: τὸ μὲν πρῶτον οἰόμενος αὐτὸν λόγῳ μόνον ἀφιέναι, ἐτοιμος ἦν, γνοὺς δὲ τῶ ὄντι παραδωσειόντα ἀνεχώρει καὶ οὐκ ἔφη αὐτὸς ἀλλ' ἐκείνον στρατηγεῖν ... 28.3: οἱ δέ, ... ὅσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ Κλέων ὑπέφευγε τὸν πλοῦν καὶ ἐξανεχώρει τὰ εἰρημένα, τόσῳ ἐπεκελεύοντο τῷ Νικίᾳ παραδιδόναι τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἐκεῖνῳ ἐπεβόων πλεῖν· 28.4: ὥστε οὐκ ἔχων ὅπως τῶν εἰρημένων ἔτι ἐξαπαλλαγῆ, ὑφίσταται τὸν πλοῦν. One might read the above scene as a duel of bluffing wits: Cleon offends Nicias, but does not expect to go to Pylos instead of him; Nicias offers the command to Cleon, but does not expect him to accept it. (I owe this remark to a relevant point in the report of the anonymous referee).

26 Cf. also below p. 139 and nn. 63 and 65.

27 Κουφολογία is the light or empty or thoughtless talk ('*levitas verborum*', according to Bétant's 1843-47 Lexicon; 'propos étourdis', according to de Romilly 1967: 21, a consistent manifestation of Cleon's vanity (κουφότης) in general (see Plutarch's example of it at *Nic.* 7.6-7). On the *braggadocio* and irresponsibility of Cleon's promise see Lewis 1992: 418 and Rhodes 1998: 227. Thuc. calls it mad (μανιώδης) at 4.39.3, and Gomme 1956b: 479 rightly explains that the promise was mad not because it was most unlikely to be fulfilled *per se*, but to be fulfilled within a fixed time-limit in the midst of military operations. Cf. also the ancient scholiast ad loc. (Hude 1927: 249: μανιώδης· ἀντὶ τοῦ ἢ περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος προπετῆς ἀπόφασις). For Grote 1872: 260-61, however, Cleon's promise was not at all presumptuous, but, on the contrary, 'a reasonable and even a modest anticipation of the future'. Similarly Kagan 1974: 244 and 247 n. 99. As for the 20 days time-limit, it was not tight, according to Wilson 1979: 124-25 and, as Vlachos 1970: 130 put it, 'une fois l'opération engagée, elle ne pouvait être que très rapidement menée et c'est sur cette donnée que table, fort justement, Cléon'.

they would either get rid of Cleon, which they rather expected, or Cleon would indeed manage to capture the Spartans of Sphacteria for them.²⁸

George Grote was furious with the aforesaid *sōphrones* and established a school by proclaiming their conduct a treacherous one. Because, as he puts it (p. 251):

‘Of all the parties here concerned, those whose conduct is the most unpardonably disgraceful are Nicias and his oligarchical supporters; who force a political enemy into the supreme command against his own strenuous protest,²⁹ persuaded that he will fail so as to compromise the lives of many soldiers and the destinies of the state on an important emergency – but satisfying themselves with the idea that they shall bring him to ruin.’³⁰

And (p. 250):

‘...while his [sc. Cleon’s] political adversaries (Nicias among them) are deplorably timid, ignorant and reckless of the public interest; seeking only to turn the existing disappointment and dilemma into a party-opportunity for ruining him’.

This approach, which has largely been adopted by most modern scholars, is, in my view, another case of over-interpretation of what Thucydides actually says, no matter if one agrees or disagrees with the historian’s opinion here. First, we ought to observe that the Athenian assembly did not comprise only the *sōphrones*, namely Nicias’ oligarchical supporters according to Grote;³¹ Cleon’s supporters were also there, of course, and

28 4.28.5: Τοῖς δὲ Ἀθηναίοις ἐνέπεσε μὲν τι καὶ γέλωτος τῇ κουφολογίᾳ αὐτοῦ, ἀσμένους δ’ ὁμῶς ἐγίνετο τοῖς σώφροσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, λογιζομένοις δυοῖν ἀγαθοῖν τοῦ ἐτέρου τεύξεσθαι, ἢ Κλέωνος ἀπαλλαγῆσεσθαι, ὃ μᾶλλον ἤλπιζον, ἢ σφαλεῖσι γνώμης Λακεδαιμονίους σφίσι χειρώσεσθαι.

29 But for this strenuous protest see also below n. 62.

30 Cf. also Dover 1973: 37; Westlake 1968: 70 speaks more generally of ‘the irresponsibility of the Athenian assembly’, not only of the *sōphrones*.

31 According to Plut. *Nic.* 2.2, Nicias was primarily supported by the rich and notable as an opposing force to Cleon’s repulsive brazenness (ὑπὸ τῶν πλουσίων καὶ γνωρίμων ἀντίταγμα ... Κλέωνος βδελυρίαν καὶ τόλμαν), but was held in some repute already

most probably outnumbered the *sōphrones*; yet their own responsibility and share in the decision taken is not criticized by the denouncers of the latter. The argument that Cleon's supporters believed that their leader would succeed does not necessarily mean that his opponents considered the feasibility of the operation impossible, irrespective of how they assessed Cleon's chances. Graves (1884: 168), for instance, remarks that these Athenians, the *sōphrones*, 'may have considered the enterprise feasible, but were not unwilling that its risks should fall upon Cleon, while they knew that Demosthenes would be at hand to advise and direct'; and certainly, we may add, the destinies of Athens were hardly compromised on this occasion, as Grote's exaggerated rhetoric wants us to believe. After all, Grote himself argues that this operation, given the enormous military inequality between the two armies, must have been fairly easy and that failure would imply 'an idea not only of superhuman power in the Lacedaemonian hoplites, but a disgraceful incapacity on the part of Demosthenes and the assailants' (260). But if so, neither the lives of many soldiers nor the destinies of the state would actually be compromised, as the outcome of the operation bore out after all.³²

Further, there is nothing in Thucydides suggesting that the conduct of Nicias and his oligarchical supporters, the *sōphrones* of 4.28.5, is unpardonably disgraceful, and nowhere in Thucydides is Nicias charged with cowardice. But Grote as well as those who agree with him all of a sudden choose to part company with Thucydides at this juncture and follow instead Plutarch's account, an author who writes five centuries later and whose historical acumen and judgement, incidentally, they hardly admire otherwise. In any case, Plutarch alone writes that Nicias resigned

since Pericles' time (ἦν μὲν ἔν τινι λόγῳ καὶ Περικλέους ζῶντος), and well-liked by the common people too, who supported his ambitions (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν δῆμον εἶχεν εὖνον καὶ συμφιλοτιμούμενον).

32 Cf. 4.38.5: Αθηναίων δὲ οὐ πολλοὶ διεφθάρησαν (see Gomme 1956b: 478). For the relative easiness of the operation and perfect feasibility of Demosthenes' plan and Cleon's promise see also Kagan 1974: 244-47 and n. 99. However, even recently Tompkins 2017: 106, discussing 4.28.5 (n. 28), wonders 'how ... could "prudent" men hope for disaster'.

his command to Cleon out of cowardice and regards this act as disgraceful and detrimental to the interests of Athens.³³ Yet, no other ancient source supports this assessment and, more importantly, we do know – and we cannot overlook this fact – that in the *Life of Nicias* Plutarch, the biographer, has his own axe to grind, and that his *Nicias* must be read along with his pair, *Crassus*, if we want a thorough and trustworthy evaluation of the two men; and these are factors that may offer another explanation of Plutarch's attitude toward Nicias, as I have argued in detail elsewhere.³⁴ Besides, the fact that some years later Nicias offers to resign also his Sicily command, a far more important assignment,³⁵ and this despite his supposed disgrace in the Pylos affair, allows perhaps the suspicion at least that what Plutarch considered to be disgraceful five centuries after the Pylos episode – and *a fortiori* what modern era regards as such – might not coincide after all with the pertinent viewpoint of most people in those times and those circumstances. For as we shall see below, Nicias was not at all disgraced on account of his resigning the Pylos command. Conclusion: Plutarch's evidence here cannot, I believe, annul or thrust aside that of Thucydides.

However, what the historian says at 4.28.5 (n. 28) does indeed give rise to several queries and is open to various interpretations. What is, for instance, the ultimate meaning of ἀπαλλαγῆσθαι in that context? Did the

33 Plut., *Nic.* 8.2: Οὐ γὰρ ἀσπίδος ῥῆψις, ἀλλ' αἴσχιόν τι καὶ χεῖρον ἐδόκει τὸ **δειλία** τὴν στρατηγίαν ἀποβαλεῖν ἐκουσίως ... 8.5: καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἔβλαπεν οὐ μικρὰ τῷ Κλέωνι τοσοῦτον προσγενέσθαι δόξης ἑάσας καὶ δυνάμεως ... ('Nicias was thought not merely to have cast away his shield, but to have done something far more disgraceful and base in voluntarily throwing up his command out of cowardice ... and besides, he wrought no little harm to the city in allowing Cleon to acquire such a high reputation and political power...') -- Perrin's transl. [Loeb] with slight modifications); cf. also *Comp. Nic.-Cr.* 3.1,3,5.

34 See Nikolaidis 1988: 331-33.

35 Cf. 6.23.4: ταῦτα γὰρ τῇ τε ξυμπάσῃ πόλει βεβαιοτάτα ἡγοῦμαι καὶ ἡμῖν τοῖς στρατευσομένοις σωτήρια. εἰ δὲ τῷ ἄλλως δοκεῖ, παρήμιμ αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχήν ('For these precautions I regard as not only surest for the whole state but also as safeguards for us who are to go on the expedition. But if it seem otherwise to anyone, I yield the command to him' – transl. Smith [Loeb]). Pace Rhodes 1998: 227, his reference to 7.15.1 as a similar case is unfortunate; Nicias does not actually resign his command there, but only asks the Athenians to replace him because he is sick and cannot perform his duties.

sōphrones expect Cleon to get killed or simply to fail in carrying the operation through? If he only failed, why would they necessarily get rid of him? More importantly, on what grounds did they believe that Cleon had more chances of being killed or failing than of succeeding? I shall discuss these questions in turn, but first I will try to address, opening a parenthesis at this point, another crucial question: who were these *sōphrones*?

Despite the etymological transparency of the term σώφρων (σῶς, sound + φρήν, mind), Thucydides' use of the words *sōphrōn* and *sōphrosynē* is very complex because, following the practice of the Sophists, he too played with several possible meanings or shades of meaning according to the context.³⁶ Helen North (1966: 100-1) astutely argued that the contrast between Athens and Sparta, one of the major themes in his *History*, often takes the form of a contrast between rival conceptions of *sōphrosynē*. Extreme though this view may initially sound, it is very well documented. *Sōphrosynē* in its primary sense arising from the etymology of the word (i.e. sound-mindedness),³⁷ is a Spartan quality *par excellence*;³⁸ and so are such qualities as orderliness (εὐταξία), propriety or decorum (εὐκοσμον, κοσμιότης, αἰδώς), quiet or peacefulness (ἡσυχία), abstention from politics (ἀπραγμοσύνη), slowness in action and procrastination (βραδυτής, μέλλησις) out of concern for safety (ἀσφάλεια) and so forth, as natural consequences of sound-mindedness or prudence.³⁹ The Spartans themselves regard the quality of *sōphrosynē* as peculiarly their own (see nn. 38 and 41), their allies openly recognize this fact and appeal to it,⁴⁰ and thus democratic Athens, as opposed to oligarchic

36 See Georgiadou 1988: 140, 142, Gomme 1956a: 301, and more generally North 1966: 100-16.

37 According to Bétant's 1843-47 Thucydidean Lexicon, the two primary connotations of *sōphrosynē* are *sapientia* and *prudentia* (the other two *moderatio* and *modestia*).

38 Cf. 1.84.2-3. Also 1.79.2, North 1966: 102-4, Edmunds 1975: 74 and 79.

39 See, for instance, 1.32.4-5, 69.4-5, 70.4, 8, 71.1-4, 84.1-3, 124.1-2, 8.1.3. See also North 1966: 101-4, and cf. [Arist.], *IV* 1250b12: παρέπεται δὲ τῆ σωφροσύνη εὐταξία, κοσμιότης, αἰδώς, εὐλάβεια (caution).

40 See, e.g., 1.68.1 and 3.59.1 with Gomme 1956: vol. 2, 345. See also Georgiadou 1988: 142-43, 192-93 and North 1966: 102.

Sparta, is not very keen on laying claim to this quality.⁴¹ The words *sōphrōn* and *sōphrosynē* are missing from all Pericles' speeches (the terms *metrios* and *metriotēs* are used instead),⁴² and Thucydides never calls Pericles *sōphrōn*,⁴³ although in his celebrated portrait of him at 2.65 he describes him exactly as such (2.65.5):⁴⁴

Ὅσον τε γὰρ χρόνον προύστη τῆς πόλεως ἐν τῇ εἰρήνῃ, **μετρίως** ἐξηγεῖτο καὶ **ἀσφαλῶς** διεφύλαξεν αὐτήν ... 7: ... **ἡσυχάζοντάς** τε ... καὶ ἀρχὴν μὴ ἐπικτωμένους ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ μηδὲ τῇ πόλει κινδυνεύοντας ἔφη περιέσεσθαι.

For so long as he presided over the affairs of the state in time of peace he pursued **a moderate policy** and kept the city **in safety** ... 7: ... for he had told the Athenians that if they would maintain **a defensive policy** ... and not seek to extend their sway during the war or do anything to imperil the existence of the state, they would prove superior (transl. Smith [Loeb])

In view of the above, it is difficult, I think, to dissociate the *sōphrones* of 4.28.5 from the political dimension of the term, in other words, to avoid their connection with aristocratic principles and oligarchic-sympathisers in Athens. Gomme (1956b: 470) and other scholars deny this and maintain that the word *sōphrones* here bears only its primary and generic

41 For *sōphrosynē* as a Spartan and a more or less oligarchic (aristocratic) quality see n. 38 and further 8.1.3, 24.4, 53.3, 64.5. See also North 1966: 112 ('*Sōphrōn* is the operative word denoting oligarchy'); Edmunds 1975: 76 and n. 17 *ibid.* ('an oligarchic slogan'), and cf. Gomme 1956a: 300 and 379 on 3.37.3 and 3.82.8; Dover 1973: 37; Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1981: 159-61; Georgiadiou 1988: 143-46; Hornblower 1991: 77 (on 1.32.4), 124-5 (on 1.79.2), 486 (on 3.82.8); Tompkins 2017: 106; see also Balot 2017: 331-32.

42 See, for instance, 1.76.4, 77.2, 2.65.5 and cf. North 1966: 102, 104-6, and Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1981: 160. Cf. also n. 37.

43 But in Isocr. 16.28 Pericles is praised as *σοφρονέστατον, δικαιοτάτον καὶ σοφώτατον τῶν πολιτῶν*, while Aristotle describes him as *φρόνιμος* (*Eth. Nic.* 1140b8).

44 Thus, the aforementioned concomitant qualities of *sōphrosynē* are also shared by the Athenians at times; cf. Georgiadiou 1988: 142-43, 195-96. For Thucydides' own views about *sōphrosynē* and its political significance, see North 1966: 113 (8.24.4-5; 53.3; 64.5; 97.2).

meaning and thus simply refers to the sensible and prudent men of the assembly at large. That these sensible men might have laughed at Cleon's frivolous promise is perfectly understandable, but why would the same persons have looked forward to his ruin, whether physical or political, if a factional or political more broadly antithesis was not also simmering? On the other hand, some critics believe that the use of the term *sōphrones* here is ironic, given the successful outcome of the Sphacteria enterprise and the fulfillment of Cleon's promise.⁴⁵ Yet, this reading is not particularly convincing either. For, if the use of *sōphrones* here is ironic, it must be self-ironic, because Thucydides, who calls Cleon's promise mad, as we shall see (4.39.3), would certainly have included himself among those *sōphrones*.⁴⁶ Thucydides now does occasionally make ironic remarks – he often sneers, for example, at the religiosity of the Spartans which he regards as specious,⁴⁷ but I can find no instance where he sneers at himself.

Here the parenthesis on *sōphrosynē* in Thucydides closes and we may proceed to the other questions which the historian's description at 4.28.5 engenders. In what sense did the *sōphrones* expect to get rid of Cleon?

45 Cf., e.g., Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1981: 160, Babut 1986: 73, Georgiadou 1988: 144, and more recently Flower 1992: 56 and Tompkins 2017: 106. However, Hornblower 1996: 188 rightly, in my view, denies the ironic dimension of the *sōphrones* here.

46 This was Gomme's opinion too (1956b: 469: 'Thucydides doubtless reflected that he had been one of this group of 'sensible men' at that time'); see also Rhodes: 1998: 227, but Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1981:160 seem to disagree; and so does Flower 1992: 56, who dissociates Thucydides from the *sōphrones* above.

47 Finley 1942: 311-12. For another ironic remark of Thuc. (Cleon being the butt) see 5.7.3, but on the whole 'irony is not a characteristic of the Thucydidean narrative', as Westlake 1960: 393 with n. 34 rightly observes. On the contrary, Connor 1984: 36 n. 36 sees irony in many passages of the *History*, on the basis that the author knows that the reality eventually contradicted or conflicted with what a character had expected or affirmed or simply said on a certain occasion (see his 'irony' index on p. 264). But these instances are not necessarily ironical, in my view (cf. also Hornblower's 2008: 211 criticism on 5.82.5); nor is 6.23.3, *pace* Hornblower 2008: 359, while at 3.83.8 (ἀριστοκρατίας σώφρονος προτιμήσει), *pace* Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1981:160, there is no irony at all (see Gomme 1956a: 379) and, if there is, it refers to the noun *aristokratia*, not to the adjective *sōphron* (see Hornblower 1991: 486 on 3.82.8).

Could they really have thought it more likely that Cleon would be killed⁴⁸ in a comparatively easy operation (see n. 32) or is what we have here simply an inadvertent expression of wishful thinking on the part of Thucydides? More on this shortly. The evidence, on the other hand, from the *Knights* of Aristophanes, produced soon after the events of Pylos and taken within the whole context of this play, appears to suggest the political rather than the physical ruin of Cleon;⁴⁹ thus, it is perhaps safer to take ἀπαλλαγῆσθαι in its general meaning and suppose that, if Cleon failed, as was rather expected, his disgrace would be so great, especially after his silly and boastful promise (see n. 27), that it would automatically put him out of the political arena once and for all. This is how the *sōphrones* may have seen things, as other critics also believe.⁵⁰ However, the political career of Nicias who was discredited – if only superficially, as it seems – by Cleon’s success, did not suffer any setback: as soon as Cleon returns triumphantly with the Spartan prisoners to Athens, it is Nicias who, as elected *stratēgos*, pursues with yet more vigour the war against the Lacedaemonians (4.42.1). Moreover, one might also question whether Cleon’s political power was enhanced commensurably to his spectacular success. Plutarch surely maintains that it was,⁵¹ and the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, so far as the evidence from a play can fully be entrusted as historically accurate, suggests (581-94) that Cleon was elected *stratēgos* in the following year.⁵² However, Thucydides does not mention this, and indeed the only mention he makes of Cleon in office

48 So Thibaudet 1922: 36; de Romilly 1963: 156; Woodhead 1960: 314; Baldwin 1968: 214.

49 Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 973-76: ἡδιστον φάος ἡμέρας / ἔσται τοῖς παροῦσι καὶ / τοῖσι δεῦρ’ ἀφικνουμένοις, / ἢν Κλέων ἀπόληται (Sweetest will the bright daylight be / for both those already in town / and those who are to come / if Cleon gets lost). But this comedy was staged in 424 while Cleon was still alive.

50 Cf. Classen & Steup 1900: vol. 4, 64. ‘indem Cleon, wenn sein Versprechen sich nicht erfüllte, jedenfalls seine politische Rolle ausgespielt haben würde’. See also Grote 1872: 251.

51 See *Nic.* 8.5 (above n. 33) and cf. also Ar. *Eq.* 280, 702, 709, 766, 1404 (all referring to Cleon’s free meals at the *Prytaneion*).

