

The Greek Embassy to Gelon (Hdt. 7.153–67) and *Iliad* 9*

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ABSTRACT: I argue that Herodotus encourages his audience to perceive the Greek embassy to the Syracusan tyrant Gelon (7.153–67) as a latter-day version of the Achaean embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* 9. Similarities of form and content indicate a significant intertextual relationship between the two episodes, which are structured as speech hexads in direct discourse, comprising paired speeches between three envoys and a powerful potential ally against a formidable Eastern foe. Both Achilles and Gelon respond to their suppliants' requests with angry refusals due to perceived disrespect, followed by concessions that lead in Achilles' case to the prospect of his rejoining battle before Troy, but in Gelon's case to final rejection of the invitation to embrace his Hellenic identity by joining the alliance against Xerxes. This intertextual strategy serves three important purposes: it underscores Herodotus' framing of the war against Xerxes as a sequel to the Trojan War, similarly characterized by division among its Greek participants; it highlights the unlikelihood of the Greek victory, achieved by necessity without the aid of Gelon; and it demonstrates by contrast with Homeric epic the significance of ethnic and communal (rather than personal) identity in Greek politics both during and after the Persian War.

KEYWORDS: Herodotus, Homer, intertextuality, Gelon, tyranny, Deinomenid dynasty, Sicily, Syracuse, identity politics, Panhellenism.

The author of *On the Sublime* famously describes Herodotus in superlative terms as the 'most Homeric' (Ὀμηρικώτατος, 13.3) of Greek writers.¹ In this essay I will make a claim that is more modest by one adjectival degree: I will argue that Herodotus is *more* Homeric – significantly so – than commonly recognized in his depiction of the Greek embassy dispatched to seek the support of Gelon, tyrant of Syracuse, against the Persian invasion led by King Xerxes (7.153–62).² Previous scholars have duly noted and discussed Iliadic allusions made by two of the Greek ambassadors in their speeches to Gelon;³ it has also been suggested – and doubted – that Herodotus evokes as a specific intertext the embassy sent to Achilles by Agamemnon in *Iliad* 9, which also attempts to persuade an incomparably

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¹ For full explication of this claim see the papers by various hands in Matijašić 2022.

² The historicity of the embassy is disputed. Recent discussions of the issue include Morgan 2015: 28–9, who is 'inclined to think it historical', and Vannicelli 2017: 488 on 7.153–67, who notes that it is commonly but not universally accepted as such; both cite previous bibliography.

³ Pelling 2006: 89–92, Grethlein 2006, 2010: 160–6, Haywood 2022: 75–8 and Tuplin 2022: 337–40 focus on Herodotean and Homeric intertextuality; broader analyses of the episode include Munson 2006: 263–5, Scardino 2007: 216–24, Zali 2015: 203–17 and Vannicelli 2017: 487–509.

powerful ally to take the field against an imposing Eastern enemy.⁴ I will develop the case for such an intertextual move on Herodotus' part by looking at the distinctive structure and content of the colloquy between Gelon and his visitors. This narrative strategy, which discloses significant differences as well as similarities between the two texts, serves three important purposes: it underscores at a crucial narrative juncture Herodotus' framing of the war against Xerxes as a latter-day version of the Trojan War, similarly characterized by near-fatal division among its Greek participants; it highlights the unlikeliness and enormity of the Greeks' victory, achieved by necessity without the aid of the recalcitrant Gelon; and it demonstrates by pointed contrast with Homeric epic the significance of ethnic and communal (rather than personal) identity in the context of Greek politics both during and after the Persian War. Despite presenting himself as conqueror of the Carthaginian *barbaroi* in the Hellenic West, Gelon's ruthless rise to tyrannical power characterizes him and his leadership style as more Persian than Greek. Moreover, the vision of Panhellenic harmony promoted by the envoys from the mainland dissolves as the Spartans and Athenians each defend their own hegemonic interests at the cost of alienating an invaluable ally.

I begin by setting the scene for the embassy in Herodotus. After describing the Athenian commitment to oppose Xerxes despite ominous oracles from Delphi, Herodotus tells us that the leaders of the Greek resistance resolved (inter alia) to expand their alliance if possible by sending messengers to several Greek communities – namely, Argos, Sicily, Corcyra and Crete (7.145). They did so, Herodotus tells us, 'in the hope that the Hellenic race might somehow become a single entity, and that they might accomplish their shared goal, if they all put their heads together' (φρονήσαντες εἴ κως ἔν τε γένοιτο τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν καὶ εἰ συγκύψαντες τώυτὸ πρήσσειεν πάντες, 7.145.2).⁵ Thus Herodotus highlights from the outset the crucial and problematic issue of Greek unity, which though previously elusive might yet be achievable 'somehow' (the eloquent enclitic κως). The only individual mentioned in this context of recruiting allies is the tyrant Gelon, whom Herodotus identifies as the specific target of Greek overtures in Sicily because his resources were said to far outstrip those available to any other Greeks.⁶ Herodotean narrative technique also underscores the special status of the Sicilian embassy, since of all the delegations mentioned, none of which proved successful, Herodotus chooses to dramatize only the negotiations that took place at the tyrant's court in Syracuse.⁷

⁴ As suggested by Grethlein 2006: 493 and Tuplin 2022: 337–8. Scardino 2007: 218 n. 401 remains sceptical.

⁵ I cite N.G. Wilson's Oxford Classical Text of Herodotus (2015); translations are my own.

⁶ 'The resources of Gelon were said to be great, greater by far than those of all the Greeks' (τὰ δὲ Γέλωνος πρήγματα μεγάλα ἐλέγετο εἶναι, οὐδαμῶν Ἑλληνικῶν τῶν οὐ πολλὸν μέζω, 7.145.2). Cf. Herodotus' previous general observation that the only Greek tyrants comparable to Polycrates of Samos for magnificence (μεγαλοπρεπεῖην) were 'those who became tyrants of Syracuse' (οἱ Συρηκοσίων γενόμενοι τύραννοι, 3.125.2).

⁷ Zali 2015: 203 describes the embassy scene as 'intentionally prolonged and elaborated on to shed light on the constant strife for command among the Greeks in the Persian Wars, while at the same time proleptically projecting it on to the period after the Persian Wars and up to the time of Herodotus'.

Herodotus devotes a full fifteen chapters to his description of the Greek embassy to Gelon: four (7.153–6) describing Gelon’s background and rise to power; six (7.157–62) that portray the embassy proper; and another five chapters (7.163–7) describing the aftermath of the breakdown in negotiations. Before proceeding to the embassy proper, it is instructive to observe what Herodotus chooses to tell us in his substantial account of Gelon’s background – an account that gives us reason to expect that Gelon might not be receptive to the entreaty of his fellow Greeks. Gelon enjoyed his first taste of power as cavalry commander for Hippocrates, tyrant of Gela on the southern coast of Sicily. Gelon distinguished himself, Herodotus tells us, in the sieges of Callipolis, Naxos, Zancle, Leontini and Syracuse, in addition to many non-Greek communities. Herodotus adds that of all the besieged communities mentioned, none except Syracuse ‘escaped subjection (δουλοσύνη) at the hands of Hippocrates’ (7.154.2). In this generalized context the term need not denote anything harsher than political subjugation to the tyrant’s rule.⁸ In the specific case of Zancle, however, Herodotus has already reported that Hippocrates, in collusion with the Samians and ignoring his alliance with the city, had the majority of the Zancleans bound and kept as slaves (ἐν ἀνδραπόδων λόγῳ εἶχε δήσας, 6.23.6).

