

The Value of the Past Challenged. Myth and Ancient History in the Attic Orators

I. THE VALUE OF THE DISTANT PAST

‘History is bunk. What difference does it make how many times the ancient Greeks flew their kites?’ pronounced Henry Ford.¹ Fortunately, not everybody subscribes to the apodictic comments on life that American entrepreneurs sometimes make, but Ford’s disavowal of history, in particular of ancient history, is representative of a general feeling. The past, many contemporaries would agree, is not of much help concerning the problems of the present. As Koselleck demonstrated, the topos of *historia magistra vitae* has lost much of its plausibility since 1800.² The Greeks, it seems, thought differently. They were, as van Groningen aptly put it, in the ‘grip of the past’.³ Particularly the distant past was in high regard. To take an example from the *Iliad*, Phoenix adduces the story of Meleager when he tries to persuade Achilles to return to the battlefield: ‘For I remember this action of old, it is not a new thing, / and how it went; you are all my friends, I will tell it among you.’ (‘μέμνημαι τόδε ἔργον ἐγὼ πάλαι, οὐ τι νέον γε, / ὡς ἦν, ἐν δ’ ὑμῖν ἐρέω πάντεσσι φίλοισιν.’ 9.527-8). A look at epic genealogy reveals that Meleager is only one generation older than the heroes of the Trojan War.⁴ Nonetheless, Phoenix qualifies Meleager’s refusal to defend Calydon as ‘of old time’. Whilst Ford evokes the ancient Greeks to debunk history, Phoenix’ presentation of the Meleager story implies that temporal distance heightens the authority of exempla.

This view of the past is not only shared by other Homeric heroes, but also seems to apply to the ancient recipients of the *Iliad*. The prominence of epic poetry as well as the preference for mythic subjects in tragedy indicates that it was in particular the remote past that held the Greeks in a firm grip. This predilection for ancient times comes to the fore in the tendency to cast recent history in a mythic register.⁵ Aeschylus’ *Persians* and Simonides’ *Plataea elegy*, for instance, mythicize the Persian Wars just as Phoenix distances a recent event from the present.

Two passages, one from Herodotus, the other from Thucydides, however, help muddle this picture of a uniform veneration of the ancient past. In Herodotus’ report on the battle at Plataea, the Athenians and Tegeans engage in a discussion about who is entitled to take the left wing (9.26-7).⁶ The Tegeans buttress their claim by invoking the duel in which their mythical king Echemus defeated Hyllus.

¹ *New York Times* October 29, 1921.

² Cf. Koselleck 1979. S. below???

³ Van Groningen 1953.

⁴ Cf. Grethlein 2006: 56.

⁵ Cf. Grethlein 2010: 55-7; 64-8; 75-9.

⁶ Cf. Grethlein 2010: 173-86.

The Athenians start their response with a catalogue of mythical deeds, notably the intervention on behalf of the Heraclidae and the Argives around Adrastus, the victory over the Amazons and the participation in the Trojan War. All these achievements, however, should not count for much (9.27.4-5):

But what is the point in mentioning these episodes? People who were brave in those days might be relatively useless now, and vice versa. So that's enough ancient history.

ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ τι προέχει τούτων ἐπιμενησθαι· καὶ γὰρ ἂν χρηστοὶ τότε ἔοντες ὡυτοὶ νῦν ἂν εἶεν φλαυρότεροι καὶ τότε ἔοντες φλαῦροι νῦν ἂν εἶεν ἀμείνονες. παλαιῶν μὲν νυν ἔργων ἄλις ἔστω.

Instead, the Athenians flag a recent display of their virtue: Marathon. While the Athenians here still dutifully list their mythical deeds, Thucydides has them discard the ancient past more harshly at a conference in Sparta in 432 BCE: 'Now as for the remote past, what need is there to speak when the audience would have the evidence of hearsay accounts rather than personal experience?' ('Καὶ τὰ μὲν πάνυ παλαιὰ τί δεῖ λέγειν, ὧν ἀκοαὶ μᾶλλον λόγων μάρτυρες ἢ ὄψις τῶν ἀκουσομένων; 1.73.2).