52 So Dover 1968: lxxxii and 174 (on l. 582); Westlake 1968: 61; Kagan 1974: 250, 260 and n. 1; Mitchell 1991: 171 and 188.

again is with regard to the Amphipolis expedition in 422.⁵³ That Thucydides suppressed Cleon's election as *stratēgos* in 424 – a fact that could easily be verified or disproved – due to his bias and antipathy toward him is not at all convincing and, in any case, Gomme (1956b: 506, 526-27) is particularly meticulous on this matter and gives very plausible reasons why Cleon could not have been one of the ten generals in 424.

Finally, were the *sōphrones* justified in expecting that Cleon's command at Pylos would probably lead to his physical or political extermination? If the able and resourceful Demosthenes, the commander in charge of the operations there, had already unsuccessfully attempted a landing on Sphacteria, the Athenians would perhaps have had some grounds for believing that Cleon could not fare any better. Such an attempt, however, had not taken place, according to Thucydides' account: once the Lacedaemonian proposals for peace, after their mishap in Sphacteria, had been turned down and the envoys went back to Sparta (4.17-23.1), the war was resumed, but it was trench warfare, so to speak, with no party gaining or losing anything substantial: the Spartans kept ineffectually assailing the Athenian fortress at Pylos, and the Athenians kept sailing round Sphacteria, so that the entrapped Spartan contingent might not be able to escape. Cleon, however, probably in some collaboration, not necessarily secret, with Demosthenes, as we shall see, proposes now something quite different: immediate and drastic action. He reproves the Athenians for needless dallying and urges them to invade the island and capture the Spartans. This easy business, he alleges, tauntingly pointing at Nicias, our generals should have already accomplished, if they were real men,⁵⁴ and this was, in any case, what he himself would have done, had he been in command (4.27.5).

What follows is well-known: Nicias, feeling gravely insulted by Cleon's insinuation of cowardice, offers to relinquish the command to him so that he may try his own way. But he does so – and this point is as a rule suppressed – only after the people of the assembly, the *dēmos*, with

53 See also Grote's (1872: 369) remark to the same effect: Cleon 'obtained no command during this immediately succeeding period' [sc. after his achievement at Pylos].

54 For the added 'real' in the translation (4.27.5 in n. 13) see Rhodes 1998: 226, Kagan 2009: 132, and note that such appeals to masculinity are already known from Homer: cf. *Il.* 5.529, 6.112 etc. See also Eur. *El.* 693.

shouts challenged Cleon to sail to Pylos himself, since this operation seemed so easy to him.⁵⁵ As Robert Connor (1984: 116) rightly remarks, ‘almost any Greek male would be outraged by such an insult and challenge his critic to do better’. Plutarch, however, and several modern scholars have severely criticized Nicias’ conduct here, regarding it as tantamount to treason, since he offered the command to someone without military experience and of whose failure he was certain.⁵⁶ But there is no evidence whatsoever that Nicias believed that Cleon would certainly fail, much though Thucydides would doubtless have included him among the *sōphrones* of that assembly. One might also with reason suppose that Nicias gave up the command because he wanted either to compromise Cleon by calling his bluff or, taking into account the stalemate at Sphacteria, to give him in earnest the opportunity to try his own way and do some notable service to the city.⁵⁷ Plutarch, after all, who is so critical of Nicias in this matter, clearly allows this possibility, whereas several modern scholars ignore his evidence here, and affirm that Nicias believed Cleon to be incompetent.⁵⁸ On what evidence? Plutarch does not say such a thing, for what we read in the *Nicias-Crassus Comparison* is clearly the opinion of Plutarch and not of Nicias;⁵⁹ and Thucydides himself, despite his prejudice against Cleon, makes no negative remark about Cleon’s strategic abilities before Amphipolis. In the final analysis, what options did Nicias really have before him after Cleon’s offensive innuendoes? He must either act on his prodding and sail to Pylos himself or do

55 See 4.28.1: Ὁ δὲ Νικίας τῶν τε Ἀθηναίων τι ὑποθορυβησάντων ἐς τὸν Κλέωνα, ὃ τι οὐ καὶ νῦν πλεῖ, εἰ ῥάδιον γε αὐτῷ φαίνεται, καὶ ἅμα ὄρων αὐτὸν ἐπιτιμῶντα, ἐκέλευεν...τὸ ἐπὶ σφῶς εἶναι ἐπιχειρεῖν. Cf. Plut. *Nic.* 7.3: ...τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις εἰπεῖν παρέστη· ‘τί δ’ οὐχὶ καὶ νῦν αὐτὸς σὺ πλεῖς ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας;’ Upon which Nicias offered to relinquish his command for him; see n. 59.

56 Cf., for instance, Grote 1872: 251 and Vlachos 1970: 106: ‘Une telle attitude frise la trahison’. For Plutarch’s evidence see above n. 33.

57 Cf. Plut. *Nic.* 7.4: Ὁ τε Νικίας ἀναστὰς ἐξίστατο τῆς ἐπὶ Πύλον στρατηγίας αὐτῷ, καὶ λαμβάνειν ὀπόσην βούλεται δύναμιν ἐκέλευσε, καὶ μὴ θρασύνεσθαι λόγοις ἀκινδύνοις, ἀλλ’ ἔργον τι τῇ πόλει παρασχεῖν ἄξιον σπουδῆς.

58 See, for instance, Woodhead 1960: 314 and Vlachos 1970: 107.

59 Cf. *Nic.-Crass. Comp.* 3.5: ... τῇ Κλέωνος ἀπειρία καὶ θρασύτητι...στρατηγίαν ἐμπειρίας ἄκρας δεομένην παραδιδούς (‘handed over [sc. Nicias] to the inexperience and rashness of Cleon... a command requiring the utmost experience’ – Perrin’s transl. [Loeb]); cf. also *Nic.* 8.5 (n. 33).

what he actually did, in the belief that either Cleon was bluffing (in which case he would be ridiculed, should he refuse the command) or that his plan (Demosthenes' plan in fact) might indeed precipitate the surrender of the Spartans. In any case, to carry out Cleon's proposals himself would not be so honourable after he had been openly accused of cowardice, and in those circumstances, even if he were successful, part of his success would with justice be attributed to Cleon who had recommended that course of action.

It appears, as I see things, that Thucydides' text clearly suggests that in that assembly over the Pylos expedition Nicias tried to disparage Cleon by calling his bluff, in other words, by demonstrating the vanity of his challenge; so clearly that it prevents us from contemplating the possibility that Cleon with his bizarre behaviour might actually have tricked Nicias into handing the Pylos command to him.⁶⁰ Recently, Geoffrey Hawthorn (2014: 113) does not exactly revive the well-known theory that wants Cleon to be secretly collaborating with Demosthenes to this effect,⁶¹ but, as he puts it, Cleon 'may have engineered the confrontation

60 Note that Nicias did not quit his generalship, namely the office to which he had been elected; he only allowed Cleon to command this specific campaign; cf. 4.28.3: Νικίας...ἐξίστατο τῆς ἐπὶ Πύλῳ ἀρχῆς (so also the ancient scholiast [Hude 1927: 245: ἐξίστατο: παρεχώρει]; cf. Mitchell 1991: 188 and Flower 1992: 42). In other words, Cleon's role in Pylos was somewhat unofficial from the military point of view, because the actual commander there was Demosthenes, even though he was not an elected *stratēgos* either; so Grote 1872: 369, Gomme 1956b: 438; Westlake 1968: 107; Connor 1984: 108. More recently, however, the dominant view has been that Demosthenes was a general-elect in the spring of 425 bound to officially enter office in the following mid-summer (see Kagan 1974: 220; Hornblower 1996: 152; Rhodes 1998: 207-8). Yet if these critics are right, the somewhat scorning attitude of the other two generals towards Demosthenes (see 4.3 and cf. Westlake and Kagan above) is not easily understood and rather seems to militate against their view. On the other hand, Strassler 1990: 111-12, argues that the generals were not that contemptuous of Demosthenes (they reassured him that they would come later to help him; see 111 n. 4), but he is least convincing.

61 Cf., e.g., Woodcock 1928: 103; Westlake 1968: 72n. 1; Connor 1984: 110, 116; Mitchell 1991: 173 and n. 7.

to enhance his own reputation'.⁶² Indeed, Cleon's conduct, after he had secured the command, in combination with his promise to capture or slaughter the entrapped Spartans, leaves this possibility wide open. Gomme (1956b: 469) remarks here: 'Cleon's immediate demand for light-armed troops shows that he already had a good idea of what was wanted at Pylos'.⁶³ I fully endorse this comment, but I would like to advance it to its logical conclusion: is it reasonable for one to imagine that Cleon, as soon as he was given the command, without having been to Pylos before, without knowing the terrain there, and with no military experience till then (as far as Thucydides allows us to know), should have demanded to take with him a specific military force (peltasts and archers), without being in some contact and understanding with Demosthenes, the commander of the Athenian army at Pylos and the man who organized and directed all the operations there?⁶⁴ It was Demosthenes, after all, the man whom he immediately chose as his fellow-commander for this enterprise, exactly because he had heard of his plans to land on Sphacteria; that much at least is recorded by Thucydides (4.29.1-2:... τῶν τε ἐν Πύλῳ στρατηγῶν ἓνα προσελόμενος, Δημοσθένη, ... πυνθανόμενος τὴν ἀπόβασιν αὐτὸν ἐς τὴν νῆσον διανοεῖσθαι).⁶⁵

62 Similarly Flower 1992: 55. See also Connor 1984: 117 and cf. Westlake 1968: 73-74, esp. 74: 'He [sc. Cleon] may have adopted the subterfuge of pretending to be unwilling.' If so, Cleon's 'strenuous protest' against accepting the Pylos command (see Grote 1872: 251 with n. 29) was a sham one.

63 Cf. also Woodhead 1960: 315; *contra* Flower 1992: 55: Cleon 'is simply exploiting a crisis for his own gain, without a clear policy in mind'. Besides, Flower 1992: 45 and 47 offers a good answer (adopted also by Rhodes 1998: 227) to Kagan's (1974: 241) question of how these light troops happened to be so conveniently in Athens at that time ('open preparations for the implementation of Demosthenes' plan had been underway for some time'), although one might speculate and other reasons that do not necessarily presuppose some secret collaboration between Demosthenes and Cleon.

64 Cf. also Connor 1984: 116: 'Would someone who has just been forced into an unwelcome command act in this way?' Besides, let me add, Demosthenes was not at all disinclined to secret dealings and agreements, as 3.109.2 evinces.

65 For Gomme 1956b: 471 this information was enough and 'there is no need to suppose any *secret* understanding between him [sc. Demosthenes] and Cleon' (cf. also Flower, above n. 63); Gomme is probably right for another reason: as Westlake 1968: 97 remarks, Thuc. was a colleague of Demosthenes in the board of *stratēgoi* in 424/23, perhaps also a relative of him by marriage (97 n. 3), held him in some esteem, and

Be that as it may, Cleon eventually accepted, as we saw, the command of the expedition to Pylos and even promised his compatriots that he would finish the job within twenty days; and he did deliver. Thucydides nonetheless, although he knows that Cleon's promise was fulfilled, characterizes it as mad (4.39.3: Καὶ τοῦ Κλέωνος καίπερ μανιώδης οὔσα ἡ ὑπόσχεσις ἀπέβη· ἐντὸς γὰρ εἴκοσι ἡμερῶν ἤγαγε τοὺς ἄνδρας, ὥσπερ ὑπέσθη).⁶⁶ 'No sentence throughout the whole of Thucydides astonishes me so much as that in which he stigmatises such an expectation as "insane"', confesses Grote (260), who subsequently attributes this characterization to the historian's prejudice against Cleon. And so do most scholars.⁶⁷ Yet, this passage can also be read from a different perspective. To my mind, for instance, Thucydides' statement here, much though it apparently discredits his judgement and prestige, is ultimately to his credit and in fact comprises one of our best testimonies to his historical

used him as a principal source (see also id. 1989: 205-6); how likely is it, then, that Demosthenes should have concealed from Thuc. his secret collaboration with Cleon? Be that as it may, the information above that Demosthenes was thinking of invading the island did not specify the nature of the troops required. Nor do we know for sure that Demosthenes had asked for reinforcements, although Grote's (1872: 246-47 n. 1) remarks to the contrary are well-argued; when Cleon alerts Demosthenes that he is coming with the troops he had asked (ἔχων στρατιὰν ἦν ἠτήσατο), we are not certain if the subject of the verb is Cleon or Demosthenes (see here Gomme 1956b: 473 on 4.30.4). At 4.30.3 Thuc. tells us that Demosthenes was summoning troops from the allies in the neighbourhood (στρατιὰν τε μεταπέμπων ἐκ τῶν ἐγγύς ξυμμάχων), which might suggest that he did not ask for reinforcements from Athens, but Woodcock 1928: 103 cogently argues that Cleon acted upon the instructions he had received from Demosthenes; so also Babut 1986: 72 with n. 39 *ibid.* and Flower 1992: 44-45 and 56.

66 Unlike the common rendering 'insane as Cleon's promise was', Connor 1984: 116 n. 15 follows Schneider 1974: 21 n. 29 ('das Versprechen, so wahnwitzig es aussah') and makes the point that the suffix -ώδης gives the adjective a certain ambiguity (denoting as it does either fullness or similarity) which the translation should preserve: 'although it had seemed quite crazy'. Hornblower 1994 and Rhodes 1998 *ad loc.* adopt his translation, but, in my view, the characterization of Cleon's promise as μανιώδης, made after its fulfilment at that, represents not the Athenians' impression, but the historian's fixed and unequivocal opinion; cf. also de Romilly 1963: 172 n. 2. Had Thuc. meant to say that Cleon's promise seemed (not was) mad to the Athenians (which might well have been the case also), he would have written, I think, δόξασα in lieu of οὔσα.

67 See, for instance, Gomme 1956b: 478: 'Thucydides' bias is once more clear'; Woodhead 1960: 314; Westlake 1968: 75; Kagan 1974: 247 n. 99; Schneider 1974: 21 n. 29.

scrupulousness. Of course did he dislike Cleon and was prejudiced against him,⁶⁸ especially since he most probably held him responsible (with good reason more or less) for his exile following his failure to recover Amphipolis.⁶⁹ Yet what really matters, as far as historical trustworthiness is concerned, is not the historian's feelings as such, but whether these feelings make him tell lies about Cleon, suppress his successes⁷⁰ or distort facts in order to present him in an unfavourable light or even slander him. Nor do Thucydides' characterizations of Cleon as a most violent citizen (βιαίτατος at 3.36.6) and a demagogue (4.21.3) necessarily indicate bias, as Woodhead (1960: 311-12) would have us believe.⁷¹ No ancient source denies that Cleon was a violent demagogue and thus, insofar as the attributes *biaiotatos* and *demagōgos* describe Cleon accurately, the historian's duty, Gomme (1962: 112) rightly argues, is to represent him as such, regardless, I would add, of the fact that the Athenian *demos* apparently supported Cleon and followed his policies freely and gladly.⁷²

68 This is above everything else manifest in 5.16.1; cf. Gomme 1956b: 637, Baldwin 1968, and see notably Woodhead 1960 *passim*, and Kagan 1974: 247 n. 99. But as regards the narrative in the Pylos episode, I would not agree with Westlake's (1968: 75) verdict that 'all other considerations are subordinated to his desire to expose the unworthiness of Cleon'.

69 See 4.104.4-106.3-4 and cf. Marcellinus' *Vita Th.* 46; Grote 1872: 261; Gomme 1956b: 585, 587; Kagan 1974: 299. *Contra* Pope 1988: 284, who argues that Thuc.'s hostility to Cleon cannot stem from a private reason but rather from a public, namely a political one (Cleon's overall standing as a public figure).

70 These successes are mostly connected with Cleon's fatal expedition to Amphipolis, but only few of them are confirmed or actually supported by the historian's narrative; see below.

71 Cleon is a violent demagogue also in Diodorus (12.55.8: Κλέων ὁ δημαγωγός, ὠμὸς ὢν τὸν τρόπον καὶ βίαιος); cf. de Romilly 1963: 156 n. 1. Further, Kagan 1974: 156, 234 with n. 53 *ibid.*; Rawlings 1981: 224; Westlake 1989: 207, and others argue that Thuc.'s introductions of Cleon at 3.36.6 and 4.21.3 are meant to present him in an unfavourable light, disregarding that he is also described as *πιθανώτατος*, a positive rather than negative characterization (see above n. 4). Connor's 1984: 85 n. 15 estimate of these introductions of Cleon above is more balanced and more convincing. See also next note.

72 So Kagan 2009: 161, who also shrewdly remarks that Thuc.'s account of Cleon's career 'represents a radical revision of contemporary opinion'. On the other hand, it is worth reminding ourselves that all ancient evidence regarding Cleon is unanimously damning: besides Aristophanes and Plutarch, see Arist., *Ath. Pol.* 28.3, Theopompus

When Thucydides, then, describes Cleon's promise as crazy in a passage where Cleon's prediction is juxtaposed to his own, and where Cleon's prediction and not his own came true in the end, he at the same time shows that any antipathy and bias he had do not interfere with his respect for historical truth. For in all likelihood Thucydides was present, as we saw, in that notorious assembly and heard the arguments and counter-arguments set out during it; he was therefore in a position to see and assess for himself the mood of the people, and so he accurately, more or less, took it down for us. As Westlake (1968: 72) also notes, in connection with the second Pylos debate, 'there is no reason to suspect that Thucydides has given a fictitious or distorted account of what actually happened in the course of the debate'.⁷³

In conclusion, I would further like to suggest another possible explanation for Thucydides' position at 4.28.5, namely, for the reaction of the *sōphrones* to Cleon's promise; an explanation that is perhaps related to the well-known but insoluble problem regarding the composition of Thucydides' work.⁷⁴ That our historian often narrates or reflects on a certain event having in mind subsequent events or even the end of the whole war is beyond doubt;⁷⁵ but how exactly and to what degree this *a posteriori* knowledge affects, sometimes perhaps unawares, his judgement or the shaping and flow of his narrative is a moot point. In this particular case I would suggest that, speaking as he does about Cleon and the

115 F 92-94 (Jacoby 1962: 556), and Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 38; that a descendant of Cleon took pride in him (Ps.-Dem. 40.25) barely changes the overall picture, and certainly constitutes no evidence of 'a pro-Cleon tradition after Thucydides', as Baldwin 1968: 214 n. 24 contends.

73 See also above p. 125-26 and n. 21. And as Pope 1988: 284-85 more generally observes, Thucydides is not 'guilty of manipulating [sc. the public figures] so as to give an unfavourable impression. We shall find him innocent, a reporter not a propagandist'.

74 Cf. de Romilly 1963: 6. On this important issue see briefly Dover 1973: 14-20 and Rawlings 1981: 250-54; in more detail: Finley 1940; de Romilly above: 187-92, 213-29, 262-70, 275-86; Pohlenz 1968; Gomme, Andrewes & Dover 1981: 361-444; cf. also Hornblower 1996: 119-22 and 2008: 1-4, 41-57.

75 As de Romilly 1963: 188 argues, when Thuc. underlines and stresses some ideas in book 4, it is because 'of the greater significance given to them by later events'; cf. also Rawlings 1981: 252. Some other passages indicating knowledge of later events: 1.8.1; 13.3; 18.1, 119-24, 142-43; 2.65.5-13, 100.2; 4.48.5, 81.2, 108.4; 5.26; 6.15.3.

conservative Athenians, Thucydides is anticipating or rather projecting, by way of wishful thinking perhaps, what happened three years later, namely Cleon's failure to recover Amphipolis, his poor and superficial strategy there, and his rather inglorious death on the battlefield.⁷⁶ The events of Pylos, at any rate, were certainly written after 422, that is to say, after the Amphipolis campaign and during the peace of Nicias; and according to some scholars, even after 404 when the whole war was over.⁷⁷

Prima facie, one should not expect any similarity between the operations at Sphacteria and Amphipolis; if for no other reason, because no island and no naval force are involved in the latter. Nevertheless, the two campaigns have been linked together through their common denominator, Cleon, by Thucydides himself. Speaking somewhat contemptuously about Cleon's strategy at Amphipolis (5.7), the historian says that he acted in the same way as he had acted with success at Pylos and so had acquired confidence in his own wisdom,⁷⁸ the ultimate implication being

76 However, according to Diodorus 12.74, Cleon fought bravely at Amphipolis. But since all generals fight and fall with bravery in Diodorus (see Westlake 1968: 81 and n. 2), this testimony is of little or no value, given also Diodorus' very poor account of the battle of Amphipolis (see Grote 1872: 380 n.1 and cf. Kagan 1974: 299 n. 141). Grote 1872: 383-85 and Westlake 1968: 81-2 criticize both Cleon's strategic incompetence in Amphipolis (cf. also Spence 1995: 423 with n. 34 *ibid.*) and his cowardice on the battlefield, but Gomme 1956b: 652 and Kagan 1974: 328-30 defend him on both counts (although Gomme 1962: 117-18 speaks of 'Cleon's poor generalship' at Amphipolis); perhaps with some justice, given Thuc.'s prejudice against the author of his banishment.

