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# GLAUCUS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST HERODOTUS 6.86 ON MEMORY AND TRUST, OATH AND PAIN\*

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*“I think I understand you; you generalize, Don Benito; and mournfully enough.  
But the past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all,  
and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves.”  
“Because they have no memory,” he dejectedly replied; “because they are not human.”  
(Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*)*

The story of Glaucus the Spartan, his guilt, and the consequent destiny of his descendants holds a strategic position in the narrative economy of Herodotus. The story is the culmination of a long section in the sixth book which intertwines the story of the relationship between Athens and Aegina with that of the Spartan kings Cleomenes, Demaratus, and Leotychidas (6.52–86). The particular structure of this story makes it a cornerstone in the Herodotean vision of the nature and actions of man and their consequences, as well as the influence of divine intervention in human life. In particular, it concentrates on the ambivalence of memory, the risks associated with trust, and the efficacy (and limits) of taking an oath based on the latter.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to my introductory considerations on the relationship between religion and memory (above, pp. 17–19), the objective of this paper is to show that the whole system of stories to which I will refer is grounded on the constant and determining presence of an oath, at the crossroads of power and fragility. Furthermore, my investigation will highlight some primary cultural focal points: the polarisation between an unintentional act (ἄκων) and an intentional one (ἐκόν); the theme of the legacy of guilt;<sup>2</sup> the social nature of trust and the reciprocal behaviour this nurtures. The tale of Glaucus and the previous ones make it possible to focus on both the relationship between memory, oath and oblivion, as well as the interruption of

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1 Regarding unsworn oaths in general, see Callaway 1993, 19, where there is only a brief reference to Glaucus' tale. *Contra* Mikalson 2002, 193. There are useful observations in Gray 2002, 313 and Fletcher 2011, 33. For a wider discussion regarding the problems caused by oath-taking in Greece, see Sommerstein, Fletcher 2007, *passim*.

2 According to Gernet 1955, 537–39, in the story of Glaucus attention is focused on a vision of life “qui admet la transmission héréditaire de la responsabilité”, according to “la conception fondamentale d’une solidarité entre les générations.” On “accountability” in Herodotus, see Gould 1989, 70.

that “reciprocity continuum”<sup>3</sup> on which the social grammar of intercourse and co-operation is founded:

“What the rules of justice will have to prescribe is reciprocity, and what is to be accounted as reciprocity, what is to be exchanged for what, will depend on what each party brings to that bargaining situation of which the rules of justice are the outcome”.<sup>4</sup>

## 1 BINDING MEMORY: OATH AND SOCIETY

A close examination of oath taking in the Greek world is not the aim of this paper. It is important, however, to underline that its function of “social discipline”<sup>5</sup> is closely tied to its role as a hinge between politics and religion, the human dimension and that of the divine. Oaths confer an irrevocable seal of guarantee for the affirmation being voiced or to the commitments being undertaken, maintaining the memory of them and at the same time rendering the consequences deriving from oblivion unstoppable and functional, especially if such oblivion is deliberate. In other words, the act of taking an oath is a stabilising force for the social group. Thanks to its ritual structure (e. g. Hom. *il.* 3.267–80, ὄρκια πιστά), it creates binding situations which serve as witnesses and guarantors through direct invocation of the gods, and/or of objects of marked symbolic significance. The use of “settings, symbolic gestures, bloody offerings”<sup>6</sup> establishes the contract within the sphere of the divine, and makes the commitment derived from it both visible and binding: the oath anchors the words in something fixed and definitive and reduces the possibility of different interpretations, an inexhaustible source of ambiguity and conflict. An oath’s performative character<sup>7</sup> produces a “temporal space” at its centre, *es meson*, to put it in Greek, where conflicts tied to memory can be reformulated under the sign of trust guaranteed by irrevocable divine intervention. This “temporal space” has a social nature,<sup>8</sup> and the oath possesses all the characteristics of the “fait social”: a) pervasiveness; b) collective involvement; and c) the capacity to coerce.<sup>9</sup>

3 Sahlin 1972, 198; Calame 2006, 41: “[...] Mémoire consacrée et entretenue de manière communautaire dans des formes discursives.”

4 Macintyre 1988, 36. *Ibidem*, 14: “[Dike] is the ordering of the polis”.

5 Prodi 1992, 21.

6 Sandowicz 2011, 17. See Benveniste 1947; Casabona 1966, 211–29; Benveniste 1969, 163–75. More recently see Sommerstein, Fletcher 2007. On the dangers of the “sacred” see Moulinier 1952 and Parker 1983. For a comparative and anthropological perspective see Douglas 1984, particularly chap. 6 *Powers and Dangers*, 95–114. See also Burkert 1996, 169–71.

7 On performative-linguistic aspects see Austin 1962. On oath-taking see also Zuccotti 1998 and Giordano 1999, 36–41.

8 The power of the oath, according to Paolo Prodi (Prodi 1992, 22), is constituted above all by its triadic structure: the relationship between the oath taker, the god, and society.

9 See Durkheim 1895, 22–23: “Est fait social toute manière de faire, fixée ou non, susceptible d’exercer sur l’individu une contrainte extérieure; ou bien encore, qui est générale dans l’étendue d’une société donnée tout en ayant une existence propre, indépendante de ses manifestations individuelles.” See Calame 2006, *passim*.

An oath is ultimately a word producing an effect, just like other speech acts, such as the oracular word, which has to be spoken to make an event take place; the word of justice or *themistes* pronounced by the *basileus* (Hom. *od.* 16.403); the word of the curse of the *Arai* (Aeschyl. *eumen.* 147); and by no means least the poetic word, the praise which helps what deserves to be remembered to grow and thus exist. It is worth remembering the incipit of the Herodotean *Histories* (1.1: “[...] This is the display of the inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that things done by man may not be forgotten in time (τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται).”<sup>10</sup> “What deserves to be remembered” is in fact the discriminating element that determines the aim of the narrative.

## 2 THE RELENTLESS OATH: IRREVERSIBILITY AND PUNISHMENT

The Herodotean *logoi* offer various examples of the ways in which the commitments and affirmations expressed in oaths are not forgotten. The ritual gestures and verbal *formulae* present in the *Histories* at first sight seem to re-evoke the cultural horizons of the archaic age and express the preoccupation with avoiding oblivion and perpetuating the memory and irrevocability of an oath.<sup>11</sup>

The punishment of perjury is entrusted to entities belonging to the same divine sphere called upon at the time of the formulation of the oath. Among these are the *Arai*, the curses that an oath taker invokes against himself and his descendants in the case of perjury.<sup>12</sup> Mythical portrayals highlight this punitive aspect: indeed, taking an oath already entails the risk of perjury and its consequences.<sup>13</sup>

In particular and of primary importance in the Herodotean tale analysed here, is the Hesiodic portrayal. Horkos, the oath personified (*Works and days* 219; 803–05), is described in the *Theogony* (231–32) as “Oath who most troubles men upon earth when anyone willfully (ἔκῶν) swears a false oath.”<sup>14</sup> Horkos is significantly placed among the sons of Eris, Strife, who in her turn is daughter of “deadly Night” (*Theogony* 224: Νύξ ὀλοή) and mother of other woeful entities, including Lethe and Oblivion (*Theogony* 226–27). What stands out even in *Work and Days* is the sig-

10 Transl. by A. D. Godley, Loeb Cambridge MA, [1925] 1981<sup>6</sup>. All the following translations of Herodotus are from this edition.

11 E. g. 1.165–67 and 3.65.7. For a case of “willing oblivion” of the oath, see the story of Prexaspes in 3.75. On the various types of oath in Herodotus, see Bennardo 2004–2005. See also the interesting observations of Giraudeau 1984, 28–33 and Harrison 2000, 119.

12 On the link between *Arai* and *Erinyes*, see Hom. *il.* 3.278; 19.259–64; Aesch. *seven against Thebes* 70–71: “Erinyes, the potent spirit of the vengeance of my sire”; Aesch. *eumen.* 415–17: “We are Night’s dread children (τέκνα). Curses (Ἀραί) are we named in our habitations beneath the earth”; Soph. *el.* 110–15. See Vallois 1914, 262 and Sewell-Rutter 2007, 79–81. See also Calame 2006, 212–15. All the following translations of Aeschylus are from H. Weir Smyth, Loeb Cambridge, MA., 1926. Those of Sophocles are by R. Jebb, Loeb Cambridge, MA. 1894.

13 See Benveniste 1947, 89–90; Benveniste 1969, 163–65. *Contra* Bollack 1958, 31. See Loraux 1997, 131–35. For *alastor* as “oath demon”, see Pippin Burnett 1998, 140–41 and 206, n. 77.

14 Transl. by H. G. Evelyn-White, Loeb Cambridge, MA 1914. All the following translations of Hesiod are from this edition.

nificant relationship of Oath both with Oblivion and the Erinyes, daughters of the night, who are present at his birth, offering him his first care: “Avoid fifth days: they are unkindly and terrible. On a fifth, they say, the Erinyes assisted at the birth of Oath whom Strife bare to trouble the forsworn” (τὸν Ἔρις τέκε πῆμ’ ἐπιόρκους, *Work and Days* 804). It is opportune to underline this genetic relationship, since it will be a *leitmotif* in the Herodotean text: Oath is a son (*pais*) of Eris, Strife, from which divisions among community members derive.<sup>15</sup>

It is no coincidence that the Erinyes are described as μνήμονες (“ever-mindful”), that is as the “active memory” of the oath, as δυσπαρήγοροι (“relentless”).<sup>16</sup> Their implacability reveals a solidarity between oath and memory which can have consequences in reality, above all in a culture in which man describes himself as part of a wider social group from which his existence receives meaning. The most terrible punishment entails both the loss of possessions, which are seen as “an extension of oneself”, as well as deprivation of descendants, which is the other possible method of surviving beyond one’s own lifetime, as Nicole Loraux has rightly observed.<sup>17</sup> Memory in the culture of archaic and classical Greece regards a particular state of mind, a feeling: its re-evocation has consequences in reality, and these consequences therefore endorse the concept of the word.<sup>18</sup>

### 3 OATH-TAKING IN HERODOTUS (6.52–85): FATHERS AND SONS, MEMORY AND OATHS

As already mentioned, the tale of Glaucus, a Spartan citizen and the son of Epicycles (6.86), closes a long section of the sixth book which frames the story of three Spartan kings, Cleomenes, Demaratus and Leotychidas (6.52–85). The flashback on their rivalry is inserted within the tale of the conflict between Athens and Aegina (6.48–94) in the context of the release of some Aeginetan hostages. The narrative structure follows the logic of a story within a story and partially the process of *mise en abyme*: I will show how the destiny of Glaucus plays a key role in this plot in which oaths and the terms of these vows, betrayed trust, and deliberate oblivion are intertwined.<sup>19</sup>

- 15 Hesiod distinguishes between two types of Strife: “So, after all, there was not one kind of Strife alone, but all over the earth are two” (*Work and Days* 11–12). Loraux 1997, 136 and Zarecki 2007, 8–9.
- 16 Aeschyl. *eum.* 382–84. See also Hes. *theog.* 54–135. Loraux 1997, 138.
- 17 See also Aeschyl. *prom.* 516; *eum.* 383; Soph. *aj.* 1390. Loraux 1997, particularly 129–33. On *Theogony* 226–31, see Vallois 1914, 258.
- 18 Simondon 1982, 223–24. See Chaniotis 2006, 212: “Intense emotions were sometimes to be expected (e. g., in funerals) or were deliberate, e. g., in oaths, curses, and confessions. For the understanding of rituals one needs to consider not only the norms that regulated them, but also the emotions of the participants and the tensions among them that threatened to undermine the rituals.”
- 19 The history of the difficult relations between Athens and Aegina is present throughout the work of Herodotus, see 5.82: “This was the beginning (ἔξ ἀρχῆς τοιῆσδε) of the Aeginetans’ long-standing debt of enmity (ἔχθρη) against the Athenians.” See also 5.82–89, 7.144. This enmity

In 6.48–50 the Aeginetans obey Darius and concede water and land, as do many other Greek communities. The Athenians accuse them of betrayal, protest to Sparta about this, and King Cleomenes orders the delivery of the hostages. On the instigation of the other Spartan king, Demaratus, the Aeginetans refuse and accuse Cleomenes of acting illegitimately (because according to the Spartan constitution both kings need to agree), and of having been corrupted by the Athenians. At this point (6.51), a long digression about the rights of Spartan kings starts, and only stops at chapter 60. Once again, as in other *logoi*, we see reference to the Sanctuary of Delphi, the religious authority which at one time had legitimised the dual monarchy of Sparta and, at the same time, the different prestige and rivalry of the two reigning families.<sup>20</sup> In chapter 61, the focus returns briefly to the present: Cleomenes returns to Sparta from Aegina and considers taking revenge on Demaratus, who has defamed him (διέβαλε). Cleomenes accuses Demaratus of reigning without being entitled to: indeed, he is not the legitimate son of King Ariston. Here Herodotus begins another dive into the past (6.61–65) which amplifies the effect of the narrative, developing a complex intrigue which revolves around memory, oaths, and generational transmission: a plot that prepares us for the story of Glaucus with its ambivalence.

