

A Note on Thucydides 2.41.4, ὑπόνοια, and Conceptions of History¹

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In a couple of clauses of the Funeral Oration that have occasioned some diversion of views among editors and commentators, Thucydides has Pericles disparage Homer's ability to praise Athens fittingly: καὶ οὐδὲν προσδεόμενοι οὔτε Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτου οὔτε ὅστις ἔπεισι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει, τῶν δ' ἔργων τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἢ ἀλήθεια βλάψει. A close look at this passage and its context in order to resolve difficulties of construal will suggest that Thucydides is explicitly concerned here with historiography, and specifically how historiography and mythic narratives, primarily epic poetry, are related. Traditionally, poetry was the principal means by which the Greeks understood their history. The heroic myths of the poets conveyed to the Greeks the paradigms through which they understood their distant and recent past. The implication of the words which Thucydides places in the mouth of Pericles is that the traditional relationship between history and poetry has been overcome in the new phenomenon of Periclean Athens. In this passage Pericles advances a theory of history related to fifth-century *Kulturgeschichte* and their revolutionary understanding of history as an advance into civilized sophistication from primitive origins. In essence, Thucydides makes Pericles assert that in Athens in the fifth century BC one has reached the end of history.

An initial and fruitful question arises over whether the disjunction οὔτε Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτου οὔτε ὅστις ἔπεισι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει refers to Homer and other poets or to Homeric poetry and other forms of historical narrative. It seems most naturally to refer to Homer, or reciters of Homeric epic, as well as others who might come into the city and sing the κλέος of a city's warriors after a battle. Rusten comments at this point that "Pericles has in mind someone like Choerilus of Samos, who wrote an ac-

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count of the Persian war,”² and the newly recovered opening of Simonides’s Plataea elegy³ gives us a greater sense of how these non-Homeric praise poets appropriated the myths while at the same time distinguishing themselves from the Homeric tradition.⁴ Kakridis⁵ maintains that ἔπεισι here does not refer to poetic verses but to the artful prose of a λογογράφος. He makes a compelling argument that the two disjuncts Ὅηρου ἐπαινέτου and ὅστις ἔπεισι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει ... are to be taken in the context of the programmatic 1.21.1: καὶ οὔτε ὡς ποιηταὶ ὑμνήκασι περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες μᾶλλον πιστεύων, οὔτε ὡς λογογράφοι ξυνέθεσαν ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῇ ἀκροάσει ἢ ἀληθέστερον ... since in both disjunctions there is a polemic against Homer in the first member and “Konfrontierung der Ergötzung (τὸ προσαγωγόν bzw. τὸ τέρπειν) mit der ἀλήθεια” in the second. He argues that “... das Wort ἔπεισι unserer Stelle [entspricht] dem ἀκροάσει des Prooimions, insofern als dieselbe Sache das eine Mal von der Seite des Autors, das andere Mal von der des Publikums betrachtet wird.” Moreover, he points out, it is more likely that Thucydides would find fault with a historian for aiming more towards giving pleasure than truth than with a poet.

Even granted these points, however, it does not seem necessary to conclude, as Kakridis does, that Thucydides here “nicht mehr an die Dichter denkt.” If he intends the disjunction in 1.21.1 to be an interpretative key to this passage, then Thucydides may use the word ἔπη here precisely because it does evoke primarily “verses” so as to assimilate the historians who have preceded him (especially Herodotus, as Kakridis shows) to the poets. In this way, the two most important narratives of Greek wars before Thucydides, those of Homer and Herodotus, are again counted as belonging to a single class, τὸ μυθῶδες, whether in verse or prose. The word ἔπη means unambiguously “poetic verses” in three other sections, five instances, of Thucydides’s history. Only once does it not mean verses, at 3.67.6. There the Thebans are urging the Spartans to ignore the Plataeans’ recounting of their valorous rôle during the Persian Wars in response to the Spartans’ question whether they had done the Spartans or their allies any good during the present war. The Thebans characterize the Plataeans’ speech as irrelevant self-praise through appeals to their ancient virtue and their fathers’ graves. Speeches with such adornments, they argue, are mere deceptions: ἀμαρτανομένων

2. J.S. Rusten, *Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War Book II* (Cambridge, 1989) note *ad loc.*

3. M.L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati*, vol. II, *editio altera* (Oxford, 1992), and D. Boedeker and D. Sider, eds., *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire* (Oxford, 2001).

