The School of History

Athens in the Age of Socrates

Mark Munn

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Berkeley Los Angeles London

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS x
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xi
MAPS xiii

Introduction 1

PART I THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRATIC ATHENS, 510–415

1 The Past of Democratic Athens 15
The Past and the Truth / The Origins of Democracy / Choral Songs and Tragedies / Praise in Song / Enacting the Immanent Past / Performance and Public / The Dead and the Living / Everyman's Past / Witnesses to the Past

2 The Aristocracy of Democratic Athens 46
The Privileges of Empire / The Best of the Athenians / The Public Display of Private Arete */ Prowess in War / The Impression of Power / The Best of the Greeks*

3 Servants of the Athenian Democracy 64
The Power of Numbers / Slaves of Slaves / Friendship with Foreigners and Loyalty to the Demos */ The Sycophants / The Demagogues / The People's Money / The Tyranny of the* Demos */ The Sophists / The Speech-Writers / Victory, the Measure of Virtue / The Oracle Mongers / The Expertise of* Syngrapheis */ The Conspirators*

PART II THE CRISIS OF ATHENS, 415–403

4 The Expulsion of Alcibiades, 415–413 95
Alcibiades / Sicilian Ambitions / Antiphon the Sophist / Spoiling the Moment / Athens Turned Inside Out / The Conspiracy of the Mysteries / Alcibiades' Defense / The Destruction of Alcibiades / Hearing the Testimony of History / The Limits of Power / The Will of the Gods / Alcibiades in Flight / The Flight of the Birds

5 Rationalizing Oligarchy, 413–411 127
On the Boundaries of Asia / Saviors and Phantoms / Sage Advice / The Ancestral Constitution / The Best Laid Plans / Desperate Straits / Moderation and Accommodation

6 A Procession of Victories, 411–408 152
Victory at Cyzicus / Immutable Change / The Generals and the Men of Athens / Realizing Vision / Alcibiades Triumphant / Alcibiades and the Laws / Beloved of the Mother of the Gods

7 The Limits of Democratic Imperative, 408–405 175
Lordship of Asia / The Eclipse of Alcibiades / Victory at Arginusae / The Trial of the Generals / Playing on Reason / Finding the Right Perspective / To Humor the Lion

8 Surrendering to Sparta, 405–404 195
The Friendship of Cyrus / The Battle of Aegospotami / Conon, Cyprus, and the New King / The Siege of Athens / Negotiating With Sparta / Theramenes' Secret / The Surrender of Athens / The Agents of Oligarchy / Again, the Ancestral Constitution / Breaking the Back of the Democracy / Pulling Out the Roots of Empire

9 The Athenian Civil War, 404–403 218
Freedom and Slavery / The Thirty "Establishers of the Laws" / Social Engineering / More Ancient Virtues / Those Who Are In and Those Who Are Out / Beating Out the Lion / The Return of the Exiles / War Between Piraeus and Athens / The Spartan Settlement

PART III RESURRECTING ATHENS, 403–395

10 The Laws of Athens, 403–400 247
Sources / The Few and the Many / The Restoration of a Democracy / The Heroes of Piraeus / True

Athenians / Andocides and the Laws / The Work of the Nomothetai */ The Laws of Athens*

11 Eliminating Socrates, 401–399 273
The Case Against Nicomachus / Amnesty and Remembrance / Ominous Reminders / Socrates' Offense

12 Athenian Democracy and History, 399–395 292
A New Past for a New Beginning / A Passion for Books / Socrates and the Laws / Remembering the Spoken Word / The Account Compiled by Thucydides / Thucydides in Exile / Thucydides in Athens / Why Thucydides Wrote / The Unfinished Condition / The Beginnings of Posterity

APPENDIX A. EPIGRAPHIC CHRONOLOGY 331

APPENDIX B. EURIPIDES' *HELEN* AND ARISTOPHANES' *THESMOPHORIAZUSAE* 333

APPENDIX C. CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVENTS OF 410–406 335

APPENDIX D. THE SURRENDER OF ATHENS AND THE INSTALLATION OF THE THIRTY 340

ABBREVIATIONS 345

NOTES 347

BIBLIOGRAPHY 441

GENERAL INDEX 469

INDEX LOCORUM 495

Introduction

THE SUBJECT

In less than a century (between 478 and 404 B.C.E.*) Athens gained and lost an empire. Among ancient empires bordering the Mediterranean, the Athenian empire was impressive neither for its size nor for its durability. But as the creation of a democratic state it was unique. No dynasty or ruling oligarchy controlled the instruments of power at Athens. Political, judicial, and military power were directed by means of public debates in which skilled speakers tried to sway the majority against their rivals' efforts to do the same. Because power was publicly constructed, contestants for political influence at Athens developed the means to appeal to wide audiences, and to guide popular approval or condemnation not so much according to narrow, sectional interests, but by casting their arguments in terms of transcendent principles. Over the course of the Athenian experience with empire, the use of writing to hone the skills of debate and to express the principles that made arguments memorable gave rise to new habits of discourse and standards of judgment. These habits in turn provided the foundations of rhetoric, political philosophy, constitutional law, and history.

Writing had long been employed among the Greeks, especially as an aide-mémoire for poetry and to give voice to monuments, but in the course of the fifth century it became increasingly the medium for other forms of expression, particularly in prose. Athenian democracy encouraged habits of literacy, both for the creation of public records and memorials and in the personal use of writing as one of the tools to sharpen and amplify rhetoric. The consequences of this trend were various and profound. Poetry at

*Unless otherwise noted, all dates are Before the Common Era.

Athens was enriched by the absorption of rhetorical and eulogistic style and content. In this period the public conscience was both entertained and at the same time informed about underlying meanings and ironies within contemporary events through the allegories of tragedy and the farces of comedy, all created and preserved in writing. The enrichment of literary description and rhetorical argument achieved by writers versed in a growing literary heritage enabled critical history to be written, first by Herodotus and then by Thucydides. And many of the same motives that sharpened rhetoric and critical history stimulated the reflective and analytical skills of political philosophy, best known in the person of Socrates and represented in the writings of Plato.

A surprising amount of the foregoing is represented in the literary products specifically of the generation that saw the Athenian empire come to an end, in 404, as the final outcome of the Peloponnesian War. Aristophanes was of that generation, and although Sophocles and Euripides both died in 406 and did not live to see the defeat of Athens by Sparta, they did experience and respond to the convulsions that preceded the final fall. Within that period the *Histories* of Herodotus were written, and Thucydides, although he was writing after the fall of Athens in 404, began to gather material for his account when the war with Sparta began in 431. Pericles, who died in 429, left no written speeches of his own, nor did any of his contemporaries. But within the following generation, Gorgias, Antiphon, Thrasymachus, and other sophists circulated treatises displaying their rhetorical skills. Increasingly, texts of actual speeches were collected and studied, and by 400 a great number of contemporary speeches were in circulation. Plato was born and educated in these final decades of the fifth century, in the most influential period of his mentor, Socrates. Although Plato's works belong to the generation after the Peloponnesian War, the event that inspired Plato to write was the trial and execution of Socrates in 399. The same year marked the publication on stone of a substantial body of the laws of Athens. The compilation of these laws, beginning in 411, resulted in the creation of the first known centralized state archive and marked the beginnings of research into constitutional history.

It is not a mere quirk of fortune that such a literate legacy should survive from the last three decades of the fifth century, and not, to any comparable degree, from earlier decades. The habits of reading and the applications of writing burgeoned specifically in the late fifth century, and testimony to the phenomenon is evident in the immediately following generations. Within the fourth century, written works of rhetoric and history, and studies of poetry, laws and institutions, and political philosophy proliferated. All such works referred directly to literary predecessors or implicitly reveal the influence of earlier works. The wide-ranging writings of Aristotle exemplify the tendencies of fourth-century authors to thrive on the works of their

predecessors. Yet amidst all this attention to works of the past, as the citations by Aristotle attest, the vast bulk of the literary heritage available to fourth-century authors is traceable to works no earlier than the last third of the fifth century.[1]

The Athenians were well aware that their city was the home of this literary revolution. Athens was the "school of Hellas," as Thucydides reports the famous claim of Pericles. There is an apparent danger of circularity in accepting this testimony, since Athenian rhetoric naturally praised Athens. But such praise is neither the sole nor even the chief support for this judgment. Much of the political commentary of late-fifth and fourth-century Greece was openly critical of Athenian policies and institutions. Yet it confirms that Athens, in the final decades of its domination of an Aegean empire, was the central focus of tracts of rhetorical polemic, of reflective drama, of philosophical criticism, and of historical analysis out of which emerged the intellectual tools by which human achievements then and ever afterward have been more keenly judged and compared.[2]

What were the conditions that brought standards of criticism and debate to so high a pitch? Part of this inquiry must seek to establish the objects of criticism and debate at Athens, and part must seek to establish *when* debate at Athens reached such a threshold of intensity that it yielded a lasting record in writing. Put in these terms, an investigation into the conditions that placed Athens at the center of an intellectual and literary revolution must become a historical investigation of the time in which this revolution took place, and particularly of the intersection between political and intellectual culture at that time. The present book is a historian's investigation of this subject.

THE PROBLEM

The investigation begins with a survey of how the Athenians recorded their past between the birth of classical Athenian democracy in the late sixth century and the era of the Peloponnesian War nearly a century later. Some of the themes of popular struggle celebrated by later generations of Athenians can be traced to the origins of democracy in the overthrow of tyranny. But we do not encounter scrutiny of the contemporary practices of democracy and empire or critical reflection on the traditions of the Athenian past until we arrive at the generation that experienced the Peloponnesian War (431–404) and witnessed the destruction of the Athenian empire as its outcome.

Themes of social and political division within Athens are already recognizable close to the time of the death of Pericles in 429. Over the following generation these divisions led to a series of progressively more violent political convulsions, and eventually to revolution and civil war. At each stage,

we find Athenians looking to their past to find guidance through troubled times. And at each stage, just as communal stability seemed at hand, renewed crisis called present wisdom into question and prompted deeper reflection on the meanings of a past that was ever growing in complexity.

Our investigation thus comes to focus on the period that Thucydides chose to write about, the Peloponnesian War. It is even possible that our interest in identifying the origins of critical historical analysis has much in common with Thucydides' motives for writing history. Having lived through this period of ever-intensifying crises, Thucydides was surely responding to the challenge of explaining the destruction of the Athenian empire. But his history never reached that point. Having set out to narrate "the war" that began in 431 and that lasted, as Thucydides notes in 5.26, for twenty-seven years until the surrender of Athens, his work ends abruptly in the midst of its twenty-first year (411/10). Thucydides' narrative was later continued by others, so we are able to follow the events that Thucydides had in view when he wrote. But the incompleteness of his work is problematic for present purposes, because we lose contact with Thucydides' intellectual project as it approaches the very time in which it was formed.

Before the abrupt termination of his narrative, Thucydides reveals some of his judgments in view of the outcome of the war. His views are always nuanced, and they likely would have become even more so had he gone on to narrate a further six or seven years of the career of the Athenian empire. But without his judgments on the events accompanying the final defeat of Athens we are hard put to evaluate his meaning in the several passages where he fully contextualizes events but goes on to affirm superlative instances like, "[These were] certainly the best men . . . who perished in this war," (3.98.4); "a disaster more complete than any . . . " (7.29.5); ". . . a man who, of all the Hellenes in my time, least deserved to come to so miserable an end" (7.86.5); ". . . the greatest action that we know of in Hellenic history" (7.87.5); and ". . . a better government than ever before, at least in my time" (8.97.2). We simply do not know how Thucydides would have dealt with the ecstatic highs and bewildering lows that lay in store for the Athenians and their foes in the final six years of the war, or in the civil war at Athens that followed.[3]

Thus as we approach the climax of the story of the greatness of Athens and her fall, we lose the perspective of the man who drew our attention to the subject. Xenophon, whose continuation of Thucydides' narrative is our chief source for the events after 411, is not up to the task of evaluating the many implications of events according to the standards set by Thucydides. He was a young man at Athens in these years, and probably an eye-witness to several of the episodes he narrates. But Xenophon told the story after the passage of at least twenty and possibly more than forty years, and he offers a selective and comparatively simple, linear narrative. Xenophon in-

vests his talents chiefly in details that evoke a strong picture of individual character. We lack, however, the depth-perception of Thucydides that allows us to see shadings of motive and the contingencies of events.[4]

The shadings of motive and the cross-purposes of protagonists that pitched events into unexpected directions all became pronounced, in Thucydides' narrative, in his eighth and final book. This tells the tale of events following the Athenian disaster in Sicily, in 413, through the first overthrow of democracy at Athens in 411. Book 8 contains many changes of stylistic and narrative habits, by comparison with the previous books of Thucydides' account, and these changes have usually been explained as a feature of incompleteness. The absence of speeches and the frequency of authorial judgments and conjectures, it is thought, would all have been edited out if Thucydides had lived to finish his work (death being thought the most plausible explanation for the sudden end of a project so clearly conceived and thus far forcefully executed). It may well be, however, that the very complexity of events accounts for the change in style, and possibly even the abrupt ending, of Thucydides' history.[5]

This was the dénouement for Athens, the point at which war, for them, truly became

> a stern teacher; in depriving them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people's minds down to the level of their actual circumstances.... To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings.... Any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man....[6]

These are the terms in which Thucydides characterizes the effects of *stasis,* factional conflict and civil war, that first struck Corcyra in 427 and that eventually convulsed "practically the whole of the Hellenic world" (3.82.1). *Stasis* struck Athens in 411, and again more violently in 404–403. Before and between those events, in Thucydides' own narrative and in other sources, we can detect the effects of fanaticism within the politics of Athens. It would seem that by 411 the changing quality of the story of the war was sufficient to account for the changes in Thucydides' narrative style. Given his ambitious goal of providing a "clear account" *(to saphes)* of events, Thucydides may have been overwhelmed by the complexities imposed on him, in times when words themselves were changing their customary meanings. It was a task that could only be dealt with by the simplified choices of Xenophon, and through the haze of time elapsed.