Moreover, in the subsequent stages of his career – as tyrant, first of Gela and then of Syracuse – Gelon emulated Hippocrates in his own repression of Greek civic freedoms, now distinguished by a manifest class bias in favour of the wealthy. When Hippocrates died, Gelon defeated the citizens of Gela in battle – citizens who ‘no longer wished to be subject’ to tyrannical rule (οὐ βουλομένων τῶν πολιτητέων κατηκῶν ἔτι εἶναι, 7.155.1). And although he claimed to do so in support of the dead tyrant’s sons, Eucleides and Cleandrus, Gelon promptly usurped rule of the city for himself. Gelon subsequently took control of Syracuse by restoring from their exile in Casmene oligarchs⁹ who had been driven out of the city by the people and their own slaves: ‘For the *dēmos* of the Syracusans surrendered the city and themselves to Gelon upon his approach’ (ὁ γὰρ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Συρηκοσίων ἐπιόντι Γέλωνι παραδίδοι τὴν πόλιν καὶ ἑωυτόν, 7.155.2). Furthermore, in order to increase the population and the wealth of Syracuse, Gelon ordered the mass deportation of Greek civic populations, moving all the inhabitants of Camarina (which he razed to the ground) and half the inhabitants of Gela to Syracuse, where he made them citizens. David Asheri notes that such mass deportation was ‘almost unknown in mainland Greece, but was widely practiced in the Middle East on a much larger scale by the Persians, and before them by the Assyrians and Babylonians’.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Raaflaub 2004: 252: ‘Subjection (*doulosunē*) to a tyrant, later equated directly with “slavery” and thus with nonfreedom, was initially understood primarily as subordination, servitude: the citizen was *doulos* in the sense of having to serve or obey the tyrant as his master (*despotēs*).’ Commenting on the fate of the other cities listed in 7.154.2, Hornblower and Pelling 2017: 116 on 6.23.3 describe their subjugation as ‘doubtless more figurative than the enslavement’ to which Hippocrates subjected Zancle.

⁹ For the Syracusan γαμῶποι, horse-breeding oligarchs descended (or at least claiming descent) from the city’s original Corinthian colonists, see Asheri 1988: 768 on 7.155.2 and Vannicelli 2017: 492–3 on 7.155.8.

¹⁰ Asheri 1988: 769. Cf. Herodotus’ story of Darius and the Paeonian brothers (5.12–15), whose staging of their sister’s multitasking skills inspired the king to command the forced migration of the Paeonians en masse to Phrygia; see further Hornblower 2013: 103–7.

Other instances of this practice by Gelon add the element of class bias and the imposition of literal slavery upon Greek populations. After besieging the city of Megara Hyblaea, Gelon dispatched the wealthy (the ‘fat cats’, τούς ... παχέας, 7.156.2) to Syracuse to become citizens, but sold the *dēmos* into slavery for export abroad (ἐπ’ ἐξαγωγῇ ἐκ Σικελίης, 7.156.2). He made the same distinction when he depopulated the Euboean community of Leontini, ‘in the belief that the *dēmos* was an extremely unpleasant thing to live with’ (νομίσας δῆμον εἶναι συνοίκημα ἀχαριτώτατον,¹¹ 7.156.3). And so Herodotus concludes his analepsis, that in such fashion Gelon ‘had become a great tyrant’ (τύραννος ἐγεγόνεε μέγας, 7.156.3).

This portrayal of Gelon’s background prepares us to meet a powerful ruler accustomed to total autonomy in conducting political and military affairs, and indeed in the social engineering of communities, exercised at the expense of fellow Greeks as well as non-Greeks. As such, he exemplifies a fundamental theme that Carolyn Dewald has identified in the *Histories* as a whole, ‘the tendency of powerful autocratic regimes to become more powerful still and to transgress more and more against the persons of those they rule in the process.’¹² Moreover, Rosaria Munson notes that Herodotus describes the policies of Gelon (and Hippocrates) ‘through the monarchical model, in terms that recall the conquests and deportations of the Persian kings’, resulting in the ‘identification of Sicilian tyranny with the despotic-barbarian rule that threatens the Greeks from the East.’¹³ After such an introduction, Gelon appears from the outset to be an unlikely ally in the mainland Greeks’ fight for freedom against Xerxes.

So much by way of preface. It is my contention that Herodotus’ dramatic staging of the Greek embassy to Gelon evokes, in both its structure and substance, one of the pivotal episodes of the *Iliad* – the embassy sent by Agamemnon to Achilles in Book 9, in the hopes of persuading him to return to the fighting before Troy.¹⁴ I begin with the distinctive dialogic structure of the embassy in Herodotus’ rendition, a speech hexad in which the appeals delivered consecutively by Hellenic, Spartan and Athenian ambassadors elicit corresponding replies from Gelon. This presentation duplicates the structure of the embassy scene in *Iliad* 9, where the successive speeches of Odysseus, Phoenix and Ajax elicit responses in kind from Achilles. The arrangement and interrelation of the six Herodotean addresses, all delivered in *oratio recta*, produce a speech pattern that is unique in the *Histories*, a fact obscured by Mabel Lang’s discussion of Herodotean speech hexads.¹⁵ Of the nine speech hexads identified by Lang, she designates only three as ‘three-stage pairs’, and the Sicilian embassy scene is not among them. Counterintuitively (and unpersuasively, in my view), Lang analyses the exchanges between Gelon and the Greek representatives as a single

¹¹ Vannicelli 2017: 494 on 7.156.3 suggests that this dismissive description of the *dēmos*, incorporating the Herodotean *hapax* συνοίκημα, may have been a sympotic motto in origin.

¹² Dewald 2003: 32, although she does not discuss Gelon’s tyranny in detail, and detects a tension between the generally negative depiction of tyranny in the *Histories* and the achievements of the Greek tyrants in the context of their individual *logoi*.

¹³ Munson 2006: 264.

¹⁴ Cf. Griffin 1995: 26: ‘The refusal of Achilles to yield is the central fact in the creation of the *Iliad* from the traditional plot of the hero’s withdrawal and triumphant return.’