4. See Eva Stehle, “Help Me to Sing, Muse, of Plataea,” *Arethusa* 29 (1996): 205–22.

5. Johannes Theophanes Kakridis, *Der thukydeische Epitaphios: ein stilistischer Kommentar* (Zetemata 26, Munich: 1971) 70–72.

δὲ (sc. ἔργων) λόγοι ἔπεισι κοσμηθέντες προκαλύμματα γίνονται. Kakridis adduces this instance as evidence that ἔπη in Thucydides can mean “nicht nur ‘epische Dichtung’ ... sondern auch die gewöhnliche Rede, wenn sie verbis exornata, verborum ornatu exulta ... ist.” However, even in this instance, λόγος means “gewöhnliche Rede” and ἔπη refers to the ornamental content of the “verba,” i.e., the invocation of their fathers’ παλαιὰ ἀρετή. It is not meter that makes the words epic, but content, the invocation of the ancestors’ glorious deeds.

In defence of Kakridis’s point, finally, one ought to consider whether the usage of ἔπη at 3.67.6 is not relevant to its use at 2.41.4 in a more deeply meaningful, even tragic, way: Thucydides has Pericles use the word ἔπη in a context which calls to mind earlier criticisms of λογογράφοι, and perhaps especially the λογογράφος of the Persian wars just here, where, as Kakridis had noted earlier, “die Sprache viel reicher ausgestaltet ist; ... die Rede entfernt sich von der objektiven Beschreibung, um in einen Hymnus einzumünden.”⁶ That is to say, precisely here Pericles’s language might be described as λόγοι ἔπεισι κοσμηθέντες, as Pericles himself says: ἄ γὰρ τὴν πόλιν ὕμνησα, αἱ τῶνδε καὶ τῶν τοιῶνδε ἀρεταὶ ἐκόσμησαν (2.42.2). If one anticipates the fate of Athens in the trial of their allies, the Plataeans, by five Spartan δικασταί, and the subsequent executions and devastation of the city, and if one considers that Thucydides wrote and published his history only once Athens had lost the war, once the Athenian ἔργα had gone catastrophically and irremediably wrong, then the parallel strikes something of a tragic chord. In sum, it appears that it would be a mistake to force a choice between “verses” and “marked speech” in 2.41.4, and even if one were to force ἔπη in this instance to refer to the prose of logographers, the point which is essential to this argument remains: Thucydides here has Pericles make the claim that mythic paradigms, i.e., the exploits of mythic heroes as allegories of recent history, whether in prose or in poetry, are inadequate to Athenian deeds. No matter whether the particular target is Choerilus of Samos, Simonides, or a poet of their ilk, or one of the λογογράφοι, it is a way of understanding history that is at issue, not whether the narrative is metrical.

As we continue to the heart of the passage, Gomme⁷ objects to the manuscripts’ reading τῶν δ’ ἔργων τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἢ ἀλήθεια βλάψει on the grounds that it is a “pure generalization about poetic narrative.” He finds it not only irrelevant, but “inconsistent, for it will mean ‘but whose interpretation of the deeds (which will be extravagant) will be injured by the truth.’” He finds this inconsistent because he looks to a slightly earlier sentence: καὶ

6. *Op. cit.* 64.

7. A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* vol. 2 (Oxford, 1956) 128. Hornblower’s more recent commentary (Oxford, 1991) unfortunately passes in silence over the issue.