Although Ariston has two wives, he has had no children. So he decides to marry again, this time the most beautiful woman in Sparta, who however is the wife of his friend, Agetos. Ariston promises to give his friend whatever he chooses and he is invited to do the same under the rule of reciprocal exchange. Since Ariston is already married, Agetos suspects nothing and the two friends seal the proposal with an oath (6.62: ἐπὶ τούτοις δὲ ὄρκους ἐπήλασαν). Ariston asks for the most beautiful woman in Sparta, who thus passes from one husband to the other on the basis of an oath which even in the eyes of Herodotus was a trick, but equally an irrevocable commitment (ἀναγκαζόμενος μέντοι τῷ τε ὄρκῳ καὶ τῆς ἀπάτης τῆ παραγωγῆ).

Demaratus is born prematurely to this woman and is initially disowned by his father before the Ephors, but then accepted as his son. The verb used on this occasion is ἀπόμνυμι, which has the sense of “to swear to deny something”, with particular reference to the official act of disowning a son.<sup>21</sup> Later, on succeeding his father, Demaratus often conflicts with the other king, Cleomenes.

has even more distant roots: “But the Aeginetans were uplifted by great prosperity, and had in mind an ancient feud with Athens (ἐχθρῆς πάλαιης ἀναμνησθέντες) ...” (5.81). See Corcella 1984, 73 and 197–98; Nenci 1998, 247; Rood 2007, 129. Regarding the use of *mise en abyme* in historiography, and particularly in speech structure, see Grethlein 2010, 98 and 220. On the incomplete connection of *Ringkomposition* and *excursus* in this part of book VI, see Spada 2008, 121–27. Regarding digressions in Herodotus’ *Histories*, see chiefly Cobet 1971, 45–82 and De Jong 2004, 112: “The historical ‘digressions’ are in fact *analepses* or *prolepses*, which are usually marked off by means of ring-composition, narratorial interventions which announce or conclude a section [...], or by anaphoric and cataphoric pronouns (*hōde*, *hōs*, *toionde*, etc.)”.

20 Defradas 1954 and Momigliano 1979, 71. On the overlapping structure of the section, see Corcella 1984, 197 and Beltrametti 1986, 137–40.

21 Andoc. *on the mysteries* 127. Transl. by K. J. Maidment, Loeb Cambridge MA, 1968.

Behind the apparently disordered mix of digressions, Herodotus is really making the rules for his vision of human history. To quote Charles-Olivier Carbonell:

“Ce n’est pas l’espace qui ordonne et organise les Histoires. C’est le temps qui en fait une œuvre rigoureusement chronologique, même si cette rigueur exige un apparent désordre.”<sup>22</sup>

Herodotus returns to his starting point, that is the conflict between Athens and the citizens of Aegina, who are accused of taking the side of the Persians. Cleomenes, who had asked for the delivery of the hostages, is furious because he has been blocked by the accusation of corruption. As revenge (ἀποτίνυσθαι) he makes an agreement with Leotychidas, a Spartan with the same lineage (οἰκία) as Demaratus, that Leotychidas will become king in exchange for supporting Cleomenes against the Aeginetans. At this point a new digression enfolds in which tries to explain Leotychidas’ hate (ἔχθρός) for his relative Demaratus, who married his betrothed after raping her. Here the story takes a judicial turn, introduced once again by an oath. On the instigation of Cleomenes, Leotychidas swears on the illegitimacy of Demaratus and takes him to court. The term used this time is κατόμνυται, that is “to swear to confirm the authenticity of a past event.” The denunciation and oath sworn by Leotychidas start a conflict (6.66: ἐόντων περὶ αὐτῶν νεικέων), which rapidly moves onto a religious plane and involves the god of Delphi. In fact, the Spartans decide to turn to the sanctuary of Apollo to clarify their doubts about the legitimacy of Demaratus. The decision is made publicly and collectively since it is the socio-political balance itself which is in danger. Cleomenes follows a pre-established plan (ἐκ προνοίας): he corrupts an important Delphic person to convince the Pythia to establish (ἔκρινε) that Demaratus was not the son (παῖς) of Ariston. This soon happens and Demaratus is deposed (although later the corruption comes to light and the guilty parties are punished, 6.71–72).

#### 4 MOTHERS AND SONS, OATH AND SUPPLICATION: DANGEROUS CONNECTIONS

Leotychidas therefore becomes king through a dispute about fathers and sons, based on oaths taken and then denied but nevertheless actuated by a memory, which is the connection between the social microcosm and that of the divine. Herodotus ably constructs the character of Leotychidas first as victim to the tyranny of Demaratus and then as his persecutor: with the support of the Pythia, who has been corrupted by Cleomenes, he not only deprives Demaratus of sovereignty and of genetic and

- 22 Carbonell 1985, 145. According to Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 13, “Après avoir admis que l’apparence morcelée des Histoires reflétait leur être, on pose désormais que leur réalité profonde contrarie leur apparence et que leur diversité cache leur unité.” See Gould 1989, 39: “Herodotus’ stories are, for the most part, anchored somewhere in a single continuum of time, either by counting years or more often by counting generations”; Fornara 1990, 26: “He [Herodotus] pursues a multitude of subjects; he has a propensity for digressions that can fatigue the reader and complicate the narrative argument”; Rood 2007, 126: “Particularly distinctive of Herodotus is the use of anachrony in what some critics have thought equivalent to modern footnotes or endnotes.”



social identity, but also humiliates him publicly with derision and insults (6.67),<sup>23</sup> to the point of pushing the deposed sovereign to examine the memory of that paternal oath that has been the source of all his troubles. When he returns home, Demaratus sacrifices a cow to Zeus Ἐρκεῖος, protector of family life, and immediately afterwards summons his mother: in her hands he places (6.68: ἐς τὰς χεῖρας) parts of the entrails and begs her (κατικέτευε) to tell the truth (φράσαι μοι τὴν ἀληθείην). Technically the language used on this occasion does not directly refer to the oath, but to prayer and supplication.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it seems clear from the context that the mother is excluded from the sacrifice, even though one can deduce that it takes place within the domestic space, from the mention of Zeus Ἐρκεῖος.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless the contact with the entrails binds her to a truthful relationship with both her son and the god.

Herodotus seems to place Demaratus in a position that is deliberately ambiguous: on one hand, when he conducts the sacrifice, he acts as legitimate head of the household (*oikos*); on the other, however, he turns to his mother in the guise of a suppliant, that is of a stranger (*xeinos*).<sup>26</sup> The storyteller uses the vocabulary of supplication twice, firstly in indirect narration (κατικέτευε) and then in direct speech which Demaratus addresses to his mother (ἱκετεύω). The repetition is reinforced by the participle καταπτόμενος with which Demaratus appeals to Zeus *Herkeios* and the other gods, a term which refers to a suppliant's typical behaviour, i. e. clutching onto the gods' altars and statues. The ex-king therefore finds himself in an uncertain position, caught between the affirmation of his identity and its denial. Only the ὀρθὸς λόγος of his mother can put an end to his doubts. It is not by chance that a specific term like κατερέω appears, a verb which when passive has the sense of a full confession without reservations, i. e. "truthful" (6.69: πᾶν ἐς σὲ κατειρήσεται τὸ ληθές); in this way memory becomes shared and puts back into play that past which seemed irrevocably sealed by the oaths taken by Ariston and then Leotychidas.

The mother's tale produces another flashback, based on a well known literary theme (a variant of the *ménage à trois* between Zeus, Alcmene and Amphitryon): the groom Ariston is substituted by a ghost which takes on his appearance (φᾶσμα εἰδόμενον Ἀρίστωνι), sleeps with his new wife, and then leaves crowns, which turn out to come from the *heroon* of Astrabacus,<sup>27</sup> as a physical sign of his presence. The tone is in a minor key and almost parodic: the hero Astrabacus is not Zeus (as in the case of Alcmene), just as Ariston is not a fully legitimate husband. This does

23 Lloyd-Jones 1971, 68; Nenci 1998, 233.

24 The taking of an oath requires an inseparable mix between verbal and nonverbal actions. See Harth 2006, 15–36 and Caciagli 2009, 187–88.

25 Hom. *od.* 20.333–37; Lyc. *a. leocr.* 25. See Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 16. According to Burkert 1977, 184 and 256, there is a close connection between Zeus *Herkeios* and Zeus *Ktesios*, not only "as centre of court and property", but also as gods who guarantee the participation of citizenship: for both these gods their "places of cult are not transferable and thus indissolubly bind the man to his polis".

26 Brief observations in Scott 2005, 272.

27 Paus. 3.16.6. See Burkert 1965. Regarding the fabulous nature of this and other stories Aly 1921 remains valid; on the birth of Demaratus in particular, see 156–57. On the influence of research on Herodotus by Wolf Aly, see Beltrametti 1986, 210–11.

not stop Ariston demanding more credible evidence from his wife: she therefore takes an oath to confirm this, using the same word (*κατόμνυμι*) used by Leoty-chidas to affirm the illegitimacy of Demaratus (*ἐγὼ δὲ κατωμνύμην*), and at the same time she reproaches Ariston for denying that he was the man with whom she had just lain. In the story told by the mother wishing to persuade her son, the oath of confirmation (publicly taken) weakens her husband's suspicions (6.69.3): "When he saw me swearing (*κατομνυμένην*), he perceived that this was some divine affair (*ὡς θεῖον εἶη τὸ πρῆγμα*)".

The mother's tale concludes with a request that Demaratus no longer seek out the past, since he has now heard the truth declared in a solemn manner. One can note in this account a reversal of roles: in the mother's tale it is the mother who has taken the oath (*κατωμνύμην*), and no longer the father. However, her vow remains an event in the past: it is not repeated in front of Demaratus.