¹⁵ Lang 1984: 120–6.

speech followed by a pentad, consisting of a speech pair followed by a speech triad. Thus the opening speech of the anonymous ‘messengers of the Greeks’ (7.157.1) conveys the information that Xerxes intends to enslave all of Greece, and that it is in Gelon’s self-interest to join the alliance against him; the tyrant challenges the Greeks by demanding supreme command in return for his aid, and the Spartan Syagrus responds in the negative. In the final three speeches Gelon revises his challenge by agreeing to settle for command of either the army or navy; the Athenians respond by claiming naval command for themselves, if not for the Spartans; and Gelon offers by way of synthesis or conclusion the observation that the Greeks are likely to have commanders but no soldiers to command.¹⁶

The speech hexads that Lang does classify as ‘three-stage pairs’ are the following: the dispute between Darius and Otanes concerning the best way to unseat the false Smerdis (3.71–3); the discussion of Astyages and the Magi concerning the danger posed by the recently resurrected Cyrus (1.120); and the discussion of Otanes and his daughter concerning their strategy for exposing the false Smerdis (3.68–9). The first of these speech-scenes consists of five exchanges between Darius and Otanes, capped by a final speech from Gobryas, while the latter two incorporate speeches in indirect discourse. In other words, none of these exchanges shares the structure that is common to the Homeric and Herodotean embassy scenes under discussion: three pairs of speech and counter-speech, rendered in *oratio recta*, delivered by three different supplicants and their single auditor.

In Homer and Herodotus alike, the first pair of speeches is the most extensive of the three. Odysseus’ appeal to Achilles’ sense of kinship with his fellow Achaeans and his desire for glory is extended by the inclusion of Agamemnon’s extravagant list of gifts. Achilles responds with a lengthy, furious rejection of those gifts, and a threat to leave Troy for home in Phthia at the break of dawn. The first speech to Gelon is delivered by ‘messengers of the Greeks’ (οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων, 7.157.1), who are otherwise unidentified – they are unnamed and given no specific *polis* affiliation. They say they have been sent by the Lacedaemonians, the Athenians and their allies, which anticipates the Panhellenic cast of their appeal to Gelon.¹⁷ Just as Odysseus sought to identify the interests of Achilles with those of the other Achaeans fighting before Troy, so too the Greek messengers seek to identify the interests of Gelon with those of the mainland Greeks. They argue that since Xerxes ‘the barbarian’ (τὸν βάρβαρον, 7.157.1) intends to subjugate ‘all of Greece’ (πᾶσαν τὴν Ἑλλάδα), and that as ruler of Sicily¹⁸ Gelon’s

¹⁶ In my summary of the speeches I employ basic categories of content used by Lang (as explained on the page preceding her first chapter) to capture the gist of each speech: information, challenge, response, synthesis or conclusion. As Lang herself acknowledges, these conventions serve her synoptic purpose at the expense of the particulars of individual speeches and dialogues, which may have more complex rhetorical functions.

¹⁷ Cf. Zali 2015: 204. Although some manuscripts omit mention of the Athenians, Vannicelli 2017: 495 on 7.157.3–4 rightly notes that their inclusion alongside the Spartans ‘anticipates the structure of the dialogue and with it the centrality of the theme of hegemony’.

¹⁸ Vannicelli 2017: 495 on 7.157.11–12 suggests that this hyperbolic description of Gelon’s rule (ἄρχοντί γε Σικελίης, 7.157.2) could reflect the aspiration of the Deinomenids to present themselves as masters of all Sicily: cf. 7.163.1 for Gelon’s conception of himself as Σικελίης τύραννος, and see the important discussion of the Deinomenid tyrants by Morgan 2015: 23–86.

share of Greece is significant, he should join their effort to keep Greece free (τὴν Ἑλλάδα ... συνελευθέρου, 7.157.2)¹⁹ – a goal that is achievable only if all of Greece (πᾶσα ἡ Ἑλλάς, 7.157.2) is united. Otherwise, they face the fearful prospect that all of Greece (πᾶσα ἡ Ἑλλάς, now in emphatic final position, 7.157.2) may fall. Altogether the messengers use the word Ἑλλάς no fewer than eight times in the course of their speech (7.157.1 3x, 7.157.2 5x), with an additional verbal echo in their mention of Xerxes' crossing the Hellespont (τὸν Ἑλλησποντον, 7.157.1), as if by sheer verbal repetition – virtual incantation – they might conjure up a single, unified community of Hellenes to include Gelon and his subjects.

This persistent repetition reflects the liminal status of the far-flung Sicilian colonists in their relationship to the Greek mainland and its inhabitants. To judge from its appearances in extant Greek literature, the geographical reference of the term Ἑλλάς grew significantly broader over time, from its application in the *Iliad* to a specific region south of Thessaly and adjacent to Phthia, to its frequent application in the *Odyssey* to central and northern Greece, to its application in Alcman to the Greek mainland exclusive of the Aegean isles and Asia Minor, with later inclusion of the islands by Hecataeus and Simonides.²⁰ The earliest extant reference to Hellas as (implicitly) including Sicily may be found in a fragment of Xenophanes (fr. 8 W² = Laks/Most D66) preserved by Diogenes Laertius, where the first-person narrator speaks of sixty-seven years 'tossing about my thought throughout the land of Greece' (βληστρίζοντες ἐμὴν φρόντιδ' ἀν' Ἑλλάδα γῆν). Diogenes claims that Xenophanes spent time in Zancle and Catania in Sicily.²¹

The Greek ambassadors invoke Hellas in its most capacious sense as they strive to create for Gelon a sense of belonging and attachment that is the communal equivalent of the bond of *philia* that Odysseus and the other emissaries repeatedly invoke as they urge Achilles to look beyond his anger at Agamemnon for the sake of all his comrades – the Παναχαιοί (9.301), as Odysseus characterizes them in the emotional finale of his appeal.²² Also relevant in the context of the embassy to Gelon is the plurality of communal identities that a

The subsequent Greek speakers are less flattering, and address him as ruler of Syracuse alone (7.159, 161.1).

¹⁹ This appeal to preserve Greek freedom is of course darkly ironic, in view of Gelon's past history of subjugating, and sometimes literally enslaving, fellow Greeks in Sicily: see above, n. 8.

²⁰ As detailed by Hall 2002: 127–9.

²¹ Cf. also fr. 6 W² = Laks/Most D69, which mentions a man (possibly a victorious Panhellenic athlete) whose fame will traverse 'all of Greece' (Ἑλλάδα πᾶσαν) because of the commemorative power of song.

²² Even before Odysseus begins to speak, Homer prepares us for the centrality of this issue by having Achilles describe his visitors as 'dear' (φίλοι, 9.197) to him, indeed the 'dearest' (φίλτατοι, 198, 204) of the Achaeans (the superlative implies some degree of *philia* for the rest of Achilles' comrades as well). Odysseus highlights the virtue of φιλοφροσύνη ('good fellowship', 9.256, as translated by Griffin 1995: 107), recommended to Achilles by his father Peleus as he sends him off to war. Phoenix not only emphasizes the paternal love that he personally feels for Achilles (esp. 9.437, 444, 485–6), but also incorporates into his story of Meleager counsel that he receives from his 'truest and dearest' (φίλτατοι, 9.586) comrades, clearly intended to mirror the emissaries sent by Agamemnon. Finally, Ajax laments that Achilles disregards the 'love of his companions' (φιλότητος ἑταίρων, 9.630) by refusing to return to the battlefield.