ὡς οὐ λόγων ἐν τῷ παρόντι κόμπος τάδε μᾶλλον ἢ ἔργων ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια, αὐτὴ ἡ δύναμις τῆς πόλεως, ἣν ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν τρόπων ἐκτησάμεθα, σημαίνει (2.41.2). One finds in 2.41.2 the problem of words that do not live up to the Athenians' deeds. Then Gomme finds Pericles claiming, very shortly later, that the translation of Athens' deeds into poetic imagery will be too extravagant for the deeds to live up to. Thus his charge of inconsistency. He would prefer that Thucydides had written ἡ ὑπόνοια τὴν ἀλήθειαν βλάψει or τῆ ὑπονοία ἡ ἀλήθεια βλάπεται instead.

Reference to the earlier sentence allows us to clear up an initial difficulty about how to construe the clause. Gomme (and others, including Liddell, Scott and Jones's *Greek English Lexicon*) construe τῶν δ' ἔργων as dependent on τὴν ὑπόνοιαν. But surely here, as in 2.41.2, Thucydides invokes his central contrariety⁸ of speech versus deeds, action, war. The clauses under consideration, ὅστις ἔπεισι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει, τῶν δ' ἔργων τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἡ ἀλήθεια βλάψει, carry this contrast of speech and deeds into this new, poetic context. ὑπόνοια does not govern τῶν δ' ἔργων, ἡ ἀλήθεια does. τῶν δ' ἔργων ἡ ἀλήθεια is a deliberate echo of ἔργων ἀλήθεια in the earlier sentence.⁹

This correction does not save the sentence from Gomme's charges of irrelevance and self-contradiction. Saving the sentence from Gomme's concerns will require showing that what Pericles says about the relation of words and deeds implied in the phrase τῶν δ' ἔργων τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἡ ἀλήθεια βλάψει does not contradict, but explains what Pericles says in 2.41.2. Understanding how this is so will require sorting out exactly what Thucydides means by ὑπόνοια in this context, and that, in turn, will require us to think about the relationship between myth and history.

Clearly, denigration of Homer is central to what Thucydides has Pericles say. Superficially, it seems that he might simply be invoking Homer because Homer wrote about heroes fighting heroically, and so might fifth-century Athenians be described. But he is actually, subtly, much more specific in the way he brings Homer into it. By using the phrase Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτου, Pericles evokes the conventions of rhapsodic recitation during the fifth century. We know from Plato that Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτης belongs to the technical vocabulary of Homeric recitation. At the beginning of *Ion*, for example, that

8. Adam Parry, "Thucydides' Historical Perspective," reprinted in *The Language of Achilles and Other Papers* (Oxford, 1989) especially 290–91 and 296 ff., calls this contrast the "central metaphor" of Thucydides's work.

9. With Thucydides, we are not yet at the point at which "truth" can pertain only to speech or thoughts: there is still something of its etymology left in the word ἀλήθεια. A classic treatment of the connection between history as an account of deeds and the deeds themselves can be found in Henry R. Immerwahr, "History as a Monument in Herodotus and Thucydides," *American Journal of Philology* 81:3 (July 1960): 261–90.

is how the rhapsode Ion refers to himself; Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτης is essentially a synonym of “rhapsode.” By means of this formulation, Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτου, Thucydides evokes a tradition of rhapsodic transmission of Homer familiar to his audience, given its centrality in such self-defining contexts as the Panathenaia. If the city were to need Homer as her eulogist, Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτης, the citizens would have heard the Homeric eulogy from the lips of a Ὀμήρου ἐπαινέτης, a eulogist of Homer, a rhapsode.¹⁰

On its own, this might be of some antiquarian interest without being very meaningful; but once one has noticed that Thucydides is using the technical language of the transmission of epic poetry other features of the sentence make sense in a deeper way.