Finally, Herodotus' insistent use of another verb needs to be underlined. The verb *μετέρομαι* is typical in these situations of supplication. In this context it is best translated as "to beseech", and yet one cannot and must not neglect the potential aggressive sense of this verb which renders the very same supplication a risky practice.<sup>28</sup> Used first by the son towards his mother (6.68), and then again by the mother in her reply to her *παῖς* (6.69),<sup>29</sup> this verb refers to *λιταί*, that is the "prayers", which are well known in the personified Homeric and Hesiodic version (*αἱ Λιταί*, the "Prayers", Hom. *il.* 9.502–23). The completeness of the mother's tale is confirmed by her request that Demaratus no longer accept other *logoi* about his paternity, since they are by now rendered superfluous both by the absolute truth ("You have heard the whole truth", *τὰ γὰρ ἀληθέστατα*) he has just heard and by the recovered memory of his mother's oath, each authenticated by the sacrificial entrails placed in her hands.

As well as being authenticated through the recovery of maternal memory, paternity reveals its function as an interface at the crossroads of multiple processes of socialisation and recognition. The same function can be better illustrated by Glaucus' tale.

## 5 DEPOSITS AND TRUSTS, MEMORY AND RETURN AS CULTURAL OBJECTS: SOME GUIDELINES TO MEANING-MAKING

Herodotus now moves into the future to illustrate the unhappy demise of the three kings,<sup>30</sup> and with this aim turns to the general narrative framework of the Athenian denunciation against the Aeginetans (6.48–50). Cleomenes, finally rid of Demara-

28 Havelock 1978, 126–27; Crotty 1994; Naiden 2006, 82 and 273.

29 Hdt. 6.69: "Therefore I entreat you by the gods to tell me the truth" (*Ἐγὼ σε ὄν μετέρομαι τῶν θεῶν εἰπεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*); 6.69.1: "My son, since you pray and entreat me to tell you the truth, the whole truth shall be told to you" (*ὦ παῖ, ἐπειτέ με λιτῆσι μετέρομαι εἰπεῖν τὴν ἀληθειάν, πᾶν ἐς σὲ καταειρήσεται τὴν ἀλήθειαν*).

30 Hdt. 6.72–84 (and Paus. 3.7.9). See How, Wells 1912, 92; Nenci 1998, 237; Scott 2005, 280–81; Irwin forthcoming, 232 (I am very grateful to prof. Klaus Geus, Freie Universität Berlin, who allowed me to read the text at proof stage).

tus, can wreak vengeance on the Aeginetans who have humiliated him and, together with Leotychidas, vent all his anger against them (6.73: δεινόν [...] ἔγκοτον). Left without protection, the inhabitants of the island put up no resistance, and the two kings “round up” (this is the sense evoked by the verb ἐπιλέγειν in 6.73.2) ten hostages chosen from among the most eminent citizens, take them to Athens, and place them in the custody (παραθήκην κατατίθενται, entrust) of their worst enemies. Punishment therefore happens in a well known and regulated manner, that is the depositing of a possession.<sup>31</sup> Usually the deposit refers to privately owned, material goods of some value: in this case the framework is that of an interstate conflict and the item placed in custody has great political value.<sup>32</sup>

A deposit implies its return and, at the same time, a preliminary definition of the conditions of return: it is impossible to fail to return a deposit without being in violation of the rules.<sup>33</sup> In Plato this infringement is intertwined with the relationship between fathers and sons, ancestors and descendants, that is with the temporal line which sustains the notion of *genos*. Plato draws on a long tradition when he states (*Laws* 913c):

“[...] if any man [...] without the consent of the depositor takes up a treasure which neither he himself nor any of his forefathers has deposited (ἂ μήτε αὐτὸς κατέθετο μήτε αὐ πατέρων τις πατήρ), and thus breaks a law most fair, and that most comprehensive ordinance of the noble man who said, ‘Take not up what you laid not down’ [...] what penalty should such a man suffer? God knows what, at the hands of gods (ὑπὸ μὲν δὴ θεῶν, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν) [...]. Such conduct is injurious (οὐ σύμφορα) to the getting of children [...]”.

Plato makes reference to unspecified ancient stories (τοῖς περὶ ταῦτα λεγομένοις μύθοις), amongst which that of Glaucus could perhaps be included.<sup>34</sup>

What seems a simple, even obvious rule, which reciprocally binds the depositor and recipient can nevertheless cause intricate situations and lend itself to becoming a source of social mistrust and conflict. It is within this reference system that the second part of this paper is developed, with the aim of roughly identifying the posi-

31 Millett 1991, 204.

32 We know at least one other case of an unusual type of deposit: At 9.45, the deposit is an *illocutionary act* by king Alexander of Macedonia, regarding the Persians’ intentions before the battle of Platea (Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, παραθήκην ὑμῖν τὰ ἔπεα τάδε τίθεμαι). The “delivery” of this deposit will have to take place in the future through the activation of memory. See Macan 1908, *ad l.*, and Flower, Marincola 2002, 33 and 188–89.

33 See Sahlins 1972, 217 and 247 on the multiple kinds of return.

34 A law attributed to Solon states: “a deposit shall not be removed except by the depositor himself, on pain of death” (Diog. Laert. 1.57: ἂ μὴ ἔθου, μὴ ἀνέλη, transl. by R. D. Hicks, Loeb Cambridge MA, 1972 [First published 1925]). See Plat. *laws* 913a–c: “Our business transactions one with another will require proper regulation” (Τὸ δὴ μετὰ ταῦτ’ εἶη συμβολαίων ἂν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἡμῖν δεόμενα προσηκούσης τάξεως, transl. by R. G. Bury, Loeb Cambridge MA, 1967 & 1968). In the same section of *Laws*, the rule “Thou shalt not move the immovable” (μὴ κινεῖν τὰ ἀκίνητα) plays a centrale role. See also *Laws* 742c: “No one shall deposit money with anyone he does not trust (ὄτω μὴ τις πιστεύει)”. Plat. *resp.* 333c: “‘What then is the use of money in common for which a just man is the better partner?’ ‘When it is to be deposited and kept safe (Ὅταν παρακαταθέσθαι καὶ σὼν εἶναι), Socrates.’” (Transl. by P. Shorey, Loeb Cambridge, MA, 1969). See Millett 1991, 204.

tion of the cultural objects at play:<sup>35</sup> a) the trust that sets in motion the delivery of the deposit; b) the memory that guarantees its return; c) the oath that provides an ordered space in which potential controversies come together and possible conflict is neutralized. When used correctly, the deposit is a procedure that stabilises a reciprocal relationship and implicitly has ties with traditional forms of exchanging gifts.<sup>36</sup>

## 6 UNFAIR DEPOSIT, IMPROPER RETURN: KING LEOTYCHIDAS AND THE AEGINETAN HOSTAGES

In the episode regarding Aegina, what was a widespread practice in the Greek world based on shared obligations and prohibitions seems to be ruined to the core by elements of impropriety and subversion. The action in 6.73 takes place in two phases: in the first, the Spartans seize ten men; in the second phase, these “goods” are given as a deposit to the Athenians. The deposit does not belong to the depositors (the two kings, Cleomenes and Leotychidas), but are hostages (ὄμηροι) taken by force and selected with the aim of weakening Aegina. And yet the language used (παραθήκη κατατίθενται) usually means “to deposit something with somebody”. The misdeed is first of all identifiable in the fact that the Aeginetans are excluded from this negotiation and, instead of making an exchange, they are the subjects of the exchange. Moreover, the deposit entrusted to the Athenians does not seem to provide for terms and conditions of return. In 6.85 Herodotus again resumes the narrative about the legal contention between Aegina, Athens and Sparta: years later when the Aeginetans hear of the death of Cleomenes (488 BCE), they file a suit against the other king Leotychidas regarding the hostages who remain “deposited” in the custody of the Athenians. Recognising the king’s guilt, the Spartan magistrates decide to re-establish reciprocity, making Leotychidas himself a hostage to be surrendered in exchange with those he himself had given to the Athenians (6.85: [...] ἀντὶ τῶν ἐν Ἀθήνησι ἔχομένων ἀνδρῶν). This time it is the same citizens who voluntarily deliver their king in order to reactivate the balance fractured by previous behaviour. The intervention of a Spartan “wise advisor” (Θεασίδης ὁ Λεωπρέπης, ἐὼν ἐν Σπάρτῃ ἀνὴρ δόκιμος) once again, however, changes the situation. The Aeginetans are warned of the risks of a possible “second thought” on the part of the Spartans and therefore give up the idea of taking Leotychidas away as hostage. Following the logic intrinsic to deposits, this is the right decision: only the person who has given the deposit can have it returned. And this indeed is the aim of the Aeginetans. An agreement (ὁμολογία) is then stipulated between the two sides: Leotychidas will accompany the Aeginetans to Athens to obtain the return of the deposit (6.86, ἀπαιτεῖν τὴν παρακαταθήκην). We see a process of duplication: on one

35 See the definition of Griswold 1987, 4: “I use the term *cultural object* to refer to shared significance embodied in form, i. e., to an expression of social meanings that is tangible or can be put into words”.

36 *Definitions* 415d, attributed to Plato: Παρακαταθήκη δόμα μετὰ πίστεως, “deposit”, i. e. ‘which is given in trust’. See Millett 1991, 204.

hand, the two parties are Leotychidas and the Athenians; on the other, the two parties consist of Leotychidas and the Aeginetans. Attention is therefore focused on general principles which render the request for the return legitimate: the search for a solution introduces and justifies a new story within the narrative, that is the story of Glaucus.

## 7 GLAUCUS, THE MOST RIGHTEOUS OF ALL SPARTANS: TOKENS AND TRUST, MEMORY AND IDENTITY

The Athenians refuse to relinquish the deposit, claiming as a pretext (προφάσις) the same argument used by the Aeginetans at the beginning of the story, that the two Spartan kings are not present together. Leotychidas therefore opts for a “moral suasion” based on the authority of the past and the value of important teachings which the Greeks, particularly the Spartans attribute to the “stories from the past”.<sup>37</sup>

“Men of Athens, do whichever thing you desire. If you give them back, you do righteously; if you do not give them back, you do the opposite. But I want to tell you the story of what happened at Sparta in the matter of a trust” (Hdt. 6.86a, ὁκοῖον μέντοι τι ἐν τῇ Σπάρτῃ συνηείχθη γενέσθαι περὶ παρακαταθήκης, βούλομαι ὑμῖν εἶπαι).

The tale, set about three generations before Leotychidas (ἐν τῇ Λακεδαίμονι κατὰ τρίτην γενεὴν τὴν ἀπ’ ἐμέο), seems to have been intended to be related orally, given the continual repetition of oral markers (Λέγομεν ἡμεῖς οἱ Σπαρτιῆται [...] φημὲν [...] τὰδε λέγομεν [...]). Glaucus, the son of Epicycles (Γλαῦκος Ἐπικύδου παῖδα), a Spartan citizen famous throughout Greece for his many good qualities, one day receives a visit from a rich stranger (ξεῖνος) from Miletus wishing to benefit from Glaucus’ famous righteousness, δικαιοσύνη<sup>38</sup> (ἦκω δὲ τῆς σῆς, Γλαῦκε, δικαιοσύνης βουλόμενος ἀπολαύσαι). Given the political instability of the Greeks of Asia, the Milesian feels it is wise to guarantee the future of his *oikos* and descendants: in fact, “nowhere in Ionia do we see the same men continuing to possess wealth”.<sup>39</sup> He wants to deposit half of the family’s inheritance with Glaucus in monetary form (τὰ ἡμίσεα πάσης τῆς οὐσίας ἐξαργυρώσαντα θέσθαι) together with some tokens (σύμβολα). These will be kept as a material sign of both the commitment undertaken and the memory of it, as well as the identity of the possessor. Indeed, Glaucus would have to “restore the money to whoever comes with the same tokens and demands it back.” According to this agreement, Glaucus receives the deposit with these tokens (Γλαῦκος δὲ ἐδέξατο τὴν παρακαταθήκην ἐπὶ τῷ εἰρημένῳ λόγῳ).