77 According to Gomme 1956b: 448-49, 'not long after 421 B.C.'; according to Rawlings 1981: 227, after 412, probably after 407; according to others, even after 404 (see Gomme above and cf. de Romilly 1963: 188-90). Ed. Meyer believed that the whole Pylos episode was written later on the basis of 5.29.3 (see de Romilly 1963: esp. 187-88 nn. 2-3); cf. also 4.12.3 (ἐν τῷ τότε), 4.48.5 (ὄσα γε κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τόνδε), 4.74.4. De Romilly: 190 believes (in agreement with Meyer) that the Pylos episode was written after the Sicilian adventure, possibly between 407-404 (p. 191).

78 Cf. 5.7.3: καὶ ἐχρήσατο [sc. Cleon at Amphipolis] τῷ τρόπῳ ὡς καὶ ἐς τὴν Πύλον εὐτυχήσας ἐπίστευσέ τι φρονεῖν. For the meaning of *tropos* here (plan/procedure or spirit/temper) see Gomme's 1956b: 639-40. According to Balot 2017: 325 n. 4, it was due to his success at Pylos that Cleon became overconfident and hence made critical mistakes at Amphipolis, where he not only lost his own life but also squandered many of his 'exceptional soldiers'.

that Cleon believed that he would carry Amphipolis by force as he had done with Sphacteria, but also, one might add, with Torone which he had similarly taken by storm only a few days earlier.⁷⁹ Yet the way he conducted the operations in Amphipolis and the miscalculations that he made, so far as Thucydides' narrative allows us to judge correctly, was lamentable, although one can hardly turn a blind eye to the historian's prejudice against Cleon here.⁸⁰ Intriguing as they are, I will omit here the details of Cleon's military plans and maneuvering,⁸¹ but I will pause on the comments of Gomme, who has drawn several parallels between the events at Pylos and Amphipolis, and especially between the respective narratives of Thucydides. The actual battles in particular must have been

79 Several scholars adduce this accomplishment as one more example of Thuc.'s bias against Cleon, on account of which the historian is inclined to suppress the latter's successes: e.g. Woodhead 1960: 304-5; Gomme 1962: 115; Westlake 1962: 287; Baldwin 1968: 211-12; Kagan 1974: 319; Schneider 1974: 20 and n. 28. This may be true in some cases, but, as regards Torone, it is worth considering perhaps that its capture was an easy military operation, since Cleon had already been informed that Brasidas was away (5.2.3), the wall of the town was partly dismantled (4.112.2, 5.2.4; see Gomme 1956b: 631), and its inhabitants were too few to resist the Athenians (5.2.3: οὔτε οἱ ἐνόντες ἀξιόμαχοι εἶεν); moreover, the latter would attack from land and sea, so that the Spartan force of Pasitelidas would be unable to defend the town on both fronts at the same time (5.3.1-2). Yet, in discussing Torone's capture, some critics set aside Thuc.'s curt and composed narrative and see instead a brilliant strategy on the part of Cleon (Kagan 1974: 321), the organizer of 'a remarkable *coup de main*' (Woodhead 304). With all his admiration of Cleon, Grote 1872: 371 modestly speaks only of a 'not unimportant success'; and rightly so, since Torone was not strategically that significant and this is why 'Brasidas' reputation is scarcely tarnished, and Cleon's not at all whitened' after its capture, as Gomme 1956b: 632 perceptively concludes. After all, since the aim of Cleon's expedition was primarily the recovery of Amphipolis (Pritchett 1973: 379; Spence 1995: 432), Thuc. may not have thought it necessary to dwell on all Athenian operations and territorial gains in the area; let alone the possibility (the certainty rather) that some of Cleon's supposed successes (see mainly West & Merrit 1925 and Adcock 1927: 247-48) may actually never have been accomplished or may have taken place in other periods or occasions or after his death; cf. Gomme 1956b: 636; 1962: 115 n. 2; Pritchett 1973; Mitchel 1991: 170, 179; Spence 1995: 426-29.

80 See above and nn. 67, 68, 76.

81 For the relevant detailed accounts see Gomme 1962: 114-20 and Hornblower 1996: 435-36 with more bibliography there.

very similar and, as Gomme (1962: 120) says, “with a very slight alteration of language, just a shift of emphasis, a longer and more detailed account of Athenian casualties, the story of Amphipolis could have been made very like that of Sphacteria”.⁸² It may be just as possible then that, when Thucydides was writing that the *sōphrones* of the Athenians expected to rid themselves of Cleon during the Sphacteria operations, he had Amphipolis in mind.⁸³ For indeed, as Grote (370) also remarks, the first alternative of the Athenian expectations concerning Cleon’s initiative in the Pylos affair (see n. 28) was really the more probable at Amphipolis. In other words, Thucydides anticipated, and thus also presents the Athenian conservatives as anticipating, that Cleon, owing to his poor generalship as shown at Amphipolis three years later, would not be able to defeat the Spartans, while his frivolity and impetuosity could even expose him to mortal peril in a hand-to-hand battle, as was expected given the situation, with the most renowned Greek warriors.⁸⁴

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82 See also Woodhead 1960: 306 and cf. de Romilly 1963: 188 n. 2. On the other hand, Rawlings 1981: 217-33 has drawn interesting parallels between Pylos and the Cyzicus campaign of 410.

83 Cf. Marshall 1984: 32; Flower 1992: 46 n. 23.

84 In fact, however, that battle was not fought at close quarters; cf. 4.38.5: ... ἡ γὰρ μάχη οὐ σταδαία ἦν.

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ANDERSEN'S CODE: ARISTOPHANIC OBSCENITY IN *THUMBELINA*¹

By Bartłomiej Bednarek

Summary: In his seemingly innocent fairy tale *Thumbelina*, Hans Christian Andersen makes two allusions to Aristophanes. One of them is quite explicit, as the author makes a toad produce the sound *co-ax, co-ax, brek-ek-ek-kex*, which is a quotation from the *Frogs*. The other allusion is less conspicuous. In one of the first sentences of *Thumbelina*, an object that a woman needs in order to beget a child is referred to as a barleycorn. As I argue, even though on the surface it can be explained in terms of magic typical for fairy tales, it can be also understood as an obscene allusion to the sexual act. This results from the ambiguity, well-known in Andersen's time, of the word κριθή, which in Aristophanes' comedies can mean either barleycorn or penis.

Hans Christian Andersen is an author of some of the most widely read stories for children. He introduced (if not necessarily invented from scratch) a few characters that, in spite of almost two centuries having elapsed, still remain iconic and strongly influence popular culture. *Thumbelina* is certainly among his most famous creations, which is typically thought of (if we allow for some gender stereotypes that may seem embarrassingly old-fashioned, but at the same time seem to correspond

- 1 I would like to thank Ioannis Konstantakos, Marcel Lysgaard Lech and the anonymous reviewer of *Classica et Mediaevalia*, the first readers of this text. I am also grateful to all friends and colleagues who allowed me to share my ideas about Andersen with them. Thank you for asking "why don't you write about it?" This research was possible thanks to the generous support of the National Centre of Science in Poland, grant number 2018/31/D/HS3/00128.

to Andersen's own ideas) as a fairy tale for girls in what may be called a pink princess phase. However, as often happens with stories for children, Andersen's tale seems to transmit other layers of meanings, some of which are not meant to be understood by their primary audience.

All the adventures of Thumbelina result from her beauty, which attracts males, who either try to seduce her or abduct her in order to pursue their intention of marriage. Needless to say, other kinds of fulfilment of male passion for a beautiful and helpless female are not explicitly mentioned anywhere, even though the text seems to be bursting with suppressed sexuality. It also underlies the first instance of Thumbelina's abduction, which is, quite unusually, performed by a woman for her son's sake:

One night as she lay in her cradle, a horrible toad hopped in through the window – one of the panes was broken. This big, ugly, slimy toad jumped right down on the table where Thumbelina was asleep under the red rose petal. “Here's a perfect wife for my son!” the toad exclaimed. She seized upon the walnut shell in which Thumbelina lay asleep, and hopped off with it, out the window and into the garden. A big broad stream ran through it, with a muddy marsh along its banks, and here the toad lived with her son. Ugh! he was just like his mother, slimy and horrible. “Co-ax, co-ax, brek-ek-eke-kex”, was all that he could say when he saw the graceful little girl in the walnut shell.²

While the female toad can speak, her son is only able to produce a sound similar to that of amphibians in mating season, which may be evocative not only of his stupidity but also of arousal. More strikingly, however, in this passage Andersen makes an allusion to a learned tradition, as the seemingly nonsensical *co-ax, co-ax, brek-ek-eke-kex* is (with a slight change) what Aristophanes made his chorus of frogs sing in a swamp (*Ra*.

2 All passages from Andersen are given in the translation by Jean Hersholt available on The Hans Christian Andersen Centre website (https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/Thumbelina_e.html); consulted on 24.09.2020).

209, *sqq.*).³ This suggests that the author was familiar with Aristophanes and that he did not intend to conceal this.

This outward allusion to Attic comedy may be taken as an incentive to look for some other instances of intertextuality, even though this may seem to be a rather bold strategy for an author of fairy tales. After all, Aristophanes had a racy reputation as a poet that is certainly not suitable for children. However, once Andersen puts away his innocent mask, the whole text becomes much juicier than it might have seemed. It begins thus:

There once was a woman who wanted so very much to have a tiny little child, but she did not know where to find one. So she went to an old witch, and she said: "I have set my heart upon having a tiny little child. Please could you tell me where I can find one?" "Why, that's easily done", said the witch. "Here's a grain of barley for you, but it isn't at all the sort of barley that farmers grow in their fields or that the chickens get to eat. Put it in a flower pot and you'll see what you shall see." "Oh thank you!" the woman said. She gave the witch twelve pennies, and planted the barley seed as soon as she got home. It quickly grew into a fine large flower, which looked very much like a tulip. But the petals were folded tight, as though it were still a bud. "This is such a pretty flower", said the woman. She kissed its lovely red and yellow petals, and just as she kissed it the flower gave a loud *pop!* and flew open. It was a tulip, right enough, but on the green cushion in the middle of it sat a tiny girl. She was dainty and fair to see, but she was no taller than your thumb. So she was called Thumbelina.

Already the first sentence presupposes sexuality, given that an average adult person in the time of Andersen did not need to consult an old witch in order to find a solution to the initial problem of Thumbelina's mother-to-be. The answer to the question of what a woman may need in order to beget a child seems all too obvious, or at least, it might have seemed that

3 This connection between Aristophanes and Andersen has been observed, among others, by Hall 2007: 29 n. 71, but, as far as I can tell, no compelling interpretation has been offered in the scholarly literature.

way in the period before artificial insemination was invented. And indeed, what happens in the initial part of the story to a large degree satisfies our expectations, as one does not have to swear by Freud to notice that the description of the flower and its treatment is strongly charged with eroticism and that the plant itself has phallic connotations. The only element that seems to be odd in this puzzle is the immediate response given by the witch, as the barley seed that the witch gives to the woman does not, at first glance, seem like what an adult would expect in this context. This is where we return to Aristophanes.

In *Peace*, Trygaeus, the main character, who is just about to perform a sacrifice of a sheep, instructs his servant to distribute barley grains among the spectators. Within the comic convention, this was meant to allow the audience to take part in the fictional ritual, as pelting an animal with grain was one of preliminary rites, which, among other functions, helped to distinguish the members of the sacrificing community from potential outsiders.⁴

Once the barley is distributed, Trygaeus asks (963-67):

Τρυγαῖος	ἔδωκας ἤδη;	
Οἰκέτης β'		νή τὸν Ἑρμῆν, ὥστε γε
	τούτων ὅσοιπέρ εἰσι τῶν θεωμένων	
	οὔκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ κριθὴν ἔχει.	
Τρυγαῖος	οὐχ αἱ γυναῖκές γ' ἔλαβον.	
Οἰκέτης β'		ἀλλ' εἰς ἐσπέραν
	δώσουσιν αὐταῖς ἄνδρες.	

Trygaeus: You've given it to them already?

Slave: By Hermes,⁵ I have, so that of all these spectators there isn't one who hasn't got some seed.

Trygaeus: The women haven't got any.

4 On the ritual use of barley grains, see von Fritze 1897; Stengel 1910: 13-33; Ziehen 1902 and more recently 1966: 107-8; van Straten 1995: 31-40; Graf 2002: 121; Paul 2018; Bednarek 2019.

5 It hardly seems to be a coincidence that in this context the slave invokes Hermes, an ithyphallic divinity.

Slave: Well, the men will give it to them tonight!⁶

The wordplay that Alan Sommerstein struggled to reflect in his translation (note the use of the word *seed*) results from the double meaning of the word κριθή, which usually refers to a *grain of barley*, but in comedy it is sometimes used, as it is here, to cover also the semantic field of *membrum virile*.⁷ This usage is explained in the scholia (R 607a), in Suda (κ 2416) and Hesychius (κ 4101). Based on these texts, Brunck added an explicatory note to his edition of Aristophanes' comedies from 1783, which soon became the standard point of reference. He wrote (*ad* 965): κριθή enim, ut ἐρέβινθος, virile membrum notat etc.

In the same (third) volume of Aristophanes' comedies, Brunck added a supplementary note on Aristophanes' *Birds* 565.⁸ In it he suggested that in this line, transmitted as ἦν Ἀφροδίτῃ θύῃ, πυρούς ὄρνιθι φαληρίδι θύειν (*when someone sacrifices to Aphrodite, [he is supposed to] sacrifice some wheat to the coot*), the πυρούς (*wheat*) should be corrected into κριθάς. Otherwise, unless corrected, the reference to the wheat seems to fit oddly in the context (for the reasons that are hardly relevant here). The word κριθή, on the other hand, as Brunck argued, was particularly adequate in the context of the mock sacrifices to Aphrodite, due to its obscene connotations. This conjecture has become widely accepted.⁹ It was also incorporated into Brunck's editions published after his death. For example, the Oxford edition of Aristophanes' comedies from 1810 features the corrected version of the text as well as the explicatory note on the double meaning of the word κριθή.¹⁰

Although I do not know whether Andersen had direct access to any of these editions, it is quite clear that the obscene connotations of the word

6 Text and translation by Sommerstein 1985.

7 For the discussion of the obscene use of the word κριθή, see especially Henderson 1991: 119-20.

8 Brunck 1783: 212. The text of the *Birds* was printed in the second volume of the same Brunck's edition with no corrections of the paradosis and no references in endnotes. The conjecture was therefore clearly a result of his work on the text of the *Peace*.

9 Thus, Dunbar 1995: *ad loc.*; Sommerstein 1987: *ad. loc.*

10 Andersen could have been also familiar with Becker's commentary on the *Peace*, in which commentary (1829: *ad* 967) the obscene meaning of κριθή is explained.

κριθή were already a commonplace among those who studied Aristophanes when Andersen published his *Thumbelina* in 1835. It was also well known when Andersen studied Greek literature as a pupil of Simon Meisling in the 1820s.¹¹ Therefore, it seems very likely that he knew that the word, which in the Greek refers to a barleycorn could be taken to mean penis. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that a barleycorn is exactly what the witch in the *Thumbelina* prescribes to the woman, who seems to be single and old enough to have a child, but so childish that she does not know where babies come from. The answer is encoded in the double meaning of the word κριθή. It seems too precise to be a matter of coincidence. It rather seems to be a joke, which Andersen made over the heads of the children, who were unable to grasp the allusion. Only those who knew Aristophanes' comedies and his exegetic tradition could fully appreciate it.

There is also a smoking gun, which Andersen does not even try to conceal. As if in order to make sure that we know that he knew what he was doing, Andersen left an evident trace of his familiarity with the learned tradition, by using the onomatopoeia *co-ax, co-ax, brek-ek-ek-kex*. Thus, we and some of his educated readers back in the 1830s should feel invited to appreciate the wisdom of the old witch, Andersen's wit and the naiveté of whole generations of adults who made their children read the *Thumbelina* as if it were an innocent fairy tale.

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11 According to his biographers (e.g. Andersen 2005: 52-77), Andersen's relationship with his teacher was very difficult and there are reasons to think that the figure of the toad was inspired by Meisling (Larsson 2008: 110-12). Unfortunately, I am not aware of any direct evidence that indicates that Meisling explained (or was able to explain) to his pupil the double entendre in *Peace* 693-7 or in *Birds* 565.

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A POSSIBLE ARISTOTLE-FRAGMENT IN THE b-SCHOLION ON *ILIAD* 22.94

By Robert Mayhew

Summary: The b-scholion on *Iliad* 22.94 attributes a claim about a venomous snake (δράκων) to Aristotle's *On Animals*. Likely because there is no obvious parallel text in Aristotle's extant works on animals, the reference tends nowadays to be dismissed as inauthentic (though it was taken much more seriously in the 19th century). Further, the Aristotle reference has been consigned to a footnote in the standard edition of the *Iliad* scholia. This essay reassesses the scholion and considers as possible sources a few different works of Aristotle. It also suggests that the Aristotelian material – whatever its source – was brought in by Homeric scholars to support one side of a debate over the meaning of κακά φάρμακα.

Early in *Iliad* 22, Hector is described as waiting for Achilles,

ὥς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειρὶ ὀρέστερος ἄνδρα μένησιν
βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακ', ἔδου δέ τε μιν χόλος αἰνός,
σμερδαλέον δὲ δέδορκεν ἐλισσόμενος περὶ χειρῆ¹

As a *drakōn*² by its hole in the mountains waits for a man,

1 The text is West 2000: 272-73.

2 The *drakōn* also appears in *Il.* 2.308, 3.33, 6.181, 11.26, 11.39, *Od.* 4.457. Note *LfGrE* s.v. δράκων (M. Harder): “Charact. and behaviour ... neither recall the types of snake familiar to Greece and Asia Minor nor suggest a ‘dragon’. ... No clear dist. between δ. and ὄφις poss.” But see van der Mije 2011: 364-66 for an attempt at identification. On Aristotle on the *drakōn*, see below note 22.

having eaten evil *pharmaka*,³ and a dreadful *cholos* enters it,⁴
and it shoots a stinging glance, coiled by its hole (93-95).

The ancient scholars' main concern here was the use of *χειή* for the snake's abode.⁵ (More on this shortly.) There was also some curiosity about the idea of a snake eating poisonous things (*κακὰ φάρμακα*), and what precisely these things were. It is this latter issue that interests me most, though the bT-scholia⁶ that are the focus of this paper concern both *χειή* and *κακὰ φάρμακα*.

I begin by presenting transcriptions with translations of the two most relevant (sets of) scholia:

1. schol. T *Iliad* 22.93 & 94 (Burney MS 86 [fol. 242r])⁷

‡‡‡^o ἐπὶ χειῆ: ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ζῶων ξυλόχους τε καὶ εὐνάς φησι·
δύναται γὰρ καὶ ἕτερα ζῶα χωρήσαι· νῦν δὲ χειάν, τὴν αὐτὸν μόνον
χωροῦσαν καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἔλυτρον αὐτοῦ οὔσαν· «οὐδὸς δ'
ἀμφοτέρους ὄδε χεῖσεται». ἢ ὅτι δίκην ὕδατος ἐκχεῖται εἰς αὐτὴν
τὸ θηρίον· ἀγριώτερα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐρήμῳ γεννώμενα : —

- 3 See *LfGrE* s.v. *φάρμακα* (V. Langholf). I leave *φάρμακα* untranslated, as its nature is disputed in the scholia that interest me here.
- 4 de Jong 2012: 82: “*χόλος* is a psychological force, anger, as well as a substance in the body, bile, which is produced by the organ known as *χολάδες* (4.526 = 21.181) ... Here it is uniquely used to refer to the poison of a snake ...” See also van der Mije 2011: 368-69.
- 5 Though rare (in the Homeric epics, it appears only in *Il.* 22.93 and 95), this concern is not shared by modern scholars; see e.g. *LfGrE* s.v. *χειή* (W. Beck) and Richardson 1993: 116.
- 6 The scholia preserved in the b family of manuscripts (i.e. *Venetus* B [B], *Escorial* Y 1.1 [E3], and *Escorial* Ω 1.12 [E4]) and in manuscript T (*Burney* MS 86). The source of both is a lost archetype (known as ‘c’), the sources of which in turn are in large part ancient exegetical commentaries. See Erbse 1969: xvii-xxi and xxvi-xxviii (with a stemma on lviii), and for briefer overviews Dickey 2007: 19-20 and Schironi 2018: 9-11.
- 7 This manuscript can be accessed here: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=burney_ms_86_fs001r. ‡‡‡^o is written above *χειῆ* in the text of the *Iliad*, ⊕ over *βεβρωκῶς*.