This hypothesis suggests that the fall of Athens and the civil war of 404–403 were the eye of an epistemological storm that, paradoxically, may have both prompted Thucydides to write history and prevented him from

completing it. If so, then there is a functional link between the eventual failure of narrative by Thucydides' exacting standards and the failure of Athenian democracy and empire. The present book will seek to justify this hypothesis and its corollary, namely, that Thucydides' writing was only possible with the return of democracy and of renewed hopes for empire after the passing of the storm of 404–403.

This book will also examine other intellectual progeny of the storm of internecine brutality at Athens in 404–403 and the subsequent restoration of democracy. Those events were the background to the trial of Socrates in 399, and this, in turn, was the source of disillusionment with Athens that impelled the young Plato away from politics and into a life devoted to philosophy. Plato's writings and those of other Socratics, among whom Xenophon is the only other whose works survive, were retrospective accounts of significant encounters in the life of Socrates from the 430s until his execution in 399. They deal with almost exactly the same period that Thucydides defined as the appropriate subject of political history. Although there is very little direct overlap of subjects treated in the works of the Socratics and in Thucydides' history, they have in common the underlying conundrum of finding reason within a community where all decisions are subject to the approval of a sovereign popular assembly.

For a generation Socrates had been close to the center of a tradition of thought critical of Athenian democracy. His trial was therefore in part a review of a generation of Athenian political experience, seen through the distorting lens of 404–403. Socrates was charged, however, not with political misdeeds, but with impiety. His trial thus pitted his personal devotion to abstract ideals against a pragmatic, public consensus on the appropriate forms of piety. This public sense of piety was given strong expression, in the year of Socrates' trial, by the publication of a comprehensive calendar of public sacrifices. Scholarship to date has not made much of this conjunction of evidence, however, for none of our sources treat either this or any other explicit connection between the trial of Socrates and renascent democratic ideology. But affirmation of the supremacy of democratic consensus was clearly the issue upon which the trial of Socrates turned. To Plato, the condemnation of Socrates was a sign that Athenian democracy would remain as obtuse to the rule of reason as it had been, in the judgment of Socrates and his circle, before 404. While Plato chose, as a result, not to subject himself to the rule of public consensus, at close to the same time we find Thucydides offering an artifact of reason as an antidote to popular ignorance.

To recognize the links between the trial of Socrates and the intellectual project of Thucydides requires an appreciation of the larger matrix of both subjects, namely, Athens at the transition between the fifth and fourth centuries. The task requires a narrative account of the political transformations

of Athens in these years, for one of the features that renders the period so problematic is that Athens itself was a dynamic concept, and never so unstable and violently changeable as it was in the last decade of sovereignty over its empire. To trace such a narrative will also require us to confront a problem that is the most explicit, though enigmatic, link between the interests of both Thucydides and Socrates, namely, the career of Alcibiades.

From Thucydides' narrative, and in the historical and biographical traditions that later looked back on these events, no personality has evoked stronger reactions and more perplexity than Alcibiades. He rose to the forefront of Athenian politics in the generation after Pericles, displayed moments of captivating brilliance in a turbulent career, and left a reputation clouded by the disasters that led to the collapse of the Athenian empire and to the subversion of Athenian democracy. Alcibiades was prominent among those who, from time to time, kept company with Socrates, and this fact was one, though by no means the most remarkable, sign of the ambiguous relationship between Alcibiades and the democracy of Athens.

Fascinating though he is, within scholarship of the past half-century Alcibiades has not been a favorite focus of historians chronicling classical Athens, her democracy, or her empire. Students of Athenian democracy tend to overlook him as an aberration, and focus instead on the features of democracy established by Pericles and his contemporaries or on the institutions of the more stable democracy of fourth-century Athens, rebuilt from the rubble of the civil war in 404–403 that marked the end of Alcibiades' life. The aversion is not entirely a modern phenomenon. Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians* surveys in detail the political turmoil at Athens in the last decade of Alcibiades' life and never mentions him. Xenophon cannot avoid him, but scarcely probes beneath the surface of his public acts—Alcibiades certainly provided no model of character worth an extended portrayal, according to Xenophon's standards. But Thucydides, in confronting the deeds of Alcibiades, is repeatedly drawn into penetrating judgments. Thucydides' most trenchant statements about the nature of Athenian politics and the fate of Athens were made with Alcibiades clearly in mind. The nuances, in these instances, that Thucydides reads into contemporary Athenian political culture are by no means all unfavorable to Alcibiades.[7]

The enigma of Alcibiades is underscored in the picture that emerges from the Socratic writings of both Xenophon and Plato. Alcibiades was the only man for whom Socrates admitted a temptation to yield to the power of Eros. The tribute affirms the well-known charms of Alcibiades in physical appearance and charismatic presence. But it also points to an essence underlying these qualities that Socrates, that most powerful deconstructor of character, wished to confront and experience. Plato's portrait of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Symposium* is rich in detail

and implications, but it is hardly a transparent window into the political virtues, whatever they may have been, that Socrates saw in Alcibiades. Elsewhere, in the *Alcibiades* 1, *Protagoras,* and *Gorgias,* Plato provides further context for Socrates' fascination with Alcibiades, but these do not prepare us to understand how Socrates' relationship to Alcibiades was, as Xenophon relates in the *Memorabilia,* one of the chief reasons why Socrates was condemned to death by a jury in 399.[8]

In the century following their deaths, both Socrates and Alcibiades were cast in the light of ignominy that generally surrounded the men connected in 404–403, in one way or another, with the fall of empire and the deepest crisis of democracy at Athens. So Aeschines the orator could remind a jury that "Socrates the sophist" had been put to death, "because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty who put down the Democracy." In view of these circumstances, Plato and Xenophon's Socratic dialogues may be seen, in part, as a concerted effort to rescue the memory of Socrates from the simplistic, popular characterizations that followed complex and controverted times. Alcibiades had his apologists too, although they engendered no cult of personality so coherent as that which grew up around the memory of Socrates. The most influential of them were Plato and Thucydides.[9]

The political turmoil of Athens in the late fifth century collapsed the customary definitions of community that the Athenians had so artfully constructed over a century's experience of democracy. The very force and rapidity of that collapse, coming in stages no more than a few years apart, generated powerfully creative reactions from among those experiencing it. Among those with a talent for eloquence, the challenge to find meaning in agony, anxiety, and unbearable loss yielded works of inspiration, transforming forever the standards of literary expression and critical judgment. The art of Euripides represents this in tragedy; Aristophanes expressed the genius of comedy, and captured the yearning of the era most memorably in his *Frogs*. These artists spoke for the community as a whole, for the Athenian *demos* too was, collectively, a political actor. As Athenians reconstructed their civic identity after 403, those among the survivors who had been connected with the shifting circles of leadership were compelled, sometimes by the processes of law, to offer closely reasoned justifications of their actions in previous years. Some preserved documents from the times as witness to their political convictions, in the belief that time would reveal the honor of their intentions and the wisdom of their deliberations. Some, like Thucydides earlier in this period, and Xenophon and Plato later on, sought refuge abroad and then turned to writing as part of their personal reconciliation with Athens.

Yet for all the array of documentary evidence that survived these years of crisis, for all the rhetorical incision displayed, or dialectic subtlety em-

ployed, no account of these times succeeded in presenting more than a highly partial, and in that respect historically inadequate, analysis of the course and causes of events. In fact, only Thucydides set himself the task of providing a comprehensive account. Employing the skills and the sources at his disposal, he established a magisterial presence in setting forth a reasoned historical narrative. But for some reason he stopped short of the conclusion.

In contemplating the story left unfinished by Thucydides, we are drawn to consider the relationship between the times and Thucydides himself. For his project was clearly both a product of his times and timeless in its insights. Much the same can be said of Plato, among other distinguished coevals of Thucydides. Taking the relationship between times and the decisions made by those living in them as a problem for investigation, I set out in this book to study, through the diverse partial accounts that survive, the times in which these men lived. By examining through a narrative of events the impact of experience on critical thought, I offer a new understanding of the conditions that gave birth to the luminary skills of both Plato and Thucydides.

THE BOOK

In studies of Athenian history, or Greek history generally, it has been nearly universal practice to treat the events of 404–403 as a great divide. The Athenian empire came to an end, and with it the Athenian democracy, in the regime of the Thirty inaugurated in 404. In 403 the Thirty were overthrown and Athenian democracy was reborn, to remain more or less stable until Aristotle's day. But the lasting consequences of the events leading up to 404–403 were not fully manifested until after the democracy was restored, and the vision of empire as a goal of Athenian policy did not die forever in 404. We must recover, therefore, the perspective of those who lived through the crises of 411 and 404–403 in order to recognize the unique impact of those events on the later shape of Athenian democracy, and upon enduring habits of reflection and standards of critical judgment about the past.[10]

To appreciate the lessons of history as they were experienced from an Athenian perspective, preexisting conditions must be established. This is the purpose of Part I of this book. Analysis here is discursive and topical, designed to frame issues that reemerge in subsequent chapters. Chapter 1 opens on the question of how the past was known to Athenians, and to Greeks generally, before the emergence of historical thought honed by Herodotus and Thucydides. From the very birth of their classical democracy, with their celebration of the memory of the tyrant-slayers, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the Athenians developed distinctive ways of relating past

experience to their present concerns. Monument, song, dance, drama, and eulogy were the chief forms in which knowledge of the past was preserved and, as revealed in subsequent chapters, reinterpreted as occasions demanded. The following two chapters focus on the relationship between the Athenian empire and democracy on the one hand, and the self-perceptions of the Athenian aristocracy on the other. Empire promoted elitist ideals among Athenians, and this in turn fostered a latent tension within democratic Athens between those who counted themselves among the *kaloi k'agathoi,* the "beautiful and the good," and the less affluent majority of Athenians who constituted the sovereign authority of the Assembly and the law courts of Athens. Elitist ideals could coexist with democracy as long as Athens and her empire were prosperous and successful. But war against Athens and her empire brought on by Sparta and her allies changed these conditions. The Peloponnesian War, commencing in 431, compelled the sovereign *demos* of the Athenians to enforce its authority even over its own elite by harsh measures. New forms of democratic leadership and new ways of articulating elite ideals, some supportive and some critical of democracy, were the result.

With Part II, the book becomes a historical narrative in six chapters, tracing the movements of Athens from the height of her power before the Sicilian expedition of 415 through defeat and surrender in 404 to civil war and reconciliation in 403. Although Thucydides' masterful narrative of the stages that led the Sicilian expedition to its destruction in 413 is not recounted here, Part II of the present book does appraise significant military events in the years that followed, and offers solutions to problems of chronology bequeathed to us by the termination of Thucydides' carefully measured account. The guiding purpose of chapters 4 through 9 is to assess the effects of war on political culture at Athens. Reflections of contemporary concerns in tragedy, comedy, and Socratic literature are introduced alongside the usual sources of historical narrative, with results that transform our understanding of events and of the sources themselves. Among the features developed here to a greater degree than in most accounts of this period is an appreciation of the often ambiguous but ultimately decisive influence of the Persian court on the politics of the Aegean.