Some observations can be made immediately. In the first part of the story, the σύμβολα appear to be the binding elements: the agreement is based on them, and trust, with its double sense of confidence (πίστις) and deposit (παραθήκη/παρακαταθήκη), is established. It is for this reason that a conflict regarding the

37 Plat. *hipp. maj.* 285d.

38 Gagarin 2002, 74.

39 This is a continually repeated guiding principle of Herodotean thought, e. g. 1.5 and 9.122.

σύμβολα can lead naturally to the oath as a space for regulation and resettlement every time a breach of trust is discovered and resolved. Another element of duplication regards memory, as will be seen in the next part of the story.

The σύμβολα are by definition incomplete and have to be reunited with their counterparts to become whole: this is the only way to reliably communicate and pass on the authenticity of the contract agreed in the past.<sup>40</sup> Σύμβολα are therefore *material memories* which reciprocally oblige two people in relation to certain items and on the basis of certain pre-established conditions. The tale of the virtuous Spartan had to sound familiar both to the audience of the tale and to Herodotus. For the internal narrator, Leotychidas, the story is true.<sup>41</sup> Even if Herodotus does not seem to doubt the authenticity of the story of Glaucus, the historian's position nevertheless does not coincide with that of the secondary narrator, as I shall show.

The story has an anecdotal and legendary flavour, while also alluding to the uncertain situation of the Greeks of Asia in sixth century due to the Persian conquest and the Ionic revolt. In spite of these allusions, which would be recognisable to Herodotus' audience, one has to agree with those scholars who maintain that

“the moral tale of Glaucus [...] has no historical content; the situation is ‘immemorial’ suspended in an anecdotal, essentially timeless and placeless limbo”.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to remember the persuasive aims of Leotychidas' speech to the Athenians.<sup>43</sup> From this perspective, there is a clear asymmetry between the main character (Glaucus and his *genos*, not all Spartans), on one hand, and, on the other, all Athenians as a political community.

Lastly, from the perspective of a wisdom oriented anecdote without precise historical truth, it can be helpful to reflect on the irony created by Glaucus' name and family name. If the story is accepted as legend, the names become part of a network of allusions typical of such stories: indeed, the name selected is also that of the Homeric hero Glaucus the Lycian, who in the duel scene with Diomedes (Hom., *il.* 6.119–236) is an extreme and generous example of the rigour with which one has to understand the rules of hospitality exchange and inter-generational hospitality. In

40 Gauthier 1972, 65–66 is accurate when he speaks of “marques de reconnaissance”. Theognis (1137, 1139 and 1147–50) links trust with the “evil deeds”: “Let him beware always of the crooked speech of the unrighteous, who having no respect for the Immortal Gods do ever set their heart upon other men's goods, making dishonorable covenants for evil deeds (αἰσχρὰ κακοῖσ' ἔργοις σύμβολα θηκάμενοι) (transl. by J. M. Edmonds, Loeb Cambridge MA, 1931). See Nagy 1984, 253 and Bouvier 2004–2005, 87 (and, therein, the paper of D. Bonanno). See the definition of *polis* by Macintyre 1988, 34: “The expression of a set of principles about how goods are to be ordered into a way of life”.

41 Griffiths 2007, 135–36. See also Rood 2007, 130.

42 See Myres 1953, 74 and 80, and Lateiner 1989, 144 and 226. For the inclusion of Glaucus among the “morality tales” see Fontenrose 1978, 113 and 118–19; Nenci 1998, 248–49; Eidinow 2007, 46–47. *Contra* Parke, Wormell 1956, 17.

43 Gould 1989, 41. The story of Glaucus is a “memorable traditional tale” used as a means of persuasion in a public rhetorical framework aimed at collective and political decisions. In Immerwahr's opinion (Immerwahr 1966, 214), “its [Glaucus' tale's] underlying idea is that justice in international relations corresponds to justice in private relations, in that both are a *give-and-take based on mutual trust*” (italics mine).

its turn, the father's name Ἐπικύδης, an evocative name ("glorious", "brilliant") linked to the Homeric κῦδος ("renown", e. g. *Il.* 1.405; 5.506; 8.51), bitterly confirms the destiny of the son: yes, Glaucus becomes famous, but in a different way from that set out by the archaic code.<sup>44</sup> The σύμβολα exchanged between the depositor and receiver understandably enter the sphere of reciprocity based on the sharing of trust.

## 8 LOST IN OBLIVION: DISCLAIMING *SYMBOLA*, DENYING IDENTITY

The functioning of the σύμβολα involves a double and reciprocal procedure: recognising the identity of others, and being recognised in your own identity. Here the voluntary amnesia of Glaucus comes into play, which introduces the second part of the story.

A long time later (Χρόνον δὲ πολλοῦ), the children of the citizens of Miletus arrive at Sparta and, after having displayed the tokens, ask Glaucus if they can have their paternal possessions back in accordance with the agreement established with their father. At this point, an embarrassing tug of war begins which overturns the initial terms of the story. Glaucus does not remember the event (οὔτε μὲμνημαι τὸ προήγημα) and neither do the children's attempts to remind him about the man from Miletus succeed in jogging his memory. Nevertheless, such oblivion does not stop the wise Spartan from remembering his reputation as a righteous and earnest man. He therefore adds that once his memory returns (ἀναμνησθεῖς) and confirms his receipt of the deposit, he will take steps to return the deposit as stipulated by the law (ποιεῖν πᾶν τὸ δίκαιον). On the other hand, if he remembers that he did not receive the deposit, things will be regulated according to Greek custom (νόμοι). Finally, he allows himself and his memory (τέταρτον μῆνα) three months of time to make a decision.<sup>45</sup>

The situation is complex: not only does it hinge on memory and oblivion, but also on true and false memory. Here the act of remembering takes place on two levels: the first is the return of memory, but this does not in itself guarantee the memory of the deposit (and its return). On the second level, Glaucus clearly says that he wants to remember, but that he could remember that the deposit did not take place. There are therefore two double events, separate but intertwined: a) remembering / not remembering; b) remembering what is true / remembering what is false. The Herodotean text does not allow for the possibility of innocent oblivion happening in good faith, that is involuntarily.

The strangers leave resigned to the loss of their paternal legacy.<sup>46</sup> The reference to Greek *nomoi* suggests that the first exchange of the σύμβολα took place without witnesses. Resorting to an oath is therefore the only weapon available to the creditors

44 See Baslez 2008, 47. Regarding the anthropological space of κῦδος, see Kurke 1993.

45 See Gernet 1917, 62–63.

46 Gauthier 1972, 76.

who feel they have been denied the agreement represented by the σύμβολα.<sup>47</sup> Glaucus knows that he will be unable to avoid this oath, and this has further consequences. The compensation that the receiver of the deposit denies to the depositor will be translated into another type of compensation, in which the unexpected intervening factor will be social identity and the generational memory of the main character.

### 9 “BUT OATH HAS A SON”

The sons of the man from Miletus have left, to return (with little hope) at the end of three months. For his part, Glaucus makes his way to Delphi to consult the oracle: he wants to ask the god “whether he should seize the money under oath” (εἰ ὄρκῳ τὰ χρήματα λήσσηται). Once again the Pythia appears and plays a decisive role.<sup>48</sup> Equally, the close correspondences between the previous stories and the story of Glaucus are clear. The same verb μετέρχομαι, which we have seen mark the dialogue between Demaratus and his mother (above, pp. 26–28), now symmetrically marks that between Glaucus and the priestess. Here, however, the focus is moved from the human arena to that of the divine, from the area of supplication to that of the illocutionary (and implacable) force of the words. It is worth examining directly the Pythia’s response in hexameter to the Spartan’s request:

“The Pythian priestess threatened him in these verses (μετέρχεται τοῖσδε τοῖσι ἔπεισι): ‘Glaucus son of Epicydes, it is more profitable now / To prevail by your oath and seize the money (χρήματα λήσσησθαί). / Swear, for death awaits even the man who swears true. / But Oath has a son (ὄρκου παῖς), nameless; he is without hands / Or feet, but he pursues (μετέρχεται) swiftly, until he catches / And destroys all the family and the entire house. / The line of a man who swears true is better later on” (6.86γ).

It has been rightly observed that the Pythia’s reply includes two parts: one part derives from Hesiod, as confirmed by the *verbatim* repetition of a verse (*Works and days* 285): “The line of a man who swears true is better later on”. In the other part, we see attention focused on the relationship between man and god, and on the difference between the involuntary act and the intentional one.<sup>49</sup>

The description of the son of Oath (ὄρκου παῖς) is largely connected to that “underworld” genealogy which was mentioned in the earlier part of this paper. In *Works and days* 320–26 we find the inspiration for the Delphic verses:

“Wealth should not be seized: god-given wealth is much better; for if a man takes great wealth violently and perforce, or if he steals it through his tongue (ὄ γ’ ἀπὸ γλώσσης λήσσηται), as often happens when gain deceives men’s sense and dishonor tramples down honor, the gods soon blot him out and make that man’s house low, and wealth attends him only for a little time”.

This warning recurs frequently and insists above all on the relationship between deliberate falsehood and future retribution involving descendants:

47 The resignation of the Milesian’s sons seems to further confirm the non-historical nature of the story: see Bravo 2011.

48 Gernet 1955.

49 See Crahay 1956, 97–98; Nagy 1984, 272. From a different perspective, see Gagné forthcoming [2013]: “Les deux parties du texte se répondent de manière parfaitement symétrique”.



“For whoever knows the right and is ready to speak it, far-seeing Zeus gives him prosperity; but whoever deliberately lies in his witness and forswears himself, and so hurts Justice and sins beyond repair, that man’s generation is left obscure thereafter” (*works and days* 282–85).<sup>50</sup>

The question up for discussion here is not the Hesiodic and generally archaic framework, which is undeniable, so much as the value the Herodotean public gave to it in the fifth century. From this perspective, authors such as Pindar and the tragedians seem to take seriously the gravity of perjury and its consequences for descendants.<sup>51</sup> If we move into the fourth century, the theme remains alive, as we can gather from both Plato and Aristotle,<sup>52</sup> and also from judicial oratory. For example, Lysias and Demosthenes refer to an oath *κατ’ ἐξωλείας*, i. e. “invoking annihilation upon himself and his children”.<sup>53</sup>

Other sources for the story can also be identified outside the Greek world. The story is set in Sparta, but is also connected with Miletus in Asian Ionia, a culturally mixed area and home of the depositor. It comes as no surprise to note that similar types of oath which call for eradication of memory through the destruction of descendants as a punishment for perjury are widespread throughout the Aegean and the Near East. In Akkadian, the oath itself is said to be transformed into a demon who seizes the transgressor. Comparable to the story of Glaucus is a Babylonian document that bears witness to the conflict between an insolvent debtor, in spite of repeated oaths and a desperate creditor: “The one who swears a (false) oath by Nanna and Šamaš will be covered with leprosy. He will become poor and have no heir”. A similar case is a text discovered at Ugarit (thirteenth century BCE): “Fear the oath and save yourself. The one who swears at the river (but) refuses the payment, his wife will never have children”.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, neither Hesiod’s poetry nor eastern parallels can fully account for Herodotus’ representation, which remains singular and substantially isolated.<sup>55</sup> It requires a systematic analysis of its most significant elements.