⊕ βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακα: φασὶν αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν, ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι λυσοῦν τε τοῦ ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν · *

‡‡° “by its hole”: In the case of the other animals he says ‘copse’ and ‘lair’; for it [i.e. a copse or lair] can⁸ make room for other animals, too; but here [he says] ‘hole’, [because] it only has room for the [*drakōn*] itself, and is in a way its case; “this threshold will be room enough (χειῖσεται) for both of us” [*Od.* 18.17].⁹ Or [Homer uses χειή] because in the manner of water the beast pours (ἐκχεῖται) into it. And the [animals] that are brought forth in solitude are wilder [sc. than other animals].¹⁰

⊕ “having eaten evil *pharmaka*”: They claim that it [sc. the *drakōn*], eating ants and beetles after hiding,¹¹ is filled with venom and is provoked to go into a frenzy wiping off the irritating venom.

8 The journal’s referee suggested correcting δύναται to δύνανται, which would make the translation more natural: “for they [i.e. a copse and a lair] can” etc.

9 This *Odyssey*-quotation, here and in the following b-scholion, seems a bit out of place, and I suspect something may have dropped out at this point. It arguably makes a bit more sense in the context of an etymological explanation of (and objection to) χειή, of the sort found in an Aristonicus-scholion on *Il.* 22.93 in *Venetus A* (fol. 284r):

«ὥς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειῖ»· ὅτι τὴν τῶν ὄφρων κατάδυσιν χειὰν εἴρηκεν, ἀπὸ τοῦ χειῖσθαι ὃ ἐστὶ χωρῆσαι ...

“As a *drakōn* by its hole”: Because he called the secret place of the snakes χειά, which is from ‘to pour’ (χειῖσθαι), which is ‘to make room for’....

Aristonicus is explaining why Aristarchus athetized this verse. See Schironi 2018: 349-50.

10 I am grateful to the journal’s referee for help in translating and understanding this passage (which also appears in the following b-scholion), as it gave me a great deal of trouble. The last line of this text is a further explanation of why Homer made the *drakōn* (a wild animal) dwell in a hole rather than in a copse or a lair.

11 Balme 1991: 147 points out that Aristotle uses φωλεύω, φωλεία, and their cognates, for both hibernation and estivation.

2. schol. b *Iliad* 22.93 (Venetus B [fol. 294r], Escorial Y 1.1 [fol. 285r], Escorial Ω 1.12 [fol. 189r])¹²

κζ ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ξυλόχους τε καὶ εὐνάς φησι· δύναται γὰρ καὶ ἕτερα ζῶα χωρῆσαι. νῦν δὲ χειάν, τὴν αὐτὸν μόνον χωροῦσαν καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἔλυτρον αὐτοῦ οὔσαν· «οὐδὸς δ' ἀμφοτέρους ὄδε χεῖσεται». ἢ ὅτι δίκην ὕδατος ἐκχεῖται εἰς αὐτὴν τὸ θηρίον. ἀγριώτερα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐρήμῳ γεννώμενα. φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζῴων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐσθίοντα αὐτὸν μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι πλείονος τοῦ ἐμφύτου καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι καὶ λυσσᾶν ἐπιθυμοῦντά που ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν· ~

κζ [= χειῖ] In the case of the other animals he says ‘copse’ and ‘lair’; for it [i.e. a copse or lair] can make room for other animals, too; but here [he says] ‘hole’, [because] it only has room for the [*drakōn*] itself, and is in a way its case: “This threshold will be room enough (χεῖσεται) for both of us” [*Od.* 18.17]. Or [Homer uses *χειῖ*] because in the manner of water the beast pours (ἐκχεῖται) into it. And the [animals] that are brought forth in solitude are wilder [sc. than other animals]. Now Aristotle claims in *On Animals* 6 that it [sc. the *drakōn*], eating ants and beetles, is filled with venom, more than the natural amount, and so is provoked and goes into a frenzy, desiring somehow to wipe off the irritating venom.

I think T is superior to b in this respect: these are clearly two separate scholia on two different verses. For further evidence that these are separate comments, note that in *Lipsiensis gr.* 32, the ‘ants and beetles’ comment is virtually identical to the one in T, but is preceded by an entirely different comment that notes an etymological connection between δράκων in *Il.* 22.93, and δέδορκεν in 95;¹³ and that Eustathius (in a passage

12 These manuscripts can all be accessed here: <https://amphoreus.hpcc.uh.edu/>. In *Venetus B* and *Escorial Y 1.1* (but not in *Escorial Ω 1.12*), κζ is written over χειῖ in the text of the *Iliad*. Otherwise, this scholion is identical in all three manuscripts. Although this is presented as a scholion on χειῖ in *Il.* 22.93, as I make clear it is in fact two scholia, one on χειῖ in 93, the other on κακὰ φάρμακα in 94.

13 «ὡς δὲ δράκων»: δράκων εἴρηται παρὰ τὸ δεδορκεῖναι· καὶ γὰρ δράκων ἀπὸ τούτου εἴρηται· τὸ γὰρ βλέμμα δεινὸν ἔχει. καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου ἰστάμενος δεινότερος ἐστίν. φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας, μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι, καὶ λυσσᾶν που ἐναπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν. (I

quoted below) couples a clearly related ‘ants and beetles’ comment with a different interpretation of κακά φάρμακα, which precedes it.

I pass over for the moment the first comment – identical in T and b – which concerns why (or whether) Homer chose to use χειή to refer to the abode of the snake, when he elsewhere uses ξύλοχος (‘corpse’, see e.g. *Il.* 5.162) or εὐνή (‘lair’, see e.g. *Il.* 11.115). Here again are the passages that concern me (on κακά φάρμακα in *Il.* 22.94), with the differences highlighted:

T: φασίν αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι λυσσᾶν τε τοῦ ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν.

b: φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐσθίοντα αὐτὸν μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι πλείονος τοῦ ἐμφύτου καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι καὶ λυσσᾶν ἐπιθυμοῦντά που ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν.

The major differences are φασίν (T) in place of φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης (b), and μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν (T) which is absent in b. This latter aside, T seems like a slightly more condensed version of the same material. The difference between these two texts with respect to the Aristotle-citation is hard to explain, given that we should expect the comments on κακά φάρμακα in b and T to have the same source. My aim in what follows is to speculate about the source of the reference to Aristotle.

Erbse 1972: 288 edits and presents these bT scholia together, as follows:

βεβρωκῶς κακά φάρμακα: φασίν αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι, b(BE3E4)T

was unable to consult this manuscript and so relied on Bachmann 1835: 682-83.) Cf. schol. D *Il.* 22.94/U^m & 22.95/Z^s (van Thiel²). The etymological connection is sound; see Colvin 2007: 194: “**δράκων**: < *d̥rkōn (root *derk-, ‘look’): poetic term derived from the unnerving eyes of a reptile. A play with δέδορκεν 95.”

πλείονος <ῆ> τοῦ ἐμφύτου b(BE3E4) καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι λυσσᾶν τε τοῦ ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν. b(BE3E4)T.

As presented, this is misleading, as mss. B, E3, and E4 all contain the Aristotle-reference. Erbse does, however, print this reference in his apparatus, where he explains why he omitted it: *mentionem Aristotelis ... ab auctore hyparchetypi b fictam et interpolatam esse demonstravit Valk I 175*. Here is the relevant passage in van der Valk 1963: part 1, 175:

bT X 94 offers information about dragons that were filled with venom by eating ants. b takes over the notice and ascribes it to Aristotle: φησὶν ἐν τῷ ζ´ [sic]¹⁴ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης κτε. This time the notice of b seems quite trustworthy, since he refers to a definite passage of Aristotle. If we consult Aristt. HA VI, we see that it begins with the words αἱ μὲν οὖν τῶν ὄφρων καὶ τῶν ἐντόμων γενέσεις κτε.¹⁵ The book itself, however, does not discuss serpents, but treats fishes, birds and mammals. Fortunately, we are acquainted with the unreliability of b, for otherwise we might have thought that originally the sixth book of Aristt. HA had presented a text which differed from that which is offered by our mss. The behavior of b is understandable, for he was interested in dragons (see [p. 151] note 90) and, therefore, he tried to make the notice of bT interesting by ascribing it to Aristotle.¹⁶

Although I cannot dismiss this as impossible, I do find dubious the idea that b would insert Aristotle's name into the text to make it more interesting, even adding a title and book number. Moreover, this would be particularly sloppy of b, as αἱ μὲν οὖν τῶν ὄφρων καὶ τῶν ἐντόμων

14 Mss. B, E3, and E4 all have ζ, but as van der Valk goes on to refer to HA 6, his printing ζ´ creates no problems in interpretation. (In one book-numbering system 6, 7, and 8 are represented by ζ, ζ, and η, in another by ζ, η, and θ. See Primavesi 2007: 63-64 and Dickey 2007: 131-32.)

15 "So much for the generations of snakes and of insects etc.," which would include the *drakōn*, and ants and beetles.

16 van der Valk adds in a footnote: "We may imagine that b, when looking through the HA of Aristotle, saw that the sixth book began by mentioning dragons. The beginnings of new books are most easily discernible in the mss."

γενέσεις does not announce the subject to be discussed in Book 6, but briefly describes the subject that Aristotle had just discussed in the previous book: *HA* 5.19-32 is on the generation of insects, *HA* 5.34 (the last chapter of *HA* 5) on the generation of snakes. I therefore think it worthwhile to explore other possibilities.

Rose included this scholion (or rather, something like it) in all three of his collections of Aristotle fragments (1863, 1870, 1886). In each case he combined material from an A-scholion with the B-scholion (based on Dindorf's edition).¹⁷ In his first collection (titled *Aristoteles Pseudepigraphus*, as he thought all of this material was spurious) he sees a connection between this 'fragment' and *HA* 7(8),¹⁸ the source or identity of which he considers Theophrastus' *Περὶ τῶν φωλευόντων* (see DL 5.44 [124 Dorandi], and frs. 366-370 FHS&G) – recall the μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν in T, which Rose and other editors 'restore' to b.¹⁹ I cannot here discuss the ongoing debate over the authenticity of *HA* 7(8), a text I will return to shortly. (I believe *HA* 7(8) is authentic, but cannot make that case here, nor is it important in the present context.²⁰) Setting aside *HA* 7(8), I suppose it is just

17 For instance, Rose³ fr. 372 is presented as follows (the ellipses and parentheses are his):

Schol. in Hom. Il. χ, 93 (Dind.): (ὡς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειρὶ (ὀρέστερος ἄνδρα μένησιν, βεβρωκῶς κατὰ φάρμακ' ἔδω δέ τε μιν χόλος αἰνός): ἡ διπλῆ ὅτι τὴν τῶν ὄφειων κατάδυσιν χειρὰν εἴρηκεν ἀπὸ τοῦ χεῖσθαι (A) . . .

. . . ἢ ὅτι δίκην ὕδατος ἐκχεῖται εἰς αὐτὴν τὸ θηρίον. ἀγριώτερα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐρήμῳ γεννώμενα. φησὶ δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ ζ' περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐσθίοντα αὐτὸν μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας <μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν> ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι πλείονος τοῦ ἐμφύτου καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι καὶ λυσοῦν ἐπιθυμοῦντά που ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν (B int.).

See *Venetus* A (fol. 284r), quoted above in note 9. ἡ διπλῆ should be in pointed brackets.

18 Following the notation in Balme 1991: '7(8)' = Book 7 according to the paradosis, Book 8 according to Theodore Gaza's rearrangement (in his fifteenth-century Latin translation). This rearrangement, which was accepted by Bekker and became standard, was a consequence of Gaza having concluded that the tradition's Book 9 in fact belonged after Book 6.

19 His text in this collection alone includes "ἐν τῷ ζ' (corr. ζ') περὶ ζώων" κτλ. Rose refers to "Ar. h.a. 8, 13, 15" (i.e. *HA* 7(8).13 & 15). More recently, Huby 1985: 318-19 has argued that *HA* 7(8) is an inauthentic compilation making use of the works of Theophrastus, including *Περὶ τῶν φωλευόντων*.

20 On the authenticity of *HA* 7(8), see Balme 1991: 1-13 and Schnieders 2019: 97-108.

possible (but unlikely) that the scholar responsible for the Aristotle comment had access to Theophrastus' *Περὶ τῶν φωλεόντων*, which discussed this behavior of snakes and which he mistook for a work of Aristotle's or which was being circulated as such. But I do not consider this possibility a serious alternative to van der Valk's explanation.

In his other two collections, Rose attributes the text to a lost work of Aristotle on animals (which he labels *Zoica*). Heitz 1869: fr. 301, who presents a much more accurate edition of our text, also takes it to be from a lost work on animals (though he does not mention a title).²¹ In Mayhew 2020, I argue that the lost *Zoika* was a collection of data concerning animal coloration, anatomy, and behavior. And I believe I have demonstrated in Mayhew forthcoming the probability that at least one Homeric scholar had access to the *Zoika* (or a compilation including excerpts from it). So I think one genuine possibility is that the *Zoika* contained a description of snakes eating poisonous animals, and that this was the source of the reference in the b-scholia.

I turn now to the *Historia animalium*. HA 7(8).13-17 is devoted to animals that hide – i.e. that hibernate or avoid the sun – and in 7(8).15, Aristotle (for I think he is the author) says that “while the other snakes hide in the ground, the vipers conceal themselves under rocks” (οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι ὄφεις ἐν τῇ γῆ φωλεύουσιν, αἱ δ' ἔχιδναι ὑπὸ τὰς πέτρας κατακρύπτουσιν ἑαυτάς) (599a33-b2). Later, in 7(8).29, he attempts to show how differences in location can make a difference in the bites or stings of various animals, including snakes (see 607a21-34). He says that “snake bites too differ greatly” (τά τε τῶν ὄφεων δῆγματα πολὺ διαφέρουσιν) (607a21). After providing a couple of examples, he writes (607a27-29):

πάντων δὲ χαλεπώτερα ἔστι τὰ δῆγματα τῶν ἰοβόλων, ἐὰν τύχη ἀλλήλων ἐδηδοκότα, οἷον σκορπίον ἔχιδναι.

But more dangerous than any are the bites of the venomous animals after one happens to have eaten another, for example a viper that has eaten a scorpion.

21 In his apparatus, however, he refers to HA 8(9).6, which describes the δράκων – a promising lead which I return to shortly.

There is, however, no mention (here or elsewhere) of snakes eating ants and beetles. Perhaps the most relevant passage, noted by Heitz, is *HA* 8(9).6.612a30-31:

ὁ δὲ δράκων ὅταν ὀπωρίζῃ τὸν ὀπὸν τῆς πικρίδος ἐκροφεῖ, καὶ τοῦθ' ἐώραται ποιῶν.

The *drakōn*, when it eats fruit, drinks down the juice of the *pikris*, and it has been seen doing this.²²

Aristotle is referring to a snake extracting liquid from the *pikris*, a kind of bitter plant or herb,²³ prior to eating fruit.

This last Aristotle-passage is worth exploring in greater detail. In *HA* 8(9).6, Aristotle presents an array of endoxa illustrating the intelligence of animals – eating things that protect them or otherwise promote their lives: For instance, a weasel eats the herb rue before fighting snakes, as the odor of rue is inimical to snakes; and, a hound feeling pain eats a certain kind of grass to make itself vomit.²⁴ In the case of the *drakōn* eating *pikris*, however, no such reason is given to explain this behavior, the explanation in my view likely having dropped out of the text. But judging by the evidence in Pliny and Aelian, the *drakōn* does this as a remedy of some kind, and not to acquire venom. Pliny *NA* 8.99 claims that the snake (*anguis*), after hibernating in winter, rubs its eyes against fennel to restore its sight; and, that the *drakōn* (*draco*) cures its nausea by eating wild

22 Aristotle refers to the *drakōn* three times in the *Historia animalium*, the other two being 7(8).20.602b24-26 and 8(9).1.609a4-5. The mention in *HA* 7(8).20 suggests a water snake, the other two a land snake. See Schnieders 2019: 593-94. I doubt this snake can be identified.

23 Theophrastus says it is “bitter in taste, and this is why it received its name” (τῇ γεύσει δὲ πικρά, διὸ καὶ τοῦνομα εἴληφε) (*HP* 7.11.4). According to Amigues 2006: 324, this is *Crepis zacintha* (English ‘Striped hawksbeard’). See Schnieders 2019: 738-39 for other suggestions.

24 *HA* 8(9).6.612a28-30 and 31-32: ἡ δὲ γαλῆ ὅταν ὄφει μάχηται ἐπεσθίει τὸ πήγανον-πολεμία γὰρ ἡ ὄσμη τοῖς ὄφεισιν. ... αἱ δὲ κύνες ὅταν ἐλμινθιῶσιν ἐσθίουσι τοῦ σίτου τὸ λήϊον. These two endoxa appear on either side of the reference to the *drakōn*.

lettuce.²⁵ Similarly, but in more detail, Aelian in NA 9.16 describes (*inter alia*) how a snake (ὄφις), after hibernating in winter (τοῦ χειμῶνος φωλεύσας), improves its eyesight by rubbing against fennel.²⁶ He has a separate discussion of the *drakōn*, which I think is of capital importance in the present context. I present NA 6.4 in full:

οἱ δράκοντες ὅταν ὀπώρας μέλλωσι γεύεσθαι, τῆς πικρίδος καλουμένης ῥοφοῦσι τὸν ὀπὸν· ὀνίνησι δὲ ἄρα αὐτοὺς αὕτη πρὸς τὸ μὴ φύσης τινὸς ὑποπίμπλασθαι. μέλλοντες δὲ τινα ἔλλοχαῖν ἢ ἄνθρωπον ἢ θῆρα, τὰς θανατηφόρους ρίζας ἐσθίουσι καὶ τὰς πόας μέντοι τὰς τοιαύτας. οὐκ ἦν δὲ ἄρα οὐδὲ Ὅμηρος αὐτῶν τῆς τροφῆς ἀμαθής. λέγει γοῦν ὅπως ἀναμένει περὶ τὸν φωλεὸν εἰλούμενος, προεμπλησθεὶς σιτίων πολλῶν φαρμακωδῶν καὶ κακῶν.

The *drakontes*, when they are about to eat fruit, drink the juice of the so-called *pikris*; it seems to help them against being filled with wind. But when they are about to lie in wait for either a human or a beast, they eat death-bringing roots and herbs of the same sort. In that case, Homer was not ignorant of their diet. For at any rate he describes how it waits, coiled up near its hiding-place, having filled up beforehand on a lot of poisonous and evil food.

So according to Aelian, sometimes the *drakōn* eats a certain plant for medicinal reasons, and other times it eats different plants to produce or improve its venom, and this latter (he thinks) is what Homer is describing.

25 *idem* (sc. *anguis*) *hiberna latebra visu obscurato maratho herbae se adfricans oculos inunguit ac refovet ... draco vernam nausiam silvestris lactucae suco restinguit*. Plut. *De soll. an.* 20 (*Mor.* 974b) seems to conflate these two, writing that the *drakōn* improves its eyesight with fennel: ὁ δὲ δράκων τῷ μαράθρω τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀμβλυώττοντα λεπτύνων καὶ διαχαράττων. (He does not mention hibernation.)