Syracusan might choose to claim or emphasize on any given occasion, whether his *polis* identity as a Syracusan; a regional or geographical identity as an inhabitant of Sicily; an ethnic or tribal identity as a Dorian; or a national identity as a Hellene.²³ Although in the 470s the Deinomenids chose to emphasize their identity as Greeks whose victories over Western ‘barbarians’ paralleled those of the mainland Greeks over the Persians, the extent to which Greeks residing in Sicily before that time fostered a sense of collective Hellenic consciousness is disputed.²⁴ For obvious reasons, the ambassadors focus on the ‘Greekness’ of Gelon and his subjects to the exclusion of all other communal identities.

At the close of Achilles’ angry response to Odysseus, the Homeric narrator notes that he ‘very strongly rejected’ (μάλα γὰρ κρατερῶς ἀπέειπεν, *Il.* 9.431) Agamemnon’s offer of reconciliation. Herodotus too as primary narrator emphasizes the anger in Gelon’s immediate response to the Greeks’ request (7.158.1):

Γέλων δὲ πολλὸς ἐνέκειτο λέγων τοιάδε· ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, λόγον ἔχοντες πλεονέκτην ἐτολμήσατε ἐμὲ σύμμαχον ἐπὶ τὸν βάρβαρον παρακαλέοντες ἐλθεῖν.

Gelon laid into them, speaking some such words as these: ‘Men of Greece, bringing a self-seeking proposal you have dared to come to summon me as an ally against the barbarian.’

LSJ notes the use of ἔγκειμαι in reference to combatants who ‘press hard ... upon a retreating or defeated enemy’, and to ‘opponents in politics or argument’. The force of the verb is heightened by the adjective πολλός, prompting J. Enoch Powell to translate the phrase as ‘inveigh’.²⁵ Gelon does indeed inveigh against the greed and effrontery of his visitors; his addressing them as ‘men of Greece’ may imply from the outset his resistance to being included in their number.²⁶ In

²³ For these options and their interactions with one another see e.g. Malkin 2011: 18–19, 97–118 and Thatcher 2021: 16–28, 85–132.

²⁴ Malkin 1986, 2011: 97–118 argues for a strong sense of regional Hellenic identity among Greeks residing in Sicily (*Sikelioῖται*), focused on the altar of Apollo Archegetes, from within forty to fifty years of the founding of Naxos in 734. Hall 2002: 122–3 disagrees, denying that Hellenic consciousness was a ‘particularly salient level of identification’ for Sicilian Greeks during any time period. Thatcher 2021: 85–132 concludes that Hellenic identity was not prominent for Sicilians prior to the 470s, but was brought to the forefront by Deinomenid ideology after the battle of Himera in 480.

²⁵ Powell 1938 s.v. ἔγκειμαι (used only once elsewhere in the *Histories*, with the literal meaning ‘to be placed inside’, 2.73.4).

²⁶ At 4.158.3 the Libyans who deceptively led the colonists from Thera to the site of Cyrene address them as ‘men of Greece’, underscoring the alienation between the settlers and the native population. Elsewhere, the Thessalians address the Greeks so when asking them for forces to hold the pass of Mount Olympus against Xerxes and the Persians (7.172.2); and Pausanias addresses his troops so after the battle of Plataea (9.82.3), when demonstrating the difference between the gustatory habits of the defeated Persians and the victorious Greeks. Cf. Dickey 1996: 177–82, 295. For the historical development of the term Ἕλληνες, used from the sixth century onwards to designate the entire population of Hellas in its broadest sense, see Hall 2002: 129–32.

revealing the basis of his grievance Gelon turns the argumentation and rhetoric of the messengers against them, revisiting and recasting their themes of conflict with the barbarian, joint efforts for the sake of liberation, and acting to preserve one's own interests. Gelon claims that the Greeks had ignored his own previous request for assistance when battling the 'barbarian army' (βαρβαρικοῦ στρατοῦ, 7.158.2) of the Carthaginians; declined to avenge the murder of Dorieus, a member of the Spartan royal household, at the hands of the Egestaeans, acting in concert with the Carthaginians (5.46); and refused his offer to help liberate (συνελευθεροῦν) – presumably from Carthaginian control – trading posts that had proved profitable for the mainland Greeks.²⁷ Such (alleged) disengagement on the part of the mainland Greeks leads Gelon to his indignant conclusion that 'as far as you are concerned, everything here [sc. in Sicily] is under barbarian control' (τό τε κατ' ὑμέας τάδε ἅπαντα ὑπὸ βαρβάρουσι νέμεται).

Gelon characterizes the mistreatment he has (ostensibly) endured at the hands of the Greeks as 'disrespect' (ἀτιμίας, 7.158.4) – an insufferable affront for any Homeric hero, but especially so in the case of Achilles, whose only compensation for a shortened lifespan is the everlasting honour (τιμὴ) or glory (κλέος) he may win in the fighting at Troy.²⁸ Moreover, we can see in the course of Gelon's first speech a progression that is familiar from the embassy scene in *Iliad* 9 and, in Jasper Griffin's view, represents part of Achilles' 'consistent character – a first violent response, subsequently toned down'.²⁹ For despite the disrespect shown him by the Greeks, Gelon declares his willingness to provide truly massive support for the Greek war effort: specifically, 200 triremes, 20,000 hoplites, 2,000 cavalry, 2,000 archers, 2,000 slingers and 2,000 lightly armed troops to serve alongside the cavalry, in addition to grain for the entire Greek army for the duration of the war.³⁰ The concession is contingent, however, upon Gelon's being named commander-in-chief (στρατηγός τε καὶ ἡγεμών, 7.158.5) of the Greek forces marshalled against the barbarian. Ironically, the overwhelming numbers at Gelon's disposal and their precise numeration align him (yet again) with Persian rather than Greek leadership.³¹

²⁷ See Morgan 2015: 27–9, who detects in Gelon's claims 'manipulation of the historical record for ideological purposes' by a ruler with 'a successful tyrant's flair for opportunism' (p. 29). Cf. Munson 2006: 264 for Herodotus as 'here making Gelon indulge in the propaganda by which we know the Sicilian tyrants proclaimed themselves avengers and liberators of the Greeks in the West'. (See further p. 55 below.) The identity of both the Carthaginian 'conflict' (νεῖκος, 7.158.2) vaguely referenced by Gelon and the trading outposts he mentions is problematic: see the discussions by e.g. Asheri 1988: 767, Morgan 2015: 28–9 and Vannicelli 2017: 496–7 on 7.158.8. Zali 2015: 205 n. 114 points out that no mention of conflict with the Carthaginians is made by the Herodotean narrator in his accounts of Gelon's rise to tyrannical power (7.153–6) or the colonizing misadventures of Dorieus (5.42–6).

²⁸ See especially Achilles' complaint to Thetis that Agamemnon has 'dishonoured' (ἠτίμησεν) him (1.352–6); Achilles describes his choice of undying *kleos* rather than a safe return home (*nostos*) and a long life at 9.410–16.

²⁹ Griffin 1995: 26 with n. 29.