50 *Theog.* 231–32; *works and days* 263–64: “He does mischief to himself who does mischief to another, and evil planned harms the plotter most”. See Lonis 1980, 274. Cf. *od.* 4.824 and 9.454: about these verses see Griffin 1980, 162 and Callaway 1993, 20.

51 Pind. *ol.* 2.65–68. See Grethlein 2010, 22 and 30. Aeschyl. *agammnon* 466 and *choephorae* 853. About Euripides, see Torrance 2009, 4: “There is no reason to doubt that Euripides took oaths as seriously as other fifth-century Greeks [...] Jason in Euripides’ *Medea* essentially suffers the traditional punishment for perjury through the extinction of his family line”. *Contra* Sewell-Rutter 2007, 3; Lonis 1980, 274–75: “L’imprécation appelle donc la malédiction non seulement sur le parjure, mais aussi sur sa maison et même, dans certains cas, sur sa descendance [...]”.

52 Plat. *resp.* 363c: “And others extend still further the rewards of virtue from the gods. For they say that the children’s children of the pious and oath-keeping man and his race thereafter never fail (παῖδας γὰρ παίδων φασὶ καὶ γένος κατόπισθεν λείπεσθαι τοῦ ὀσίου καὶ εὐόρου)”. See also Arist., *F* 148 *Rose*.

53 *IG* 12.10.15; Antiph. *on the murder of Herodes* 11; Lys. *a. eratosth.* 10. See also Demosth. *a. aristocr.* 68 and *a. timocr.* 151. Callaway 1993, 20; Loraux 1997, 137.

54 Burkert 1996, 172; Sandowicz 2011, 18 and 30–31.

55 Repeated references to this Herodotean passage are in Plut. *de sera numinis vindicta*, 22.556; Juvenal *sat.* 13.199–207; Stobaeus *anthologium* 3.27.14.27 and 3.28.15.5. See also Eustathius *comm. ad hom. Il.* 1.652.10, and *anthologia graeca* 14.91.4. According to Crahay 1956, 97–98, it is possible to consider this tale as “un fabliau unique”. Nenci 1998, 248–49.

## 10 BEING NAMELESS AND UNUTTERABLE

As the Pythia assails Glaucus on hearing his request, the same verb (μετέρχεται) heralds the son of Oath's assault on Glaucus. It is an inescapable assault which is seemingly paradoxical in its description. In fact, the son of Oath is characterised by two peculiar features: he is ἀνόνημος, but while he has no hands or feet he quickly and relentlessly seizes his victim.

In relation to anonymity, there are two different levels to consider: the human and supernatural. On the human level, anonymity expresses a situation of temporary or permanent marginality, as can be established from the *Odyssey* and in some ethnographic sections in Herodotus. Alcinous sees Odysseus weep as he listens to Demodocus singing, and asks the hero to finally reveal his identity, because

“there is no one of all mankind who is nameless (ἀνόνημος), be he base man or noble, when once he has been born, but parents bestow names on all when they give them birth” (*Od.* 8.552).<sup>56</sup>

Anonymity is a condition which places the individual beyond the social nature of the human “space”. Even in Herodotus it is a condition which places man in an unsocial space. He notes that anonymity makes the Atarantes exceptional: “These are the only men whom we know who have no names (ἀνόνημοί εἰσι μόνοι ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν); for the whole people are called Atarantes, but no man has a name of his own” (4.184, see also 4.45 and 7.16). The absence of name characterises the extreme position of marginality and assigns these people to “last position”, making them unrecognisable.<sup>57</sup>

Given this, it is not surprising to find an interest in anonymity in tragedy and judicial oratory. In fact, the term ἀνόνημος is regularly associated with the absence of glory (ἀκλεής), with the lack of homeland and home (ἄπολις, ἄοικος), and above all with the lack of descendants (ἄπαις). Equally interesting is the connection between anonymity and oath taking. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the father Theseus accuses his young son Hippolytus of the death of Phaedra. To defend himself, Hippolytus swears an oath: “I swear by Zeus, god of oaths, and by the earth beneath me that I never put my hand to your wife, never wished to, never had the thought (μηδ' ἂν θελήσαι μηδ' ἂν ἔνοιαν λαβεῖν). May I perish with no name or reputation (ἀκλεῆς ἀνόνημος) [citiless, homeless, wandering the earth an exile] and may neither sea nor earth receive my body when I am dead if I am guilty (κακὸς ἀνὴρ)!” (*Eurip. hippol.* 1028–31).<sup>58</sup>

At this point there is a clash between Theseus, who does not trust his son's oath and the Chorus, which considers Hippolytus' words sufficient to inspire trust (1036–37): “[Chorus Leader] You have made a sufficient rebuttal of the charge

56 Transl. by A. T. Murray, Loeb, Cambridge, MA., 1919. All the following translations of Homer are taken from this edition.

57 Hartog 1980, 46.

58 Transl. by D. Kovacs, Loeb Cambridge MA., 1994–2002. Regarding the connection between *polis* and *oikos*, see Camassa 2007, 93. See also Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 28.

against you by giving your oath in the name of the gods, which is no slight assurance” (ὄρκους παρασχών, πίστιν οὐ σμικρὰν, θεῶν).

The son proclaims his innocence by means of the oath and, at the same time, affirms the absence of willingness and intent:<sup>59</sup> this is exactly what Glaucus cannot do, and what will lead him to ruin.

Anonymity is therefore perceived not only as a weakness, but also as a threat which hangs over the whole social order. Plato (*Laws* 878b) holds that a party guilty of a bloody crime like murder or injury (ἐξάμαρτόντα) must be without name (ἀνόνημον), without children (ἄπαιδα), and without his rightful inheritance (ἄμοιρον).<sup>60</sup> It is important to underline here that anonymity is part of the social sphere, both in the public and private area: indeed, it is connected to the absence of *time* and *kleos*, and therefore to oblivion.<sup>61</sup>

This threatening element is certainly present in the anonymity of the son of Oath, against which it seems impossible for Glaucus to defend himself. This aspect, which is explicit in the Delphic hexameter, makes this entity even more terrible. Indeed, without knowing a name, how does one know whom to react against? The absence of name highlights the extreme strangeness (and otherness) of the avenger.

Turning to the supernatural, anonymity frequently characterises entities belonging to the dimension of the underworld, bound to the sphere of impurity (*misma*) and its reparatory procedures: their literary (and figurative) representation is problematic, and anonymity is a symptom of that difficulty. Above all, it seems to connote pre-Olympic entities such as the *Moirai* (the goddesses of Fate), the Sirens,<sup>62</sup> and especially the Erinyes (see above, pp. 23–34), called “the anonymous Goddesses” in *Iphigenia in Tauris* (944): [...] ταῖς ἀνόνημοις θεαῖς [...]. In any case, what is of interest here is that anonymity characterises entities from the underworld that punish the guilty through isolation and social oblivion.

59 Cf. Eurip. *iphig. in tauris* 502: Orestes does not want to reveal his name to Iphigenia and tells her: “If I die unnamed, I would not be mocked at” (ἀνόνημοι θανόντες οὐ γελώμεθ’ ἄν). See *Ion*, 1372: “I think on that time when my mother, after a hidden union, sold me secretly and did not allow me the breast; but in the temple of the god, without a name, I had a slave’s life (ἀνόνημος ... εἶχον οἰκέτην βίον)”. All the following translations of *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Ion* are by W.J. Oates and E. O’Neill, Jr., New York 1938.

60 E.g. Isaeus *menekl.* 36–37, 46, on the connection between “gave his name” (ἐθέμην τὸ ὄνομα)/ “house’s anonymity” (ἵνα μὴ ἀνόνημος ὁ οἶκος αὐτοῦ γένηται)/ “childless”/ “nameless” (ἄπαιδα δὲ τὸν τελευτήσαντα καὶ ἀνόνημον). Transl. by E.S. Forster. Loeb Cambridge, MA, 1962.

61 See e.g. Isocr. *antidos.* 136. See *laws* 873d, regarding the cowards who kill themselves (ἀνανδρία): “They shall be buried in those borders of the twelve districts which are barren and nameless (ἀργὰ καὶ ἀνόνημα), without note, and with neither headstone nor name (μήτε στήλαις μήτε ὀνόμασι) to indicate the tombs”. Aristotle *ethica eudemia* 1221 and Pollux *onomasticon* 5.159 associate anonymity with a series of unsocial values: envy, ill repute, ingloriousness, blame, etc. See Zeitlin 2008, 92.

62 Regarding the *Moirai*, see Eurip. fr. 13 Page: [...] ἃ δ’ εἶς τε Μοίρας τὰς τ’ ἀνόνημους θεὰς [...]. Regarding the Sirens as an anonymous pair, see Eustathius *comm. in dion. perieg.* 358: [...] αἱ Σειρήνες δύο καὶ ἀνόνημοι [...]. See Scarpi 2005 and Pirenne-Delforge, Pironti 2011, 102–103.

As already mentioned, the relationship between otherness and anonymity is ambiguous in the same way that there are many names which characterise other terrible and implacable gods, such as in the case of Hades, “the Son of Cronos, He who has many names”.<sup>63</sup> Even Apollo is described πολυώνυμος, in *Hymn* 3.82: it is in the verses in which the island of Delos asks Leto to swear that Apollo, the child to be born, will build his first temple there, in exchange for a place of welcome for her next birth, since the god “surely ... will be greatly renowned” (ἐπεὶ ἦ πολυώνυμος ἔσται). The oath is solemnly taken (84–86): “And Leto swore the great oath of the gods: ‘Now hear this, Earth and wide Heaven above, and dropping water of Styx (this is the strongest and most awful oath for the blessed gods) [...]’”.

### 11 A DREADFUL SON, AN UNBREAKABLE MEMORY: THE AWFUL BODY OF OATH’S PROGENY

“Being nameless” is not the only way the Pythia represents the son of Oath. The absence of hands and feet is added to his anonymity (οὐδ’ ἔπι χεῖρες οὐδὲ πόδες). This type of monstrosity is akin to being a monopode, or, homologically speaking, to having multiple limbs or to lacking limbs entirely (*apodia*). Compare Scylla’s twelve feet in the *Odyssey*: “Verily she has twelve feet, all misshapen [...]”(od. 12.89, πάντες ἄωροι). The semantic oscillation of ἄωρος is significant here. It is a word which indicates both an excess of quantity as well as deformity and incompleteness: in other words, a monstrosity which expresses weakness and power together. Then there are the *Graiai*, the Gorgon’s sisters, single-toothed and one-eyed creatures: “the fair-cheeked *Graiae*, sisters grey from their birth” (*theogony* 270–71).<sup>64</sup>

The case of kings Ariston and Demaratus is closely linked to the integrity of trust and the area of sexual relations. The kings obtain their wives wrongly, or there is the case of Demaratus’ mother who has an ambiguous erotic experience. The mythical model for this type of situation is the cripple Hephaestus who catches up with and captures the rapid Ares, thereby punishing the anomy and chaos caused by Aphrodite’s adultery:

“Ill deeds thrive not (οὐκ ἀρετᾶ κακὰ ἔργα). The slow catches the swift (κίχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὠκύν); even as now Hephaestus, slow though he is, has out-stripped Ares for all that he is the swiftest of the gods who hold Olympus. Lame though he is, he has caught him by craft, wherefore Ares owes the fine of the adulterer (τὸ καὶ μοιχάγρι’ ὀφέλλει)” (od. 8.329–32).