26 ὅταν ἀποδύσῃται τὸ γῆρας ὁ ὄφις ὑπαρχομένου δὲ τοῦ ἥρος δρᾷ τοῦτὸ, ἐνταῦθά τοι καὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τὴν ἀχλὺν καὶ τὸ ἀμβλὺ τῆς ὄψεως ῥύπτεται καὶ ἐκεῖνο ὡς γῆρας ὀφθαλμῶν, τῷ δὲ μαράθῳ ὑποθήγων τε καὶ παραψήχων τὸ ὄμμα ἐκάτερον, εἴτα ἐξάντης τοῦδε τοῦ πάθους γίνεται. ἀμβλυώττει δὲ ἄρα διὰ τοῦ χειμῶνος φωλεύσας ἐν μυχῷ καὶ σκότῳ. οὐκοῦν μαλκίουςαν ἐκ τῶν κρυμῶν τοῦ ζῶου τὴν ὄψιν ὑποθερμαίνων τὸ μάραθρον καθαίρει, καὶ ὄξυωπέστερον ἀποφαίνει.

I believe we have enough evidence to support a reasonable hypothesis (or hypotheses) about the source of the Aristotle-reference in schol. b *Il.* 22.93-94. First, it is clear that Aristotle collected a number of ‘facts’ or *endoxa* about various kinds of snakes, which hibernate or hide from the heat, and which eat certain plants (e.g. *pikris*) and animals (e.g. scorpions) for reasons other than normal nutrition. Perhaps something about ants and beetles dropped out of the snakes-eating-venomous-animals passage in 7(8).29 or the *drakōn*-passage in 8(9).6, though this would have to have happened very early on. I think it somewhat more likely that the reference originally came from a collection of such data in the *Zoika*, perhaps in a book or section titled *Περὶ ὄφρων*.²⁷ The *Περὶ ζώων* in our b-scholion would then refer either to the *Historia animalium* or (more likely) to the *Zoika*, with the book number (ζ) a scribal error (e.g. a later erroneous addition), unless per chance *Περὶ ὄφρων* was the sixth ‘book’ or subsection of the *Zoika*. It is also just possible that the source was one of the six books of Aristotle’s lost *Homeric Problems*, which might have been titled *Περὶ ζώων*;²⁸ though I doubt this hypothesis has more merit than van der Valk’s explanation.²⁹ But I do find both of the other hypotheses – *Historia animalium* and *Zoika* – more likely, and no more speculative, than van der Valk’s, and this despite the fact that I cannot explain how the reference to Aristotle dropped out of T.

If the reference in b is accurate, then Homeric scholars made use of what Aristotle wrote in his biological writings about snakes eating ants and beetles. What more might we say about the issue or debate concerning *Iliad* 22.93-94 and involving Aristotle’s views on snakes? I believe a passage in Eustathius is illuminating in this context. This is from his discussion of *Iliad* 22.94 (vol. 4, p. 581.7-10 van der Valk):

27 Athenaeus 7, our best source for information on Aristotle’s *Zoika*, variously refers to it – with the title of its subsection – as *Zωϊκά ἢ περὶ ἰχθύων*, *Περὶ ζωϊκῶν καὶ ἰχθύων*, *Περὶ ζώων καὶ ἰχθύων*, etc. See Mayhew 2020: 110.

28 See Mayhew 2019: 33.

29 Even setting aside this possibility, however, if Aristotle discussed elsewhere snakes eating ants and beetles, one can speculate about how he might have interpreted *βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακα* in *Il.* 22.94.

κακὰ δὲ φάρμακα οἱ μὲν πῶς τινὰ φασι χολῆς γεννητικὴν, ἣν ἐσθίων ὄφεις εἰς χολὴν ἐρεθίζεται. ἕτεροι δὲ ὅτι δράκων ἐσθίων μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας ἰοῦ πληροῦται καὶ εἰς λύσσαν ἄγεται, καὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἅπερ ὁ ποιητὴς λέγει κακὰ φάρμακα πρὸς διαστολὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν.

Some claim ‘evil *pharmaka*’ are a certain herb productive of bile (*cholēs*), which the snake eats and so is provoked into anger (*cholēn*). But others [claim] that the *drakōn*, eating ants and beetles, is filled with venom and brought to a frenzy, and these are what the poet calls evil *pharmaka* in opposition to the good ones.³⁰

So on one view, κακὰ φάρμακα refers to certain plants (according to Aelian, “deadly roots and herbs”). On another, κακὰ φάρμακα refers to ants and beetles, with certain plants (e.g. the *pikris*) in fact being ἀγαθὰ (not κακὰ) φάρμακα. Modern scholars for the most part favor the former view,³¹ and Roemer 1924, 73 is right that *Od.* 2.328-29 and 4.229-30 do in fact support this reading.³² But the Homeric scholar(s) who cited Aristotle on ants and beetles defended the latter position³³ – as Aristotle too might well have done, had he discussed *Iliad* 22.93-94 in his *Homeric Problems*.

30 I.e. to good *pharmaka*, likely herbs with medicinal properties.

31 See Leaf 1902, 2: 437; Ameis & Hentze 1906; 10; Cunliffe 1924 s.v. φάρμακον, 2; van der Mije 2011. Richardson 1993: 116 and de Jong 2012: 82, however, leave open the nature of the snake’s diet.

32 Roemer 1924 contrasts this with the ancient interpretation found in our b-scholion – an interpretation he attributes (erroneously, in my view) to Aristarchus: “Anders die antike Exegese, die Exegese Aristarchs, am besten erhalten in [Venetus] B: φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης etc.” Unlike van der Valk and Erbse, he does not dismiss the attribution (“Also sehen wir hier mit vollem Recht die Autorität des Aristoteles angerufen und ausgespielt gegen eine falsche Volksvorstellung ...”), though he recognizes that it has no parallel in the extant corpus. He mentions in a footnote, however, that Dittmeyer drew his attention to the scorpion-passage in *HA* 7(8).29.607a27-29 (quoted above), which Dittmeyer 1907: 350-51 considers an excerpt from Theophrastus’ *Περὶ δακέτων καὶ βλητικῶν*.

33 As did Eustathius, immediately following the above quoted passage (vol. 4, p. 581.10-12 van der Valk): τὸ δὲ ἐκ τῶν μυρμηκῶν κακὸν δηλοῦται καὶ ἐν τῷ μυρμηκιᾶν, κτλ.

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LUCRETIUS

AND THE SALTY TASTE OF SEA AIR

By Pamela Zinn

Summary: This article treats the sense of taste in Epicurean thought through the evidence in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. It reconstructs Lucretius' account of what taste is and how it works, with a view to explaining instances like the taste of salt by the seaside, where we seem to taste at a distance. I argue that such instances are not exceptions, but examples that reveal more about the processes behind them. When analyzed in conjunction with the physiology of taste and the water cycle, the salty taste of sea air confirms the traditional view that the perception of flavor consistently occurs through direct contact with the object of perception, not through indirect contact with an intermediary. Moreover, it advances the understanding of what comes into contact, what the perceiver contributes to taste, and taste's sensory threshold.

INTRODUCTION

The sensory turn has led to a renewed scholarly interest in Epicurean theories about the senses, for which Lucretius' *De rerum natura* offers some of the most important evidence. While the preponderance of that attention has been devoted to the sense of sight, there have also been studies on the rest of the so-called five senses, as well as on other perceptions, the nature of sensible qualities and their relationship to the senses' spheres of discrimination, the role of the senses in epistemology,

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and the possibility of synaesthesia.¹ In the context of the debates about touch, the sense of taste has also come under scrutiny. The testimony of *De rerum natura* (hereafter *DRN*) is particularly important in these cases as there is no explicit discussion of either in what survives of Epicurus' works.² The discussion in other Epicurean sources is minimal.³ The traditional scholarly perspective is that the Epicureans believed that the sense of taste functions through direct contact between the sense organ and the object of perception, i.e. between the tongue and food or drink.⁴ It is generally thought that, in this, taste is like the sense of touch, which also operates through direct contact, whereas the senses of sight, hearing, and smell entail the apprehension of objects at a distance via contact

- 1 On smell, see Koenen 1997. On sound, see Koenen 1999; Koenen 2004; Holmes 2005; Zinn 2018. On touch, see Maurette 2014: esp. 312-15; Sedley 2018. On taste, see Rosenmeyer 1996 and, regarding taste in ancient thought more generally, Rudolph 2018a and Rudolph 2018b: esp. 49-54 on the atomists. On other perceptions, such as that of time and of the self, see e.g. Verde 2008; Zinn 2016; Németh 2017: esp. ch.1. On sensible qualities and the senses' spheres of discrimination, see e.g. Sedley 1989; Furley 1993; Monet 1996; O'Keefe 1997. On the role of the senses in epistemology, see e.g. Fowler 1984; Everson 1990; Asmis 2009; Vogt 2016. On synaesthesia, see Walters 2013. These topics are not mutually exclusive nor treated as such by the aforementioned studies, many of which contribute substantially to multiple topics. Broader studies that also include treatment of many of these topics include Asmis 1984; Long & Sedley 1987: esp. 1.72-90, 2.75-93. The work of scholars like Solmsen (e.g. 1961), Schoenheim 1966, Striker 1977, Glidden (e.g. 1979a, 1979b), and Taylor 1980, while perhaps too early to be considered part of the sensory turn per se, is also noteworthy and has contributed significantly to subsequent scholarship on these topics.
- 2 I have found none. Other scholars concur. Regarding taste, see e.g. Bailey 1947: 3.1257; Rosenmeyer 1996: 138; Koenen 1997: 167 n. 18. Regarding touch, see e.g. Asmis 1984: 105 n. 2; Koenen 1997: 163 n. 1.
- 3 The most important example is PHerc. 19/698, which may be from Phld. *De Sensibus*; on this, see p. 181 below. See also Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1109c, 1110b-c.
- 4 See e.g. Bailey 1947: 3.1179, 3.1253; Asmis 1984: 105, 111, 115-16; Asmis 2009: 102.

with intermediaries.⁵ Others have suggested that all of the senses are reducible to touch.⁶ Schoenheim and Rosenmeyer propose specifically the touch of effluences.⁷ In support of the possibility that taste might work this way, both mention the salty taste we experience near the sea (*DRN* 4.222-24, 6.928-30).⁸ The Epicureans believed that the senses do not err.⁹ This phenomenon points to a potentially illustrative conundrum: how is it possible to taste at a distance? According to Lucretius, while *DRN* does not explicitly explain everything, it does offer one enough to work out the rest for oneself.¹⁰ In this way, apparently exceptional phenomena present opportunities to reveal further complexities of the processes which led to them.¹¹ This study thus reconstructs the physiological mechanisms underlying the sense of taste, with a view to explaining the salty taste of sea air and other instances of taste at a distance. In the process, it also brings to bear evidence from Epicurean discussions of the water cycle. It argues that, in fact, the salty taste of sea air is no exception; rather, it is the apparently exceptional case that proves the rule, so to speak, with implications for our understanding of the Epicurean theories about what one tastes, how taste works, and taste's sensory threshold.

- 5 See e.g. Sedley 2018: 68. On the close relationship between touch and taste in ancient thought more generally, see e.g. Weddle 2017: esp. 105-6, 118; Rudolph 2018a: 1-2; Rudolph 2018b: 45, 49, 51.
- 6 For an overview of scholars who at times seem inclined to that interpretation, see Sedley 2018: 67-8, on whose contribution to the debate, see pp. 180-81 below.
- 7 Schoenheim 1966; Rosenmeyer 1996. On what is meant by effluences, see pp. 153-56 below.
- 8 Schoenheim also cites the bitter taste we experience near the mixing of wormwood; Schoenheim 1966: 80, 86 n. 2; Rosenmeyer 1996: 144. For an overview of the state of the text in the second instance of these lines, see Bailey 1947: 3.1694.
- 9 On the Epicurean belief in the reliability of the senses and their role in epistemology, see *Lucr. DRN* 4.478-99. *Epic. RS* 23, 24; *Diog. Laert.* 10.31-32. The bibliography on this subject is vast; see n. 1 above for some important contributions.
- 10 *Lucr. DRN* 1.400-9.
- 11 See e.g. pp. 194-97 below on the taste of honey, Koenen 2004 on the echo, and Glidden 1979a: 168 on the role of the bizarre.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

The sense of taste is a capacity of all living creatures. One of the traditional five senses of the body, Lucretius explicitly attributes it to both humans and animals. All are born with this essential property and from birth learn to use it through experience, in a process of trial and error. It generally helps one to seek suitable nutrition, avoid poison, and thus to survive.¹² Lucretius' main account of taste occurs in the fourth book of *DRN*, following the treatment of sight (4.54-378) and optical illusions (4.379-468), his refutation of skepticism and argument for the epistemic reliability of the senses (4.469-521), and the explanation of hearing (4.522-614). In brief, it proceeds as follows:

- 4.615-16 Taste can be understood according to a logic similar to that which explains how the other senses work.¹³
- 4.617-21 We experience taste in the mouth, via the tongue and palate. The flavor comes from food.
- 4.622-26 When we taste different flavors, we also experience pleasure and pain, depending on the shapes of the particles involved.
- 4.627-32 The pleasures of taste cease once ingestion occurs. Any food will suffice for nourishment, provided that it meets certain basic conditions.
- 4.633-41 Some food is better suited to some creatures than to others.

12 See e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 4.633-62, 823-59, 5.1032. The faculty of smell also aids in seeking food, avoiding poison, and survival; 4.684-86.

13 These lines evoke and bring forward the sense of Lucr. *DRN* 4.522-23. See also 4.489-96, 6.981-87.

- 4.642-62 Different sorts of creatures experience the same food differently. This is due to differences in the creatures' physical makeup.
- 4.663-72 Similarly, when we are sick, things taste different to us than they usually do.

Lucretius then moves on to the sense of smell (4.673-705). This much is fairly uncontroversial. The debate about taste primarily revolves around the details of the interpretation. Before presenting a more in-depth treatment than has thus far been attempted, a sketch of that debate is in order.

Consideration of taste is often closely linked to that of touch, in both the ancient and modern discussions of Epicurean theory. As stated above, the traditional view is that both touch and taste operate through direct contact with the objects of their perception. Others have proposed an indirect contact mechanism. This idea has a history. Lucretius' emphasis on *tactus* and on the role of contact in the materialist physics of the senses led some scholars to question whether all of the senses can be reductively explained by the sense of touch.¹⁴ Two of the advocates of this theory – that indeed they can be – are Schoenheim and Rosenmeyer.¹⁵ Both also argue that touch is in fact the registering of contact specifically with various kinds of effluences, different sorts for the different senses; by their logic, taste is the registering by touch of contact with effluences of taste-bodies or flavor.¹⁶ However, Schoenheim acknowledges that with taste '[t]here are not normally effluences as such. It is the objects themselves we taste, even though we do squeeze

14 See n. 5 above.

15 Schoenheim 1966; Rosenmeyer 1996. Cf. Glidden 1979a: 177-78 n. 15; Furley 1993: 91-92.

16 Schoenheim 1966: esp. 74, 77, 81, 86 n. 2, 87; Rosenmeyer 1996: esp. 137-38, 140, 141-42, 143.

the taste out of them'.¹⁷ She reaches a similar conclusion about the role of effluences in the sense of touch.¹⁸ Schoenheim nevertheless takes 'the salty taste of sea water and the bitter one of wormwood, which we can perceive without actually drinking the water or eating the herb' as evidence for the role of effluences in all of the senses, at least in some cases.¹⁹ While Schoenheim treats taste in the context of her larger arguments about touch, it is Rosenmeyer's main topic and he considers it in far greater detail. He argues that chewing liberates effluences of flavor from food.²⁰ These effluences, not the food, enter our passages and lead to taste.²¹ Thus all taste occurs at a distance from the source object, whether the relatively small distances in our mouths or the perceptible larger distance of 'the salty flavor of the sea breeze'.²² In order to address their arguments, we must first consider what is meant by 'effluence'.

On one reading, effluents are simply bodies which flow out from a source object. Effluence refers collectively to a stream of effluents. Some effluents emanate continuously from the surface, as do *simulacra*, the ultra-fine films that give rise to vision. They have the same shape and color as their source object, but do not share its other properties. Other effluents are emitted from deep within an object, like odors, sounds, and smoke.²³ While *simulacra*, sounds, and odors are microscopic, one can see smoke.²⁴ The *simulacra*, odors, and sounds are intermediary stimuli that

17 Schoenheim 1966: 80.

18 Schoenheim 1966: 85.

19 Schoenheim 1966: 80, 86 n. 2.

20 Rosenmeyer 1996: esp. 137-40. Rosenmeyer uses the terms effluence, film, and *simulacra* to refer to the same entities; Rosenmeyer 1996: 135 n. 4.

21 Rosenmeyer 1996: 138-39, 143-44.

22 Rosenmeyer 1996: 138, 144. Cf. e.g. Asmis 1984: 111.

23 On the positions in the source objects from which these effluences are emitted, see e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 4.90-97, 694-97. That *simulacra* do not replicate the structure of the object beyond the arrangement of constituents on its surface, see 4.65-71, 87-89, 110-11, 196.

24 Lucr. *DRN* 4.54-126, 143-46; Epic. *Ep. Hdt.* 47-48. See also Bailey 1947: 3.1694.

– barring distortion – allow us to perceive certain properties of the thing from which they originated by preserving some continuity with the relevant aspects of that object’s nature.²⁵ Smoke, on the other hand, is an example of effluents that do not function as intermediaries and have a nature fundamentally distinct from that of their source object. On this minimal reading, it seems plausible to hold, as for example Bailey does, that effluences of some sort could be involved in the salty taste of sea air – whether or not they are involved in taste more generally.²⁶ Other interpretations of ‘effluence’ exist as well. For example, Schoenheim suggests that the effluents particular to their respective senses are miniatures of the original objects, with the partial exception, as noted above, of the effluences that cause touch and taste.²⁷ According to Rosenmeyer, the emitted particles involved in sight transmit the structure of the source object, but those involved in hearing, smell, taste, and perhaps certain kinds of touch, are identical to their source objects, as microscopic replicas or extensions thereof.²⁸ Atomic vibration within an object or *πάλσις* is generally thought to be the proximate cause of certain emissions, like the emission of *simulacra*. Rosenmeyer takes *πάλσις* to be the

25 *Simulacra*, more specifically, preserve the color and shape of an object (or at least the shape of its color) and thereby allow one to perceive those properties of the object. Odors do not begin from a single larger particle of odor, but are sent forth as they form, preserving and transmitting the scent of the source. A sound is emitted from an object as a single particle, which breaks up into smaller but otherwise identical particles, allowing the perception of the original sound. They also preserve and enable perception of part of the nature of their source. It is in a thing’s nature to make particular sorts of sounds and not others, as with the different sorts of sounds that creatures of different species are capable of making. It is also in a thing’s nature to make sounds that consistently have certain characteristics, as with the distinctiveness of the voices of different individuals that features in voice identification.

26 Bailey 1947: 3.1208–10, 1694; cf. 3.1253. Other scholars who seem to share this minimalist interpretation include Sedley (1989: 126) and Furley (1993: 83–84, 91–92).

27 Schoenheim 1966: 74, 78, 86 n. 2.

28 Rosenmeyer 1996: 135–37, 144, 146–49.

cause of all effluences.²⁹ While Koenen is inclined to view vision and olfaction as involving such ‘automatical’ or involuntary emissions, she views hearing and taste as generally involving ‘non-automatical emissions’, or emissions which living creatures cause deliberately. She suggests, however, that automatical emissions might be involved in the taste of liquid and the salty taste of sea air.³⁰ Nevertheless, as Koenen notes, in Lucretius’ actual explanations of hearing (*DRN* 4.522-614) and taste (*DRN* 4.615-72), he makes no reference to effluences, i.e. to a flowing away of particles involved in those sensory processes.³¹

These scholars have raised a series of related questions about what taste actually is for the Epicureans: What exactly does one perceive? What is the relationship between that thing and the sense of taste? Is any contact with the thing itself or with bodies that flow from it? If the latter, are those bodies fundamentally like their source, and where do they come from? How does one come into contact with what one perceives? What part of the body does – in other words, what is the sense organ of taste? How does that lead to the experience of taste? And, finally, do we contribute anything to those perceptions? These questions will be addressed in context. First it will be useful to return to the issue of touch.