Part III, comprising the last three chapters, continues the narrative from the reconstitution of democracy in 403 through the year of Socrates' trial in 399, and looks ahead to the renewal of war between Athens and Sparta in 395. In this period, both the events and our sources lend themselves to a more topical narrative, while thematic links between one chapter and the next build a new understanding of this transformational decade. Chapter 10 examines the reemergence of democracy and its relationship particularly to the project to revise the laws of Athens, resumed after 403. Chapter 11 relates the emerging definition of the laws of democratic Athens to the

concept of public piety. The condemnation of Socrates on a charge of impiety, in the same year as the publication of a revised calendar of public sacrifices, thus becomes intelligible as an assertion of a new form of democratic authority over the realm of communal identity. This was one means by which the Athenians hoped to avoid repetition of the catastrophes of the recent past, blame for which was being placed on visionary leaders, inspired by obscure forms of private knowledge. Finally, chapter 12 examines the forms of knowledge about the past, especially the recent past, that were accessible to Athenians after 403, and the uses and abuses of that knowledge encouraged by the Athenian democracy. From among the various practices deployed and criticized by orators like Lysias and Andocides, by the followers of Socrates and by his critics, it becomes possible to recognize the conditions that made it both possible and desirable for Thucydides to write history.

The view that Thucydides' account was largely composed at one time, after the fall of Athens, has been a minority view for some time, advocated most cogently in the works of John Finley. A wider acceptance of Finley's arguments has been undermined by a common misconception about Thucydides' relationship to the events he describes. Thucydides states at the opening of his work that he began to write as soon as the war broke out, in 431. Later in his narrative, he states that his exile in 424 allowed him to gather information from both sides of the conflict. The common assumption has been that, throughout this period, Thucydides had in mind the composition of a historical treatise.

Here it is argued that this idea did not occur to Thucydides until well after his return to Athens in 404. His claim to be writing as early as 431 can be understood in the context of Athenian political culture of that period. Political leadership depended upon the mastery of rhetorical skills, and this produced a fascination for rhetoric noticeable already in the early 420s. As an aspirant to political prominence in those years, Thucydides must have engaged in the attested practice of taking notes on speeches as they were delivered and sharing such notes among friends in discussions of key moments of judicial or political decision-making. In the same manner, memorable conversations or lectures delivered by illustrious sophists of the day formed the basis of the dialogues of Socrates later reported by Plato. Plato provides our most important testimony to the process of transmitting the spoken word through notes and edited texts.

Contrary, therefore, to the prevailing opinion that Thucydides' speeches were largely creative reconstructions of what could only be dimly remembered words, it is likely that written notes underlay most if not all of the speeches reported by Thucydides. The question of how close the Thucydidean rendition might be to the original words remains, but the scope of the question, which lies at the heart of Thucydides' claim to objectivity, is

fundamentally transformed by this realization. The increased reliance on written texts, and the close inter-reference of texts and spoken words, attested in a variety of ways in the generation of the Peloponnesian War, is one of the keys to understanding the intellectual refinements achieved by that generation.

This book concludes that new standards of critical thought emerged from the experience of history, as individuals attempted to guide and advise the Athenians in difficult times, and as they sought ways to avoid the failings of the past. The writings of Plato are the expression of a personal quest begun under these conditions. The writing of Thucydides represents a more focused and immediate response to the same set of conditions. In Thucydides' case, the very immediacy of his work provides clues to the unique relationship between events and the writing of his history. The concept of Thucydides' entire work, and many of his distinctive analytical and narrative choices, derive from circumstances at the time of composition. This can be precisely placed, as I argue here, in 396–395. At that time the Athenians were hoping to recover their empire, and as a result were again contemplating the renewal of war with Sparta. Thucydides wrote for an audience poised between desire and uncertainty, looking to the past for guidance. As Thucydides conceived it, history was the school of a democracy struggling to comprehend its future.

PART ONE

The Spirit of Democratic Athens, 510–415

CHAPTER ONE

The Past of Democratic Athens

In investigating past history, and in forming the conclusions which I have formed, it must be admitted that one cannot rely on every detail which has come down to us by way of tradition.

THUCYDIDES 1.20.1*

THE PAST AND THE TRUTH

Every generation learns from its stories of the past. Stories that claim to instruct usually assert that they are "true." The "truth" told in stories can be understood as an aspect of communication involving both speaker and listener in cognitive harmony. It depends upon a common key, a base of reference, or a source of authority, which the speaker invokes and the listener accepts.

Divine inspiration was an ancient sanction of truth. But inasmuch as truth is always a matter of assertion and can be contested, we find that from the beginnings of Greek literature, Homer and Hesiod spoke to audiences mindful of the fact that gods can inspire men to speak "many falsehoods that were like true sayings." Some three centuries and more after Homer and Hesiod, Thucydides, in the quote above, gave himself critical distance from stories of the past that were told in his day. Was Thucydides an innovator in this respect? What were the standards by which the Greeks in his day and before were prepared to recognize the truth?[1]

The currency of a story was perhaps the most fundamental test of which story, among less credible accounts, deserved to be treated as "true." That which is *alethes,* "true" in Greek, is, etymologically, that which is "unforgettable." That which has proved itself memorable, therefore, is *alethes.* Such a subjective construction of truth gave first place to the test of time, a criterion that the ancient stories of the Homeric epics could easily satisfy. This explains what seems to us to be a naive acceptance of the myths and legends that pervades Greek thought. Even Thucydides, with his critical stance, has

*Translated by R. Warner. Translations elsewhere, unless attributed, are by the author.

disarmed modern commentators with his candid treatment of the "facts" about Agamemnon's army at Troy. Critical scholarship about the past, among Greeks both before and after Thucydides, was less concerned with systematic criteria for separating the verifiable past from legend than it was with determining which legends deserved credence, according to the largely subjective standards of prevalence, and which ones had been distorted. This was the concern expressed by Hecataeus of Miletus, writing around the end of the sixth century, in the opening lines of his work on genealogies: "I write what I believe are truths *(alethea),* because many stories of the Greeks, as it seems to me, are absurd."[2]

However much a teller might invest his stories with reason and plausible detail, truth and significance were ultimately qualities to be affirmed by audience acceptance. Public approval required the skillful combination of the familiar with both novel and pleasurable elements—a combination most effectively managed in song and performance. But familiar stories full of significance for one audience might seem odd or contradictory to the "common knowledge" of other audiences. The resolution of these contradictions and the articulation of the prevailing "truth," something sensible to the majority of listeners, was at the center of the artistry of all Greek poets who hoped to achieve more than local distinction, and of all learned men, like Hecataeus, who hoped to show themselves to be judicious arbiters of truth.[3]

Truth, as one approached recent events, had to be gauged differently. An event that had not passed through the filters of communal telling and retelling could not be measured by the standards of consensus. A reliable account of recent events depended upon the established wisdom and veracity of the source or informant. Hecataeus, and perhaps also the so-called Seven Sages of an earlier generation, men like Solon of Athens, probably relied upon their reputations for wisdom about things far away in time and space to establish their authority in matters of immediate concern. That authority was a matter of practical concern, for all of the so-called Sages were statesmen, as was Hecataeus, who appears in Herodotus' history as a wise advisor in the affairs of his native Ionia during the crisis of war against the Persians. As far as we know, none of these men wrote anything resembling a historical account of their own times.[4]

History was born when Herodotus and Thucydides each ventured the ambitious task of creating treatises that would simultaneously demonstrate their discriminating wisdom and apply it, Herodotus to the recent past, Thucydides to the immediate past. On subjects of wide interest and concern, they both were aspiring to define what popular consensus *should* be as, and even before, it formed. In the process, a new and more exacting standard of truth about the past was established.

This standard was the truth that each author claimed "to know," and that each encouraged their readers to accept by engaging them in the complex

web of reason and circumstantial detail that was their history. Their endeavor thus to construct a *historical* truth required them to disavow what they did not or could not "know" as beyond the reach of reason or evidence. Their authorial standpoint therefore involved a potential challenge to prevailing notions of truth and a tension with public opinion that their texts do not often reveal, but which never lay far below the surface of their narratives.[5]

What notions of truth about the past prevailed at Athens before Herodotus and Thucydides set down their versions of the formative years of Athenian democracy and empire? How, more particularly, was the Athenian past known to Herodotus, Thucydides, and their contemporaries? The remainder of this chapter considers the ways the past was told, from the late sixth until the second half of the fifth century, and how the particular character of the Athenian public and its institutions influenced the stories of its past.

THE ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY

Gazing at the paintings on a wall of the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, "The Liberator," in the Agora of Athens (map 4), the literary travel-guide, Pausanias, identified the figures of Theseus, Democracy, and Demos ("The People"). The painting was probably created in the 340s, some 500 years before Pausanias wrote. "It shows Theseus," Pausanias reports, "as the establisher of political equality for the Athenians." He goes on:

> There is also a popular tradition that Theseus transferred sovereignty to the people and that from his time on they were a democracy, until Peisistratus came to power as tyrant. But in fact many similar things that are not true are said by most people who are uneducated in history, who believe what they have heard since childhood in choral songs and tragedies; and one such falsehood is told of Theseus, who in fact himself ruled as king, and his descendants as well, for four generations after the death of Menestheus. And if I wanted to recite genealogies, I could even enumerate all those who were kings after Melanthus until Cleidicus the son of Aesimides.[6]

Pausanias' commentary on truth and history displays an agonistic pride in learning that characterizes the authorial voice in Greek literature as far back as its beginnings with Homer and Hesiod. Like these archaic poets, Pausanias could claim authority by displaying an expertise that his audience would recognize because it treated familiar themes in knowing detail. But unlike the audiences of oral performance for which poets composed, Pausanias was addressing a learned readership. His was an audience that would recognize, from the few names he dropped, that he was in command of the scholarship that had recorded royal genealogies, and that he could thus

show that Theseus the King was the founder of a line of kings, not of popular sovereignty as represented in the paintings before him.

Yet, as Pausanias' comments show, learned scholarship was powerless to correct traditions still deeply entrenched in monument, song, and ceremony. The needs of civic identity dictated what was acceptable to audiences educated in choral songs and tragedy. Tradition, when the paintings on the stoa were created, held that democracy was an Athenian trait, and therefore it must have been so from the time of its legendary founding hero. It was not useful to have history correct that tradition.[7]

Public celebration of Democracy was an even more recent development at Athens than Pausanias thought. Celebrations in the name of Democracy were no older than 403, at the earliest. The term *demokratia,* "rule of the people," is not firmly attested as a description of the Athenian form of government until the last third of the fifth century. Within those years, the term was referred back to "the ancestral laws that Cleisthenes established when he introduced *demokratia.*" The reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 are in fact now commonly accepted as the most fundamental event in the development of classical Athenian democracy. But it is only a matter of conjecture among scholars that the term *demokratia* is as old as the reforms of Cleisthenes. The evidence favors the conclusion that *demokratia* gained currency ca. 460, close to the time of Ephialtes' reforms and the strengthening of popular sovereignty that became the classical democracy in the age of Pericles.[8]

Whatever the true origins of *demokratia* may have been, it is clear that the Athenians themselves, by the late-fifth and fourth centuries, advanced several accounts of the foundation of their democracy, tracing it back variously to Cleisthenes, to Solon, and to Theseus. When we understand that Athenian democracy was an evolving process and not a fixed entity, it is not remarkable that its origin should be ambiguous and subject to contested interpretations. In fact, from an early date Athenian civic identity was more closely tied not to democracy, but to the liberation of Athens from the tyranny of the Peisistratid family, an event that took place in 510, close in time to Cleisthenes' reforms. The overthrow of tyranny was celebrated in song and monument not more than two years after 510, and these commemorations were perpetuated in long-lived institutions. But by the late fifth century the nature and significance of the overthrow of tyranny had become hotly disputed, especially in the divide between learned and popular traditions.