In all these cases, being deformed in respect to the feet is not only the expression of an uncontrollable power, of a threatening otherness, but also expression of an ability to re-establish order where it has been shattered.

From this perspective, the best example of this theme is still the Erinyes, whose connection with Oath I have already underlined. In Sophocles’ *Electra*, the heroine and her sister talk about the need to seek vengeance for the death of their father

63 *Hymn 2 to Demeter*, 18 and 32: “that son of Cronos, of many names”. See Calame 2011, 9 and 11.

64 Cusumano 2006.

Agamemnon. Electra hopes that their brother Orestes (παῖδ' Ὀρέστην) can join them with powerful means at his disposal (ἔξ ὑπερέρας χερσός) and stamp out their enemies (ἐπεμβῆναι ποδί). The Chorus predicts the imminent arrival of Justice: “Justice, the sender of the omen, will come, winning the just victory of her hands’ might (Δίκη δίκαια φερομένα χερσὸν κράτη)” (*electra* 455–75).

It is a clear sign of the unrelenting memory of Agamemnon’s death: “Never does the lord of the Hellenes forget (Ὅν [...] ἀμναστέϊ)” (*electra* 482). The fragile and pliable memory of men is countered by the unbreakable memory of the Erinyes of Agamemnon, whom Sophocles describes as πολύπους καὶ πολύχειρ (489–90): “She, too, will come, she of many hands and many feet who lurks in her terrible ambush, the bronze-shod Erinyes”. Through the reference to an excess of hands and feet, these verses highlight the ability of the Erinyes to pursue and seize the guilty party to deliver the right punishment.

The memory of the Erinyes is also specifically connected to Oath in the *rhesis* by Ajax in the Sophoclean drama of the same name, when the hero tricks both Tecmessa and the chorus and isolates himself for his imminent suicide.<sup>65</sup> The fragility of memory is the counterpart to the fragility of an oath, both expressions of betrayed trust :

“All things the long and countless years first draw from darkness, and then bury from light; and there is nothing which man should not expect: the dread power of oath (δεινὸς ὄρκος) is conquered, as is unyielding will” (Soph. *ajax* 646–49).

On the seashore, immediately before killing himself, Ajax asks Zeus to protect his corpse from the outrage of his enemies and animals. This plea is also made to the Erinyes:

“And I call for help to the eternal maidens who eternally attend to all sufferings among mortals, the dread, far-striding Erinyes (σεμνάς Ἐρινύς τανύποδας) [...] Come, you swift and punishing Erinyes (ταχέια ποίνιμοί τ' Ἐρινύες), devour all the assembled army and spare nothing!” (835–44).

Implacability, speed, and excessiveness intertwine to fence off a space protected from tricks and betrayal, where an oath can be taken and maintained and return power and integrity to injured memory.<sup>66</sup> Again, Hesiod comes to mind: the bad action fuels the speed of the punishment, a quality of Oath in *Theogony* (231–32) and in *Works and days* 219: “For Oath keeps pace (αὐτίκα γὰρ τρέχει Ὀρκος) with wrong judgements”.

Oath therefore belongs to the same category as underworld beings such as the Erinyes, as well as beings who manifest their regulatory power through deformed or excessive otherness, as in the case of Hephaestus. The Son of Oath, already nameless, appears as a mutilated creature, deprived of movement and grip, yet even he can move quickly in order to seize, like a real underworld power.

65 Farmer 1998.

66 Hesychius, τ 149 line 1 <τανύποδας Ἐριν[ν]ύς> ταχύποδας, ἐν τάχει τιμωρουμένας. *Scholia in Sophoclem, (scholia vetera) Ajax*, 837, <τανύποδας> τὸ τανύποδας ...τὰς πανταχοῦ τεινούσας τοὺς πόδας.

The excess of hands and feet is analogous to their absence, similar to the relationship between *anonymos* and *polyonymos* that I have suggested. Indeed, anonymity produces social stigma comparable to that produced by physical deformity. The power and implacability of the son of Oath are tied to strangeness and eeriness: on the level of ritual practices, they are a reminder of the Curse Tablets, in particular the judicial ones, in which the absence of hands and feet play a role.<sup>67</sup> The condition of incompleteness in its various forms is at play here: the status of son (*pais*), however, is already in itself an expression of otherness because it indicates an as yet incomplete being. The punishment inflicted on Glaucus is the extinction of *genos* which can only take place through the absence of sons (*paides*). It therefore seems legitimate to identify the son of Oath as a double of the Erinyes.

Alongside them, another group of entities should be remembered, the *Litai*, i. e. the Prayers, described in book IX of the Iliad and mentioned earlier in relation to the dialogue between Demaratus and his mother on the crucial subject of paternity and identity. The verb “pray” (λίσσομαι) recalls the ambivalent “beseech/attack/seek to avenge” (μετέρχομαι), and that places the Homeric description in the functional area not only of the Herodotean *Son of Oath*, but also of the other “beings” recalled earlier. If we follow the Homeric verse directly, the coherence of the whole picture and the internal references appear immediately clear:

“For Prayers are the daughters of great Zeus (λιταί εἰσι Διὸς κόυραι), halting (χωλαί) and wrinkled (ῥυσαί) and of eyes askance (παραβλῶπές τ’ ὀφθαλμῷ), and they are ever mindful to follow in the steps of Sin (μετόπισθ’ ἄτης ἀλέγουσι κιοῦσαι). Howbeit Sin is strong and fleet of foot (σθεναρή τε καὶ ἀρτίπους), wherefore she far out-runneeth them all, and goeth before them over the face of all the earth making men to fall, and Prayers follow after, seeking to heal the hurt. Now whoso revereth the daughters of Zeus when they draw nigh, him they greatly bless, and hear him, when he prayeth; but if a man denieth them and stubbornly refuseth, then they go their way and make prayer to Zeus, son of Cronos, that Ate may follow after such a one to the end that he may fall and pay full atonement (ἵνα βλαφθῆεις ἀποτίση)” (il. 9.502–12).<sup>68</sup>

One can clearly see the general tone which recalls on the one hand *Works and Days*<sup>69</sup> with references to the Erinyes and Oath, and on the other the Delphic hexameter which in Herodotus’ text gives the Son of Oath the ability to seize hold of those who are guilty of perjury (κραιπνὸς δὲ μετέρχεται), and destroy their line (γενεή) and house (οἶκος).

What matters most here is to observe the constant use of descriptive elements which refer to a conflicting vision of the world, in continual tension between order and anomy. The discourse strategies that have been examined return insistently to peculiarities of name or deformity of parts of the body, defined in terms of excess or flaws. A relevant and paradoxical role is assigned to the symbolic exchange between weakness and power, which leads us to the penalty that in the end all of us have to pay, in the present and future. All the elements examined seem to lead us

67 See Michel 1957 and Jordan 2000.

68 See Naiden 2006, 273.

69 See Hainsworth 1993, 128–30 and particularly 129: “The description of the Λιταί clearly must be pathetic [...] It is characteristic of admonitory literature”.

towards the notions of “retribution” and of “guilt by descent”, which are activated by both the strength and the fragility of the social importance of trust.<sup>70</sup>

## 12 GLAUCUS’ REPENTANCE: ASKING FOR THE GOD’S FORGIVENESS

An examination of the second part of the Pythia’s response to Glaucus allows us to clarify two fundamental questions: Why is Glaucus punished? What is the ideological framework that establishes the sense of this story in the whole Herodotean narrative?

The Pythia’s response immediately produces a feeling of repentance in Glaucus:

“When Glaucus heard this, he entreated the god to pardon (συγγνώμην τὸν θεὸν παραιτέτο) him for what he had said (τὼν ὀηθέντων). The priestess answered that to tempt the god and to do the deed had the same effect (τὸ πειρηθῆναι τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἴσον δύνασθαι)” (6.86γ).

Pardon here is not admissible, and the nature of guilt is closely tied to intentionality.<sup>71</sup> The problem of “intention” is not about what had been previously done in the external part of the sanctuary, i. e. Glaucus’ intentional oblivion regarding the agreement made with the stranger from Miletus and the non-recognition of the tokens inherited by the sons, but rather about the question that has been put to the god within the sacred area. In fact, the question itself is endowed with power and is therefore dangerous: “to tempt the god” (τὸ πειρηθῆναι τοῦ θεοῦ) is a language act which is not so different from an oath (above, pp. 22–23). Glaucus’ words, delivered as a query to the god, produce a lesion in that reference system on which the cohesion of any social reality is based. It is no coincidence that the conflict between the Spartan and the Delphic god reaches its peak in the symbolic short-circuit of the two communicative faculties, speaking and hearing, which are normally supported reciprocally in the real sense as a pair of tokens. We observe a flawed exchange between what is said (by Glaucus to the Pythia and vice versa) and what is heard (first by the Pythia and then by Glaucus). In fact, Glaucus’ repentance relates to what he has said (to the god), not what he would like to say/do (to the Milesian’s children). In my opinion, this explains the priestess’ reply. She pulls together both sides of the problem, which Glaucus had separated, just as in the narrative he had disregarded the “right order” implicit in the exchange of tokens: to say (“to tempt the god”) produces the same consequences as “to do the deed” (τὸ ποιῆσαι ἴσον).

70 Deigh 1996, 12–13, and 6: “A good will is what qualifies a person as trustworthy”. With regards to μετέρχεται, see the observations of Gagné forthcoming [2013] about “l’aspect progressif du présent de *metérchetai*, qui commence dès que l’acte est commis, pour se poursuivre jusqu’à son éventuel accomplissement final [...] au-delà de la mort”.

71 About *syngnome* in Herodotus, see Naiden 1996, 243 and Konstan 2010, 30 and 66. As regards the importance of intentionality to measure the gravity of an offence, see also Demosthenes *against aristocrates* 50: “[...] If a man slay another with malice aforethought (ἐκ προνοίας), indicating that it is not the same thing if he does it unintentionally (εἴ γ’ ἄκων, οὐ ταῦτόν) [...]”. Transl. by A. T. Murray, Loeb Cambridge, MA, 1939.

Glaucus' question destabilises the effect of legitimization exercised by the divinity, which is linked to a set of shared "moral" standards.<sup>72</sup>

In other words, it is a request which can have only one of two solutions: to allow the destruction of that "set of standards", or to destroy Glaucus, the one who pushed himself to the edge of the abyss "deliberately and of free will", and who has endangered the fragile balance between the conflicting forces which regulate the boundaries of human relations. This is why he has no means of escape. He will not pay personally for the debt. Nevertheless the crime was committed *vis-à-vis* the god, and the penalty is played out on the two levels of immortality: divine (temporal immortality) and human (immortality through the memory of *genos*).

Not perceiving the fracture in appropriate relations between men and divinities, Glaucus does not grasp the gravity of the situation: this is why his second thought cannot obtain the god's pardon. His mistake is that of having involved the religious sphere and exposing the entire social structure to an unceasing contagion. The punishment that strikes will be extreme and unrelenting.

Glaucus' misunderstanding of the true sense of his mistake is confirmed at the end of the tale in which the secondary narrator king Leotyichidas and his Athenian listeners reappear:

"So Glaucus summoned the Milesian strangers and gave them back (ἀποδίδοι) their money. But hear now, Athenians, why I began to tell you this story: there is today no descendant of Glaucus, nor any household that bears Glaucus' name (Γλαύκου νῦν οὔτε τι ἀπόγονον ἔστι οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἰστίη οὐδεμία νομιζομένη εἶναι Γλαύκου); he has been utterly rooted out (ἐκτέτριπται τε πρόρριζος) of Sparta. So good is it not even to think anything concerning a trust (περὶ παρακαταθήκης) except giving it back on demand!" (6.86δ).