In a Homeric context, the way the sentence begins, μετὰ μεγάλων δὲ σημείων is full of resonance. Homer uses the expression μέγα σῆμα for portents that the gods send. Two instances are prominent because they bracket chronologically Homer’s history of the Trojan War and at the same time draw attention to the connection between the deeds of history, monuments of those deeds, and the narratives which explain them. In the *Iliad*, as the Greeks are on their way to Troy, a snake appeared as the Greeks were sacrificing and ate eight sparrow chicks and their mother and then was turned into stone. In the *Odyssey*, after the Phaeacians, who had taken Odysseus to Ithaca, making him the last Greek to return home from the Trojan War, return to their harbor, Poseidon punishes them by turning their ship into stone. Each of these portents is described as a μέγα σῆμα.¹¹ Moreover, the reaction to each of these Homeric σήματα is just the reaction that Pericles describes to the σημεία of Athenian power: wonder, θαύμα. When the snake ate the sparrows the Greeks all wondered at it; Poseidon turns the Phaeacians’ ship into stone in order that all men, now and in the future, might wonder at it. To stand in awe, θαυμάζειν, is apparently the appropriate response in Homer to the recognition of a σῆμα from the gods. Each of these Homeric σήματα is permanent: they are not just for the ephemeral guidance of their audiences or spectators, but are meant to display the will of the gods who sent them for all men, both in the moment and in the future. Each can be

10. On the reciprocity of city and rhapsode see G. Nagy, “Homer and Plato at the Panathenaia: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives,” in D. Konstan *et al.*, *Contextualizing Classics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) 147, and see note 46. See also Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore, 1990) 200–06: in the tradition of praise poetry there is commonly an “ambiguity of subjective/objective genitives in combination with nouns designating the performance of praise poetry.” He takes the genitives to refer to the *laudator* and *laudandus*, respectively, and the ambiguity to be “functional, marking the reciprocity that binds the *laudator* and *laudandus*.”

11. See G. McGonagill, *A History of Allegorical Interpretation from Homer through Lucretius*, PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2001.

understood to represent the events of the poem in which it occurs: a nine-years-long war and the return of Odysseus in spite of Poseidon's anger. That is, they can be understood in this way because Homer tells us what they mean in the rest of the poem. In a certain sense, epic poetry is just the exegesis of *σήματα*.

Precisely by ironically appropriating language which recalls the themes and practice of epic poetry, Pericles's speech distinguishes Athens' position in the world from traditional heroic history by claiming that Athens has now superseded that history. Pericles, having evoked that tradition of the poetry of *σήματα*, now makes the remarkable claim that the earth is full of *σημεία* of the power of Athens: the sea itself, in a sense, dominated by Athenian naval power, is a *σημείον* of the power of Athens, and the power of Athens, in turn, sufficient and clear *σημείον* of the virtue of the Athenians. This new kind of *σημείον* has no need of epic to explain it; Pericles holds its truth to be self-evident.

The world itself is a permanent memorial as Pericles puts it, full of *μνημεία ἄιδια* of this city which has obviated the need of heroic history. Pericles continues to vaunt contemporary Athens over heroic history by means of locutions such as *μνημεία κακῶν τε κάγαθῶν ἄιδια*. One could hardly come up with a better or clearer description of what epic poetry is than to call it a lasting monument of the acts of harm or good performed by heroes. 'Acts of harm and good' is simply a description of traditional heroic justice: harming one's friends and helping one's enemies. And thus Rusten translates *κακῶν τε κάγαθῶν* here as 'vengeance and aid'.¹² The heroes, of course, need epic to memorialize their vengeance and aid; through epic they gain immortality. The Athenians have no need of epic; the world is their epic.

Pericles's speech honors many of the conventions of the funeral oration by subverting them.¹³ This last point is a good example of that. Through his departure from the conventions of the funeral oration, Pericles leads his audience further away from the traditional epic paradigmatic conception of history. One might have expected the dead over whom the speech was being said to be compared to heroes. In one way, Pericles follows the convention by not calling the war dead heroes. It seems that they were never explicitly called heroes in these speeches.¹⁴ But all of the attributes of heroes were

12. *Op. cit.* note *ad loc.*

13. For considerations of the genre and Pericles's speech as an example of it, in addition to Loraux, see Helmut Flashar, *Der epitaphios des Perikles (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften)*, 1969) and John Ziolkowski, *Thucydides and the Tradition of Funeral Speeches at Athens* (New York, 1981).

14. Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, trans. A. Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: 1986) 39–42.

generally attributed to the dead without using the word. The only difference between those who died in battle on behalf of their city and the heroes was, it seems, time: they were given a place where they could receive what looks just like the cultic worship of heroes, a *σῆμα*, that is, a marked tomb, and their daring and acts of vengeance and aid were permanently recorded. There were funeral games, as for heroes, perhaps even annually undertaken, as belonged to hero cult. But only the perpetuation of all of this over a very long time licensed the use of the word *hero*.

Notice, however, that Pericles has transferred this praise from the men who died to their city. Such speeches, as one might expect, were always full of praise for the city, but Pericles has fairly explicitly expanded the praise of the contemporary city to fill essentially the whole speech. These speeches usually began with an account of deeds of legendary Athenians and the recently dead would be praised by comparing them and their deeds with the glorious deeds of the ancestors.¹⁵ It is a kind of prose version of Pindar's Odes, with their mythical exempla of Pindar's patrons' ancestors and their deeds. In both genres, the praise is accomplished by means of setting forth a mythical paradigm which the *laudandus*, the object of praise, is supposed to have fulfilled. For Pericles, the city itself and her democratic constitution take the place of the ancestors and mythical paradigms: the soldiers are worthy of praise because they have fulfilled the democratic constitution of Athens.

At this point, it becomes clear that understanding the precise significance of the word *ὑπόνοια* is crucial to understanding the whole passage. For this it will be useful to consider some translations of the clause. Even though many of the translators, as a result of misconstruing the genitive *τῶν δ' ἔργων* as dependent on *τὴν ὑπόνοιαν*, are translating a construction which is probably not what Thucydides intended, what they make of the word *ὑπόνοια* will help us understand what it means. Pépin¹⁶ translates 'présentation.' For Gomme, again, it was the poet's interpretation and for Rusten the poet's intended meaning. Pépin, it seems, interprets *ὑπόνοια* primarily objectively, from the side of the means a poet uses to evoke recognition and understanding, *présentation*, and Gomme and Rusten subjectively, the poet's mental content. But *ὑπόνοια* really describes an observer's recognition of an event or narrative as a *σῆμα* by means of recognizing its applicability to his own situation and his induction from that significant event or narration to the agent's or narrator's mind. The agent's or narrator's mind, thought, is more properly called *διάνοια*. When an audience recognizes that its situation is being symbolically represented to it, the audience infers from the

15. Ziolkowski, *op. cit.* 174–77.

16. Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (Paris, 1958).

symbol to the narrator's *διάνοια*. At least this is the relation of *ὑπόνοια* to *διάνοια* which Thucydides assumes elsewhere. In Book 7, as the Athenians attempt a retreat from Syracuse, Hermocrates infers their (subjective) intentions from their (objective) preparations: *Ἑρμοκράτης δὲ ὁ Συρακόσιος ὑπονόησας αὐτῶν τὴν διάνοιαν ... (7.73)*. This is exactly what Pericles is talking about at 2.41. He is referring to the connection itself: the poet's verses themselves may give pleasure, but when the audience connects his verses with his *διάνοια*, his understanding of mythical history as the paradigm for recent events, it will be disappointed because the simple facts will be more impressive than any connection of them with mythical history. It is exactly a problem of speech, or the impression that verbal representations of deeds makes, not living up to the deeds themselves.¹⁷

In the word *ὑπόνοια*, in this context, Thucydides's Pericles refers to the way that the Greeks traditionally thought about history. It was through a process of inference from the poets' *σηματά*, their myths, to recent events that the Greeks understood their history. The Greeks, and the democratic Athenians in particular, appropriated that distant past, and its memory, recorded for them chiefly in Homer, the poet of the past: it was the paradigm for the present and the future. As Nicole Loraux has put it, the "system of representations by which the city lived extracted from the Homeric epic examples that still had real meaning ... and made Athenian history a repetitive gesture in which the battles of the present copied those of the past and foreshadowed those to come."¹⁸ The course of time and its events, as the Athenians heard their history in these public contexts, was for the most part repetition, fulfillment of the paradigms of the heroes of the distant past.