In both cases, it has been suggested that the Athenians' comments on the past reflect the author's attitude.⁷ The observation that 'people who were brave in those days might be relatively useless now, and vice versa' echoes the proem in which Herodotus notes that 'most of those cities which were important in the past have diminished in significance by now, and those which were great in my own time were small in times past' ('τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν σμικρὰ γέγονε, τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμεῦ ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρὰ.' 1.5.4). In a similar vein, the privileging of personal experience is reminiscent of Thucydides' methodological agenda. The parallels to the respective authorial reflections notwithstanding, the Athenians' preference for the recent past anticipates a tendency in fourth-century speeches to focus on contemporary events.⁸ Myths loom large in the *epitaphioi logoi* and also in the oeuvre of Isocrates with its epideictic character and focus on external affairs,⁹ but are rarely referred to in symbouleutic and forensic speeches. Likewise, archaic history, with the exception of Solon, is given short shrift by the orators. The high esteem for the remote past in ancient Greece does not hold good in the assembly and the courtroom of the

⁷ E.g. Flower and Marincola 2002: *ad* Hdt. 9.27.5; Hornblower 1991-6: *ad* Thuc. 1.73.2.

⁸ The literature on the orators' treatment of the past is vast. See, for example, Jost 1936; Schmitz-Kahlmann 1939; Pearson 1941; Perlman 1961; Nouhau 1982; Loraux 1986 on *epitaphioi logoi*; Gotteland 2001 on myth in oratory; Clarke 2008: 245-303; Grethlein 2010: 105-45; Steinbock (forthcoming).

⁹ Cf. Pearson 1941: 219-20; Nouhau 1982: 19. Cf. Perlman 1961: 159 n. 44: 'It is most interesting to note that Isocrates does not cite any methodological examples in his *Areopagiticus*, which is his principal speech dealing with internal matters.' On Isocrates' use of myth, see Masaracchia 2003.

fourth century BCE. In what follows, I will explore the preference for recent exempla in the Attic orators (II) before I add some qualifications, first touching on diplomatic speeches (III), then discussing Lycurgus' speech against Leocrates (IV). In a final step, I will return to the modern scepticism about exempla, using it to throw into relief the ancient orators' reticence to engage with the remote past. It is crucial to avoid generalizations and to do justice to the wide range of attitudes toward the past in ancient Greece, but nevertheless it is possible, I think, to pinpoint differences from modern attitudes (V).

II. PREFERENCE FOR THE RECENT PAST IN ORATORY

As I have just mentioned, Isocrates stands out among the orators of classical Athens through his numerous references to the mythical past. That being said, even his speeches bear witness to the rhetorical predilection for recent events. In the *Archidamus*, a speech against Messene and Theban power politics written in the voice of the young Spartan prince, Isocrates turns to Athenian history for successful attempts to fight off invaders (6.42):

For we shall find that as a result of dictating to others they lost repute with the Hellenes, while by defending themselves against insolent invaders they won fame among all mankind. Now if I were to recount the wars of old which they fought against the Amazons or the Thracians or the Peloponnesians who under the leadership of Eurystheus invaded Attica, no doubt I should be thought to speak on matters ancient and remote from the present situation; but in their war against the Persians, who does not know from what hardships they arose to great good-fortune?

Τούτους γὰρ εὐρήσομεν, ἐξ ὧν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις προσέταπτον, πρὸς τοὺς Ἕλληνας διαβληθέντας, ἐξ ὧν δὲ τοὺς ὑβρίζοντας ἠμύνοντο, παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίμησαντας. Τοὺς μὲν οὖν παλαιούς κινδύνους εἰ διεξιόην, οὓς ἐποίησαντο πρὸς Ἀμαζόνας ἢ Θρᾶκας ἢ Πελοποννησίους τοὺς μετ' Εὐρυσθέως εἰς τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν εἰσβαλόντας, ἴσως ἀρχαῖα καὶ πόρρω τῶν νῦν παρόντων λέγειν ἂν δοκοίην· ἐν δὲ τῷ Περσικῷ πολέμῳ τίς οὐκ οἶδεν ἐξ οἴων συμφορῶν εἰς ὄσσην εὐδαιμονίαν κατέστησαν;

Clarke notes that 'this is a strange claim to find in a speech written by Isocrates, given his exceptionally extensive use of ancient examples, including these very ones disclaimed here. We must, presumably, attribute the inconsistency to his characterization of the dramatic figure of Archidamus ...'¹⁰ Indeed, the rejection of mythical exempla helps to characterize Archidamus, but it also expresses a general scepticism that comes to the fore in other speeches in which

¹⁰ Clarke 2008: 262.