The return of the deposit to its legitimate owner also implies the "restitution" of memory, revived by the Delphic response. Leotyichidas warns the Athenians that Glaucus remembered, but too late. The key term here is πρόρριζος (i. e. "by the roots"), which refers not only to the annihilation of Glaucus' line and house, but also to the eradication of his social memory: in the narrative, Leotyichidas underlines that the punishment has taken place and that the generational line of Glaucus is already broken (νῦν, that is "today").<sup>73</sup> Πρόρριζος, however, has a more complex and deeper significance that returns at other points critical in formulating Herodotus' vision of the past:

"Only thrice, in exceptionally significant narratives, does Herodotus employ the poetic word *prorrhizos*: Solon's warning to Croesus, Amasis' warning to Polycrates, and here".<sup>74</sup>

- 72 Cairns 1999, 172: "Remorse is thus predicated upon responsibility [...]. Equally, remorse and its concomitant desire to make reparation (and elicit forgiveness) are fundamental strategies in the maintenance of co-operation [...]" See also Thomas 1999, 128. On the relationship between man and god in Herodotus, see Lateiner 1989, *passim*. Filoramo 2004, 32 underlines the Herodotean tendency "a distinguere nettamente storia umana e storia divina".
- 73 Crahay 1956, 97–98 rightly observes that the final detail of the extinction of Glaucus' *genos* implies a knowledge of the future, a characteristic of the wisdom oriented anecdote. See also Lloyd-Jones 1971, 68.
- 74 Lateiner 1989, 144.



At whom is the warning aimed here? It seems to be aimed at the Athenians, at least on the secondary level of narration. One therefore has to ask whether this warning which regards the future of the receivers of the deposit has a satisfactory conclusion or not. The doubt is legitimate: “Thus spoke Leotychidas; but even so the Athenians would not listen to him, and he departed” (6.87).

In the chapters that immediately follow, however, it will be the Aeginetans and not the Athenians who are put in a bad light, when they carry out two acts of sacrilege narrated in detail in the following section of the sixth book (6.87–93).<sup>75</sup>

### 13 THE REVERSE SIDE OF THE STORY: SPERTHIAS AND BULIS AS COUNTERPARTS OF GLAUCUS

The narrative examined so far reveals a “problematic” approach which emerges more clearly from a comparison with the story of the two Spartans Sperthias and Bulis.<sup>76</sup> The famous story is found in the seventh book (7.133–37): in my opinion, it is an example which confirms Herodotus’ tendency to disseminate unexpected cruxes and implications throughout his otherwise “traditional” narration. The setting is the expedition of Xerxes and the theme is the inviolability of the heralds, a norm which both the Athenians and the Spartans had violated in the days of Darius, when they killed his messengers. This time, therefore, Xerxes does not send any. At this point, Herodotus starts one of his many digressions in which he tries to throw light on the causal mechanisms of human behaviour.

This wickedness has consequences in Sparta, where the embassies are entrusted to the descendants (*Talhythibiadae*) of the mythical herald Talthymbius, to whom a sanctuary was dedicated. The hero shows his anger through bad omens during sacrifices (7.134) and, since the sacrificial crisis continues, the assembly officially asks if any citizen is prepared to sacrifice his life (εἴ τις βούλοιο Λακεδαιμονίων πρὸ τῆς Σπάρτης ἀποθνήσκειν) to recover the good will of the hero.<sup>77</sup> Herodotus describes how two Spartans of noble birth and great wealth, Sperthias son of Aneristus and Bulis son of Nicolaus, offer “of their own free will” (ἐθελονταί) to make amends for the wrongs inflicted on the Persians in the past. The ritual nature and scapegoat aspect of their deaths will not be considered here. Instead, I will concentrate on two main connections with Glaucus: the principle of reciprocity and restitution, and that of “guilt by descent”.<sup>78</sup> After a discussion with the Persian Hydarnes,

75 Hdt. 6.87 and 6.92.

76 Lloyd-Jones 1971, 68; Macan 1908, *ad l.* Another comparison worthy of attention, but not here, is the story of Pactyes (1.158–59), which presents interesting parallels with Glaucus. See mainly Immerwahr 1966, 214, n. 71; Fornara 1990, 41–42; Mitchell 1997, 76; Chiasson 2003, 24.

77 See Irwin forthcoming, 226: “The Spartan herald does not ask if anyone wishes to *speak*, but rather whether they wish to *die* for their city; the difference not only privileges deed over word, for some a classic distinction between Sparta and Athens, but also stresses the *ergon* which should be the most important priority of a citizen, or so at least Pericles asserted in *logos* as the first funeral oration of the war”.

78 In Hdt. 9.88 Pausanias refuses to kill Attaginus’ sons: “[...] On these terms they made an agreement, but Attaginus escaped from the town. His sons were seized, but Pausanias held them free

Sperthias and Bulis arrive before the king and, after refusing “to fall down and bow to the king”, they pass on the message from the Spartans in which they play an integral role: “The Lacedaemonians have sent us, O king of the Medes, in requital for the slaying of your heralds at Sparta, to make atonement for their death (ποινήν ἐκείνων τείσοντας)”. Xerxes’ reply is ambivalent and includes two points: 1) he will not lower himself to the level of the Spartans who have violated a universal human law (συγγέει τὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων νόμμα); 2) he will not release the Spartans from their guilt (ἀπολύσειν Λακεδαιμονίους τῆς αἰτίας).<sup>79</sup>

There are some significant details: a) the Spartans and Persians share the same code of communication, so the confrontation is on the level of νόμμα for all men; b) Xerxes breaks the pattern of reciprocity, albeit natural between enemies at war, and will not accept reparatory exchange; c) on the other hand, respect for the code and readiness to reciprocate will not save the Spartans from unrelenting consequences – that is, they will not avoid suffering the effects of “guilt by descent”. For a moment Talthybius’ anger (ἡ Ταλθυβίου μῆνις) seems to appease, despite Sperthias and Bulis being refused in exchange and returning to Sparta alive (7.137). At this point, Herodotus makes one of his now familiar leaps into the future and moves forward to the Peloponnesian War:

“Long after that, however, it rose up again in the war between the Peloponnesians and Athenians, as the Lacedaemonians say (ὡς λέγουσι Λακεδαιμόνιοι). That seems to me to be an indication of something divine. It was just that the wrath of Talthybius descended on ambassadors, nor abated until it was satisfied. The venting of it, however, on the sons of those men (ἐς τοὺς παῖδας) who went up to the king to appease it, namely on Nicolas son of Bulis and Aneristus son of Sperthias [...] makes it plain to me that this was the divine result of Talthybius’ anger (θεῖον τὸ πρήγμα). These two had been sent by the Lacedaemonians as ambassadors to Asia, and betrayed (προδοθέντες) by the Thracian king Sitalces son of Tereus and Nymphodorus son of Pytheas of Abdera, they were made captive at Bisanthe on the Hellespont, and carried away to Attica, where the Athenians put them [...] to death (ἀπέθανον ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων).”<sup>80</sup>

of guilt, saying that the sons were not accessory to the treason” (Πανσανίης ἀπέλυσε τῆς αἰτίας, φὰς τοῦ μηδισμού παῖδας οὐδὲν εἶναι μεταίτιους). See Corcella 1984, 201.

- 79 According to Irwin forthcoming, 247: “When he [Xerxes] rejects the legitimacy of killing Sperthias and Boulis as *poine*, he also rejects the principle that reciprocation-in-kind legitimates the performance of acts recognized as illegitimate: some actions are bad in themselves, always, regardless of the context. His rejection speaks rather remarkably to the Athenians of 430 BC [...] He [Herodotus] depicts the Persian king *not only* respecting the legitimacy of a universal law that the Athenians in 430 will have broken a second time, *but also* rejecting the principle they evoke to legitimate that act”.
- 80 Cobet 1971, 72–74. See also Rood 2007, 127: “The story of the revival of the anger of the herald Talthybius during the Peloponnesian War – when the Athenians execute the sons of the Spartan heralds sent to make amends for the execution of Persian heralds (7.137) – is placed just before Herodotus’ praise of the Athenians for not abandoning their fellow Greeks or surrendering to Xerxes (7.139). This external prolepsis is, as we have seen, one of a number of anticipations of the later conflict between the two great victors of the Persian Wars”. According to Irwin forthcoming, 217: “Herodotus’ portrayal of these Spartans responds polemically to the ideology, policies and fate of the Athenian who gave that speech, the man who was for many responsible for the conditions prevailing in 430 BC, for Athens’ increasingly harsh imperial policies, the war they precipitated with Sparta, and its consequences”.

Just as in the tale of Glaucus, the point of view employed here is that of the Spartans (“as the Lacedaemonians say”, ὡς λέγουσι Λακεδαιμόνιοι). While Glaucus has only thought about committing a misdeed and is punished severely (by descent), in the other case the situation is reversed. Sperthias and Bulis’ good intentions to make up for a wrong, sacrificing themselves for the sake of the community, does not have the same determining value, and the god will make their descendants pay the same price.<sup>81</sup> In the case of Glaucus, “to tempt the god” is sufficient to precipitate the events. In the case of Sperthias and Bulis, however, the right and honest intention to make amends for the wrong committed against the sacred world and to reactivate reciprocity on a human level is still insufficient. Xerxes denies them their reward.<sup>82</sup>

Other structural features connect the two stories. The tale of Sperthias and Bulis in the seventh book is in fact preceded by a list of the *poleis* that had delivered water and land to Xerxes, in the same way the narrative of the sixth book began with the subjection of various Greek areas (particularly Aegina) to the Persians, and its consequences. Even an oath is present, which here, immediately before the story of Sperthias and Bulis, closes the list of the treacherous Greek cities. Here, too, the god at Delphi is implicated in the oath:

“Against all of these the Greeks who declared war with the foreigner entered into a sworn agreement (ἔταμον ὄρκιον), which was this: that if they should be victorious, they would dedicate to the god of Delphi (δεκατεῦσαι τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖσι θεῷ) the possessions of all Greeks who had of free will surrendered themselves to the Persians. Such was the agreement sworn by the Greeks” (7.132).

I would like to conclude these observations by looking at the “other side of the coin”, both here and in the story of Glaucus. On one hand, this alternative perspective makes the relationship between men and gods less transparent and predictable, and, on the other, points to the fragility of the rules and their sanctions.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the general law according to which transgressors unleash an inescapable and retributive reaction is fulfilled imperfectly in practice. It is Herodotus himself who insists on this. He notes some significant “cracks”, and in this way reserves for himself the right to take a more active role as critical narrator and witness of a world that is difficult to decode. Its complexity casts shadows on memory and makes it difficult to understand the past from the present. Confirming the narrative connection between these two “edifying” stories, we once again find the Athenians in a difficult role. In fact, they share the same guilt as the Spartans: they too have killed the heralds of Darius. They should therefore pay the same price according to the same law,

81 Regarding the inheritance of guilt, the best story is perhaps that of Athamas, Phrixus and Cytisorus (7.197): nevertheless, it does not seem to include those elements of crisis evident in the two stories of Glaucus and Sperthias and Bulis.