This can be difficult for post-Platonic audiences to understand, since Plato's treatment of poetry in the *Republic* so influentially inverts how the Greeks had traditionally thought about the relationship between myth and reality, that myth had a kind of ontological priority over contemporary reality. The word paradigm is used here in a strong sense. Myth, that distant history, was the pattern for all subsequent action. History was, for the Greeks, and Pericles here chafes against the tradition in a way that lets us catch a glimpse

17. Two commonly consulted translations get it right. Crawley's classic and ubiquitous translation renders it, "whose verses might charm for the moment only for the impression which they gave to melt at the touch of fact." The French of de Romilly, *Thucydide, la guerre du péloponnèse*, livre II (Paris, 1962) is able to capture more elegantly than English can the reciprocity of singer and his audience, the city: "mais dont les interprétations auront à patir de la vérité des faits." Since the French word *interprétation* signifies both the performance and its reception, one is allowed to leave in the French translation the ambiguity that is inherent in the performative contexts of Greek praise poetry.

18. Loraux, *Invention of Athens* 145.

of it, a pattern to be fulfilled, and the writing of history, which was always morally didactic or *ainetic*, that is, praise either of individuals or cities,¹⁹ was a process of evoking that history so as to provoke in the mind of the audience comparison between the present circumstance and the pattern.

In the light of this it becomes clear that it is not irrelevant nor self-contradictory for Pericles to disdain Homer (or the reciter of Homeric poetry) and anyone else whose ἔπη, invocation of mythic paradigms, might give pleasure, but the truth of the Athenians' deeds will be so great as to vitiate his audience's ὑπόνοια from deed to paradigm. We have seen that it is not irrelevant precisely because Pericles here is claiming that the tradition of meditating on the city's history by means of the poets' myths is, in the unique case of Athens, no longer adequate. Homeric types and shadows have had their ending in this new city. It is not a pure generalization about poetry, because it is only true in the case of this unique city, under this democratic constitution, at this moment in history. It is not inconsistent, because it is an elaboration of the idea of the verbal representation of paradigmatic action being inadequate to Athens' transcendent deeds. It depends entirely on Pericles's reflections about the new phenomenon of Athens and the passing-away of the need for the poets' symbolic myths. In Athens in the last quarter of the fifth century, Pericles seems to say, we have reached the end of history.

This is an idea to which the Athenian Stranger of Plato's *Laws* will give explicit expression when he describes how he would answer what he calls a serious poet, a tragedian, who seeks to enter the purified, mythic city which he constructs: "Best of guests, we are ourselves poets, so far as is in our power, of the noblest and best possible tragedy. At any rate our entire state has been constructed as a representation (μίμησις) of the noblest and best life—which we say is really the truest tragedy" (817 B). Substitute epic for tragedy, and that is essentially what Pericles is saying to the Homeridae who might want to come and give rhapsodic performances as praise of the Periclean Athenians. They are no longer needed in Pericles's city because the factual city itself is nobler and better than to need any more to aspire to be a representation, a mimesis, of Homeric myth.

The comparison with the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws* suggests a final consideration about Greek conceptions of history and how Thucydides may be characterizing Pericles and his view of history. Book 3 of the *Laws* includes a famous *Kulturentstehungsgeschichte*, an account of human history as evolutionary, beginning from a cataclysmic prehistoric flood and a few shepherds, passing through the development of legislation and political communities, through Near Eastern history (in a sense, another rewriting

19. See, again, Immerwahr.

of the history covered by Homer). The Athenian Stranger's evolutionary account of political history has two strands, one authoritarian and monarchic, which has over time been perfected by the Persians, the other libertarian and democratic, perfected by the Athenians. This evolutionary understanding of history is the basis on which the Athenian Stranger and his interlocutors construct the laws for their ideal colony, Magnesia.