The Epicurean account of the universe is materialistic: the universe is comprised of bodies and void, their properties, and the interactions of these entities – interactions such as the collision of atoms zinging about in space. Lucretius uses the word *tactus* to signify contact, as well as a number of ideas and processes that involve bodies touching each other. Nevertheless, as Sedley notes, Lucretius distinguishes between touch as a sense involving contact and touch as contact itself. Sedley also argues that Lucretius understands a further duality within the former: internal

29 Rosenmeyer 1996: 136, 146-48.

30 Koenen 1997: 166.

31 Koenen 1997: 165-66. See also Rosenmeyer 1996: 149.

touch and external touch – a distinction that seems shared by the Epicurean author of PHerc. 19/698, who may have been Philodemus. According to Sedley, internal touch is the body's capacity for awareness of certain states and changes within it, including some from which pleasure and pain arise. The body thus shares with the other sense organs the ability to sense its own internal state. External touch is the body's capacity for awareness of contact with things that are adjacent to or penetrating it.³² The 'touching of touching' (*tactus ... tactūs*, DRN 2.434), then, is 'an awareness, by the *tactile sense*, of direct corporeal *contact*' with or within the body. This capacity for 'internal tactile awareness of contact' is the sensory faculty of the body, as body, that we call the sense of touch.³³ It follows that, while all the senses operate through contact (whether direct or indirect via contact with intermediaries), their perceptions do not necessarily entail the registering of all instances of contact by the tactile sense.³⁴ Therefore, they cannot be reductively explained by the sense of touch.

The distinctions with which Sedley analyzes touch can also advance the discussion of taste. For the remainder of this article, unless quoting another, I use the term 'sensory faculty of taste' when referring to the ability we generally call 'the sense of taste'; a manifestation of that faculty that is our phenomenal experience, I call 'the perception of x' (where x is what one registers awareness of), 'an instance of taste', or 'the sensation of taste'. All of these expressions use an appositional genitive. With 'the mechanism of taste', I refer to how the faculty achieves perceptions; a 'sense organ of taste' is a site where that process and the sensations that seem to arise from it occur. The 'object of perception' is the thing whose properties one seems to perceive phenomenally; a

32 Sedley 1989: 126, 129-32. Sedley 2018: esp. 64-72. See also Glidden 1979a: 161-63.

33 Sedley 2018: 72.

34 Sedley 2018: esp. 67-74.

‘sense object’ or ‘intermediary’ is a stimulus which is different in nature but whose properties at some underlying level make possible that phenomenal perception. At times, the object of perception is also called ‘the source object’ or ‘source’. When I simply use ‘taste’, I do so generally. I apply the same conventions in discussing the other sensory faculties and the perceptions associated with them.

THE MECHANISM

What taste is and how taste works are closely bound up for Lucretius. He begins his account in book four by characterizing taste as the feeling or perception of *sucus*. He then goes on to describe how *sucus* is produced when one eats (*DRN* 4.615-21):

nec, qui sentimus sucum, lingua atque palatum
 plusculum habent in se rationis plus operaeve.
 principio sucum sentimus in ore, cibum cum
 mandendo exprimimus, ceu plenam spongiam aquai
 siquis forte manu premere ac siccare coëpit.
 inde quod exprimimus per caulas omne palati
 diditur et rarae per flexa foramina linguae.³⁵

Nor do the tongue and palate, by which we perceive *sucus*, require the least bit more argument or effort to explain themselves. Firstly, we feel *sucus* in the mouth when we squeeze the food by chewing it, just as if by chance someone begins to press and to drain dry a sponge full of water with the hand. Then all that we squeeze out is distributed

35 Quotations from *De rerum natura* follow the Latin text of Rouse & Smith 1992.

through the openings of the palate and through the winding passages of the porous tongue.

On one reading, *sucus* is a liquid substance that comes from food (*cibus*) because of mastication. The analogy with squeezing water from a sponge suggests it is mastication that releases *sucus* from the food. Saliva does not seem to be involved.³⁶ In conjunction with the nearby mention of liquid in the mouth (4.624), the analogy confirms that *sucus* is liquid. It is therefore likely that one operative meaning of the word is ‘juice’. This is its primary signification in the Latin language and throughout *DRN*, though its full meaning is somewhat more complicated, as we shall see.³⁷ The repetition of *exprimimus* and its root *premo* in three successive lines emphasize that chewing food includes squeezing it – perhaps indeed juicing it. While the teeth doing the squeezing are not explicitly mentioned in the way that the hand is, line 4.615 may be evoking them with its heavy spondees. With respect to mirroring, the concentration of elisions in the opening five lines is also worth noting.³⁸ Taken together, they seem to support the view that the sensory faculty of taste operates through direct contact between the parts of one’s mouth and the food, at least on a phenomenal level. Given the tendency for correspondence

36 Lucretius is not unaware of its existence. It is mentioned twice in the poem, once in the context of food as being poisonous to snakes (Lucr. *DRN* 4.638), and once in the context of kissing (4.1108); on the latter, see Rudolph 2018a: 16–17. Perhaps Lucretius views it as something which we generally produce in the mouth in anticipation of consuming food or drink, which then aids in swallowing it.

37 See *sucus*, *OLD* and pp. 193–97 below. Scholars working on *DRN* generally translate *sucus* as juice, flavor, or taste; see e.g. Bailey 1947: 3.1254–55; Godwin 1986: 45, 130; Rosenmeyer 1996: 138.

38 The elisions are: *lingua atque* (Lucr. *DRN* 4.615), *plusculum habent* (4.616), *mandendo exprimimus* (4.618), *spongiam aquai* (4.618), *premere ac* (4.619). See also Bailey 1947: 3.1255; Godwin 1986: 130.

between the perceptible and the imperceptible, the reader can reasonably expect that there is also direct contact on the microlevel.³⁹ These lines depict what they describe in other respects as well, clarifying their meaning. In 4.618-19, *mandendo exprimus* and *premere ac* highlight the action of pressing on something by embodying it; *spongiam aquai*, in turn, mirrors the initial physical intertwining of and connection between the food and its *sucus*.⁴⁰ Moreover, the reader, if reading aloud, is pressing out auditory representations of these textual phenomena. Indeed, mentioning the effort of the *lingua* to explain itself may well have encouraged reading aloud. In the explanation of hearing and sound production just beforehand, *lingua* signifies the tongue and speech; the use of *exprimus* also echoes it. The reader is thus likely to be particularly attuned to the auditory experience.⁴¹ This trend continues in lines 4.620-21 by mirroring with the use of hyperbaton. Here the phenomena are represented visually, and the reader can apply the understanding gained from the preceding explanation of sight. *Quod* and *omne* are distributed to the first and fifth feet, respectively, and the placement of *omne* illustrates that the *sucus* is *per caulas ... palati*. Similarly, the substance's distribution *per flexa foramina* is bracketed by *rarae ... linguae*. Both constructions mimic the porousness of the tongue and palate, a subject to which we shall return shortly. These lines may also illustrate, as Godwin suggests, the winding path of the *sucus* (as juice) as it is absorbed.⁴² The repetition of *per* highlights both the absorption and its pervasiveness. Lucretius thus inscribes into the very structure of lines 4.617-21 how the *sucus* comes into the

39 On this tendency, see e.g. Schrivers 1978; Schiesaro 1990.

40 The particles of *sucus* are likely dispersed throughout the food, like the water in the sponge, not necessarily just deep-seated, like bodies of odor; for further discussion, see pp. 187-88 below. For the view that they are deep-seated, see Bailey 1947: 3.1253-55, following Robin.

41 On Lucretius' use of *exprimo* and on his use of the auditory potential of the text for philosophical disambiguation, see Zinn 2018: 132 and 138-39, 146, respectively.

42 Godwin 1986: 130.

apertures and entrances, the passages and inlets, of the tongue and palate. The knowledge of the senses discussed beforehand, if applied, would prime the reader for this explanation and facilitate it. So, we perceive *sucus* when it is released from the food by chewing and the juice enters the pores of our tongue and palate. Their passages must then interact with the juice in a way that gives rise to perception. Before we turn to that perception and the other potential meanings of *sucus*, let us consider the sense organs in more detail.

As we have seen, Lucretius identifies both the tongue and the palate as sense organs of taste.⁴³ He emphasizes this in various ways. Lucretius foregrounds them in the first line of his explanation. There, their role in perceiving *sucus* is confirmed by *qui*, which refers to both, and they serve together as subject of *habent*, indicating their common or shared action.⁴⁴ The elision in the expression which introduces them, *lingua atque palatum*, as well as the parallelisms in the pleonastic prepositional phrases of 4.620-1, perhaps further illustrate their common function. So might the partial chiasmic echo of 4.615 in 617, particularly if one takes *in ore* to refer to them collectively by synecdoche. Even today we speak of one's palate as a metonymy for that individual's particular taste or discernment. Then too *palatum* evoked both physical taste and psychological preference. The vault of the mouth was also associated with the vault of the heavens.⁴⁵ Lucretius may in fact have a multivalent meaning of *palatum*

43 Today we add the pharynx to these and focus on receptors on the surface, like the taste buds on the tongue and palate, rather than thinking in terms of pores and passages. For an overview of modern, scientific approaches to the study of taste, see Rudolph 2018a: 5.

44 It may also refer back to Lucretius' explanation of sound production in the immediately preceding account of hearing. The tongue and lips feature prominently in that mechanism. However, it is not implausible that Lucretius may also have been aware of the role of the palate in the production of some sounds. There are references to it among his Roman contemporaries; see *palatum*, OLD §1c.

45 See *palatum*, OLD; Cic. ND 2.18.49. That association is activated, if not reinforced, by Lucretius' use of *templa* at 4.624, even though the word seems to have a different

in mind throughout his account of taste, encompassing a range of its literal and figurative uses. In his view, both the tongue and palate play an important role in the mechanism of taste. As *rarae ... linguae* (4.621) reminds us, the distinction between each sense organs' apparent surface and its inner passages may be somewhat spurious. All assemblages contain void; the amount depends on how closely their constituent bodies are interlocked and – in the larger, more complex assemblages – on their internal and external structures. Thus, all seemingly solid macroscopic bodies are actually porous, and, through some of these pores, they have the potential to emit and receive matter.⁴⁶ These bodies include living creatures.⁴⁷ Every living thing is both unique and of a kind; moreover, all creatures are both made up of many different constituents and have many constituents in common.⁴⁸ To the extent that creatures differ in appearance and nature, their constitutions also differ, including the passages with which their bodies are riddled.⁴⁹ The sense organs of taste are a particularly telling example (*DRN* 4.649–51, 655–62):

semina cum porro distent, differere necesses
 intervalla viasque, foramina quae perhibemus,
 omnibus in membris et in ore ipsoque palato.

...

namque figurarum ratio ut motusque reposcunt,
 proinde foraminibus debent differre figurae,
 et variare viae proinde ac textura coercet.

primary meaning in that context; see pp. 187–91 below. Compare *templum*, *OLD* §1, 4c. See also Bailey 1947: 3.1255.

46 See e.g. *Lucr. DRN* 1.329–69, 483–97, 511–17, 532–37, 565–76, 2.100–8, 4.90–94, 6.936–58, 981–97, 1009–11, 1034–39, 1084–86.

47 *Lucr. DRN* 4.858–76.

48 *Lucr. DRN* 1.584–98, 2.342–51, 583–88, 661–72, 4.642–48, 6.981–87, 1034–36.

49 *Lucr. DRN* 2.718–29, 4.645–72 (on which, see below).

hoc ubi quod suave est aliis aliis fit amarum,
 illi, cui suave est, levissima corpora debent
 contractabiliter caulas intrare palati
 at contra quibus est eadem res intus acerba,
 aspera nimirum penetrant hamataque fauces.

Furthermore, since the seeds differ, it is necessary that the gaps and pathways, which we call passages, differ in all of the members and in the mouth and the palate itself ... For indeed as the configuration and motions of the seeds' shapes require, the shapes of the passages ought to differ accordingly, and the pathways ought to vary accordingly, as the structure compels. By this, when what is sweet to some happens to be bitter to others: for that one to whom it is sweet, very smooth bodies ought to enter the openings of the palate in a caressing manner, but, on the other hand, to those for whom the same thing inside is acerbic, doubtless rough and hooked bodies penetrate the inlets.

Lucretius thus accounts for our different tastes, i.e. what foods different creatures find preferable and even suitable.⁵⁰ In short, the shapes of one's passages influence what sorts of bodies enter and by this influence our perception.

The constitution of the tongue and palate is worth treating in further detail. Lucretius uses the palate as the exemplar (4.651, 660), coordinate with its figurative meaning as the organ of discernment, while confirming the generalizability of his remarks.⁵¹ Lines 4.652-62 elaborate on 4.649-51. In lines 4.655-57, Lucretius presents a two-fold concept of passage shape: the shape of the channel, which affects what can fit through

50 Lucr. *DRN* 4.633-41, 6.970-78.

51 On the figurative meanings of *palatum*, see pp. 185-86 above. The generalizability to the tongue and the rest of the body, including the other sense organs, is confirmed by *omnibus in membris et in ore ipsoque palato*, Lucr. *DRN* 4.651.

it, and the shape of the route that would be traced by whatever journeys through it.⁵² With respect to the shape of a channel, there is a further duality. Lucretius often uses the same word to refer to both the passages and their points of entry, as here with *fauces* (4.662), as well as with *caulae* and *foramen* throughout the account of taste.⁵³ While some passages may seem well-suited to admit bodies of particular shapes and sizes, this is not just a matter of square pegs and round holes, so to speak. A roundish channel of a particular size could potentially admit a smaller body with a spikey or angular shape. The shape of a given channel also is not necessarily regular, much less the same as the shape of its entrance.⁵⁴ Moreover, these shapes are not necessarily stable; they may change, for example, with illness.⁵⁵ These considerations suggest that there are not particular pores for sweet and others for bitter and that which bodies one interacts with on any given occasion of tasting is influenced by a host of factors, including the make-up of both the perceiver and the object of perception. The passages are also not necessarily distinct pathways that progress in a more or less linear fashion from the surface towards some destination, like a series of traffic tunnels under a river. Rather, as *flexa foramina* (4.621) earlier and *ac textura coerctet* (4.657) here may imply, the porousness of these sense organs could best be described as a three-dimensional web, a myriad of passages of various description – woven together into networks and not entirely interconnected. They are intricate

52 Lucr. *DRN* 4.655-57.

53 The device of synecdoche supports this, of course, and sometimes the distinction is even moot in context. See *fauces* *OLD* §1, 3, 4. For other views, see Bailey 1947: 3.1259; Godwin 1986: 132; Rouse & Smith 1992: 328. In light of Lucr. *DRN* 4.622-29, it is unlikely that Lucretius is referring at 4.662 to the throat, although that is the primary meaning of *fauces* at 4.628.

54 See Lucr. *DRN* 2.381-97, 4.652-54 especially *modis multis* (4.654).

55 Lucr. *DRN* 4.663-72. It is conceivable that illness may change the number of passages, the identity of the passages, or just the shape in which their perimeters are configured (keeping how many and which are open to interaction).

routes with many potential twists, turns, and choke points; some even lack an opening to the world beyond the body.⁵⁶ Here, with *intrare, intus*, and *penetrant* (4.661-62), Lucretius stresses the penetration of the passages more than before, with *diditur per ... per* (4.620-21), which the echo of *caulas ... palati* also recalls. Lines 4.652-62 also point to parallels between the mechanism of taste and other sensory mechanisms. To the extent that passages serve as a filter, allowing some things to pass through and not others, the particular selectivity of one's passages is not specific to the tongue and palate; each of the sense organs is open to interacting with its own sorts of stimuli.⁵⁷ In the mechanism of sight, for example, *simulacra* penetrate the pupils of the eyes (4.331, 719); in that of hearing, auditory stimuli insinuate themselves into or otherwise penetrate the ears (4.525, 544, 613), and, in smell, olfactory stimuli, the nostrils (2.415, 683). That of touch may also at times work this way (2.434-35); with macroscopic entities, at least, the mechanism seems to generally involve the outermost surface of the body, not its passages, as shown by the sensory threshold for external touch.⁵⁸ In at least four of these senses, then, the contact that leads to perception involves the penetration of suitable

56 Compare Lucr. *DRN* 4.90-94, 599-602.

57 Lucr. *DRN* 2.680-87, 4.489-96, 6.981-87. See also Epic. *Ep. Hdt.* 49-53; Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1109a-1110d; Asmis 1984: 115-17. Thus, sounds have no taste, so to speak, although they are pressed out through the throat, passed through the mouth, and shaped by the tongue. On the mechanism of sound production and the senses' respective spheres of discrimination, see n. 1 above.

58 Evidence for the sensory threshold for external touch comes in part from microscopic bodies that are felt collectively like a blow to the exterior surface of the body or stubbing one's toe on a rock, as with wind and cold; Lucr. *DRN* 4.259-68. For another interpretation, see Rosenmeyer 1996: 137. It also comes from macroscopic objects whose contact is not registered by the sensory faculty of touch, such as dust, cobwebs, and feathers. It seems that, due to their size and/or lightness, they do not stir perception-bearing motion (*sensifer motus*) in the particles of the *anima* dispersed throughout the flesh; Lucr. *DRN* 3.374-95.

stimuli into the passages of the body. Wherever those instances of contact occur, whether contact with an intermediary or with the object itself, that site seems to be identified as the sense organ. Thus, for Lucretius, the tongue and palate are the sense organs of taste in that the interactions which give rise to their perceptions occur in their passages and the shape of those passages at least partly determines which particles these sense organs are likely to interact with.⁵⁹

The interactions reveal more about the mechanism. They occur once the *sucus* and the passages meet (*DRN* 4.622-26):⁶⁰

hoc ubi levia sunt manantis corpora suci,
 suaviter attingunt et suaviter omnia tractant
 umida linguae circum sudantia templa.
 at contra pungunt sensum lacerantque coorta,
 quanto quaeque magis sunt asperitate repleta.

By this, when the bodies of the flowing *sucus* are smooth, sweetly they touch upon and sweetly they stroke everything around the moist dripping regions of the tongue. But, in contrast, the bodies that attack our sense prick and tear, each in proportion to their roughness.

These lines establish the fundamentals of how the interactions work at the level of microscopic assemblages and structures, priming the reader for the development of the ideas at 4.658-62. Comparing these two parts of his account, Lucretius emphasizes the tongue and palate each in turn, with his use of *linguae* at 4.624 and *palato* at 4.660; the parallels between their passages and the structure and functions of these organs suggest

59 See also *Lucr. DRN* 4.706-21.

60 See *Lucr. DRN* 4.620-21 above.

that each may also refer to the other by metonymy. The content and words of 4.622-26 and 4.658-62 not only resonate with each other, they also recall and bring to bear an earlier account of the relevance of stimulus shape to perception, within which taste features prominently: 2.398-443.⁶¹ As Friedländer and Snyder have shown, Lucretius chooses words that illustrate the shape of what they name through the pattern of their sounds.⁶² Through *DRN* 2.398-443, 4.622-26, and 4.658-62, taken together, Lucretius shows that the shape of the stimulus not only affects whether or not it can interact but also the nature of the interaction. Both at the entrances and within the passages, smooth bodies of *sucus* make contact of a gentle touching or stroking nature.⁶³ This gives rise to the perception of sweetness, which is pleasurable; the anaphora of *suaviter* (4.623) signifies both.⁶⁴ Rough bodies of *sucus* make contact that pricks or tears (4.625), depending on whether their shape is just rough or also hooked. The chiasmic presentation at 4.622-6 highlights the contrast between the smooth and rough bodies and their respective sorts of interactions.⁶⁵ In fact, the echoing sections of the accounts are structured around similar contrasts, most also introduced by *at contra*.⁶⁶ The reader

61 This account is itself a key exemplum in Lucretius' larger proof of the diversity of the shapes and sizes of the atoms or first-beginnings, comprising *Lucr. DRN* 2.333-477.

62 Friedländer 1941: 358-63; Snyder 1980: 91-92.

63 For contact by gentle touching, see *tango* and its compounds: *iucunde tangere* *Lucr. DRN* 2.403, *attingunt* 4.623. For contact by caressing, see *tracto* and its compounds: *tractentur* 2.399, *tractant* 4.623, *contractabiliter* 4.660. Lucretius often uses *tracto* and its compounds to indicate a sort of caressing motion, i.e. stimulation by stroking; see *tracto*, *OLD* §1, 2; Bailey 1947: 3.1259; Godwin 1986: 132.

64 See also *iucunde tangere* *Lucr. DRN* 2.403.

65 The arrangement is: stimulus shape, nature of physical interaction, location, nature of physical interaction, stimulus shape. It is perhaps no coincidence that *circum* (all around) occupies the central position.