Popular tradition linked the liberation from tyranny to the assassination in 514 of Hipparchus, member of the ruling Peisistratid family, by Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The tyrant-slayers lost their lives in the act, but gained immortal fame. Five years later, and soon after the actual fall of the tyranny, statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton (figure 1) were erected at a

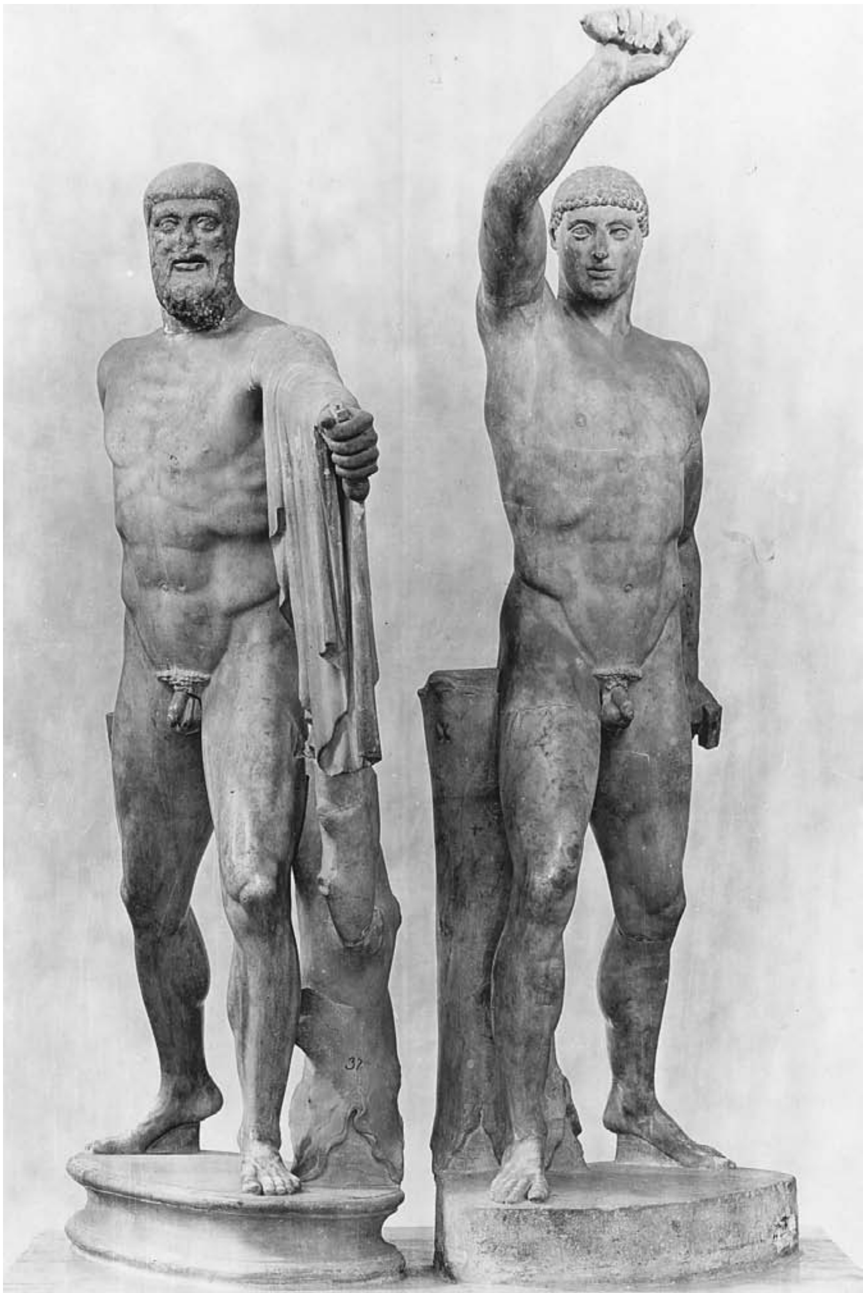

FIGURE 1. Celebrating the tyrant-slayers: Roman copies of the statues in the Athenian Agora depicting Harmodius (right) and Aristogeiton (left) in the act of striking down Hipparchus. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale no. 44825. Photo courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, neg. no. 58.1789.

central point in the Agora of Athens, probably close to where the assassination took place. An inscription, echoed in drinking songs, praised the two for "slaying the tyrant," and bestowing liberty, or equality, upon Athens. Probably at the same time that the statues were erected, public offerings were instituted at their graves outside the Dipylon gates of Athens in an area that later became the burial ground of many illustrious Athenians. An inscription from the second half of the fifth century lists the descendants of Harmodius and Aristogeiton among public figures entitled to the regular honor of dining in the Prytaneum on state occasions, and the maintenance of this honor is well attested throughout the following century.[9]

The learned tradition, represented in the narratives composed by Herodotus and Thucydides roughly a century after the events, and still later by Aristotle, pointed out that Harmodius and Aristogeiton did not put an end to Peisistratid rule by the murder of Hipparchus. Hippias, his elder brother and leader of the Peisistratid clan, held power for four more years, and was not deposed until a Spartan army defeated his supporters and forced him into exile. The celebration of Harmodius and Aristogeiton's act completely overlooked this aspect of the end to tyranny at Athens.[10]

The reaction against popular tradition is strongest in Thucydides, who singles out this episode, near the beginning of his history, to illustrate how mistaken popular opinion can be. Later in his work he returns to the story to explain the motives for the assassination. Harmodius, the beloved of Aristogeiton, had spurned the amorous advances of Hipparchus and had in turn suffered insults to his family's honor. The assassination of Hipparchus was revenge for this affront, and far from freeing Athens from tyranny, it actually turned Hippias' regime from benevolent despotism to suspicious oppression.

Aside from his introductory chapters, Thucydides' digression on the murder of Hipparchus in Book 6 is his most revealing criticism of popular tradition and pointed demonstration of his superior method of ascertaining the facts. He cites inscriptions and refers to authoritative sources (unfortunately unnamed) for information that refuted the persistent belief that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were the liberators of Athens. There will be occasion to consider the reasons for Thucydides' remarks later, in chapters 4 and 12. Here we should note that Thucydides' vehemence makes it clear that when he wrote the public at large still held Harmodius and Aristogeiton to be the greatest mortal benefactors of the Athenian political order.

CHORAL SONGS AND TRAGEDIES

The fervor of Athenian attachment to the memory of Harmodius and Aristogeiton seems paradoxical both because it reached such a high pitch soon after their deaths and because it was blind to important events that actually

accounted for the end of tyranny at Athens. The Athenians who had lived through the death of Hipparchus and overthrow of Hippias knew full well why Harmodius and Aristogeiton slew Hipparchus, and what its consequences had been. But the tale of lovers' revenge made no difference to the transcendent meaning that the Athenians collectively invested in Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Their impassioned act of personal revenge was too useful a symbol of the overthrow of tyrannical autocracy to be explained away by any misplaced concern for factual accuracy.[11]

The need for a symbol of Athenian self-determination, as soon as the Spartans withdrew, may explain the swift heroization of Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Their statues were erected in the Agora, according to Pliny, in 509—the first men to be so publicly honored, according to Aristotle. Coincidentally, another civic event was inaugurated in the Agora at Athens at about the same time. The first competitions of dithyrambic choruses were held probably in the Agora at the Dionysia festival of spring 508. No source explicitly links this custom to the fall of the Peisistratids, to the commemoration of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, or to Cleisthenes' reforms, but the close coincidence of all these events impels us to seek such a connection.[12]

The annual competitions of dithyrambic choruses were a civic event, and the competing choruses each represented one of the ten Athenian tribes. These tribes were the creation of Cleisthenes' reforms. The area known as the orchestra, or "dancing-floor," of the Agora, near the altar of the Twelve Gods, was probably the original location of these competitions (map 4). The orchestra is also named as the location of the statues of the tyrant-slayers. Preserved songs from dithyrambic song-and-dance performances tell of deeds of legendary heroes, such as Theseus, and make topical references to the occasion of performance. Dithyrambs were clearly adaptable to momentous occasions, for Aristophanes depicts a poet offering choral dithyrambs in the manner of Simonides to the founders of a new city.[13]

The victorious dithyrambic poet of 508, Hypodicus of Chalcis, is no more than a name to us, and the subject of his winning song is not attested. But the occasion called for veneration of the new heroes of Athens, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and a song linking their heritage to the destiny of Athens. Hypodicus may well have been uniquely qualified to sing about the ancestry of Harmodius and Aristogeiton since his own heritage, like theirs, was Euboean. Herodotus reports that the clan of the Gephyraei, to which Harmodius and Aristogeiton belonged, traced its origin to Eretria on Euboea. But he goes on to report an alternate version of the clan's lineage, according to which the Gephyraei had come to Athens after being expelled by the Boeotians from Tanagra, along the lower reaches of the Asopos river north of Attica.[14]

The lands along the Asopos were a contested frontier between Boeotia and Attica, and the Athenians and Thebans had recently been at war over

them. If Hypodicus wove together in song these recent events with the experiences of Harmodius and Aristogeiton and those of their ancestral clan, then the destiny of Athens and of the Gephyraei would become one. Both were victims of Boeotian aggression. The ancient victims, the ancestors of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, had been recipients of Athenian compassion. Now, by striking the first blow against tyranny at Athens, Harmodius and Aristogeiton more than repaid that ancestral favor. Poetic reckoning could thus urge the Athenians to honor their memory and repay the debt to the tyrant-slayers by striking a blow against their common ancestral enemies, the Boeotians. Within two years of the celebrations of 508, the Athenians were again fighting the Boeotians, on Tanagran ground, and won a victory that Herodotus later described as the truest proof that the recently-won political equality *(isegoria)* of the Athenians was the source of their new strength.[15]

It would be satisfying if it could be proven that the public performance of 508 so thoroughly tied the distant and recent past to the present, steeling the resolve of the Athenians in the face of potential dangers of the future. There must have been *some* articulation of the glory of Harmodius and Aristogeiton that captured a wide audience at that early date, and Herodotus' accounts of preceding and subsequent events, and the history of the Gephyraei themselves, give the clue to a unifying theme. It is a shame that we have no trace of the text of Hypodicus' performance such as we have of some of his more famous successors. But perhaps, in the martial enthusiasm of the newly liberated Athenians, we see its effects.

Tragedy too could take up contemporary themes under the nascent Athenian democracy. Phrynichus is the earliest tragedian whose artistry is known to us before the surviving works of Aeschylus. He is best known to history for the impact of his play, *Sack of Miletus*. The play dramatized the fall of the chief city of Ionia to the Persians at the end of the Ionian revolt of 499–494. In the early years of the revolt, the Athenians had accepted appeals to the Ionian kinship they shared with the people of Miletus and had supported the revolt and participated in the sack of Sardis, the Persian satrapal capital. But soon thereafter the Athenians withdrew their support and left the Ionians to confront the massed response of Persian-led forces alone. The capture of Miletus by the Persians in 494 was the event that broke the Ionian rebellion. In Phrynichus' play the horrors of men butchered and women enslaved, so often told of the fall of Troy, were brought home to the Athenians with an unsettling immediacy. Phrynichus was censured and fined for being the cause of public grief.[16]

It is commonly assumed that Phrynichus' play was performed in 493, when the mood of the Athenian public was still sensitive to the distressing news from Miletus. But his play could have had its effect at any moment when the Athenians had reason to fear Persian vengeance. Rather than an

ill-considered aggravation of recent grief, Phrynichus may have intended the emotional impact of his play to rouse the Athenians to preparatory action. Between the end of the Ionian revolt and the arrival of Xerxes in 480, another Athenian, Themistocles son of Neocles, is known to have urged the Athenians, in the face of some indifference, to take defensive measures in anticipation of a Persian attack. Themistocles was responsible for commencing the fortification of the harbors of Piraeus, and for the massive ship-building program that gave the Athenians the navy that allowed them successfully to confront the forces of Xerxes in 480. It is tempting to see in these events evidence of a collaboration between Themistocles, the ambitious statesman, and Phrynichus, the poet.[17]

Collaboration between politician and playwright is certain a few years later, when Themistocles dedicated a monument to his victory in the Dionysia of 476 as the producer of the plays of Phrynichus. This production probably included Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women,* a dramatic telling of Xerxes' defeat in the sea-battle at Salamis in 480. Because of Themistocles' decisive role among the leaders of the Greek naval forces, this victory over the Persians secured Themistocles' place in history. In view of other indications that Themistocles used piety as a means to promote his own achievements, it is altogether probable that he used Phrynichus' artistry, once again, to shape the memory of recent events as he wanted to have them imprinted on the public mind.[18]

PRAISE IN SONG

The telling of recent memorable deeds in song was ever the goal of poets aspiring to please audiences with novelty, truth, and skill. So even in the *Odyssey,* Homer depicts the singers in the great houses of Ithaca and Phaeacia diverting their audiences with songs of the Achaeans at Troy, and especially of their recent homecomings, sad though they may be for some to hear, "for men give more praise to the song that is the latest to circulate among listeners."[19]

Men proud of their deeds and singers proud of their art were the chief wellspring of Greek poetry. The many varieties of Greek poetry can be accounted for by the various social circles that patronized praise in song, from the friends and family of a champion athlete to the political community celebrating the triumphs of their common purpose. Poets who could adapt their songs of praise to suit these various audiences won the widest fame for themselves. Prize-winning contests in various forms of song had gained prominence across Greece in the sixth century, so that poetry itself became an ever more eminent field of achievement. Praise, in Themistocles' day, was reaching its most refined expression in the specially commissioned and highly paid poetry of Simonides, Bacchylides, and Pindar.[20]

Themistocles patronized the poetry of Simonides, who sang of his incisive counsel before the battle of Salamis in a poem that may have been prompted by one of the many occasions when he was honored for his leadership at Salamis. Most famous was the occasion at Sparta, where Themistocles was entertained with high honors, and given a prize for wisdom and an honor-guard to escort him to the borders of Spartan territory, something, Herodotus notes, that the Spartans granted to "him alone of all men known to us." Elsewhere, at the convocation of Greek commanders at the Isthmian sanctuary of Poseidon, and later at the games of Olympia, Themistocles was "all the talk."[21]