This evolutionary understanding of history runs counter to the traditional, Hesiodic idea of a 'Golden Age,' or to the idea that Pericles here contradicts that history is a declension from earlier, Homeric, heroic civilization.²⁰ It was noted above that the structure of Pericles's oration is anomalous in the extensive treatment it affords the city as distinct from the dead. It is also anomalous in that it begins with a history of the evolution of Athenian power and freedom. There is an implicit contrast between the ancestors, who are praised for handing the city down to subsequent generations in freedom, and the recent (no doubt the *μαραθωνόμαχοι*) and present generations, who have developed the specific form of government that has brought history to its end and the decorations of Athenian civilization, the festivals and buildings that are the evidence of Athenian greatness. Insofar as the funeral oration looks back to the ancestors not as models (however they may be deserving of honour), but as less highly developed culturally than the present generation, it is an early and overlooked reference to a view of history that has its origins in fifth-century pre-Socratic philosophy, and is now especially associated with Democritus. The earliest ancestors, in Pericles's speech, do not belong to a Golden Age nor is the contemporary city a declension from its pristine origins. They are instead to be conceived of only as having attained the final stage of primitive and pre-historic development, having settled a city and achieved the technological capacity to feed and house its citizens,²¹ having created the germ that would become what Athens has become.

One is tempted to identify the conception of history that Thucydides puts into the mouth of Pericles with Thucydides's own view, especially when one thinks back to the Archaeology of Book 1, which likewise seems to offer an evolutionary account of history, one that disparages Homer's war as a mere pirate raid in relation to the "greatest disturbance to affect the Hellenes and a considerable number of barbarians—one might say the majority of mankind."²² Settling the question of Thucydides's historiography in these

20. See Thomas Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (American Philological Association, 1967) 1–4.

21. See Cole, 26, for a summary of the stages of development that this view of history understands pre-historic primitive man to have undergone.

22. 1.1, trans. (with correction) Stephen Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

terms, if it is possible, would belong to another paper, but a few remarks about the question ought to be made in order that it be clear that one ought to resist this temptation. It is more and more being recognized how skilful and complex a narrator Thucydides is.²³ Many commentators have noted the debt, linguistic and conceptual, that Thucydides owes to Homer and tragic poetry.²⁴ The collocation of the funeral oration with the plague narrative is a common example, or the fact that Pericles's last speech, after the funeral oration's vaunting of the permanence of the glory of Athens, seems to prophesy the destruction of this glory. Since it is possible that the second disjunct in 2.41.4 referred to a poet like Simonides, the possibility that the narrative of the Sicilian Expedition specifically alludes to and is structurally informed by Simonides's Salamis elegy is of note.²⁵ As we have seen, the Funeral Oration, like the Archaeology, asserts a peculiarly fifth-century understanding of history that sees itself as liberated from mythical paradigms. By the end of his narrative, however, Thucydides's account has itself evolved and taken the earlier understanding up into a more comprehensive view that sees history as even more deeply a continuous process of re-enacting the mythical paradigms.

23. See, for example, Simon Hornblower, "Narratology and Narrative Techniques in Thucydides," in *Greek Historiography*, ed. Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

24. F. MacD. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London, 1956) is an early and classic example. See also J.W. Allison, "Homeric Allusions at the Close of Thucydides' Sicilian Narrative," *AJP* 118 (1997): 499–516; C.J. Mackie, "Homer and Thucydides: Corcyra and Sicily," *CQ* 46 (1996): 103–13.

25. Tim Rood, "Thucydides and his Predecessors," *Histos* 1998 (<http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1998/rood.html>).