66 *Lucr. DRN* 2.398-401 (*at contra* 400), 402-7 (*at contra* 404), 422-25 (*at contra* 424), 426-30 (*sunt etiam ... sed magis* - which, by variation, illustrates the phenomenon), 4.658-62 (*at contra* 661).

thus knows that 4.625-26 refers to two kinds of roughness. In book two, Lucretius states that when things are made from barb-like constituents, ones that have hooks with sharp, curved points, they tear their way into the body. This gives rise to some variety of harsh sensation, like the perception of a sour, bitter, or even repugnantly foul flavor, which is implied to be painful. However, when they are made from somewhat jagged constituents, i.e. ones with small angles that jut out a bit, there is a kind of tickling contact that stimulates perceptions of another sort, like of acidic, spicy, sharp, or otherwise tingly flavors.⁶⁷ Lines 4.625-26 indicate that this pointy sort also have the potential to be unpleasant, perhaps depending on the degree of their roughness.⁶⁸ In the elaboration of 4.626 at 4.662, the elements of *aspera ... hamataque* should thus be understood both on their own and as a hendiadys: 'rough bodies and hooked bodies' and 'bodies that are roughly hooked'.⁶⁹ Lucretius therefore conceives of sweet and bitter as opposite ends of the flavor spectrum; there are other possibilities in between.⁷⁰

Lines 4.615-26 also provide evidence for Lucretius' views on the speed of the interactions. His use of temporal clauses, adverbs, and participles reflects the apparent simultaneity of the perception of *sucus* and the underlying interactions with the bodies of *sucus*. These also seem to coincide with the perceptions of pleasure and pain; that implication at 2.398-407 and 2.422-30 is confirmed by 4.627-29, where Lucretius states that the pleasure from the *sucus* ends at the boundary of the palate, i.e. upon ingestion, the end of the process or mechanism of taste. The apparent

67 See esp. Lucr. DRN 2.398-407, 422-30, 461-70.

68 Compare Lucr. DRN 2.470.

69 See also *levibus atque rotundis* Lucr. DRN 2.402, and the echoing lines 2.404 and 2.424 where the constructions mirror the phenomenon of interlocking constituents metrically as well as when taken as instances of hendiadys.

70 On ancient and modern thought about the 'basic tastes' and the range of possible 'tastes', see Rudolph 2018a: 4-5.

coincidence of pleasure and pain with different sorts of contact – contact, that is, between the bodies of *sucus* and the passages of the tongue and palate – supports the argument that all of the sense organs are able to register awareness of their own internal states.⁷¹ That said, distribution, penetrating, colliding, stroking, pricking, tearing, and ingesting are themselves processes.⁷² All take some amount of time. If the perception of *sucus* occurs when one chews the food, with no apparent delay, and potentially lasts until the *sucus* is ingested, with no apparent lingering, then one’s sensations and the interactions underlying them must only seem to coincide, and each interaction of the mechanism must occur much faster than the speed at which perception arises.⁷³

Now, to what precisely does *quod exprimimus* (4.620) refer, and what are these *corpora suci* (4.622)? What is the experience to which Lucretius refers when he says *sentimus suctum*? According to Lucretius, atoms or first-beginnings lack certain properties generally possessed by larger, perceptible assemblages. The first-beginnings of things, being actually solid as well as immutable and indestructible, do not give off or break up into smaller bodies.⁷⁴ They are therefore dry of juice (*suco ieiuna* 2.845) and have no *sapor* of their own to contribute to the properties of assemblages.⁷⁵ This is the first instance of *sucus* in *DRN*. In the last, Lucretius characterizes *sapor* as originating from *sucus*.⁷⁶ So far it would seem that

71 See p. 181 above. The ability of the tongue and palate to register both the different sorts of contact and their own internal state may approach our notions of mouth-feel, excepting the contribution of aroma, which Lucretius does not seem to admit. Our contemporary discourse on taste sometimes approaches one’s experience of food and drink through the vector of mouth-feel and there are multiple interpretations of the concept; see Rudolph 2018a: 5.

72 With respect to pleasure and pain, see also *Lucr. DRN* 2.963–66.

73 On the speed of our perception of time relative to other sensory mechanisms, see Zinn 2016.

74 See e.g. *Lucr. DRN* 1.169–71, 215–24, 234, 483–502, 2.842–64.

75 *Lucr. DRN* 1.778–81, 2.583–88, 854–59.

76 *Lucr. DRN* 6.986–87.

Lucretius uses *sucus* for juice and *sapor* for flavor, a property (apparently) of food or drink at the phenomenal level, registered by the sensory faculty of taste. But Lucretius also uses *sucus* to refer to both the fluid and flavor at once, as he seems to at 4.615 and possibly 4.617.⁷⁷ He also occasionally uses *sapor* this way, as perhaps with *sorsum sapor insinuat* | *sensibus*.⁷⁸ Moreover, at 4.627-29 *sucus* must mean flavor, because, although one no longer experiences flavor once one ingests and distributes a nutritive substance, one still experiences pleasure if and as one's constitution is restored by that substance.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it is those substances which have a pleasurable flavor that one tends to pursue.⁸⁰ Just as *sucus* can refer to juice and, by metonymy, to the flavor whose perception it gives rise to, so too *sapor* can refer not only to flavor, but also to the sensory faculty that perceives it. It is as the sensory faculty of taste, for example, that *sapor oris* (4.487, 494) helps to establish the epistemic reliability of the senses.⁸¹ The one instance of *sapor* in Lucretius' account of taste comes at the end, where he demonstrates the validity of his mechanistic arguments through their potential to make sense of a common epistemological explanandum: the paradoxically bitter flavor of honey during illness.⁸² Generally speaking, when honey is in one's mouth, it has a sweet, pleasurable flavor.⁸³ As we have seen, this means that round,

77 Lucr. *DRN* 3.216-30, esp. 223, 226.

78 Lucr. *DRN* 2.684-85. On *insinuo* in *DRN*, see Farrell 1988: esp. 183-84.

79 Lucr. *DRN* 1.350-57, 2.711-19, 963-72, 4.858-76, 4.1091-93.

80 Hence, despite Lucretius' assurance that the sort of food does not matter beyond serving its nutritive function, one still administers the medicinal, bitter wormwood in a cup rimmed with honey; Lucr. *DRN* 1.936-42, 4.11-17, 630-32. The scholarly literature on the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain in Epicureanism is vast; for a recent overview of the subject, see Woolf 2009.

81 Lucr. *DRN* 4.469-521. See also, e.g. 2.510.

82 Lucr. *DRN* 4.663-72. For other ancient attempts to deal with this paradox, see e.g. Bailey 1947: 3.1260; Godwin 1986: 132; Rouse & Smith 1992: 328.

83 Lucr. *DRN* 1.938, 2.398-99, 2.505, 4.13.

smooth bodies are entering the passages of the tongue and palate.⁸⁴ Lucretius tells us that when one is sick, one's constitution sometimes undergoes changes that can affect perception (*DRN* 4.668-72):⁸⁵

fit prius ad sensum ut quae corpora conveniebant
nunc non convenient, et cetera sint magis apta,
quae penetrata queunt sensum progignere acerbum;
utraque enim sunt in mellis commixta sapore –
id quod iam supera tibi saepe ostendimus ante.

It happens that the bodies which were previously suited for feeling now do not fit, and that the rest are more apt, those which, when they have penetrated the sense organ, are able to produce an acerbic sensation. For both [sorts of bodies] have been mixed together in the *sapor* of honey – a thing which above I have already shown you often before.

Here Lucretius employs words and constructions with a plurality of meanings. The expression *ad sensum* functions together with the polyp-ton of *convenio* as well as with *apta*. These simultaneously signify the bodies' coming together with the sense organ, their physical (in)congruity with its passages, and their (un)suitability for causing feeling.⁸⁶ In 4.670, *sensum* is sylleptic, signifying both the sense organ (whether the

84 According to Lucretius, the constituents of honey are not so smooth, round, or light as those of water, which is also sweet; therefore it is more viscous than water. *Lucr. DRN* 3.189-202.

85 See p. 188 above.

86 In *DRN*, Lucretius uses *sensus* to mean a range of things, sometimes simultaneously, including sensation, the sense organs, and the senses or sensory faculties. See e.g. Glidden 1979a: 155. I hope to develop this further in a subsequent study.

tongue or palate) that is penetrated by these other bodies and the unusual feeling to which these interactions give rise. Lucretius highlights the fact that he has already demonstrated the logic behind this by simultaneously stating and depicting it, with the pleonasm interspersed throughout last line, *iam supera ... saepe ... ante*; this synchysis perhaps serves as also a visual mnemonic of the sorts of bodies in question, imitating their characteristic interlocking – and thus evoking the hooked shapes which lead both to interlocking and to the perception of a harsh or bitter flavor, which the reader now knows is painful.⁸⁷ These lines thus show that perception is affected by the issue of fit, with respect to size and shape. The bodies of *sucus* which used to enter the sense organ no longer fit, but now the rest (*cetera*) – i.e. those which usually do not fit – are better suited to the passages and thus for causing sensation. Under those circumstances one experiences different perceptions. The flavor of honey thus has the potential to be experienced as either sweet and thereby pleasurable or as bitter and thereby painful due to honey's mixed composition, with *sapor mellis* signifying both. As we have seen, different creatures experience the same foods differently because their passages are open to interactions with different constituents.⁸⁸ Similarly, we perceive flavor differently when our passages have changed significantly. Confirming 4.659–62, then, bitter and sweet are real, not conventions; they are two potential perceptions of the flavor of the very same thing (*eadem res*).⁸⁹ Which sensations one experiences thus depends to some extent on what one contributes to the process. It is telling that the one time the expression *corpora suci* occurs is in the context of the mechanism of taste. Because one's constitution influences which bodies are selected for interaction and, by this, how one experiences the property

87 Lucr. *DRN* 2.398–407 (esp. 404–5), 422–30.

88 Lucr. *DRN* 4.633–63. See pp. 186–90 above.

89 Following Epicurus, contra Democritus and the Sceptics. Democritus B9 (*SE M.* 7.135) DK; Sedley 1983: 33; Long & Sedley 1987: 1.37; Wardy 1988; Warren 2002: 7–9, 193–94.

of flavor, the expression is pointed. As *sucus* is *quod exprimimus*, thus *corpora suci* may be read both as a periphrasis and not. As a periphrasis, it nevertheless emphasizes the salient aspect of the thing to which the expression refers – namely, the constituent bodies of the juice that, through their interactions, give rise to the perception of flavor.⁹⁰

Until the discussion of honey, the account of taste has been concerned with *cibus*, apparently as what we might call ‘solid food’.⁹¹ Honey is a liquid.⁹² Lucretius divides all food into two categories: dry (or solid) food and liquid food.⁹³ Thus, unless otherwise specified, one should read *cibus* as signifying ‘nutritive substance’ – more precisely, ‘assemblage containing some potentially nutritive constituents’ – and any comments about *cibus* should be understood to apply to both solids and liquids.⁹⁴ Given these things, the mechanism of tasting liquids should somehow be self-evidently contained in the broader account of tasting food. We will return to this shortly. For the time being, let us simply note that one can perceive the flavor of liquids.

SEAWATER AND THE WATER CYCLE

Brackish rain was a recognized phenomenon in antiquity. Both it and the salty flavor of seawater were explananda of paradoxography at least as

90 Lucretius often uses periphrases in this way.

91 Of course, ‘solid’ food is a bit of a misnomer, given that all assemblages contain void; on which, see p. 186 above.

92 See Lucr. *DRN* 1.938, 4.13. The periphrasis *mellis liquore* emphasizes the bodies which would give rise to the perception of a sweet, pleasurable flavor, which is pertinent in these contexts.

93 Lucr. *DRN* 1.809, 859–65, esp. 864. For examples, see 2.390, 661–68.

94 Only some of their constituents are nutritive, i.e. fit for constructive incorporation by a given creature once ingested and absorbed. See e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 2.661–99, esp. 661–68 and 677–79, 709–17, 4.633–41, 865–76.

far back as Aristotle.⁹⁵ There was also a tradition of Roman writing about water. Topics included the composition of water, which sorts were beneficial and harmful, where they came from, and why. It included authors such as Vitruvius, Seneca the Younger, Pliny the Elder, and Columella.⁹⁶ All of these thinkers regard water as a sort of admixture, the flavor of which varies depending on what it is mixed with.⁹⁷

Lucretius expresses similar views on the composition of water and the flavor of liquids. According to *DRN*, fluidity is an essential property of water.⁹⁸ Something liquid or fluid is smooth, round, light, and flowing – with an ease contingent upon how smooth, round, and light its constituents are; water is a paradigmatic example of this.⁹⁹ Indeed, he calls fresh water ‘sweet’.¹⁰⁰ It is nevertheless an admixture or solution in that it contains a variety of constituents, not just what we might call water molecules.¹⁰¹ In book two’s account of the relevance of stimulus shape to perception, Lucretius presents honey and milk as exemplars of substances with a sweet, pleasant flavor; wormwood and centaury epitomize the bitter, wine lees and elecampane the tingly.¹⁰² In antiquity, honey, milk, and wine were commonly mixed with other liquids, like water.¹⁰³ It is not clear whether here Lucretius is referring to the herbs or to the tinctures or mixtures made with them. When Lucretius does specify the one or the other through periphrasis or context, he describes the flavor consist-

95 Arist. *Mete.* 2.3.358b2-6, 359a18-b22; Bakker 2016: 122.

96 Rogers 2018: 4-10.

97 They might not be surprised by the modern problem of acid rain.

98 Lucr. *DRN* 1.451-54, esp. 443.

99 Lucr. *DRN* 2.451-55, 3.189-202. It is also characterized as soft; 1.809.

100 See e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 2.474, 5.271, 6.637, 890, 894, 1266.

101 See e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 2.661-68. Milk is also sweet, pleasant, and contains nutritive constituents; 2.398-403, 5.812-15. On both, see 1.885-87.

102 Lucr. *DRN* 2.398-430.

103 Cilliers & Retief 2008: esp. 10-14. See also Lucr. *DRN* 1.260 likening neat milk to undiluted wine, and the note of Rouse & Smith 1992: 22.

ently. Indeed, as we shall see, it is to wormwood solutions (*diluta ... absinthia*) – i.e. mixtures of the herb (solute) and the water in which it has been dissolved (solvent) – that the sea is compared in Lucretius' references to the salty taste of sea air.¹⁰⁴ Seawater, according to Lucretius, is a mixture of smooth, round bodies with other constituents that are round but rough; although these do not have hooks, they are sufficiently rough (*squalidus, asper*) so as to wound the sense organs and give rise to the perception of seawater's bitter (*amarus, acerbus*), unpleasant flavor.¹⁰⁵ Conceivably both its smooth and rough constituents enter our passages, as, upon their separation, that liquid becomes sweet.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Lucretius implies that when fresh or sweet water and seawater are juxtaposed, the same person can perceive the flavor of each and thereby distinguish them.¹⁰⁷ These things suggest that one perceives the flavor of seawater through interactions with the seawater itself. Moreover, since – as we will see – Lucretius makes explicit that wormwood solution and seawater have the flavor associated with their solutes (and not the flavor of their solvent, water), the flavor of a substance is not necessarily determined by the numerical predominance of the constituents entering the passages of the tongue and palate. In other words, the quantities of constituents do not matter as much as their qualities and the interactions to which they are thus suited. Numerical predominance or concentration presumably impacts the strength or weakness of the flavor. Regardless, with respect to their relative contributions to one's perceptions, the harmful interactions take precedence over the pleasurable. Thus, when

104 Lucr. *DRN* 4.222-24, 6.928-30. Wormwood as or in liquid, see also: 1.936, 1.941 (*absinthii laticem*), 4.11, 4.16 (*absinthii laticem*). Wormwood as herb: 4.123. Centaury as herb: 4.125.

105 Lucr. *DRN* 2.456-77; on the state of the text, see Bailey 1947: 2.878-81.

106 Lucr. *DRN* 2.474-77.

107 Lucr. *DRN* 6.890-94.

noxious solutes are mixed with water, they take precedence in the flavor of the solution.¹⁰⁸

It now is possible to turn to the passage of *DRN* that initiated this investigation: 4.217-29. It follows a lacuna and is repeated with minor variation at 6.923-35.¹⁰⁹ In book four it functions as part of Lucretius' account of *simulacra*.¹¹⁰ At the outset, Lucretius presents a list of assemblages which flow from their respective sources; they are:

- 1) The intermediaries of sight, or *simulacra*, which stream off of all macroscopic things.
- 2) Odors, the intermediaries which come from deep within certain assemblages and effect the perception of scent.
- 3 & 4) Coldness from rivers and heat (or fire) from the sun – perhaps evoking frost and fire, which are among the exemplary things within the purview of the sensory faculty of touch.¹¹¹

108 Phenomenological precedence coincides with but is not necessarily caused by this. Some solutions are made with solutes that engage as little as possible with the senses, so that the solutes can stand out more, as with perfumes; *Lucr. DRN* 2.846-53. For a similar view of predominance and precedence, see e.g. Rudolph 2018b: 51-53.

109 The contents of the lacuna may be partially reflected by *Lucr. DRN* 6.921-22. Lines 6.923-25 repeat 4.217-21 with minor variations that do not significantly impact meaning. The two most crucial lines for the purposes of this study, 4.222-23, are repeated verbatim at 6.928-29, as are 4.225-29 at 6.930-35 if the reconstructions are correct. See esp. Bailey 1947: 3.1208-10, 1694; Godwin 1986: 106; Godwin 1991: 160; Rouse & Smith 1992: 292-93, 563-65; Dyson 1995: 256.

110 In the context of book six, it functions as part of the recapitulation of previously demonstrated points that are necessary to explain magnetism; on the structure and function of the account of magnetism, see e.g. Clay 1983: 189-91; Rosenmeyer 1996.

111 *Lucr. DRN* 2.431-33. Lucretius characterizes heat, for example, as an essential property of fire (see *DRN* 1.451-54, esp. 453); by synecdoche, he uses it both ways. Similarly, cold is used to signify both a property and some micro or macroscopic structure which has that property. See also e.g. 1.298-304, 483-503, 3.288-306, 5.592-613,

- 5) Wall-gnawing spray, from the waves of the sea.¹¹²
- 6) Voices (4.221), the bodies deliberately emitted by living creatures that can interact with the passages of the ears, effecting hearing.

Some of these assemblages emanate from the surface of their sources (1 and 5). Others are emitted from deep within (2 and 6). With the rest it is unclear (3 and 4). Only in (3) (4) and (5) are the sources of these assemblages specified. All except (5) are microscopic bodies. All could be considered effluences, according to the minimal notion. The ocean spray at any rate does not seem to be included as an intermediary of perception and, excepting size, it is identical in nature to its source. After the voices borne on the breeze, Lucretius introduces the controversial seventh and eight examples (*DRN* 4.222-24):¹¹³

denique in os salsi venit umor saepe saporis,
cum mare versamur propter, dilutaque contra
cum tuimur misceri absinthia, tangit amaror.

Finally, moisture of salty flavor often comes into the mouth when we are near the sea, and when we watch diluted wormwood be mixed before us, the bitterness reaches us.

637-42. The language and mechanics of temperature and thermodynamics are complex and a subject worthy of further investigation.

112 Lucr. *DRN* 4.220-21: ... *aestus ab undis | aequoris exesor moerorum litora circum*. For the interpretation of *aestus* here as ‘spray’; compare 1.719. See also *aestus*, *OLD* §6; Bailey 1947: 3.1694; West 1969: 11-12; Godwin 1986: 107. Godwin also compares the spray with Lucr. *DRN* 1.311-21.