Isocrates introduces references to the remote past with apologies or qualifications.¹¹

Dinarchus' speech against Demosthenes illustrates that this kind of scepticism is not limited to mythical events. Looking for examples of men who stood by the city in dangerous times, Dinarchus points out (37):

It would be a long task to tell of these great men of the past, Aristides and Themistocles, who built the walls of the city and brought the tribute paid freely and willingly by the Greeks to the Acropolis.

ὦν τοὺς μὲν ἀρχαίους ἐκείνους μακρὸν ἂν εἶη λέγειν, Ἀριστείδην καὶ Θεμιστοκλέα, τοὺς ὀρθώσαντας τὰ τείχη τῆς πόλεως καὶ τοὺς φόρους εἰς ἀκρόπολιν ἀνενεγκόντας παρ' ἐκόντων καὶ βουλομένων τῶν Ἑλλήνων ...

Instead, Dinarchus elaborates on politicians of the fourth century BCE, namely Thrason, Eleius and Phormion. Here as in many other cases, the trope of *praeteritio* permits an orator to express his reservation about the remote past, be it myth or the fifth century BCE, while still tapping into it for exempla.

A passage from Demosthenes corroborates that the orators' preference for the 4th century BCE is not rooted in a rigid juxtaposition of myth and history, but expresses a relative and flexible distinction between recent and remote events. In the speech against Androtion, composed in 355 BCE, Demosthenes attacks Androtion for proposing crowns for the Council of the past year. The Council had not provided any new triremes and was therefore liable to a decree that made the crowns for councillors contingent on the building of ships. In order to drive home the importance of war ships to Athens, Demosthenes looks to the past. His first exemplum is the battle of Salamis (22.13):

You know of course from tradition that after they abandoned the city and shut themselves up in Salamis, it was because they had the war-galleys that they won the sea-fight and saved the city and all their belongings, and made themselves the authors for the rest of the Greeks of many great benefits, of which not even time can ever obliterate the memory.

... ἴστε δήπου τοῦτο ἀκοῆ, ὅτι τὴν πόλιν ἐκλιπόντες καὶ κατακλεισθέντες εἰς Σαλαμίνα, ἐκ τοῦ τριήρεις ἔχειν πάντα μὲν τὰ σφέτερα αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν πόλιν τῇ ναυμαχίᾳ νικήσαντες ἔσωσαν, πολλῶν δὲ καὶ μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἑλλησι κατέστησαν αἴτιοι, ὧν οὐδ' ὁ χρόνος τὴν μνήμην ἀφελέσθαι δύναται.

Anticipating the objection that 'this is ancient history' ('ἐκεῖνα μὲν ἀρχαῖα καὶ παλαιά'), Demosthenes adds an exemplum 'that you have all seen'

¹¹ Cf. Isoc. 3.26 (reference to gods); 4.28; 5.42; 6.42.

(‘ἅ πάντες ἐοράκατε’, 22.14), namely the help the Athenians could provide for the Euboeans thanks to their ships in 357 BCE.

The argumentum *ex negativo* follows the same structure: Demosthenes first adduces the Deceleian War in which the destruction of the fleet led to Athens’ ruin and then, asking ‘But why need one cite ancient instances?’ (‘καὶ τί δεῖ τὰ παλαιὰ λέγειν;’ 22.15), he mentions the last war against the Spartans in the 370s BCE. As in the passage by Dinarchus, recent events provide stronger proof, but older ones seem important enough to be mentioned. The qualification as ‘ancient’ is relative; it is not only not limited to myth, but can also be applied to various stages of the historical past. While in Isocrates the Persian Wars appear as a recent event that is juxtaposed with τὰ πάνυ παλαιά, Demosthenes dismisses the Persian Wars and even the Peloponnesian War as παλαιά.