82 Irwin forthcoming, 245.

83 See Desmond 2004, 29: “Athenian-Aeginetan relations were a concatenation of ἀδικήματα and attempted retributions (6.87–93)”. This observation underlines the problematic nature of the story of Glaucus: it is true that the Athenians refuse to follow moral teaching and deliver the hostages, but the conflict between Aegina and Athens is very long and old, and both rivals reciprocate misdeeds. This does not deny the central role of the logic of retribution, as Gould 1989, 82 rightly states.

whereby transgressors of norms basic to human relationships are prohibited from forgetting.

Herodotus, however, offers two diverging solutions which surprise the reader and introduce a complicating factor. On one hand, the future of the Spartans is already determined: the historian does not hesitate to recognise indelible divine memory (θεῖον τὸ προήγγμα) in the violent death of the sons of Spertias and Bulis, which “puts things right” a generation later. On the other, Herodotus does not recognise the same effect in the case of the Athenians, and introduces doubt by implying that in truth they have never “paid the right penalty”:

“What calamity befell the Athenians for dealing in this way with the heralds I cannot say (οὐκ ἔχω εἶπαι), save that their land and their city were laid waste. I think, however, that there was another reason for this, and not the aforesaid (ἀλλὰ τοῦτο οὐ διὰ ταύτην τὴν αἰτίην δοκέω γενέσθαι)” (7.133).

Herodotus does not want to explicitly consider the law on moral reciprocity and divine action, but he makes it clear that to his mind the reasons for the Athenians’ punishment remain obscure, and that this obscurity is reflected in the illusory presumption of a clearly ordered world:

“Herodotus sees the *event as a complex of human motivations and superhuman forces*, a complex which is *not intelligible* to him *under a simple theological scheme*. The forces that operate beneath the surface of the observable historical events appear to him *contradictory* and can be described only in stories which have an essentially *paradoxical meaning*”.<sup>84</sup>

This does not mean that in the *Histories* the gods disappear: “traditional” religiosity and new ways of understanding the world coexist in a problematic way. In my opinion, Herodotus does not supply rigid and final answers, he does not dictate new rules, but rather puts forward new questions and raises doubts.

#### 14 EARNESTNESS AND TRUSTWORTHINESS AS CRUXES: TRADITIONAL WISDOM, DELPHIC EXPEDIENCE, AND THE MORAL OF GLAUCUS’ STORY

In itself, the story of Glaucus summarises the cruxes identified in the sixth book that I have examined here, but also partly returns us to the overall vision of Herodotus. It is a two-sided tale which looks with respect at the past, but at the same time

84 Immerwahr 1954, 30 [italics mine]. Lloyd-Jones 1971, 66–67: “For him (Herodotus) as for the early poets, the purposes of the gods are *inscrutable* to men; sometimes, *especially to one looking back into the past* and surveying a long period of time, each link in a chain of guilt and retribution may be perceptible, but often much of its extent must remain *obscure* to human understanding” [italics mine]. For Herodotus’ circumspect descriptions of the gods and their activities in the human sphere see Corcella 1984, 151; Lateiner 1989, 197–203; Sewell-Rutter 2007, 3: “His [Herodotus’] interest in supernatural modes of causation, including inherited guilt and fate, is clear, though their precise status and function in his historical work are hotly disputed”. See also Rood 2007, 127: “[...] the importance of reciprocity as an organizing principle in Herodotus’ narrative”.

presents subtle traces of irony and disenchantment. This can be confirmed by an intertextual perspective on the complex and dense narrative world of Herodotus.

There is no doubt that the narrative materials used are drawn from the colour and imagination of archaic epic, particularly that of Hesiod, as the analysis conducted so far confirms. These materials, however, are present in Herodotus via a Delphic filter. According to Roland Crahay, the main focus in the story of Glaucus is in the second part of the Pythia's response. While the first part reworks or even quotes to the letter Hesiodic hexameter, the second part defends the honour of the sanctuary and its god: there is no need to make requests to Apollo that can compromise him within the new ethical horizons which take hold between the end of sixth and fifth centuries. The Pythia does not want to announce a universal moral principle as much as to protect the sanctuary and safeguard its prestige.<sup>85</sup>

The ancient tale of wisdom, once set and re-read in the wider narrative plot of Herodotus' stories, however, produces a mosaic of contradictory and challenging references which draw the reader's attention to various questions. Certainly one of these is the continuous comparison between ancestors and descendants, that is the temporal line that supports the notion of *genos*. When Glaucus intentionally and fraudulently forgot the deposit he had received, he intervenes in the genetic memory of the Milesian's *oikos* and jeopardises the delicate apparatus of intergenerational memory. Glaucus will be repaid in the same way by Son of Oath.

At least two other points deserve to be underlined here: both are related to the paradoxical (and perhaps ironic) tone of the story of Glaucus. The first point is that (against the intentions of the narrator Leotychidas, but not those of Herodotus) the story of Glaucus does not produce the expected effects on the Athenians: they do not return the deposit, and no catastrophe seems to befall them. (We have seen the same pattern in the story of Sperthias and Bulis). Indeed, for a moment it is the Aeginetans who are to suffer this fate, both because the hostages are not returned, and because of the injustices which will render them guilty. Herodotus' irony can be measured thanks to the chapters which immediately precede Glaucus. In fact, the historian anticipates the accusation of betrayal and corruption for which Leotychidas, caught in the act, will be driven away in the future and finish his days far from his homeland and deprived of his *oikos* (6.72).<sup>86</sup> Only after this prolepsis does Herodotus let him speak. He uses Leotychidas as spokesman for an epilogue on how the corrupting nature of greed for even the most honest attracts both human and divine punishment. The irony seems to be mainly aimed at two subjects: at Sparta, and also at the sanctuary at Delphi, whose prestige was in decline after the endorsement given initially to the Persian invaders.<sup>87</sup>

85 Gernet 1955, 528; Crahay 1956, 97–98. Defradas 1954 does not recognize the Delphic element in the story of Glaucus.

86 Darbo-Peschanski 1987, 67. See also Irwin forthcoming, 232.

87 Crahay 1956, 97–98, 164 has already underlined this irony. See Beltrametti 1986, 163 and Rood 2007, 127: "Herodotus' prolepsis often have an overtly moral point".

“[...] The parable is used ironically, not only with reference to the speaker, who acquired the throne by fraud and later came to a bad end, but also in respect to the Athenians, who do not anywhere receive punishment from the gods for refusing to hand over the hostages”.<sup>88</sup>

The second point is that no oath is explicitly sworn by Glaucus. The text does not say that Glaucus has received the deposit under oath: the agreement seems to have been limited to the exchange of tokens. It is possible, however, to identify a clear allusion to the taking of an oath in those Greek *nomoi* to which Glaucus wants to appeal when he tries to deny and not return the deposit. The Spartan, however, withdraws the oath at the last minute and returns the deposit. In the story of Glaucus, a basic ambiguity surrounds the oath, which is confirmed by the quantity of oaths which precede it.

In my opinion, one can see in the story both Herodotus’ attention to the imponderable which escapes the control of man, as well as an attitude of disenchantment and a “bitter” vision of history:

“Choice and necessity, together with intellectual and moral blindness, are the elements of the Herodotean view of historical action”.<sup>89</sup>

From this perspective, man does not have complete dominion over his actions and their consequences: the morality that guides them is imperfect and ambiguous, as in the case of Cleomenes and Leotychidas, but also the Delphic priests. It is no coincidence that

“[...] in Herodotus’ historical narrative the less personalized concepts of fate and the unnamed god are more frequently deployed, and named gods tend to recede into the background”.<sup>90</sup>

At the centre of the crisis marked by Glaucus’ behaviour is again that trust which, together with memory and oath, has been identified among the primary “cultural objects” present in all the stories examined (above, pp. 28–30):

“Widespread acceptance of moral prohibitions and requirements makes possible a climate of trust [...]. A good source of examples is the duty to respect another’s property [...]”.<sup>91</sup>

Observed in its widest narrative framework (6.48–94) and in the perspective of the whole structure of the Herodotean text, the tale of Glaucus can therefore illuminate

88 Immerwahr 1966, 214.

89 Immerwahr 1954, 40 [italics mine]. Momigliano 1979, 72: “But whereas Thucydides concentrates on the inner logic of the development of power in Greece, Herodotus regarded results as being beyond human calculation”.

90 Sewell-Rutter 2007, 8. Lateiner 1988, 208–09 refers to “[...] the uncertainty of human existence that historians can ignore or minimize but cannot transcend [...]. Mention of the gods does not lessen the human historical accomplishment, for the gods are beyond history”. See also the observations of Fornara 1990, 27: “His work [*Histories*] not only embodies a highly sophisticated view of the world but expresses it polemically [...]. Unfortunately for us, Herodotus is not explicit about the inner working of his mind or his underlying intentions”. Rood 2007, 117: “Grasping the inescapably mediated and fragmented nature of his story is an essential part of understanding Herodotus’ view of history”. *Ibidem*, 130: “[...] past and future [are] a way of forming links, many of them unexpected, and deepening our sense of the uncertainties as well as the regularities of human achievement”.

91 Deigh 1996, 12–13.

some aspects of Herodotus' methods of making meaning. With this approach, memory and oblivion, oath and trust appear abscissa and ordinate within the same coordinated system of rules and of sense: two key values, trustworthiness and earnestness, depend on them.<sup>92</sup> Donald Lateiner's and Charles Fornara's observations are fundamental:

"Herodotus' original inquiry was not the culmination of a mature tradition, such as Homer's epic represents, but the invention of the first complex prose work in European literature [...] Enough flexibility remains to allow him to borrow from other genres [...] parody, comedy or melodrama, and tragedy [...] Herodotus managed to hover between the particular and the general. Facts, not speaking for themselves, required the author to 'put things next to one another' (συμβάλλεσθαι)".<sup>93</sup>

"He was content to accept a kind of compromise between historical inevitability and free-agency which from our perspective may seem philosophically vicious but which for him combined the equally valid notions of man's responsibility for his actions and his ultimate subservience to the divine will".<sup>94</sup>

In conclusion, Herodotus' new paradigm of memory boldly emerges from his subtle game of observing tradition while recognising its inadequacy in relation to the new ethical norms in the fifth century. The Herodotean preface (1.1) has a precise aim: that the great enterprises of man (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά) should not disappear because of the passing of time and become ἀκλέα, which as we have seen before is equivalent to anonymity. The crisis of traditional religiosity and changing signals are also recognisable, on a small scale, in the mocking destiny of the Delphic reply to Glaucus. The same story which on the face of it seems to guarantee the success of the punishment designated for Glaucus, that is social oblivion, at the same time shows an anomaly. On the one hand, within the story itself, Glaucus is destined to be forgotten, in that he has no descendants. On the other, the tale seems to guarantee a much longer and more stable memory that would have ensured him respect and obedience consistent with righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), within a system of fractured, religious morals. But this, of course, is another matter.

92 I agree with Beltrametti 1986, 140: in Herodotus "la storia continua ad essere una forma della morale e a costringere in questa forma le notizie, i dati, il vissuto anche recente". See Fornara 1990, 42: "Herodotus' system of cause and effect is inherently moral".

93 Lateiner 1989, 224–25. According to Thompson 2009, 71, "The fighting stories of Herodotus have a communal authority in the sense that they are recognized as the accounts that define a particular community by embodying its aspirations or exhibiting its cultural presuppositions or perhaps simply by *embodying its anxieties*. Factual veracity is not the point for a story to qualify as a *significant memory*. It may be an illusion that such stories come wholly intact and ready-made, depending only on a willing raconteur like Herodotus to preserve them. But it does seem important that such stories or *logoi* have an independent existence that a historian may tap into; a very great historian will do more" [*italics mine*].

94 Fornara 1990, 29.

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