Themistocles seems to have sought out, or at least taken full advantage of, the various public occasions when both talk and song could manufacture fame. At Isthmia certainly, and probably at Olympia as well, his status as a distinguished commander and representative of the Athenians entitled him to host banquets attended by illustrious guests. Such banquets were customarily the occasion for song, both impromptu and prepared solo performances. At Athens, song and celebration must have accompanied his dedication of a new shrine to Artemis Aristoboule, "Of the Best Counsel" (his own special attribute), as it surely did when he sponsored the restoration of the family shrine of the Lycomidae. Song made the stories memorable, and the fact that they were sung in some cases by so illustrious a poet as Simonides was itself a sign of distinction.[22]

Of all Greek commanders in the war against Xerxes, Themistocles was the most successful at associating victory with his personal genius. But he had rivals for the honors of victory. Herodotus frequently notices the competition for honor in war, not so much between opposing sides as within the allied Greek camp. The point is made by analogy in the famous phrase attributed to Themistocles in council with his fellow-commanders, when he remarked that "those who start the race late win no prizes." The point is more direct in the vignette of a named Persian officer interviewing some Greek deserters. They informed him, shortly after the Persian victory at Thermopylae, that the Greeks were preoccupied with the games going on at Olympia. When they added, in response to his questions, that the prizes of the contests were olive wreaths, the officer exclaimed to his commander, "Oh, Mardonius! What kind of men are these that you have brought us to fight against—men who compete with one another for no material reward, but only for honor!" As apocryphal as this utterance seems, it was no mere Hellenic conceit. It depicted a driving force that found concrete expression, after the victory at Salamis, in the vote of the Greek generals, solemnly taken at the altar of Poseidon, for the individual award of *aristeia,* prizes of supreme excellence. The vote resulted in no acknowledged winner—every commander had voted for himself. But the overwhelming preference for Themistocles as runner-up was the beginning of his fame at Salamis.[23]

The personalized quality of *aristeia* identified the excellence of victorious athletes with the excellence of victors in war. Outside of single combat, however, war produces no self-evident individual victors, so the honors of *aristeia* in war were open to contention, and could be accorded only by common acclaim. But why, it may be asked, was it so important to identify and hail the bearers of *aristeia?* Was it more than a matter of pride?

Victory, athletic or martial, was the indisputable mark of the favor of the gods. In battle, athletic victors were revered by their comrades-in-arms as talismans of divine favor. Decked out in their victor's ribbons, they gave courage to friends and struck fear in foes. Those who could boast that they had slain a great athlete in battle, as Sophanes of Decelea did, had still more right to be proud. In addition to Sophanes and several athletic champions, Herodotus draws attention to numerous examples of personal prowess, all of which were probably made memorable by songs of praise and monuments.[24]

A victory, witnessed and acknowledged by all, endowed the victor with an immanent quality, *kudos* ("glory"), that might imbue also those who honored him. So victorious athletes and warriors were cherished by their kin and community, and by publicly praising the victor the community sustained the *kudos* he had achieved in the moment of victory and thereby became partners in the manifestation of divine favor. Conversely, if there were no acts of praise and commemoration, the *kudos* of the victor would evaporate, and would benefit no one. Formal recognition of victory was thus essential, and praise was to be sought.[25]

As Athenian general and statesman, Themistocles moved in circles of influential men from throughout Greece who included in their number the celebrated victors of the day and their equally celebrated praise-singers. To command the esteem of his peers, Themistocles was obliged to claim his share of the honor due from the phenomenal victory at Salamis. But it was almost impossible for a military commander to distinguish his personal achievement from the communal effort he represented. Themistocles, however, had a special distinction in his recognized counsel before the battle of Salamis. Once this was formally acknowledged by others, in the crown "for wisdom" *(sophia)* granted him at Sparta, and in the praise of his "clever judgment" *(deinotes kai gnome)* sung by Simonides, Themistocles had an established claim on personal achievement. His Spartan counterpart, Pausanias, victorious commander at the battle of Plataea, was less successful in distinguishing personal from communal achievement. He was censured by Spartan authorities for placing his own name as "Leader of the Greeks" on the victory offering dedicated to Apollo at Delphi.[26]

In the aftermath of his great victory, our sources depict Themistocles repeatedly demanding the respect due to his proven foresight, sometimes in his own right and sometimes in the name of the Athenians collectively. But,

striving so hard to convert his fame into political capital, he could not avoid also becoming the focus of envy. Plutarch quotes from several poems of Timocreon, an exile from Rhodes who once courted favor with Themistocles, unsuccessfully, and who thus reviled the Athenian for being corrupted by the bribes of others. Timocreon took pride chiefly in his reputation as a victorious pentathlete, and his contempt for Themistocles stemmed in part from his confidence in his own indisputable excellence and Themistocles' failure to acknowledge it. Timocreon is the earliest preserved source to accuse Themistocles of venality, and to praise by contrast Themistocles' colleague in generalship, Aristides, as "the choicest man from Athens." It may be that Aristides' reputation as "the Just" Athenian was created in part by people like Timocreon who could no longer endure the self-promotion of Themistocles and who therefore diverted the credit due for the great achievements of Athens to others.[27]

In the end it was the Athenian public that decided his fate. In sharp contrast with the custom prevailing within the fellowship of warriors of acclaiming the *aristeia* of individuals, the Athenian civic community granted no such marks of esteem to its military leaders. Equality, expressed as *isonomia,* "equality before the law," and *isegoria,* "equality of speech," was the leitmotif of the early democracy. After the overthrow of the tyrants, the Athenians could not welcome the vaunting of a man who had bested the king of Persia in battle. Thus the praise due for his unique achievements conflicted with his obligation to acquiesce to civic equality, and this in the end proved to be his undoing.[28]

Rivals decried the arrogance of Themistocles, and critics declared that his celebrated foresight—the only element of victory he could claim as truly his own—was stolen from others. Less than a decade after his triumph at Salamis he was ostracized from Athens. A few years later evidence was produced to show that his greatness entailed the greatest arrogance—he was linked with Pausanias in a conspiracy to betray Greece to Xerxes. True or not, the fate of Themistocles was a clear warning to any who aspired to the highest pinnacles of fame as a war-leader. The Athenians preferred to have Themistocles' *kudos* superseded by a more inclusive, less personalized vision of the greatness of Athens.[29]

Public celebrations of the defeat of Xerxes at Athens acknowledged no living individual above any other. Success was bestowed by divine favor on all Athenians alike. The first sea-battle in which Themistocles commanded the Athenians against the Persians was at Artemisium, and credit for destruction of enemy ships afterwards was given to Boreas, the north wind. Simonides wrote a choral song, possibly commissioned for the occasion of the dedication of the altar of Boreas, that told of Boreas' kinship with the Athenians: long ago the god had seized Oreithyia, a daughter of the Attic King Erechtheus, and had taken her to Thrace as his wife; he fathered two

sons on her, wind-spirits, and these had come to the aid of the Athenians before the battle of Artemisium. Mythical kinship thus suffused all Athenians with the glory of victory.[30]

Praise of the Athenians collectively was more direct in the poetry of Pindar, who, in a choral dithyramb commemorating the same battle at Artemisium, celebrated "the sons of Athens," who "laid the brilliant foundations of liberty." Likewise, the city itself was the object of effusive praise in another fragment of a dithyrambic chorus by Pindar, this time referring to the Athenian role at Salamis: "O glistening, violet-crowned, and renowned in song, the pillar of Greece, famed Athens, the divine city..." The verse had a long life in the popular memory, for it gave the Athenians an almost tangible foundation for their collective pride. Its phrases were used by suppliant ambassadors to Athens in later years, and, according to Aristophanes, had the effect of making the easily-flattered Athenians "sit up on tippy-butt at the mention of 'crowns'; and if someone were to call Athens 'glistening,' he'd get all he wanted just for saying 'glistening'—a better description for sardines than for a city." The Athenians enjoyed this notion that they were, collectively, crowned victors, and they favored especially those leaders who brought them this distinction without intruding themselves into the contest for honor.[31]

ENACTING THE IMMANENT PAST

God-favored leaders were essential to winning the god-given gift of victory. But, bowing to the force of political equality and growing democratic sentiment, Athenian commanders after Themistocles deferred such honors to heroes of legend. The icons of Athenian greatness had to become, like Harmodius and Aristogeiton, creatures of popular imagination.

Cimon son of Miltiades was a younger contemporary of Themistocles who began an illustrious career as a commander, in 476/5, leading Athenian forces in the north Aegean. On the borders of Thrace, by the mouth of the Strymon river, Cimon captured the town of Eion from Persian forces. Sometime later he added the island of Scyros to Athenian possessions after driving out the "pirates" who inhabited it. Cimon's popularity was assured when, obedient to an oracle, he was able to recover on Scyros the bones of Athens' greatest ancestral hero, Theseus. The miraculous discovery of the bones of Theseus and their conveyance to Athens gave Cimon's triumphs in the north Aegean a transcendental significance. The ancient king, champion of Attic unity and hero of labors in many lands, was back among his people. The event confirmed the transformation of Theseus into the king of democratic Athens. Under Cimon's auspices, Theseus' bones were installed in a shrine below the Acropolis, and art and song began a new stage in the celebration of Theseus.[32]

Out of this movement emerged several representations of Theseus as defender of Attic soil against barbarian invaders. The story of Theseus' defeat of the Amazons found wide expression and became closely linked in the Athenian mind with the triumphs of Athenians over the Persian invaders. The most memorable depiction of this union of myth and history that animated the bones of the hero was in the murals decorating the Painted Stoa in the Athenian Agora (map 4).[33]

Built a decade or more after the return of Cimon and Theseus, the Painted Stoa may have been the product of booty from one of Cimon's successful campaigns, though this is far from certain. It was originally known as the Peisianactian Stoa, after Peisianax, brother of Cimon's wife, suggesting that a connection with Cimon was popularly perceived. Two of the panels displayed on the walls of the stoa showed Theseus saving Attica from the Amazons, an earlier invasion of barbarians from the north, and Theseus rising from the underworld to fight in the forefront of the Athenians against the Persians at Marathon. Not only were Cimon's victories against barbarians in the north thus secured, in popular esteem, by a heroic patron, but so too were the deeds of his late father, Miltiades, the famed commander at Marathon in 490, whose career had previously been clouded by accusations of tyrannical pretensions.[34]

The heroic deeds of Theseus thus accounted for the remarkable deeds of the recent past by showing how recent deeds conformed to an ancient paradigm. More than this, they also established the moral framework for the unfolding of Athenian destiny. For the events of Cimon's day were radically transforming the familiar universe of Athenian politics from the realms of Athens and Attica to the wider realm of the Greek and non-Greek peoples of the Aegean and beyond. There must have been many among the Athenians, as evidently there were among the Spartans, who felt anxious or uncertain about their rightful role in this wider universe. Depictions of the outrageous deeds of the barbarians, whether they were Persians or Amazons, or, as elsewhere, centaurs or Trojans, gave the Athenians the moral incentive to wage war against outrageous aggressors. Song, ceremony, and art made them mindful of the need to live up to the deeds of their mythic ancestors.[35]

The same blends of historical and mythical paradigms were still more subtly woven in contemporary tragedy. In the spring of 472, Aeschylus' *Persians* was performed in a trilogy produced by Pericles son of Xanthippus, another politically ambitious young man of a distinguished family. The *Persians* represents an updated perspective on the story of the victory at Salamis told four years previously in Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women,* when Themistocles was at the apogee of his fame. Aeschylus' *Persians,* produced at about the time when Themistocles was ostracized, encouraged Athenians to see their deeds as their own, and not the gift of a uniquely talented man, as Phrynichus may have suggested. We can be more confident about another aspect

of Aeschylus' play that could not have been so strongly present in Phrynichus' at its earlier date. Aeschylus' play depicted Athens as due heir to the dominion in Thrace and Asia Minor, and even among Ionian Greeks, previously held by Xerxes but lost through his folly and arrogance.[36]

The play opens with the appraisal, by the Persian elders, of the likely course of events in faraway Greece. Given the best of preparations by King Xerxes, enumerated in detail, reason gives them confidence in victory (lines 65–106). But the outcome remains uncertain. Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, is troubled by foreboding dreams and questions the elders about Athens, the object of her son's vengeance. Because of her high standing, her misgivings must be taken seriously. After proposing ritual responses, the elders begin to concede that the evidence of past encounters with the Athenians does not justify so confident a forecast. A messenger arrives with news of the disaster, told in convincing detail. Knowing now that her foreboding was divinely guided, Atossa consults the ghost of her dead husband, Darius, to learn the cause of this disaster, where blame lies, and what can be done. Xerxes is the sole bearer of blame, but as king he is irreproachable before his subjects. At last Xerxes himself arrives, to verify in person the report that has already come. He can offer no consolation, but can only confirm in grim detail the magnitude of the losses and formally commence the lamentations that are the only response possible for the Persians.[37]

