Eros has enjoyed much attention in recent decades in scholarship on ancient sexuality, vase painting and iconography, myth, Greek poetry and philosophy, and even Athenian democracy (e.g., Bartsch and Bartscherer 2005; Wohl 2002; Calame 1992). Previous scholarship touches on eros and its relation to Herodotean figures in discussing desire and tyranny in general (e.g., Wohl 2002, 220-1), but eros as a functioning concept in Herodotus' Histories as a whole has received less consideration, particularly in terms of the relation between eros, expected male gender roles, and the success of specific tyrants. In this paper I propose to extend our understanding of the relationship between tyrants and eros by analyzing the shifts in proper male roles or expectations that various male figures undergo throughout the Histories as or after they experience eros.

Herodotus frames his Histories with two logoi that define the way in which his audience should understand eros' function throughout the work: the tales of Kandaules and his wife and of Xerxes and Masistes' wife. Both tyrants experience eros toward a female and are weakened (or destroyed) for experiencing it (1.8.1; 9.113.2); I suggest that the subsequent disasters that befall these figures are partially predicated on their lust for a woman.

That two logoi which help frame Herodotus' work center on tales of tyrannical failure and eros underscores the importance of eros and its potentially debilitating effect elsewhere in the Histories, particularly in accounts of other males in positions of power. I extend this discussion to examples of Mycerinus (2.129.1-134.1), Cambyses (3.31.2-6), and the Spartans Pausanias and Demaratus. I conclude by considering in more detail the story of Deioces the Mede, a figure who, as others have argued, serves a paradigmatic function in the Histories as a founder of monarchy in the east (1.96-101; e.g., Walter 2004); I suggest that Herodotus' explicit reference to Deioces' eros for sovereignty at the beginning of this tale implies an even more negative reading for the whole of Deioces' accomplishments in the Histories and further allows Herodotus' reader to link the message of Deioces' story to the Constitutional Debate of Book Three.