Demosthenes’ *praeteritio* of the ‘ancient exempla’ indicates a first reason why recent events are preferable. He sets the recent intervention on behalf of the Euboeans off against the Persian Wars with the words ‘but take something that you have all seen’ (‘ἀλλ’ ἅ πάντες ἐοράκατε, ἴσθ’’, 22.14). In the pair of negative exempla, he justifies the reference to the fifth century BCE by saying ‘I am reminding you of a bit of old history which you know all better than I do’ (‘τῶν γὰρ ἀρχαίων ἔν, ὃ πάντες ἐμοῦ μᾶλλον ἐπίστασθε, ὑπομνήσω’, 22.15). Both comments highlight that familiarity is an important requirement that is met by recent rather than remote events. Concentrating on familiar topics is not only crucial for exempla to be effective, it also contributes to the self-fashioning of the orators eager to avoid anything that smacks of elite status. As Ober points out in his study on mass and elite in the fourth century BCE: ‘But when using poetic and historical examples, the orator must avoid taking on the appearance of a well-educated man giving lessons in culture to the ignorant masses.’¹²

And yet, the requirement of familiarity fails to challenge such stock topics as the Persian Wars that are well-known but, as we have seen, nonetheless must make way for more recent exempla. Another point favouring recent history is mentioned by Anaximenes in the *Ars rhetorica* where he discusses the part of βεβαίωσις (32.3):

One has to take the paradigms that belong to the topic itself and are as close as possible to the audience regarding time and place; if such are missing, then the grandest and best known of the others.

λαμβάνειν δὲ δεῖ τὰ παραδείγματα <τὰ> οἰκεῖα τῷ πράγματι καὶ τὰ ἐγγύτατα τοῖς ἀκούουσι χρόνῳ ἢ τόπῳ, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ὑπάρχη τοιαῦτα, τῶν ἄλλων τὰ μέγιστα καὶ γνωριμώτατα.¹³

¹² Ober 1989: 179. See also 181 on Demosthenes’ use of the ‘everyone knows’ topos.

¹³ On the discussion of recent vs. remote exempla in Roman rhetoric, see Chaplin 2000: 123-6.

While the second part of the sentence applies the criterion of familiarity to paradigms from the remote past, the first encapsulates what makes recent exempla attractive beyond the fact that they are well-known. Mentioned together with the status of exempla as οἰκεῖος, the requirement that exempla be ‘as close as possible to the audience regarding time and place’ suggests that more recent events are deemed to be more relevant to the present. We have already encountered this point in the *Archidamus*’ disavowal of mythical events: ‘Perhaps I would seem to discuss ancient events and speak far from the present circumstances.’ (ἴσως ἀρχαῖα καὶ πόρρω τῶν νῦν παρόντων λέγειν ἂν δοκοίην’, Isoc. 6.42). I postpone to the end of this paper a discussion on how this relevance of recent events relates to the modern conviction that the past is a foreign country. Here it may suffice to note that recent events were felt to have had more of a bearing on the present just as exempla from the own tradition carried stronger conviction than alien ones.

A third point that renders the recent past more attractive to orators besides its familiarity and relevance to the present can be gleaned from Isocrates. Shedding new light on the relationship between rhetoric and historiography, this point warrants a closer look.¹⁴ In the *Panegyricus*, Isocrates brings up the myth of Demeter who bestowed on Athens the gifts of corn and the Eleusinian Mysteries.¹⁵ While the introductory apology signals that a myth in this context is felt to be not unproblematic (‘For even though the story has taken the form of a myth, yet it deserves to be told again.’ – ‘καὶ γὰρ εἰ μυθώδης ὁ λόγος γέγονεν, ὅμως αὐτῶ καὶ νῦν ῥηθῆναι προσήκει.’ 4.28), a capping justification reveals *ex negativo* an objection that would be raised by critics (4.30):

In the first place, the very ground on which we might disparage the story, namely that it is ancient, would naturally lead us to believe that the events actually came to pass; for because many have told and all have heard the story which describes them, it is reasonable to regard this not, to be sure, as recent, yet as worthy of our faith. In the next place, we are not obliged to take refuge in the mere fact that we have received the account and the report from remote times; on the contrary, we are able to adduce even greater proofs than this regarding what took place.

Πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ὧν ἂν τις καταφρονήσειε τῶν λεγομένων ὡς ἀρχαίων ὄντων, ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τούτων εἰκότως ἂν καὶ τὰς πράξεις γεγενῆσθαι νομίσειεν. Διὰ γὰρ τὸ πολλοὺς εἰρηκέναι καὶ πάντας ἀκηκοέναι προσήκει μὴ καινὰ μὲν, πιστὰ δὲ δοκεῖν εἶναι τὰ λεγόμενα περὶ αὐτῶν.

¹⁴ Woodman 1988 has alerted us to the close entanglement of historiography and rhetoric. At the same time, it is important to note that the first historians defined the new genre by setting themselves off against the use of the past in oratory, cf. Grethlein 2010: 151-86 (on Herodotus); 206-39 (on Thucydides).

¹⁵ On this passage, see also Gotteland 2001: 78-80.

Further on in the *Panegyricus*, Isocrates will argue that the traditions preserving knowledge of Athens' early military achievements over such a long span of time attest to their grandeur (4.69). Here, he uses the rich oral tradition as proof of the historicity of myth. By transforming an argument against the credibility of remote events into evidence of their historicity, Isocrates slyly turns the tables. But this is not his only argument: even greater σημεῖα for the Demeter myth, he continues, are constituted by the ritual of the first-fruits brought to Athens annually from a great number of cities and by the Delphic oracles that established this institution (4.30-1). Together present custom and past narratives, the shared belief of the Greek poleis and the divine utterances provide powerful evidence.¹⁶ Isocrates' justification is remarkably sophisticated as it deploys a hermeneutic reflection on the significance of oral traditions as well as invoking an important ritual as testimony. His rhetorical efforts signal *ex negativo* that the historicity of mythical deeds was liable to be called in question, more specifically that oral traditions were likely to attract criticism for being unreliable. References to the recent past, it seems, were deemed to be more trustworthy.

The same issue re-surfaces in the *Panathenaicus*.¹⁷ After a lengthy account of the history of Athens' constitution, Isocrates anticipates the critique that 'I dare to speak as if I had exact knowledge of things, although I was not present when they were done' ('τολμῶ λέγειν ὡς ἀκριβῶς εἰδῶς περὶ πραγμάτων, οἷς οὐ παρῆν πραττομένοις', 12.149). The objection to reliance on oral traditions is here phrased as the need for autopsy. Isocrates offers a two-fold defence against the anonymous *advocati diaboli*: he points out that 'many men with reason' (πολλοὶ καὶ νοῦν ἔχοντες ταύτόν) share his belief. This argument may not be as strong as the ritual on which he capitalizes in the case of the Demeter myth, but he parallels it in relying on the agreement of the majority as a criterion for the veracity of accounts. With his second point, Isocrates goes beyond the arguments put forth in the *Archidamus*, supporting his position by a general epistemological consideration (12.150):

... I could show that all men are possessed of more truth gained through hearing than through seeing and that they have knowledge of greater and nobler deeds which they have heard from others than those which they have witnessed themselves.

... δυνηθείην ἂν ἐπιδείξαι πάντας ἀνθρώπους πλείους ἐπιστήμας ἔχοντας διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς ἢ τῆς ὄψεως καὶ μείζους πράξεις καὶ καλλίους εἰδότας, ἄς παρ' ἐτέρων ἀκηκόασιν ἢ κείνας, αἷς αὐτοὶ παραγεγεννημένοι τυγχάνουσιν.

¹⁶ Mikkola 1954: 117 draws attention to the prominence of the aspect of 'together' (2.31: συνδοκεῖ, συμμαρτυρεῖ, ὁμολογεῖ).

¹⁷ Cf. Gotteland 2001: 81-4.