³⁰ Lewis 2019: 729 sees in this mention of Sicily's agricultural abundance an implicit reference to the ancestral priesthood of Demeter and Persephone that accompanied the Deinomenid rise to political power (cf. 7.153.2–3).

³¹ For the self-aggrandizing tendency of Persian kings, above all Xerxes, to enumerate their possessions, see Konstan 1987 and Branscome 2013: 216. Unsurprisingly, scholars dispute the historical reliability of Gelon's (and Herodotus') numbers: Vannicelli 2017: 497 on

However, these numbers also have a surprising Homeric resonance, in that they align Gelon with Agamemnon, whom Nestor considers ‘superior’ (φέρτερος, 1.281) to Achilles because he rules over more men. Agamemnon is also the only hero in the Catalogue of Ships to be praised specifically for the number of his followers (2.577, 580).³² Moreover, overwhelming quantity also characterizes the litany of gifts that Agamemnon offers Achilles, and with the same price tag proposed by Gelon: submission to an overlord. Gelon defers this revelation until the end of his speech, just as Agamemnon did when proposing the embassy to the Greek leaders early in Book 9 (lines 115–61). In his repetition of Agamemnon’s proposal to Achilles, the diplomatic Odysseus has the presence of mind to omit Agamemnon’s final insistence that Achilles ‘be subdued’ (δμηθήτω, 158) and ‘submit himself’ (ὑποστήτω, 160) to him, as ‘more kingly’ (βασιλεύτερος, 160) and ‘elder in lineage’ (γενεῆ προγενέστερος, 161). In their speeches to follow, the Spartan and Athenian ambassadors will similarly invoke the elder status of their respective communities, as attested by Homer himself, in support of their claims to military hegemony over Gelon and his relatively ‘youthful’ colony of Syracuse. We will witness both increasing alienation between Gelon and the mainland Hellenes and emerging fissures in the alliance against Xerxes: the first ambassadors to speak, the unaffiliated ‘messengers of the Greeks’ (7.157.1), are succeeded by representatives of distinct communities, each concerned to protect its own right to hegemony.

The second pair of speeches in *Iliad* 9 includes the longest of the hexad, the tripartite appeal by Phoenix, which includes the ‘origin story’ of his paternal love for Achilles, the allegory of the Litai and the cautionary tale of Meleager. By marked contrast with this speech, expanded for dramatic effect at a crucial narrative juncture in characteristic Homeric fashion,³³ the response by the Spartan Syagrus to Gelon’s demand for hegemony (7.159) is pointedly concise (exemplifying the reticence that characterizes the Spartans in the *Histories* and numerous other ancient sources),³⁴ and indeed brusque in its imperious assertion of Sparta’s absolute right to military hegemony and Gelon’s necessarily subordinate role in the alliance, if he is to play any role at all. Syagrus bursts into speech without formally addressing Gelon: ‘Indeed Agamemnon, descended from Pelops, would lament loudly (Ἴη κε μέγ’ οἰμώξειε ὁ Πελοπίδης Ἀγαμέμνων) to hear that the Spartans had been robbed of their command by Gelon and the Syracusans.’ (Syagrus ceases to flatter Gelon as ruler of all Sicily.) Jonas Grethlein and Christopher Pelling have demonstrated on linguistic and metrical grounds that Syagrus is pointedly modifying a line from the *Iliad*, in which Nestor laments the unwillingness of the other Achaean heroes to stand up to Hector in the absence of Achilles.³⁵ While Syagrus cites Agamemnon as a symbol of victorious Panhellenic

7.158.16 cites competing views and important bibliography.

³² Sammons 2010: 175.

³³ See Edwards 1987: 4–5, 74–5 for expansion as a Homeric compositional technique that conveys emphasis; cf. Austin 1966: 306: ‘Where the drama is most intense the digressions are the longest and the details the fullest’ (although one may take issue with the term ‘digressions’). Hainsworth 1993: 119 on 9.430–605 adds that the great length of Phoenix’s speech reflects ‘the urgency of the situation as perceived by the speaker’.

³⁴ Cf. Zali 2015: 64–77.

³⁵ *Il.* 7.125 ἦ κε μέγ’ οἰμώξειε γέρων ἱππηλάτα Πηλεΐς. See Grethlein 2006: 488–96, Pelling

leadership against a barbarian foe,³⁶ however, his portrayal in the *Iliad* is by no means altogether complimentary: the Homeric Agamemnon proves a weak and divisive leader, willing (as his mistreatment of Achilles demonstrates) to cut off his nose to spite his face for the sake of asserting his hegemony.³⁷ That Syagrus himself is cut from the same cloth is strongly suggested by the ultimatum that he lays down for a potential ally with incomparable resources at his disposal (7.159):

ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν βούλει βοηθέειν τῇ Ελλάδι, ἴσθι ἀρξόμενος ὑπὸ
Λακεδαιμονίων· εἰ δ' ἄρα μὴ δίκαιοις ἄρχεσθαι, σὺ δὲ μηδὲ βοηθέειν.

But if you wish to help Greece, know that you will be ruled by Lacedaemonians; if you do not think it right that you be ruled, you do not think it's right to help, either.

Pelling shrewdly notes the change of perspective from the Greeks' first speech, which urged Gelon to embrace his identity as a Greek: here Syagrus addresses him as an outsider who may or may not wish to aid the Hellenic cause.³⁸

For his part, and unsurprisingly, Gelon feels slighted by Syagrus' unyielding stance: he pledges not to respond in kind to the 'reproaches' (ὀνειδέα) and 'outrages' (ὕβρισματὰ) in the Spartan's speech. In the latter term we may again discern an Achillean resonance, since among the very few instances of ὕβρις in the *Iliad* Achilles uses the term to lament Agamemnon's theft of Briseis at 1.203 (echoed by Athena at 1.214) and again in Book 9, with the cognate Homeric *hapax* ἐφυβρίζων (9.368).³⁹ In Gelon's counter-claim that he has a greater right to the leadership as commander (ἡγεμόνα, 7.160.2) of a much larger army and many more ships, he again demonstrates a quantitative bias that aligns him with the Persians rather than his fellow Greek (and possibly with the Iliadic Agamemnon, as previously noted).⁴⁰ Finally, just as Achilles makes a second concession in response to Ajax's speech by specifying the conditions under which he will return to battle, so too Gelon makes a second concession (after first offering his resources in return for total hegemony): he will be content to lead just one branch of the expedition, whether by land or sea, while the Spartans lead the other. Now the ultimatum is Gelon's: either the Spartans must (χρεὸν ἔστι) be satisfied with this power-sharing arrangement

2006: 89–92.

³⁶ For Agamemnon's role in Spartan cult and myth and his political usefulness in the sixth and fifth centuries, see Malkin 1994: 31–3.

³⁷ I agree with Scardino 2007: 218 n. 401 that the more positive post-Homeric assessments of Agamemnon cited by Grethlein do little to improve the image of the Iliadic Agamemnon as leader. Both Zali 2015: 203–4 and Tuplin 2022: 337–9 emphasize the inefficacy of the mythological intertexts invoked by the Spartan and Athenian speakers alike.

