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J. E. Lendon. *Song of Wrath: The Peloponnesian War Begins.* New York: Basic Books, 2010. 576 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-465-01506-1.

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Realism or Wrath?

J. E. Lendon's engaging new history of the Ten Years or Archidamian War, that is, the first phase of what we have come to refer to as the Peloponnesian War, sets itself to what seems at first glance a formidable task. Disdaining Thucydides' analysis that the "truest cause" of the war was the fear that Athens' increasing power was inspiring in the Spartans, Lendon looks instead to the *aitiai* (charges) and *diaphoroi* (disputes) that the great historian so famously eschewed. He builds here on an earlier article in which he posited that a Homeric concern for honor and revenge were driving factors in the outbreak of Greek wars and sets out to test the theory against the history of the Archidamian War.[1] In Lendon's estimation, cities' sense of *timē* (honor), whether stemming from a mythological past or practical accomplishments, could be totted up and compared with real-world results. Thus, Greek *poleis* acted out of anger and concern for *timē* as much as out of rational interest when they made war on each other. Tragically, what one city saw as the taking of just revenge for another's *hybris* (insult), could in itself be viewed as a disproportionate act of *hybris* and treasured up as the cause of future conflict, inspiring and perpetuating interminable cycles of war. Concern for cities' relative ranking with regard to *timē* and whether or not they were treated with the correct level of respect or deference in the fluid environment of interstate relations only created greater opportunity for *hybris* and revenge.

Ironically, in such an environment, Lendon suggests that the appearance and rhythm of reprisal were as important as its reality. *Poleis* tried to carefully modulate their vengeance so as not to spiral out of control into *hybris*. Rather, the goal of this tit-for-tat cycle of violence was to either preserve or revise the combatants' relative honor ranking in the eyes of the Greeks. Thus, Athens sought to force Sparta to accept her equality in honor while Sparta fought vindicate her superiority. To this end, Athens took care to retaliate for the annual Spartan ravages to Attica by amphibious raids around the Peloponnese and shaming the Spartans wherever possible. If Athens could not match Sparta in the virtue of *andreia* (bravery) in outright hoplite battle, they could surpass them in the competing virtues of *charis* (reciprocity) and *mētis* (guile). In essence, Lendon seeks to explain why the ancients approved of Pericles' strategy, which, by modern lights, often seems half-hearted.

Lendon also seeks to rescue Thucydides from the realists and present a rereading of the Archidamian War in which honor, rather than fear or interest, is the dominant element in the remarkable trinity of Thuc. 1.75 and 1.76. Despite the comfortable familiarity that modern realists find in the importance of *dynamis* (power) in Thucydides' analysis of the war's outbreak, in the later sections of his history, such reasoning is generally placed in the mouths of reprehensible figures while Thucydides' own analysis is more often expressed in terms of rank–that is, relative levels of *timē*. Whatever Thucydides' theory behind the special case of the outbreak of the war, Lendon argues that Thucydides knew, and described in the rest of his work, a world in which honor and revenge rather than realist calculus governed affairs.

One is reminded of G. E. M. de Ste Croix's assertion that, on occasion, Thucydides' "editorials" are contradicted by his "news reports."[2] Although other scholars have applied the notion of a pivot point away from the realism of Book 1, Lendon sets himself apart by suggesting this was not necessarily due to some literary or didactic strategy on Thucydides' part, but cultural factors.[3] Thucydides simply described the world as he knew it and the events as he saw them. Once we relieve ourselves of the comfortable, but facile notion of Thucydides as a modern realist, and try to set him and his history in the context of his own times and ethos, Lendon believes that the cycle of anger and revenge leap into high relief. The notion of Thucydides' archaic sensibilities is not new,

but Lendon makes the case with specific reference to his analysis of Greek interstate politics.[4]

In order to emphasize this point, Lendon adopts an interesting and engaging rhetorical style. He provides the reader with a narrative of the Archidamian War as he imagines the romantic Herodotus would have composed it rather than the austere Thucydides. To that end, he not only writes with verve and panache, but includes local myths and legends, sometimes anachronistically, in order to give a sense of the traditional values he believes to have been at work. The result may be debated as a matter of taste. However, this reviewer was delighted. This is not the dreary tome that is so often the product of academic scholarship, but is in fact a joy to read. Lendon wears his erudition lightly, although his extensive endnotes and appendix on the source material will be read with profit in their own right. His facility with the English language is of the sort usually drubbed out of historians in graduate school.

Overall, undergraduates and the general public will be able to rely on an accessible and well-written synthesis of the current scholarship, while specialists will profit from an old tale retold very well with an engaging new perspective.

Notes

[1]. J. E. Lendon, "Homeric Vengeance and the Outbreak of Greek Wars," in *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*, ed. Hans Van Wees (London: Duckworth, 2000), 1-30.

[2]. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "The Character of the Athenian Empire," *Historia* 3 (1954): 1-41.

[3]. For example, Robert W. Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 63-75; and Josiah Ober, "Thucydides Theoretikos/Thucydides Histor: Realist Theory and the Challenge of History," in *War and Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Korean War and the Peloponnesian War*, ed. D. R. McCann and B. S. Strauss (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 273-306.

4. Lowell Edmunds, "Thucydides' Ethics as Reflected in the Description of Stasis," HSCP 79 (1975) 73-92.

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