Thus, in outline, the play tells the story of the a monarch's overweening pride and his great failure when confronted by the defenders of freedom. But in telling this story, Aeschylus provided the Athenians with more than a cautionary tale about empire or the pleasures of seeing the misery of one's foes. The catastrophe, portended in dreams, foreseen from the past, described by living messenger, explained by the ghost of Darius, and verified by Xerxes himself, conveyed by growing stages a powerful message of affirmation for its Athenian audience. The "hateful memory of Athens" (286–87) was in fact the enactment of the memorable glory of Athens. For the inverse of the Persian catastrophe was the destined path of Athenian greatness.[38]

The complete defeat ("as by a single blow," line 251) of Xerxes and the Persian host is attributed to a sequence of agents beginning with Salamis and Athens (lines 284–86), to the gods and men of Athens (lines 345–54), and to Greeks generally (lines 402–405), and finally to the agency of the Ionian Greeks in particular (lines 562, 950–54, 1011, 1025). Throughout the play, the element of Athenian might, the sea, is the element in which the Persians meet death (lines 274–77, 302–481), especially as divine punishment for daring to enslave the sea by laying chains across the Hellespont (lines 722–24, 744–50, cf. 905–906). The role of "the Dorian spear," i.e. the Spartan-led infantry, in completing the destruction of Persian forces at Plataea is noticed (lines 796–820), but it is Athens above all (lines 474–75, 823–26, 975–77) that deals this cataclysmic turn of fate to the Persians.[39]

The play envisions a seamless, even simultaneous continuity between the battle of Salamis in 480 and the expansion of the Athenian maritime alliance of Ionian states, the Delian League, created in 478/7. The victory at Salamis was won by Ionian hands (line 562), was the work of Ionian Ares (lines 950–54), and was within view of Athens (lines 975–77). Athens is at once the champion of Ionian liberty (lines 584–97) and heir to the dominion, previously given willingly to Persia, of the Thracian and Ionian coastlands of the Aegean, and of islands as far as Cyprus, with its significantly homonymous city, Salamis (lines 852–906). In the same way that the fate of Miletus depicted earlier by Phrynichus was "their own suffering," the Ionian deeds recounted in the play by Xerxes were one and the same with the deeds of Athens. Aeschylus perhaps takes advantage of the fact that "Ionia" *(Yauna)* is the Persian name for "Greece." The words of the Persians themselves, then, grant authority to the Athenian vision of themselves as the chief seat of all Ionians and the proper agent for Ionian vengeance. This vision was only possible after 476, when the Ionian states led by Athens had begun to "plunder the land of the king in retribution for what they had suffered," as Thucydides later described the purpose of the League. According to Aeschylus' play, the Athenian empire was born, like Athena from the head of Zeus, in the moment of triumph at Salamis.[40]

The *Persians* was the middle play of the trilogy staged by Aeschylus and Pericles in 472. The first was *Phineus,* the third *Glaucus at Potniae,* of which nothing but a few lines survive. With little direct evidence to go on, modern commentators have been reluctant to see any programmatic connection between the *Persians,* a "historical" play, and the other two, dealing with mythological themes. But enough is known of their subjects to make it likely that the vision of destiny created out of the recent past at Salamis in the *Persians* was complemented in mythical teleologies in the other two plays, and that the coherence of the three tragedies was such that the *Phineus* alluded to the earlier battle at Artemisium, in 480, and, in a rather different manner, the *Glaucus at Potniae* alluded to the later land battle at Plataea, in 479.[41]

Phineus was a king of Thrace who married a daughter of Boreas and Oreithyia. Like the god of the north wind himself, Phineus was thus a kinsman of the Athenians. He had offended the gods by blinding his sons from this marriage, and was himself punished by being blinded and by having his food constantly stolen by harpies. Despite his crime, in what must be the crux of Aeschylus' tragedy, Phineus was delivered from the harpies by his brothers-in-law, the sons of Boreas. These same Boreads, grandsons of Erechtheus, were the wind-spirits praised in the hymn on the battle of Artemisium by Simonides, a hymn that was sung often afterwards, on the occasion of the festival of Athena, as an invocation of the winds to accompany the Panathenaic ship in its procession to the Acropolis.[42]

Like Theseus, the Boreads were miraculous comrades-in-arms of the Athenians against the Persians. In addition, as denizens of Thrace and merciful deliverers of Phineus, they served to establish for the Athenians an ancestral claim to dominion in the north. Simonides had located their birth on "the Sarpedonian rock," a promontory of the eastern Aegean coast of Thrace. Pindar, in a poem composed a decade after Aeschylus' play and probably reflecting its allusions, gives their home as mount Pangaeum, overlooking the Strymon river in western Thrace. This was gold-mining territory, a region that attracted Athenian settlers following Cimon's capture of Eion on the Strymon in 475, and that caused the outbreak of war with Thasos a decade later. Like the Ionian empire of the *Persians,* Aeschylus' *Phineus* revealed Athenian dominion in Thrace to be a working out of a destiny beyond the ken of any mortal Athenian leader.[43]

Glaucus at Potniae dwelt on a story not so popular in later tradition, but sufficiently clear in its main features to see that it illustrated the tragic consequences of overweening pride, this time among Greeks. Glaucus was the son of Sisyphus and king of Corinth, who fancied winning the greatest honors among the heroes of his day, Heracles, Jason, and the Argonauts among them, in the chariot race at the funeral games of King Pelias at Iolcus. Pelias' son Acastus had invited the heroes of Greece to prove themselves in contests that, according to one version of the story, inspired an oath of unity and the foundation of the Olympic games. Glaucus had incurred the anger of Zeus, however, possibly for his practice of feeding his horses on human flesh, as a measure, perhaps, to give them supernatural strength. He pastured his horses at Potniae, near Thebes in Boeotia, and there divine retribution led his horses to drink from a spring, or to eat poisonous grass, that would drive them mad. In the race at Iolcus, his team threw Glaucus from the chariot, tore him to pieces, and ate him.[44]

The contest at Iolcus and, if it was in Aeschylus' tale, the pledge taken by the heroes united there alluded to the battle of Plataea and the pledge of unity made among the Greeks before it. Glaucus' fate was an allegory for the foredoomed pride of the Peloponnesian leaders at the battle of Plataea. The fields of the Asopos where the battle was fought were the pasture-lands of Glaucus' horses; the spring at Potniae, a little south of Thebes, was the chief spring in the area of the great Persian camp, on the north bank of the Asopos. Stories of its power to inspire madness must have led the Greeks to hope for beforehand, or to see afterward, a similar divine hand working on Mardonius, general of the Persians, or perhaps Masistius, his cavalry commander. Most of all, however, this allegory was meant to remind Aeschylus' audience of the hubristic pride of other Greeks.[45]

First among these were the Corinthians, "the countrymen of Glaucus," as they were named in Simonides' elegy on the battle of Plataea. Although Simonides had praised the Corinthians for bravery at Plataea, the Athenians

favored the account later reported by Herodotus, that the Corinthians had fled the battle in panic. Whatever the reasons for this Corinthian-Athenian animosity may have been, it was clearly latent in 472, for within a decade after Aeschylus' play the two states were at war in the first open manifestation of what Thucydides called "the great hatred" of Corinth for Athens.[46]

The most famous example of overweening pride at the battle of Plataea, however, was Pausanias, the Spartan commander-in-chief of the Greek allies. Within a year or two of the battle of Plataea, Pausanias had been censured for a tactless victory dedication, and had been recalled to Sparta from his command at Byzantium after protests against his behavior by the Athenians and Ionians. He was later reinstated at Byzantium, but again fell afoul of his Greek allies. By 472 Pausanias was probably in the midst of the scandal that would lead to his condemnation for collaboration with the Persians.[47]

In sum, Aeschylus' tragic trilogy of 472 depicted the predestined success of Athens in struggles that brought others low. The *Phineus* showed the justice of Athenian claims to the Thracian coast of the north Aegean. The *Persians* showed the Athenians as the rightful protectors of Greek freedom violated by Xerxes. And the *Glaucus at Potniae* showed the rot at the core of rival claims to leadership among the Greeks. Where Glaucus' lust for glory literally consumed him, in the hippodrome of Iolcus, the champions from Attica won fair prizes. For Aeschylus almost certainly capped the trilogy by portraying the victories at Iolcus that legend attributed to the Boreads.[48]

Aeschylus' trilogy was itself crowned with the victor's prize in 472. Like the several murals on the walls of the Painted Stoa, the shrine of Theseus, and other Athenian monuments of the middle decades of the fifth century, Aeschylus' trilogy played creatively with an array of stories that all served to affirm the "rightness" of Athenian goals. The empire that was to be the product of their labors was not yet perceived as such, even though some of the acts of conquest and retribution that Thucydides later described as the beginnings of empire had already taken place. But its domain, and their rightful claim to be its champion, were clearly laid out in Aeschylus' trilogy. The persuasiveness and pervasiveness of these affirmations of purpose, in story and in art, created the ethical climate in which democratic institutions could sustain the creation of an empire. For these were the underpinnings of the famous Athenian daring, a distinctive and, to many, a disturbing characteristic, spoken of by Athenians and non-Athenians by the time of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.[49]

PERFORMANCE AND PUBLIC

Aeschylus' *Persians* is unique among surviving examples of Greek tragedy in being a "historical" play. Yet, as the foregoing illustrates, plays that dealt only in characters of myth were equally charged with "historical" meanings,

in the sense that all provided cogent instruction based on "events" of the past. All manner of performance poetry, whether tragic drama, dithyrambic chorus, elegy, or victory hymn, constructed significance around the moment of performance. In that moment, through the transport of Dionysian make-believe, past events from myth or recent memory are made to converge on the audience, creating a vivid impression of meanings coming from beyond the boundaries of normal experience. The living Persian king, or his dead predecessor, an ancestral hero, or even a god, speak before the audience and inform them of causes and purposes that shape their present moment and orient them toward the future.[50]

The past is thus, in a sense, timeless, and the eternal present is everything, always carrying with it the significance of the past. From this perspective, events of the past are not evaluated from the standpoint of the figures of the past except insofar as they might be identical with the interests of the present. So, for example, it mattered not a bit to the spectators of the first Dionysian dithyrambs praising Harmodius and Aristogeiton that these assassins of Hipparchus had neither the intention nor the effect of creating a new political order. The meaning of their act was an artifact of popular perception, shaped by the needs of the moment. In 510 the Athenian public demanded a symbol of autonomous self-determination, and found in the deed of these two men the supreme rejection of tyrannical autocracy.[51]

The Athenian public was thus no passive audience, but participated in shaping the messages that it witnessed and celebrated. The regulation of dramatic and choral performances on their appointed occasions in the city's religious calendar was a civic responsibility of the highest priority for the archons of Athens, customary already in the time of the Peisistratids and evolving without interruption with the festival institutions of the new democracy. The chief Athenian magistrate, the eponymous archon, was regularly charged with the annual selection of poets and producers to sponsor the choruses and dramas that would be staged in the city's festivals. The archon thus served as the primary mediator between art and public sentiment, and in democratic Athens he was accountable to the public.[52]

The authority of public sentiment is clearest in the case of Phrynichus. His bold experiment in the *Sack of Miletus* demonstrated the power of his art over the emotions of his audience, but his civic audience in turn made it clear that he had abused the privilege of his unanswered theatrical monologue. Later dramatists regularly chided or guided their audience and its political spokesmen. But, except when comedy pressed this role to its limits, dramatists did so indirectly, through archetypal examples, and never again confronted the audience with "their own" tragedy. The practice of screening dramatic productions, in the *proagon,* before they were enacted in public, may have emerged as a consequence of Phrynichus' experience, adding another level of public accountability.[53]

Dramatic and dithyrambic performances at Athens were prize-bearing competitions, adding a further level to the influence of public approval. The Great Dionysia, the oldest and most prestigious of the dramatic and dithyrambic festivals at Athens, was the most important ceremony of self-representation for the Athenians, both to themselves and to foreigners, whether they were resident aliens, visitors, or official emissaries. By the mid-fifth century the Athenians were using this occasion, in the spring of each year, to display Athenian prowess in the form of the tribute collected from their allies, and in the parade of the sons of Athenian war-dead, trained and armed at state expense. These proofs of sacrifice, piety, and power, together with the splendor of the performances themselves and the crowns awarded to the victors, put all in mind of the divine favor that graced this Athenian convocation.[54]