³⁸ Pelling 2006: 91 with n. 44, noting the same phenomenon in the Athenians' speech at 7.161.1.

³⁹ In the only other Iliadic instances, Nestor wistfully recalls the strength he once displayed in conflict with the hubristic Epeians (ὕβριζοντες, 11.695), and Menelaus laments the favour shown by Zeus to the hubristic Trojans (ἄνδρεςσι ... ὕβριστήσι, 13.633).

⁴⁰ Morgan 2015: 27 n. 5 wonders whether Gelon's numbers-based argument might therefore offer an implicit rebuttal to Syagrus' invocation of Agamemnon at the beginning of his speech.

or they must depart ‘bereft of such allies’ (συμμάχων τοιῶνδε ἐρήμους, 7.160.2).

The third pair of speeches in the Iliadic embassy is the shortest by far. Ajax’s brief final appeal to Achilles’ affection for his comrades elicits a sympathetic response that is briefer still, as well as a final concession: Achilles will resume fighting when Hector has slain Argives, burnt their ships and reached the Myrmidon camp.⁴¹ The third pair of Herodotean speeches departs from this template significantly. The speech of the anonymous Athenian envoy stands in pointed intratextual contrast to that of his Spartan counterpart: it is both longer (nineteen Oxford Classical Text [OCT] lines versus Syagrus’ brisk six), as befits a community known for its eloquence, and more diplomatic, though no less forceful in its message. Gelon delivers his terse response to that message in the briefest of the Herodotean speeches, chiding the Greeks for their unyielding insistence upon military hegemony and warning that they have forfeited an alliance of limitless potential.

Herodotus marks the transition from Gelon’s proposal of joint leadership with the Spartans to the Athenian’s speech by means of a loaded μὲν ... δέ construction: ‘This was Gelon’s proposal [sc. to the Spartans], but the Athenian messenger, anticipating his Lacedaemonian counterpart, answered Gelon as follows’ (Γέλων μὲν δὴ ταῦτα προετείνετο, φθάσας δὲ ὁ Ἀθηναίων ἄγγελος τὸν Λακεδαιμονίων ἀμείβετό μιν τοισίδε, 7.160.1). Whether or not the Athenian’s intervention is intended to recall Odysseus cutting in to speak before Phoenix can address Achilles (*Il.* 9.223–4), he asserts himself in the belief that the Spartans cannot be trusted to protect the Athenians’ military interests, but instead may cede command of the navy to Gelon (as later spelled out in 7.161.2). In other words, by introducing the Athenian’s speech in this way Herodotus calls our attention to potential dissension within the leadership of the alliance, even before the prospect of ‘external’ alliance with Gelon has been decided. In addressing Gelon as ‘king of the Syracusans’ (ὦ βασιλεῦ Συρηκοσίων, 7.161.1), the Athenian ostensibly flatters him in a way that Syagrus demonstrably failed to, and perhaps as mitigating preparation for his rejection of Gelon’s proposal – a rejection that the Athenian insists offers no ‘reproach’ (ὄνειδος, 7.161.3), such as Gelon perceived in Syagrus’ speech (ὄνειδεα, 7.160.1). At the same time, however, a less complimentary interpretation of the address is possible, since the Athenian limits Gelon’s rule to Syracuse rather than Sicily, as acknowledged in the opening speech of the Greek emissaries (ἄρχοντί γε Σικελίης, 7.157.2). Moreover, even ‘king’ may be an ambivalent term in this context, since (the Spartan dual monarchy notwithstanding) kingship in the *Histories* represents a typically Persian or Eastern governmental style. Note, too, that in reminding Gelon that ‘Greece sent us [sc. emissaries] to you’ (ἡ Ἑλλάς ἀπέπεμψε ἡμέας πρὸς σέ, 7.161.1), the Athenian, like Syagrus before him (7.159), addresses him as if he were an outsider, a non-Greek. More specifically, the meaning of the term Ἑλλάς, used in a comprehensive sense by the first Greek speakers to include Gelon and his Sicilian subjects, here has a more restricted sense, which excludes the tyrant and his territory.

⁴¹ Hainsworth 1993: 144 on 9.650–3 notes: ‘The distinction made between the Myrmidons and the Argives illuminates the limits of Akhilleus’ sense of social obligation: it stops at the boundary of his own tribe.’ In Herodotus’ staging of the embassy to Gelon, the speeches by Syagrus and the Athenians demonstrate similar limits as determined by *polis* boundaries.

The Athenian justifies the right of his *polis* to command the navy on three grounds (7.161.3): first, the numerical superiority of their fleet; secondly, the honour of being the most ancient Greek nation (ἀρχαιότατον ... ἔθνος), an autochthonous people who, uniquely among the Hellenes, are not ‘refugees’ (μετανάσται, an extremely rare word also found in Achilles’ response to Ajax in Book 9⁴²); and thirdly, their distinguished participation in the Trojan War, typified by Menestheus, the Athenian hero whom Homer – as ‘quoted’ by the speaker, at least – designated the ‘best man’ (ἄνδρα ἄριστον) at Troy for drawing up and marshalling troops. (In fact these are not Homer’s exact words, but a significant paraphrase.⁴³) The last two claims represent traditional Athenian themes, widely paralleled in classical Attic literature and oratory.⁴⁴ As in the case of Syagrus, the speech befits the speaker and his *polis*. At the same time, the invocation of Menestheus, which responds to Syagrus’ previous invocation of the Homeric Agamemnon, highlights both the common cause once shared by Spartans and Athenians at Troy and the competition that has begun to emerge between them at Gelon’s court. For by claiming that Homer described Menestheus as the ‘best man’ at marshalling troops at Troy,⁴⁵ the Athenian inserts him (despite his low profile elsewhere in the *Iliad*) into the competition among all the Greek heroes fighting at Troy to be recognized as the ‘best of the Achaeans’, the ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν – a title claimed by Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.91) and fatefully contested by Achilles (1.244). Grethlein cites this final claim of the Athenian ambassador to naval command, on the basis of Menestheus’ status as ἀνὴρ ἄριστος among his peers, as proof that the Herodotean debate over military hegemony corresponds to the search for the greatest hero at Troy.⁴⁶ Also relevant to the Herodotean scenario, in my view, is Agamemnon’s more fo-

⁴² The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (consulted 16 June 2023) lists only two pre-Herodotean uses of this word, both in speeches of Achilles recalling his humiliation by Agamemnon. In his reply to Ajax’s appeal, Achilles cannot forget how Agamemnon mistreated him, like some ‘dishonored refugee’ (ἀτίμητον μετανάστην, 9.648); the same line and phrase are repeated at 16.59, where Achilles describes Agamemnon’s theft of Briseis. The earliest post-Herodotean instances cited by *TLG*, apart from Aristotelian discussions of the Homeric *topoi*, occur in Aratus (fourth–third century BC) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BC).