113 For other renderings of this passage, see Bailey 1947: 1.373, 375, 563; Godwin 1986: 25; Godwin 1991: 71.

The intratextual echoes between these lines and the accounts of taste in books two and four discussed above suggest that the sections are in dialogue with each other. The dialogue itself is the controversy. As we have seen, some scholars take 4.217-29 as a whole to refer to effluences, as microscopic replicas of their sources, and thus argue that taste, at least in some cases, works through effluences.¹¹⁴ Bailey seems to think that it concerns effluences, on the minimal notion, and that they lead to the perception of flavor in some analogous way to eating and drinking.¹¹⁵ In my view, these lines are an analogy between *simulacra* and other bodies that move through the air, such as the wall-gnawing spray of the sea. At any rate, the entire list proves that there are particles, both micro and macroscopic, which are constantly separating from their sources and stream off in all directions. However, only some of these are intermediary stimuli in mechanisms underlying perception. Lucretius' focus is on *simulacra*, odors, and sounds; he suggests as much at 4.225-29.¹¹⁶ The omnipresence of those intermediaries explains why perception occurs continually and without interruption, specifically with respect to sight, smell, and hearing. This supports the long-established view that they operate through indirect contact with the objects of their perception. Now, the spray, the seawater, and the wormwood solution are all liquids; I believe that this suggests the way forward with respect to the question of taste.¹¹⁷

Lucretius' account of the water cycle is significant for the interpretation of the taste of sea air and the taste of wormwood at a distance. Some

114 See esp. Schoenheim 1966: 74, 80; Rosenmeyer 1996: 135-37; Koenen 1997: 166 n. 15.

115 Bailey 1947: 3.1209-10.

116 Lucr. *DRN* 4.225-29, 6.930-35.

117 Lucr. *DRN* 4.219-24.

of the account is part of Lucretius' treatment of Epicurean meteorology.¹¹⁸ As with so many topics in *DRN*, Lucretius actually develops one's understanding of the water cycle across the poem, expecting the reader to connect and relate the various passages. In his greater proof that there are unseen bodies in nature (1.265-328), Lucretius states (*DRN* 1.305-10):

denique fluctifrago suspensae in litore vestes
 uvescunt, eaedem dispansae in sole serescunt;
 at neque quo pacto persederit umor aquai
 visumst nec rursum quo pacto fugerit aestu.
 in parvas igitur partis dispargitur umor,
 quas oculi nulla possunt ratione videre

Again, clothes hung up on the wave-breaking shore grow damp; the same clothes spread out in the sun become dry. But we did not see in what way the moisture of water soaked through, or how it fled away with the warmth. Liquid is therefore dispersed into small particles which the eyes are in no way able to see.

This demonstrates that Lucretius has a concept of evaporation and condensation.¹¹⁹ The echoes of this passage in book six suggest that Lucretius is referring to seawater.¹²⁰ Brown rightly comments on the physical embodiment of the processes in 1.305-10.¹²¹ Lucretius seems to believe that evaporation can occur with liquids of various sorts, thus *umor aquai* is not

118 The letter from Epicurus to Pythocles (Diog. Laert. 10.84-117) is another important source on Epicurean meteorology. On the water cycle in *DRN* and Epicurean meteorology, see e.g. Montserrat & Navarro 1991. On other potential valences of Lucretius' account of the water cycle, see Nethercut (forthcoming): ch. 4.

119 See also Lucr. *DRN* 5.383-91. For a somewhat different interpretation of these processes, see Montserrat & Navarro 1991: 297-301.

120 Lucr. *DRN* 6.470-72, 616-18. See pp. 207-8 below.

121 Brown 1984: 98.

simply a periphrasis.¹²² Openness to multiple explanations is a feature particularly of Epicurean meteorology.¹²³ However, Lucretius repeatedly highlights two main causes of evaporation from bodies of liquid: the wind lifting or sweeping up droplets from the surface and the sun detaching them from it and drawing them off.¹²⁴ Similarly, lightning can cause the flash evaporation of wine.¹²⁵ Evaporated droplets do not neatly fit the concept of an effluence outlined above. They are more like emanations than emissions, but they are taken up, not sent forth. Moreover, they are neither automatical or non-automatical in the way that Koenen describes effluences; they do not flow from their source due to atomic vibration or due to a non-necessitated force pressing them out.¹²⁶ Relative to their sources, they flow away due to external necessitated causes. In *DRN* 1.305-10, form, content, and context imply that the last two lines are gnomic, that all bodies of liquid, great and small, have the potential to be dispersed similarly. In this exemplary case, the seawater is being dispersed into tiny particles (*parvas ... partis*) of seawater, not into parts which are unlike the whole. These droplets are like the aforementioned *aestus*, the spray of oceanwater – just smaller, small enough to be microscopic.¹²⁷ While it is not clear just how small they are, it is reasonable that minimal microstructures of the liquids, perhaps akin to what we call molecules, would be the easiest to take up or extricate. Therefore, the

122 Lucr. *DRN* 6.470-534; see also 3.435-36.

123 Recently, see Hankinson 2013; Verde 2013; Bakker 2016; Verde 2018.

124 See e.g. Lucr. *DRN* 1.277-79, 5.264-68, 383-92, 6.616-26, and, with respect to the water being raised or taken up 6.451-534. On the mechanism by which the sun does this, see West 1969: 82; Montserrat & Navarro 1991: 298. Rouse & Smith 1992: 398. Although the earth also sends up moisture to the clouds, this may be occurring with moisture that it has pressed out to the surface; see Lucr. *DRN* 5.483-88.

125 Lucr. *DRN* 6.231-38.

126 See p. 176 above.

127 See also Bailey 1947: 2.649.

smallest possible ‘droplets’ that could still be called, e.g., seawater probably predominate. Lucretius therefore does not understand evaporation or condensation as a fundamental change; nothing passes outside the boundaries of its nature and ceases to exist as such.¹²⁸ Rather, he views evaporation and condensation as the scattering and assembling of microscopic droplets of liquid.¹²⁹ Both Lucretius and Epicurus account for the formation of clouds, precipitation, and other meteorological phenomena in this way.¹³⁰

Other parts of the water cycle reveal more about the composition of seawater. In Lucretius’ narrative of the infancy of the world in book five, the sea was among the parts of the cosmos for which the earth provided the first beginnings. The others included the air, aether, stars, sun and moon. Their constituents were smoother, smaller, and rounder; thus the earth squeezed them out (*expressere* 5.453, *expressus* 5.487) through its sparse passages (*per rara foramina terrae*, 5.457) as its own constituents became more intertwined amongst themselves (*magis inter se perplexa*, 5.452).¹³¹ The sea was salty from the beginning; Lucretius, perhaps following Empedocles (fr. 55), here describes it as salty sweat (*salsus ... sudor*) from the earth.¹³² If evaporation is not a way of distilling water and Earth’s water supply began as seawater, where does freshwater come from? Consider Lucretius’ comments on desalination in book two (2.464–77). In his proof of the shapes of the constituents which comprise droplets of seawater (*sudor ... maris*, 2.465), Lucretius seems to be describing a

128 Lucr. *DRN* 1.670–71, 792–93, 2.753–54, 3.519–20.

129 This is not far off the mark, compared with the modern understanding of evaporation – relative to individual molecules of H₂O and of other evaporating liquids, like alcohol.

130 Lucr. *DRN* 5.261–80, 460–66, 6.451–534, 608–30; Epic. *Ep. Pyth.* 99–100, 106–9; Taub 2009: esp. 120–21.

131 Lucr. *DRN* 5.443–509, esp. 449–59, 480–88. See also 5.794. Montserrat & Navarro 1991: 293.

132 Lucr. *DRN* 5.487–88. Gale 2009: 143.

practice of salt production still used in the Mediterranean. Brine is channeled through a sluice gate into collection pits or earthenware pans. The liquid gradually departs and eventually salt crystals remain.¹³³ In Lucretius' contemporary Rome, this process was also used to collect materials for other products, such as perfume.¹³⁴ As we have seen, Lucretius believes that all macroscopic assemblages contain void and thus are porous. The wetness in caves, from water permeating through stone, is among his first proofs of this.¹³⁵ Earthen pits and vessels should thus be permeable as well; indeed, they are. According to Lucretius, wine and olive oil generally percolate through some vessels, depending on the size of their pores.¹³⁶ In the case of desalination, seawater does too. Its roughly shaped elements adhere to the earth or earthenware, separating out. The remaining liquid seeps through into a pit where it too can potentially be harvested. Repeated percolation filters out more rough elements, leaving behind the salt and literally smoothing (*mansuescat*) the rest. In other words, the acerbic seawater (*Neptune corpus acerbum*) no longer exists; bitter salt (*taetri primordia viri*) and sweet water (*umor dulcis*) remain.¹³⁷ For Lucretius, seawater is thus a solution (or what he might call a mixture) of salt and water. Aristotle has a similar account of filtration using a wax vessel, but acknowledges salt-harvesting by evaporation; Hippocrates favors evaporation and Pliny admits both distillation by filtration and evaporation and salt-harvesting by evaporation.¹³⁸ For

133 On ancient salt-harvesting practices and salt uses, see esp. Plin. *HN* 31.37-45 and e.g. Kurlansky 2002: 61-79, esp. 63-64. On modern salt-harvesting practices, see e.g. Laszlo 2001: 42-56.

134 Longhurst 2007.

135 Lucr. *DRN* 1.346-49.

136 Lucr. *DRN* 2.391-97, 6.231-38.

137 Lucr. *DRN* 2.464-77.

138 Arist. *Mete.* 2.3.358b34-359a6, 359a22-b4; Hippoc. *Aer* 8. Plin. *HN* 31.37-45, esp. 37. On experiments such as filtration using a wax vessel, see Taub 2003: 102-3.

Lucretius, a larger scale process of desalination by filtration supplies rivers and springs with fresh water; the subterranean channels of liquid are still briny, but by the time they emerge they yield fresh water.¹³⁹ These in turn renew the sea.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, this seems to be the reverse of the process by which Lucretius explains the creation of the seas in the infancy of the world. Whereas then the saltwater could pass through the pores of the earth, now the passages of the earth are sufficiently entangled that the salt bodies no longer pass through easily, but rather cleave to the earth on account of their roughness. The same roughness of the same bodies wound the passages of the tongue and palate and cause the salty flavor of seawater. It also explains the ability of the sea spray (*aestus abundis*, 4.219) to wear or eat away at the walls near the shore.¹⁴¹ The epithet *exesor moerorum* (4.220) emphasizes that the composition of the *aestus* and the *salsi umor saporis* (4.222) are the same.

Lucretius believes that seawater is one of the primary sources of the *umor* contained in the clouds. As stated above, in book six, Lucretius revisits the water-logged clothes of 1.305-10. In meaning and word choice, he recalls salt-harvesting, the wall-gnawing *aestus*, and the salty taste of sea air. At 6.470-5 the condensation of seawater on hanging garments is proof of its evaporation. The stickiness of the moisture (*umoris adhaesum*) on them emphasizes the salty constitution of the seawater. Lucretius takes this as an indication that moisture of the same sort (*consanguineae*) is contained in the clouds. He elaborates on these ideas in his explanation

139 Lucr. *DRN* 5.268-72, 6.631-38; the use of *virus* (5.269, 6.635) perhaps recalls the filtered *taetri primordia viri* (2.476). On subterranean rivers' existence, see 6.540-41. See also Montserrat & Navarro 1991: 295.

140 Lucr. *DRN* 1.230-31, 1031-32, 2.589-91, 6.890-94.

141 See also Lucr. *DRN* 1.326-27 and, perhaps, 4.1286-87. On the imagery, see West 1969: 11-12.

of rain at 6.495-516.¹⁴² While the former refers to clouds near the sea by implication, the latter does so explicitly (*DRN* 6.503-505):

concipiunt etiam multum quoque saepe marinum
umorem, veluti pendentia vellera lanae,
cum supera magnum mare venti nubila portant.

The clouds also often take up much marine water as well, just like hanging fleeces of wool, when the winds carry them above the vast sea.

This confirms that clouds can contain evaporated seawater.¹⁴³ Lucretius posits many sources for the clouds' moisture over the course of *DRN*. The sea and rivers are the primary sources; others include lakes, streams, moisture from the earth, and bodies entering our sky and aether from the infinity beyond.¹⁴⁴ To explain rain which does not taste salty, multiple explanations seem available to Lucretius, including clouds from freshwater sources, clouds whose concentration of evaporated seawater was sufficiently diluted by evaporated freshwater, and a filtration process, such that – on the way down – the aether functions analogously to the aforementioned earth filter. Conversely, if a sufficient portion of the moisture in a cloud had come from seawater, it should in due course return to the surface as brackish rain.

142 With *consanguineae* (Lucr. *DRN* 6.475) see also *cum sanguine* (6.501) in a related analogy and with *vestes suspensae* (6.471-72) see *pendentia vellera lanae* (6.504).

143 Cf. Montserrat & Navarro 1991: 300, 308 n. 72.

144 Lucr. *DRN* 5.463-66, 6.470-516.

THE SALTY TASTE OF SEA AIR

These threads can now be pulled together and brought to bear on the salty taste of sea air and the bitter taste of wormwood at distance. The key lines bear repeating (*DRN* 4.222-24):

denique in os salsi venit umor saepe saporis,
 cum mare versamur propter, dilutaque contra
 cum tuimur misceri absinthia, tangit amaror.

Finally, moisture of salty flavor often comes into the mouth when we are near the sea, and when we watch diluted wormwood be mixed before us, the bitterness reaches us.

Many sorts of bodies move through the air; some we can see, most we cannot. Moisture, for example, exists in the air near the sea. It exists in the form of the spray of the waves, droplets of seawater that are barely visible to the naked eye. It also exists as microscopic droplets of seawater that the sun and wind raise up from its surface. These evaporated particles of seawater reach the clouds above and the clothes and fleeces on the shore. It follows that these same microscopic droplets of seawater could also reach us when we are nearby. As we have seen, the perception of the flavor of a liquid occurs through direct contact between one's passages and the constituents of the liquid which they admit, with any potentially harmful constituents contributing disproportionately to one's perceptions. The primary constituents of seawater are salt and water. One perceives a somewhat harsh or bitter flavor when the structures of the tongue and palate interact with seawater, due to the roughness of the elements of salt that it contains. In other words, a salty flavor is a sort of bitter flavor. The roughness of these constituents also wounds one's

passages a bit, making that flavor unpleasant. Therefore, when we are near the sea, we perceive a salty flavor because liquid enters one's mouth and that liquid is in fact seawater – evaporated seawater, microscopic droplets like those that gather in the clouds, clothes, and fleeces. The case of wormwood is similar. Lucretius says its bitterness reaches or touches (*tangit*, 4.224) us; this is evidence that evaporated microscopic droplets of a tincture of wormwood come into contact with the sense organs of taste when the solutions are mixed before us.¹⁴⁵ We do not register our contact with these droplets in any way other than through their interactions with the passages of the tongue and palate. Unlike the *aestus*, we do not see them. While we might feel the drops of the spray on the skin if we met with their splash, we do not have tactile awareness of an individual microscopic droplet, or even of a mist.¹⁴⁶ It seems, then, that the sensory threshold of taste is lower than that of external touch. That said, it is unclear just how many of these microscopic droplets it would take for the passage-riddled tongue and palate to register the least perception of flavor. Perhaps it would suffice to interact with a single droplet of seawater or wormwood, the smallest possible. However, more may be required. Lucretius' emphasis on proximity to the sources suggests that perception is more likely where there is a greater concentration of the evaporated moisture.¹⁴⁷ Alternatively, the emphasis on proximity may simply reflect the longevity of those droplets and/or their potential airtime if not taken up to the clouds. The larger and heavier an airborne particle, the shorter the distance it tends to travel before falling to the surface and/or decomposing.¹⁴⁸

145 Perhaps compare Lucr. *DRN* 4.622-26, esp. *attungunt* and 626-27.

146 Lucr. *DRN* 3.374-95, esp. 383.

147 Similar processes and considerations influence our susceptibility to contagion; in other words, we take in diseases in the form of unseen airborne bodies. Fire can also kindle at a distance in this way. Lucr. *DRN* 6.1128-30, 900-4; Epic. *Ep. Pyth.* 93.

148 Lucr. *DRN* 4.687-705.

One does not deliberately take in these evaporated particles of liquid, nor does one feel or register awareness that they have come in until one perceives their flavor; this implies that one does no chewing, no pressing out of *sucus*, no processing of any kind prior to interaction. The perception of salty flavor therefore arises from interaction with the microscopic droplets themselves. In other words, the seawater, as seawater, enters the passages of the tongue and palate. The wormwood solution itself does too. It follows that all of the relevant constituents are of suitable size and shape. Lucretius implies that, of all the things that we can generally see, pure water is comprised of the smoothest, roundest, lightest constituents; to it he compares the mind and its ease of motion.¹⁴⁹ The constituents of the wormwood dissolved in water, probably larger than those of the water, as well as rough with hooks, must nevertheless also be sufficiently small so as to also enter. Since one perceives the flavor of microscopic droplets of liquids through direct contact, it stands to reason that one also perceives the flavor of a drink of liquid without chewing and through direct contact. As we have seen, the mechanism for perceiving the flavor of liquid should be evident from the mechanism for perceiving the flavor of food more generally. I propose that there is no need to press out the *sucus* in order to perceive the flavor of liquid – and that there is no need because it is the *sucus*.¹⁵⁰ With drink then, some of the liquid will flow into one's passages automatically and without emission or emanation. To call this *sucus* an effluence may stretch even the minimal notion beyond the point of utility. Perhaps more importantly, the interactions occur with object of perception itself, not with an intermediary that only partially reflects its nature. I further propose that when one presses *sucus* out of apparently solid food by chewing, as water

149 Lucr. *DRN* 3.177-205; see also 3.241-44, 425-29.

150 For this reason, Lucretius can compare the *sucus* which Earth produced to nourish the first living creatures to breastmilk; Lucr. *DRN* 5.811-15.

from a sponge, the juice that one extracts is liquid food, a solution of water and miniscule particles of the foodstuff, particles perhaps like molecules. All food contains at least some amount of water.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the other constituents of the food would probably dominate in the perception of flavor. Therefore, juicing solid food allows one to perceive the flavor of the food itself, also without an intermediary.¹⁵² In short, the perception of flavor involves interacting directly with the object of perception in all three cases. For this reason, microscopic drops of evaporated wormwood solution have the same distinctive bitter flavor as both a cup of the medicinal tincture and the plant itself. In turn, the consistent flavor of these substances serves as evidence that the same constituents are interacting with the passages of the sense organs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the salty taste of sea air and other cases which seem to imply the perception of flavor at a distance are only apparently a paradox. In fact, they are consistent with the mechanism of taste that Lucretius offers and, indeed, fundamental to fully understanding it. As per the traditional view of Epicurean theory, the sensory faculty of taste does operate through direct contact with the object of its perception. Flavor is a property of that food or drink; it manifests at the level of experience.

151 See e.g. *Lucr. DRN* 2.875–80, 3.223–27. By this logic it is conceivable that saliva could play a role in one's ability to perceive the flavor of things that are not food, like rocks and other minerals that lack *sucus* (3.786), perhaps if sufficiently small particles thereof somehow break off into the saliva and if the passages of the tongue and palate are open to both. However, given the value that Lucretius places on empiricism, it may be worth noting in this vein that one does not normally perceive the flavor of one's own saliva.

152 See also Bailey 1947: 3.1253.

For Lucretius, the phenomenal and the physiological are two closely related ways of understanding the same thing. Taste is both the perception of flavor and the process that underlies that sensation. Physiologically, taste is the mechanism by which one feels or registers awareness of juice. Specifically, the perception of flavor occurs when food, drink, or suitably shaped constituents thereof flow into the passages of the tongue and palate, i.e. the sense organs. In Lucretius' view, both the tongue and palate play an important role in shaping one's tastes and one's preferences. They determine what one is literally open to tasting. The shapes of the constituents, on the other hand, influence the possible perceptions of flavor and whether that sensation coincides with pleasure or pain. If the food is not liquid, then the liquid food or juice that it contains, a solution of food particles and water, enters the passages once it is squeezed out. In either case one's passages do not interact with an intermediary that only partially reflects the nature of the source object; they interact with the thing itself, whatever part of it they are open to. If one supposes that one is perceiving the flavor of seawater or that of wormwood at a distance, this is because one does not realize that the distance has been overcome – an error of reason. In fact, one is coming into direct contact with the object of perception. Microscopic droplets of seawater are taken up from the sea into the air nearby. In the same way, microscopic droplets of wormwood evaporate from vats where the solution is being mixed. These airborne droplets – although extremely tiny – have not become something else. For this reason, when they come into the mouth and enter the passages of the tongue and palate, the interactions are the same, as are the flavor and its (un)pleasantness. It may take more than one to stir the perception of flavor. Regardless, individually or collectively, the droplets are too small for other sensory faculties to register awareness of them by other means, either in transit or when they make contact. To put it plainly: Lucretius' example of the salty flavor of sea air

is no exception. Near the sea, we taste airborne evaporated seawater. Therefore, under certain circumstances, we taste things that we seem not to see or touch. The Epicureans believe taste is that sensitive, that discriminating.

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