Immediately after the dramatic contests the Athenians held an assembly both to review the conduct of the festival and to transact public business befitting this moment of heightened civic pride. In times of war this was a most portentous time of year, for the sailing season was just beginning, and decisions would be made then that would determine the objectives of that year's expeditionary forces. So, on one such occasion, more than dramatic plot prompted the invocation of Athena's protection for the alliance between Athens and Argos, for friends in Egypt, and for partners in Thessaly, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides,* the last tragedy of his trilogy of 458. Athenians were fighting in Egypt, and later that summer they would rely on Argives and Thessalians to aid them in battle at Tanagra against the Spartans and Boeotians. A generation later, the assembly after the Dionysia was the occasion when the Athenians formalized agreements with Spartan ambassadors, whose presence in Athens through the festival will have been required in order that proposed terms could be drafted in council beforehand. By so inviting the muses of poetry to speak on their behalf, the Athenians could hardly have contrived a more effective manner of imbuing political transactions of the highest importance with inspired expressions of their civic ideals. Its effects are apparent in several aspects of the overlapping spheres of poetry and politics.[55]

Drama and politics involved persuasive performances before much the same audiences. The language of the theater, both in style and in content, could influence political oratory, and the opposite influence is likely too. Ion of Chios described Cimon's public demeanor as "muse-inspired . . . like a dramatic production." His meaning was that, in addition to the gravity of the tragedies, Cimon also possessed a touch of levity, like the satyric play that capped a poet's presentation. Pericles, on the other hand, was more serious and profound, his words like "awesome thunderbolts delivered by his tongue," and he himself was dubbed "Olympian" by comic playwrights poking fun at this image. Pericles' reputation in this regard calls to mind that

of Aeschylus, who won Aristophanes' nostalgic contest of poets in the *Frogs* by demonstrating how "mighty thoughts and designs must give birth to appropriate words; the language of demigods is rightly more lofty." Prominent or aspiring political figures were occasionally dramatic sponsors, as noted above, and vice-versa. Sophocles was elected *hellenotamias,* one of the curators of the tribute collected by the Athenians, and later he was one of the ten Athenian generals during the Samian War of 440–39.[56]

Those who approached the Athenian *demos* on the occasion of the Dionysia, treating as allies or as foemen, were also affected by the experience. In the later 420s, ambassadors from Catana in Sicily came to Athens to appeal to the Athenians to send back to them the military force that had recently been withdrawn. Justin describes their appeal:

> The ambassadors appeared before the assembly in mourning: filthy clothes, unkempt hair and beards, and a generally miserable appearance designed to excite pity. Tears accompanied their entreaties, and such was the compassion they aroused in the people by their appeals that a motion was passed condemning the generals who had withdrawn the reinforcements from them.[57]

The Catanians were clearly employing devices familiar to the stagecraft of Euripides to win boons from the same audience that was fascinated by the pathetic realism of that playwright. And if Euripides was not often awarded first prize himself by the Athenians, his reputation is said to have done them inestimable service. For some of the Athenian captives at Syracuse, after 413, are said to have been spared

> for the sake of Euripides. For the Sicilians, it would seem, more than any other Hellenes outside the home land, had a yearning and fondness for his poetry. . . . [Some Athenians reported that] they had been set free from slavery for rehearsing what they remembered of his works; and some that when they were roaming about after the final battle they had received food and drink for singing some of his choral hymns. . . .[58]

Plutarch, who recounts these stories, elsewhere reports that all Athenians owed Euripides a greater debt of gratitude shortly after the poet's death. When the Spartans and their allies were deliberating over the fate of Athens, after her surrender in 404,

> Some say that in very truth a proposition to sell the Athenians into slavery was actually made in the assembly of the allies. . . . Afterwards, however, when the leaders were gathered at a banquet, and a certain Phocian sang the first chorus in the "Electra" of Euripides . . . all were moved to compassion and felt it to be a cruel deed to abolish and destroy a city which was so famous, and produced such poets.[59]

We may doubt, as will be discussed later, that the fate of Athens hung by so delicate a thread, but there is no reason to doubt the tribute to the wide

impact of Euripides' dramatic poetry. For at the end of a century of poets striving to show Athenians their destiny in the world beyond Athens, Euripides had succeeded in making part, at least, of that world treat Athens as its own. The theater of Dionysus was Athens' heart.[60]

THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

Outside of deliberative assemblies and the theater, extended orations to the Athenians regularly took place on one further occasion, at the end of the ceremonies commemorating the Athenian war-dead. Perhaps inspired by the return of the bones of Theseus to Athens in 475, the Athenians adopted the practice of conveying back to Athens the cremated remains of those killed in battle for a communal funeral outside the Dipylon gates, along the road to the grove of the hero, Hecademus (later Plato's Academy). Thucydides described the practice as the customary treatment of all Athenian war-dead, except for those who died at Marathon, whose special honor deserved a burial monument on the battlefield. As scholars have noted, however, burial on the field of battle was a well-established custom, and the Athenian ceremony of conveyance to a common grave outside of Athens was the innovation. Not until after Xerxes' invasion would the Athenians have realized that the rapidly widening field of war required them to make explicit decisions about how and where they would conduct their observances of those who had fallen in battle abroad for Athens. Their conveyance back to Athens was a powerful reminder of the links that bound Athenians to those battlegrounds across the seas.[61]

The funeral itself was a further demonstration of civic identity being transformed by the institutions of democracy and nascent empire. The cremated remains of the fallen were brought to their common gravesite in communal coffins, one for each of the ten Attic tribes. Individual identities were thus physically subsumed by group identities within the structures of Athenian citizenship. Individuals were named on the monument erected over their grave, but without further indication of patronym or family affiliation. The names of the dead, grouped by tribe, were listed under a heading typically in the form: "Of the Athenians, the following died at. . . . " Aside from noting the ranks of officers, few further distinctions were made among the names listed, but the exceptions are revealing. The occurrence of subheadings for "barbarian archers" and, in one instance, "servants," as well individuals identified by non-Attic ethnics, suggests that these honors for supreme sacrifice in service of Athens were deemed appropriate for the construction of a wider definition of "Athenians" than the group of individuals who, in practice, exercised the rights of citizenship. The indications of inclusiveness represented in the surviving fragments of these lists, however, are inconsistent. It is likely that what was deemed appropriate, over

the several decades covered by these lists, varied as much among the Athenians as it has among the modern scholars commenting on them.[62]

Appropriating for itself a share of the observances due from the families of the deceased, the state thus solemnified its unity as a supra-kinship group, embracing in equal honor wealthy and poor, citizens and foreigners, free men and even slaves—all, by meeting death in battle, as glorious Athenians. This was the preeminent moment for a eulogy of Athens and her greater domain, and the task was assigned by the Athenian Council "to a man," Thucydides says, "who is considered not to be lacking in intellectual distinction, and who enjoys an excellent reputation." Among those reported to have been selected for this honor was Gorgias of Leontini, a non-Athenian, but one known to have been widely admired at Athens for his oratory. Although scholars have denied that foreigners could deliver the eulogy over the war-dead of Athens, the ancient testimony points the other way. Nothing, in fact, could confirm the eminence of Athens in the world better than to have their heroes eulogized by distinguished foreigners. Like the occasions for dramatic and choral poetry, when foreign and Athenian poets alike competed, the institution of the funeral oration was a central one in articulating the image of an Atheno-centric universe.[63]

Plato, in the character of Socrates, describes the effects of this institutionalized "praise of Athenians to Athenians" in humorous but not insincere terms:

> In every conceivable form they praise the city, and they praise those who died in war, and all our ancestors who went before us, and they praise ourselves who are still alive, until I feel quite elevated by their laudations, and I stand listening to their words, Menexenus, and I become enchanted by them, and all in a moment I imagine myself to have become a greater and nobler and finer man than I was before. And if, as often happens, there are any foreigners who accompany me to the speech, I become conscious of having a sort of triumph over them, and they seem to experience a corresponding feeling of admiration at me, and at the greatness of the city, which appears to them, when they are under the influence of the speaker, more wonderful than ever. This consciousness of dignity lasts me more than three days, and not until the fourth or fifth day do I come to my senses and know where I am—in the meantime I have been living in the Islands of the Blessed. Such is the art of our rhetoricians, and in such manner does the sound of their words keep ringing in my ears.

Plato singles out Pericles as the most memorable of speakers on these occasions. But given the conventional nature of these addresses, he goes on to point out, even pupils of inferior instructors in rhetoric and in music could do a creditable job.[64]

Like tragic drama, the funeral oration was a vehicle for conveying a sense of purpose from out of the past to the present moment—in this case an occasion for real grief, fear, and uncertainty. To be effective in this context, the

Athenian past had to be reduced to a limited set of recognized, repeatedly enacted, and therefore inexorable themes: Athens stood for fairness and equality; in the name of these goals it championed the weak against the oppression of the strong; its mission, like its people, was aboriginal, and this divinely sanctioned link to native land was not to be broken by any invader, nor supplanted by allegiance to any authority other than to the time-honored customs and laws of Athens. These goals justified the ultimate sacrifice of its citizens and of their allies in battle, and this sacrifice in turn justified the heroic honors paid, collectively, to those who had fallen in the continuing struggle to achieve Athens' mission. Speakers could choose to give greater or lesser emphasis to any of these themes, but nearly all of them are represented in each of the Athenian funeral orations that survive. The orations were thus, in part, reviews of the Athenian past, but as such they were rather unreliable guides to Athenian history. For funeral orations were bound to elide the particularities of past events into equal steps in the same monumental stairway.[65]

One of the most peculiar effects of this tendency, from our perspective, is the claim that the funeral oration itself was sanctioned by a *patrios nomos,* which can be translated either as "ancestral law" or as "ancestral custom." All accounts touching the history of this practice, including Plato's example in the *Menexenus,* acknowledge that the interment and commemoration of war-dead at Athens was a new institution, established after the invasion of Xerxes, and belonging to the era of widening Athenian involvement in warfare far beyond the confines of Attica. It was, in other words, a feature of the emergent Athenian empire and of the democracy of the Cimonian and Periclean era. In what sense could such a recent institution be described as "ancestral"?

The answer lies in the knack of the Athenian myth-historical imagination (not, to be sure, a uniquely Athenian gift) for investing innovation with the dignity of ancient tradition, as illustrated in the examples of Theseus and the Boreads, in which legendary precedents were found for emergent concerns. In the case of the return of the war-dead to Attica, the charter myth was the story told by Aeschylus in the *Eleusinians,* later retold by, among others, Euripides in the *Suppliant Women:* the Athenians of yore had been the protagonists of a Greek custom, a *Hellenikos nomos,* also called an unwritten statute of the gods, in championing the recovery of the fallen Argives from before the gates of Thebes and giving them an honorable burial in Attica. From this seminal act the Athenians would ever afterward uphold the supreme obligation to honor their *own* fallen, in victory or defeat, by recovering them and returning them to Attic soil. The founder of this practice was, of course, Theseus.[66]

EVERYMAN'S PAST

Athenian civic life was rich with images of the past and references to memorable events, both distant and recent. But in order to comprehend the di-

verse realities of past experience and their polysemantic potentials for the future, the focus on the past in public monument and memorial was always extremely diffuse. From the century before the Peloponnesian War only three events emerge as truly distinct landmarks in this haze: the overthrow of the Peisistratid tyranny, the battle of Marathon, and the battle of Salamis. These were often recalled as unique and transformative events, defining forever the beginning of a new era—but only inasmuch as they were fresh proofs of the revival of ancient Athenian virtues. In making durable icons of these episodes, as we have seen, even the recent past was quickly simplified.[67]

Other events were recorded in word and monument with even less attention to detail, circumstances, and individuals. Victories of the post-Peisistratid democracy, over Greeks and barbarians alike, were celebrated in almost generic terms. The deeds of the victors were analogous to those of ancient heroes—Menestheus and the Athenians fighting at Troy, according to one monument—and thus Athens' contemporary champions were assimilated to an ideal of heroism that was both communal and eternal, and an ideal that every generation could strive to replicate.[68]

An instructive instance is found in the defeat of the Boeotians and Chalcidians a few years after the expulsion of the tyrants, commemorated by trophies and a brief epigram displayed on the Acropolis. Herodotus describes this episode, mentions the monuments, and recites the epigram. Archaeological discoveries have shown that the inscribed base seen by Herodotus was a second monument, erected roughly half a century after the original, which had presumably been damaged by the Persians. Replicating, with only slight variations, the original dedication, this second monument was probably prompted by one of the occasions, near the middle of the fifth century, when the Athenians were again fighting Boeotians and Euboeans. Herodotus' account of the late sixth-century victory, moreover, reads like an excerpt from an Athenian funeral oration, with its catalogue of past conflicts, and its summation in a eulogy of the merits of freedom from tyranny; it is tempting to believe that his account—our only narrative source to describe these events—derived from just such a retrospective oration at the end of another year of battle with the same foes.[69]

The obscurity of the contemporary referent was often deliberate even in the case of memorials to recognized events. So, anonymous monuments commemorated Athenian victories over the Persians at Eion in Thrace, at the Eurymedon River in Pamphylia, and in Cyprus, and over the Spartans at Oenoe in the Argolid. None of these monuments, in verse on stone or, in the last case, a scene depicted in the Painted Stoa, bore the name of a contemporary Athenian or any indication of date. As a result, the exact chronology of *all* of these events remains uncertain now as it already was in Thucydides' day, at the end of the fifth century. Only Cimon's personal celebrity rescued his role in the victories at Eion, Eurymedon, and Cyprus

from obscurity. The battle of Oenoe, on the other hand, can be connected with no known individuals, and only conjecturally related to other events. It would be completely unknown to us were it not for Pausanias' description of the painting at Athens and notice of a related Argive monument at Delphi.[70]

As these examples illustrate, monuments and orations sponsored by the Athenian democracy had no need for chronology, avoided exaltation of individuals, and offered no explanation of events beyond affirming irreproachable qualities of excellence. Within a past viewed in such terms, the difference between recent "historical" events and those of the mythic past was meaningless. As much as recent events embodied a heightened sense of truth because they were within the living memory of many, such truth was problematic, because recent events had many implications and had been variously experienced. The more distant past was more useful for civic ideology because it had long been thoroughly processed into simpler, more widely-recognized truths about the past. Public poetry, and especially drama, was created out of the rich semantic opportunities that lay between a community involved in complex contemporary experiences and their "known" past. Public oration, especially funerary eulogies, began the process of rendering recent, often powerfully affective events into a sensible part of the "known" past that the community could henceforth carry with it.