⁴³ At 2.553–5 the poet claims that ‘there was no man on earth like him’ (τῷ δ’ οὐ πῶ τις ὁμοῖος ἐπιχθόνιος γένητ’ ἀνὴρ) for marshalling horses and shield-bearing warriors; only Nestor could compete with (ἔριζεν) Menestheus, since he was his elder. (Tuplin 2022: 338 overstates the case for Menestheus’ heroic inadequacy in saying that, according to Homer, he was best at organizing troops ‘except for Nestor’.) Zenodotus athetized lines 553–5; Kirk 1985: 207 on 2.553–5 considers the praise ‘overdone’ but the lines not necessarily spurious, although conceivably the work of a Panathenaic competitor.

⁴⁴ For references cf. Vannicelli 2017: 499–500 on 7.161.15–16. *Pace* Scardino 2007: 221 n. 403, Herodotus himself does not dispute the Athenian claim to autochthony, although he does consider them of non-Greek (Pelasgian) origin: see Dewald and Munson 2022: 257 on 1.56.2.

⁴⁵ Grethlein 2006: 498 suggests that the Athenian’s evocation of Menestheus is possibly undercut by 1) the hero’s *Iliadic* command of an army rather than a navy, and 2) the rejection of such retrospective arguments by the Athenians in their later debate with the Tegeans before the battle of Plataea (9.27.4). For his part Tuplin 2022: 337–9 finds Syagrus, the Athenian speaker and Gelon all guilty of activating ‘self-undermining intertexts’.

⁴⁶ Grethlein 2006: 491, challenged by Tuplin 2022: 237 on the grounds (unconvincing, to my mind) that hegemony is not an issue in *Iliad* 9, since Agamemnon offers Achilles gifts rather than a leadership role.

cused concern, despite his own status as commander-in-chief of the Trojan expedition, to be recognized as ‘more kingly’ (βασιλεύτερος, 9.160)⁴⁷) than Achilles.

The last of the Herodotean speeches is also the shortest (4.5 OCT lines), as an exasperated Gelon speeds the emissaries on their way with an apt summary of the proceedings: for their failure to compromise it is likely that the Greeks have commanders, but will have no subordinates for them to command. Gelon urges the ambassadors to inform Greece (τῇ Ἑλλάδι, 7.162.1) that ‘the spring has been lost from her year’ (ἐκ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τὸ ἔαρ αὐτῇ ἔξαραιρηται). In this way Gelon invidiously contrasts the burgeoning vigour of his resources, as leader of a young colonial superpower, with the fading strength of the mainland Greeks.⁴⁸ This sentence also neatly encapsulates the liminal status of Sicily as in some sense both part of and separate from Greece. On the one hand, Gelon follows the example of the Athenian ambassador in referring to Greece as a foreign entity; on the other, the metaphorical representation of the tyrant’s resources as the spring of Greece’s year suggests otherwise.

The Spartan and Athenian speakers have cited Homer (implicitly in the first instance, explicitly in the second) to ground their claims for military leadership in the distant past. Gelon may also indulge in intertextuality, but of a more recent vintage: Aristotle twice mentions that in a funeral oration Pericles compared the deaths of young men in war to the loss of spring from the year (possibly a poetic or proverbial flourish).⁴⁹ If Herodotus has Gelon recontextualize Pericles’ metaphor, the effect – for some, at least, in the external audience of the *Histories* – will be to project the internecine bickering over leadership staged in the embassy to Gelon, and reminiscent of the same phenomenon in the *Iliad*, into the mid-fifth-century conflict between Athens and Sparta for Hellenic hegemony. (Explicit examples of such projection include 6.98, where Herodotus attributes some of the misfortunes that befell Greece during the reigns of Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes to ‘warring for leadership’ among the leading Hellenic states; and 8.3, where Herodotus discusses the post-war end of Athenian willingness to concede naval command to the Spartans, which they had agreed to even before the embassy to Gelon.⁵⁰) To quote Grethlein’s pithy formulation: ‘In Herodotus’ hands, history unfolds as a complex *panopticon* of different times mirroring each other.’⁵¹

⁴⁷ Cf. Achilles’ sardonic claim that Agamemnon should seek a son-in-law who is ‘more kingly’ (βασιλεύτερος, 9.392) than him. Griffin 1995: 122 notes that in the *Iliad* the comparative and superlative forms (at 9.69 Nestor calls Agamemnon βασιλεύτατος) are confined to Book 9; for the meaning of *basileus* in the *Iliad*, understood in view of its adjectival derivatives as ‘a matter of degree rather than rank’, see Taplin 1992: 47–50 (quotation from p. 47).

⁴⁸ Cf. How and Wells 1912: ii.198 on 7.162.1 and Grethlein 2006: 498–9. Lewis 2019: 729–30 understands Gelon’s metaphor of seasonal growth as an example of the fertility imagery used by Herodotus in tacit reference to the role played by the ancestral priesthood of Demeter and Persephone (7.153.2–4) in the political ascent of the Deinomenids (cf. n. 30 above).

⁴⁹ Ar. *Rh.* 1365a31–3, 1411a1–4; scholars dispute whether the war in question was the Samian War of 440 or the Peloponnesian War. For discussion and bibliography see Grethlein 2006: 499 with n. 33, Pelling 2006: 91 n. 46, Zali 2015: 213 n. 149.

⁵⁰ For discussion see Hornblower and Pelling 2017: 219–20 on 6.98.2; Bowie 2007: 91–3 on 8.2.2–3.2.

⁵¹ Grethlein 2006: 501, cf. Pelling 2019: 214–31.

Thus while Achilles can envision rejoining his comrades in the fight for Troy (admittedly in extremis), Gelon's concessions end otherwise, with a staunch refusal to join the Hellenic alliance against Xerxes. The distance between their positions is highlighted by the aftermath of the embassy reported by Herodotus, who says that while Gelon feared the prospect of Greek defeat, he could not bear the thought of submitting to Spartan leadership (7.163.1). Gelon decided instead to send Cadmus of Cos to Delphi with a large sum of money and instructions to await the outcome of the battle. If this calls to mind Achilles sending Patroclus to the Achaean camp in Book 11 to inquire after the wounded (599–617), the similarity is only skin-deep. Achilles remains concerned for the welfare of his comrades, and ultimately his love for Patroclus will trump his hatred of Agamemnon and trigger his return to the battlefield. For his part, Gelon, with no intention to engage, is prepared to offer money and submission (earth and water) in the event of Persian victory. In the conflicting Sicilian version of Gelon's attitude towards the war reported by Herodotus (7.165–6), the money he sent to Delphi was meant to help the Greek cause – the only help that Gelon could offer while otherwise engaged in defeating Hamilcar's Carthaginian forces and their Sicilian allies at the battle of Himera. This Sicilian tradition is consistent with Gelon's claim in his first speech to have engaged with Carthaginians – Eastern barbarians – even before the mainland Greeks were threatened by Xerxes' invasion (158.2).⁵² Thus Herodotus offers a valuable witness to duelling post-war traditions concerning the activity and motives of Gelon during Xerxes' invasion, and the propaganda whereby (as Kathryn Morgan has detailed) the Sicilian tyrants attempted to insert themselves retrospectively into 'the master narrative of the early fifth century on the Greek mainland: Greeks against barbarians, the defense of freedom, and resistance to monarchical tyranny and concomitant slavery'.⁵³ While Herodotus passes no explicit judgement on the credibility of this alternate Sicilian tradition, his expanded and dramatized treatment of the Greek embassy, with its Homeric resonances and less sympathetic portrayal of Gelon, is likely to have made a greater impression upon his (non-Sicilian) readers.⁵⁴

Before concluding I would like to discuss the issue of flexibility in Herodotus' intertextual method and its possible large-scale application to the presentation of speeches in the embassy to Gelon.⁵⁵ I found evidence of such flexibility on a small scale in the portrayal of Gelon as fundamentally analogous to Achilles

⁵² Luraghi 1994: 280–1 argues that Gelon is in fact referring to Himera, as if that battle had already been fought and won. For the possible implications of this argument for the dating of the battle and the bias of Herodotus' own account, see Morgan 2015: 28–9.