One feature of the communal construction of recent events deserved specific record. This was the geography of exploits, of victories, and of death in battle. Commemoration of the geography of events established an eminent domain of the Athenians over other lands. Similarly, the record of the native origins of those who joined Athenians in the exploits, victories, and in death, demonstrated that the impetus to contribute to the Athenian destiny transcended the boundaries of citizenship. We may call such commemorations imperialist, and demonstrations of empire, but to do so casts a historicizing eye over them that was not appropriate to their moments of creation. For the Athenians were constructing a view of their place in the world that was not finite and bounded, but open to new potentials. Although in documents of practical record terms like "the allies," or "the cities," or eventually "the subjects" and even "the cities that the Athenians control" gave definition to their empire, in commemorative rhetoric as in drama, such concrete terms were rarely admitted.[71]

The past told in this manner produced a meaningful account, but one whose meaning was completely subjective, and was constantly retold to sustain the process of integrating present experience with the past. It was meaningful especially because it served the purpose of renewing, for each generation, the prototypes of civic devotion, and for recording the territorial landmarks of Athenian endeavor that each generation should strive to

maintain or exceed. It is probably the case, and may be stated here as a hypothesis, that a radically different way of rendering meaning out of the past emerged only as it began to become apparent that the eminent domain of Athens was not limitless.

WITNESSES TO THE PAST

Until Herodotus completed his history of the Persian Wars, no earlier than the 420s, there was no account of the recent past of Athens apart from the essentially oral traditions of public history as they were conventionally constructed and popularly construed. The need that Herodotus felt to present an account of the Persian Wars, "lest events fade through time from human memory," was just as urgent for the half-century between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars. Thucydides expresses outright pessimism when confronting the poverty of information available to him about the era of his own youth when he remarks, at the beginning of his history, that "it was impossible, because of the passage of time, to find out accurately about events before [the Peloponnesian War]. . . ." In different ways, Thucydides and Herodotus both drew attention to the subjective and shifting quality of knowledge about the past prior to their accounts. Their viewpoint in this regard was widely shared within the intellectual community that made Athens its crossroads in the last third of the fifth century.[72]

When Herodotus' work appeared, Thucydides was also writing on some aspect of the war then underway between Athens and Sparta. Hellanicus of Lesbos, among other works, compiled a chronicle of Athenian, or properly, Attic events, from the mythical past to his own day, that appeared shortly before Thucydides put his account in order, after the end of the war in 404. In addition to these works, and all roughly within the span of 430–400, the list of Athenian eponymous archons was published in an inscription giving names starting in 683/2; Hippias of Elis compiled the list of Olympic victors that began in 776; Antiochus of Syracuse wrote about southern Italy and Sicily from early times to his day; Glaucus of Rhegium composed his *On the Ancient Poets and Musicians,* comparing the artistry and establishing the chronologies of poets from the early seventh century until at least the time of Phrynichus and Aeschylus; and works of erudition on comparable subjects were produced by Ion of Chios, Stesimbrotos of Thasos, Damastes of Sigeum, and Charon of Lampsacus, as well as others who are known to us for the most part only from passing references to their works.[73]

Posterity has affirmed that the achievements of Herodotus and Thucydides stand far above the rest in this crowd, but the point of interest here is that there was a *crowd.* While not all might deserve, retrospectively, to be called historians, they were all busy converting their research and wide learning about the past into prose treatises, and were doing so at very close

to the same time. There were forerunners, such as Hecataeus of Miletus and Pherecydes of Syros. But there is no indication that their earlier works inspired the great *proliferation* of writings about the past that took place in the late fifth century. And no forerunners can explain Herodotus' and Thucydides' transformation of the critical inquiry into the past through their focus on recent events.[74]

From amidst this gathering crowd, Herodotus introduced a work that promised the familiar and produced something profoundly different from other chronicles of the past. Herodotus presented his account of the Persian Wars, he announces at the head of his work, "lest events fade through time from human memory, and lest great and amazing deeds displayed both by Greeks and by barbarians should lose their glory, and especially to show the reason why they fought one another." Herodotus' first phrases echo the formulae of epigrammatic monuments that stand before their viewers as durable reminders of the glory of those honored. Like the praise of victory-songs, the lists of genealogists, and the chronicles of landmark events in a community's past, these displays do not explain, they only affirm. For affirmation of an ancient pattern, like that given in a funeral oration, is sufficient reason in itself. Herodotus' last phrase, on the other hand, evokes the milieu of ancient epic and contemporary tragedy, for only there were stories told to explain *why* things happened.

Here lay the remarkable vision of Herodotus. For deeds celebrated in praise and eulogy were the tokens of immortality, born of the hope that some essential and infallible quality, be it *kudos* or *kleos* (both "glory") or *arete* ("excellence"), would inhere in the deeds of an individual or a community, however fallible and mortal they otherwise were. Their message to posterity was a summons to perpetuate their memory and to strive to surpass them. But tragedy had another message. The stories of tragic drama gripped the imagination precisely because they showed how elusive these tokens were, and how evanescent they could become as great men and women found themselves crushed by a fate larger than they had comprehended.[75]

The implications of tragedy were the opposite of eulogy. The Athenians were able to cultivate both to so high a degree only because, after Phrynichus' unsettling experience, they firmly maintained the boundary between "*our* inexorable destiny" and "the unforeseen fate of *others*." The fate of others, to be sure, was always at some level an allegorical warning to the audience that they should not thus mistake the tokens of their own doom. This added to the appeal of tragedy, for it excited a sense of danger to a highly emotional pitch. But that experience was tolerable through the release the audience could seek in the knowledge that this doom was not, in fact, their own.

Herodotus knew well the lesson of Phrynichus, since he is our source for the story. He knew well, too, the importance of the events Phrynichus had

enacted in his *Sack of Miletus,* since they had been the consequence of "the beginning of evils for Greeks and barbarians," namely, the support of the Ionian revolt by Athens and Eretria. And that event, in turn, had been the consequence of the Athenians' accepting and acting upon a vision of their own destiny, as fatherland of Ionians, presented to them by Aristagoras of Miletus. Herodotus tacitly reminded his audience that the doom of Miletus, so fearful to the Athenians, was later visited upon Athens itself, sacked by Xerxes. Xerxes in turn had been humbled, at least in Greek eyes, and the story of these wars achieved a sort of closure following the final defeat of his army of invasion.[76]

But the story went on, as Aeschylus had portrayed it in the *Persians,* with the Athenians rightfully inheriting part of his former dominion. Tragedy brought out the unexpected in events in part by choosing different points in time to mark the beginning and the ending of a tale. The importance of this device of tragedy to Herodotus' story is brought out from his opening narrative of the fate of Croesus. Starting with this thematic precedent, his *Histories* are replete with stories of how the mighty had mistaken the warnings of their doom for the tokens of their destiny. We must ask, therefore: before an Athenian audience in the 420s and 410s, could Herodotus' tale of empire and its limits be taken as the tale of the fate of others and not *also* as a vivid warning about their own? In what sense had "the beginning of evils for Greeks and barbarians" reached fulfillment? For as of 431, the Athenians were at the center of "the greatest disturbance in the history of the Hellenes," as Thucydides described it, "affecting also a large part of the barbarian world, and indeed, I might almost say, the whole of mankind." In such a context, the Greeks, and especially the Athenians, could not seek release from the warnings implicit in the tragic structures of Herodotus' *Histories* because the events he told were, in fact, their own. This inescapable tension must underlie the anecdote that Thucydides cried when he heard a reading of Herodotus' *Histories.*[77]

The tears of Thucydides are emblematic of what Herodotus must surely have intended in writing the *Histories*—to reflect on the dangers inherent in the power enjoyed by Athens in the 420s and early 410s. There is universal recognition that Herodotus finished his work no earlier than the 420s, but the question of how long his work had been in preparation and when his "publication" is to be placed are contested. I align myself with those who see the work as a whole to be the product of a life of learning but no more than a few years of composition. Passages at 6.98 and 9.73 indicate that the reign of Artaxerxes I (464–424) and the Spartan invasions of 431–425 had both come to an end by the time these passages were written. Herodotus wrote, I would argue, in view of the great swings of emotion and reason that prevailed at Athens after 425, when peace with Sparta was foreseeable, possibly even in hand, but its implications for the destiny of Athens were still hotly contested.[78]

Thucydides provides our most important insights into the nature of opinion at Athens from the victory of Cleon at Pylos in 425 to the death of Cleon at Amphipolis in 422. Among other passages, the tenor of public sentiment at Athens in this era is portrayed at a significant juncture in the narrative of Thucydides, in the summer of 424. In that summer, the Peace of Gela settled war among Sicilian states and led to the withdrawal of an Athenian force from Sicily. The generals responsible for the withdrawal, however, were thereafter placed on trial and banished or fined for having neglected to exploit opportunities to the best interests of the Athenians (the same event recalled in the passage from Justin, quoted above, page 35). Thucydides comments:

> Such was the effect on the Athenians of their present good fortune that they thought that nothing could go wrong with them; that the possible and the difficult were alike attainable, whether the forces employed were large or wholly inadequate. It was their surprising success in most directions which caused this state of mind and suggested to them that their strength was equal with their hopes.

This, I believe, was the audience to which Herodotus directed his moral, delivered to King Croesus from the mouth of the Athenian sage, Solon: "Look to the end, no matter what it is you are considering. Often enough God gives a man a glimpse of happiness, and then utterly ruins him."[79]

The past animated public policy, and Athens of all places had the most numerous and well established of institutions for reenacting the past before a wide public. Under the Athenian democracy, especially from the era of Pericles on, Athens had the most developed institutions for converting public animus into state policy. Herodotus' project was a logical outgrowth of this milieu, placing his own wide learning and that of his predecessors and contemporaries, especially the Greeks of Ionia who had endured other forms of tyranny and remembered other forms of empire, into an account that comprehended the most potent Hellenic icon of the past, the Persian Wars down to the creation of the Athenian empire. Thucydides was among those Athenians who experienced the disturbing consequences of political power driven by, among other things, this very icon. Among the ways in which Athenian intellectuals of this era chose to come to grips with the profound changes of their time, Thucydides chose the model pioneered by Herodotus. But in doing so, he attempted a radical departure from the mode of Herodotus' discourse. Herodotus assembled truths that converged from all directions, including from myth and fable, on the world as seen by Greeks of his day. To Thucydides, such accounts partook too much of "stories of the past that people . . . uncritically accept from each other," or that "poets have sung with exaggerated embellishments," or that "speech-writers composed with more attention to persuading their listeners than to telling

the truth." His exacting standards constrained him to write, he claimed, only about events that he or his informants had experienced directly, and that were therefore not subject to any of the filters of official or popular recollection.[80]

The remainder of this book is an examination of the audience that Herodotus addressed, and of the circumstances that impelled a member of that audience, Thucydides, to further refine his critical approach to the past. The inquiry will lead, by the final chapter, to a new argument about Thucydides' means and motives for writing history. To reach that point, we need to follow an analytical narrative of events down to the time that Thucydides wrote, particularly bridging the gap between the point at which, in 411, Thucydides left his history unfinished, and the point from which, after the surrender of Athens in 404, Thucydides attests that he wrote. The next two chapters examine prevailing conditions, especially ideological conditions, at Athens in the 420s, when Thucydides participated in Athenian politics before his banishment in 424/3. The fourth chapter begins, in Part II, the thread of narrative from the point at which the aspirations of 424, described above, were at last put in motion in the scheme to conquer Sicily.