⁵³ Morgan 2015: 26; cf. Feeney 2007: 46, who sees Herodotus as 'mediating a long-standing Sicilian project of integration together with competition' (sc. with the older *poleis* of the homeland) by including both mainland and Sicilian explanations of why Gelon failed to help the Greeks against the Persians.

⁵⁴ Munson 2006: 264–5 argues that the scant detail of the Sicilian *logos* effectively undermines its credibility. Otherwise Baragwanath 2008: 217–20, who sees in the combination of the dramatized staging of the embassy and the alternative Sicilian tradition an example of the shifting motives that characterize the representation of human motivation in the *Histories*; she grants that the more negative portrayal of Gelon's motives in the embassy, unqualified by a source reference, 'retains a persuasive quality' (p. 219).

⁵⁵ In what follows I am thoroughly indebted to lines of thought suggested by one of the journal's anonymous referees.

in the context of *Iliad* 9, but also reminiscent of the Iliadic Agamemnon in the number of troops and resources at his command, as well as the need for his leadership to be acknowledged by his peers. By the same token, while I have traced intertextual links between the speeches of the Homeric and Herodotean embassy scenes in the order of their presentation, affinities between other speeches in the two episodes demonstrate the sophistication of Herodotus' approach to the Homeric target text, which accommodates shifting narrative focal points. I have previously compared (and primarily contrasted) the speeches of Ajax and the Athenian ambassador to Gelon, but it is the speech of Syagrus that most resembles Ajax's in its brevity, aggrieved tone and lack of hope for further progress in negotiations. Each begins his speech obliquely – Ajax by addressing Odysseus, Syagrus by invoking Agamemnon – before addressing a peremptory command to his interlocutor: Achilles should graciously respect the dear friends visiting his compound, while Gelon must know that if he wishes to help Hellas, he will do so under Lacedaemonian command. In addition, the responses given to these speeches both contain concessions: Achilles specifies the desperate conditions under which he envisions returning to battle, while Gelon extends the option of sharing military command with the Spartans. Lastly, Ajax's climactic claim that he, Odysseus and Phoenix yearn to be 'nearest and dearest' (κῆδιστοί⁵⁶ τ(ε) ... καὶ φίλτατοι) to Achilles of all the Achaeans may find an (admittedly implicit) parallel in the tribal ties between the Dorian Spartans and the Dorian Syracusans. In this way Herodotus underscores similarities between the second greatest Greek warrior at Troy and the military power of Sparta, second to none on mainland Greece in 480 and the nemesis of Athens in post-war, intra-Hellenic conflict.

Moreover, in several respects the Athenian's response to Gelon is more evocative of the speeches delivered by Odysseus and Phoenix than that of Ajax. As already noted, the staging of the Athenian's speech as forestalling a potentially unwelcome reply from Syagrus may echo the staging of Odysseus' speech as an interruption – one that incorporates Agamemnon's proposal, and therefore must precede Phoenix's more personal, emotional appeal. The length of the Athenian's speech to Gelon again mirrors (on a much smaller scale) those of Odysseus and Phoenix, while his climactic appeal to the distant past – the myth of Athenian autochthony and Menestheus' place of honour in the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships – parallels Phoenix's final argument, based on the cautionary tale of Meleager. In this last instance, however, differences between the two scenarios are no less consequential than similarities, in that Phoenix argues selflessly for behaviour that will enhance Achilles' honour (τιμή, 9.605), while the Athenian messenger envisions a zero-sum contest for naval honour that pits his fellow citizens against Gelon's Syracusans, winner takes all. This discrepancy again highlights the destructive competition for leadership that nearly undermined the Greek alliance against Xerxes, roiled the Greek world in the years following his defeat and ultimately led to the internecine destruction of the Peloponnesian War.

⁵⁶ Although LSJ translates κῆδιστος in this context as 'most cared for', this understates the ambiguity of the adjective in its possible reference to connection by marriage (κῆδος), suggesting a closeness that is second only to blood relations: cf. Garvie 1994: 349 on *Od.* 8.583.



In summary and conclusion: I have argued that, against a broad Homeric background signalled by Iliadic allusions in the speeches of the Spartan and Athenian envoys, Herodotus encourages his audience to perceive the debate with Gelon over military hegemony as a latter-day version of the embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* 9. There are striking similarities of form and content between the two episodes: both are structured as speech hexads in direct discourse, comprising pairs of speeches between three envoys and a uniquely powerful potential ally in a great war against an Eastern foe. Achilles and Gelon respond to the request of their suppliants in substantially similar ways, with an immediate and angry refusal due to perceived disrespect, followed by concessions that lead in Achilles' case to the prospect of his return to the battlefield at Troy, but in Gelon's case to final refusal of the invitation to join the Hellenic alliance against Xerxes – a refusal that heightens both the unlikelihood of defeating the king and the magnitude of Greek victory in retrospect. A decisive factor in the discrepancy between the decisions of Achilles and Gelon lies in the unity of purpose shared – or not – by the three speakers who seek their help. Although the speeches delivered by Odysseus, Phoenix and Ajax reflect their distinctive personalities, the heroes all share the single goal of persuading Achilles to rejoin their ranks, and present a united front as his closest friends among the Achaeans. If the ambassadors to Gelon all share the same goal of persuading him to embrace his Hellenic identity and join their alliance, they also betray decidedly different perspectives on the task at hand. The idealizing Panhellenic rhetoric of the initial speech is fractured in the first instance by Syagrus' laconic and imperious insistence upon Spartan hegemony of the Greek resistance, and in the second by the Athenian's more verbose but no less parochial claim to naval command if ceded by the Spartans. In his willingness to submit to Persian rule rather than Spartan leadership, Gelon demonstrates an affinity to non-Greek *barbaroi* that recalls his ascent to tyrannical power, which he achieved in part by depriving fellow Hellenes of their political freedom. Moreover, in his apparent repurposing of a metaphor adapted from a Periclean funeral oration, Gelon projects the Hellenic military disunity on display in his court into the recent and ongoing experience of Herodotus' contemporary audience, which is forced to suffer the consequences of conflict between Athens and Sparta.

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