Scholars have been quick to link Isocrates' defence of oral traditions to the methodological issues pondered by historians. It is widely assumed that he challenges Herodotus' and Thucydides' approval of autopsy while paving the way for his alleged students Duris and Theopompus who would abandon the critical standards established by the latter.¹⁸ There is however little evidence, if any, for a school of rhetoric historiography founded by Isocrates and its existence has been effectively challenged by recent scholarship.¹⁹ I think it is also mistaken to assume that Isocrates levels his reflections specifically against Herodotus and Thucydides. The high esteem in which autopsy is held is not specific to historiography. Heraclitus and Thales also seem to have preferred eyesight over hearsay and passages from Homer, and the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, tragedy and comedy highlight how widely spread this evaluation of autopsy was in Greek culture.²⁰ Moreover, Herodotus and Thucydides in actuality do make use of oral traditions; the methodological reflections of the latter do not even signal a preference for autopsy (1.22.2).²¹

This is not to deny that Isocrates uses a concept of proof that resembles the historians' efforts to find out what happened. The notion of πίστις figures prominently in the two passages under consideration; σημεία (4.30), ἀκριβῶς (12.149), ἔλεγχος (12.150) and ἀλήθεια (12.150) are other terms that signal Herodotus' and Thucydides' reliance on proof.²² This, however, does not mean that Isocrates borrows these terms from the historians, let alone that he challenges their approaches. The tendency to construct intellectual history as a linear development dominated by references to the authors whom we have come to consider canonical is as common as it is mistaken. Even when considering the scanty transmission of fifth-century literature, enough is bequeathed to us to glimpse that the 'language of proof' was shared by authors working on a great variety of subjects.²³ Physiologists and Presocratics also based their conclusions

¹⁸ On Isocrates' reflections as challenging Thucydides, see Schmitz-Kahlmann 1939: 56-60; Gotteland 2001: 83-4; on Isocrates' reflections as breaking the ground for later historiography, see Avenarius 1956: 81-5; Schmitz-Kahlmann 1939: 60-2; Nickel 1991. On the other hand, Flower 1994: 50-1 correctly observes that Isocrates in *Panath.* 149-50 and also in *Paneg.* 7-10 does not comment on historiography. On both passages, see also Marincola 1997: 276-9. On Thucydides' influence on Isocrates, see the survey by Nouhaud 1982: 115-17.

¹⁹ Cf. Flower 1994: 42-62.

²⁰ Heraclitus DK 22 B 55, Thales *ap.* Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 3.12.14; In Homer, see *Il.* 2.484-93; *Od.* 3.92-5 and 3.186-7; 16.470 with the interpretation of Marincola 1997: 63-4. Physiologists, e.g. *De arte* 1.17; in tragedy, see for example Aesch. *Pers.* 266-7; in comedy Ar. *Thesm.* 5-19. For a survey with more references, see Nenci 1953: 17-29.

²¹ Cf. Marincola 1997: 67-9.

²² σημείον, e.g. Thuc. 1.21.1 (in Herodotus with the primary meaning 'sign, mark', cf. Thomas 2000: 192), ἀκριβεία, e.g. Thuc. 1.22.1, ἔλεγχος, e.g. Hdt. 2.22 (not used by Thucydides for his own work), ἀλήθεια, e.g. Thuc. 1.22.1 (ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων).

²³ For the 'language of proof', see Thomas 2000: 190-200, who puts Herodotus in the context of fifth century BCE science. On the relation between the first historians and forensic rhetoric, see Butti de Lima 1996: 79-185; for Thucydides, see also Siewert 1985.

on σημεία and invoked ἐλέγχῃ²⁴ just as orators would strive for ἀλήθεια and ἀκρίβεια.²⁵ The notion of evidence addressed by Isocrates was not put on the agenda by Herodotus and Thucydides, but was an issue simultaneously pondered by orators, philosophers, scientists and historians. In this complex traffic of ideas it is hard to make out the clear-cut dependencies of which older scholarship is so fond. Instead of revealing an Isocratean challenge to Thucydides, the parallel employment of the ‘language of proof’ rather bespeaks the practical relevance of Thucydides’ methodological standards.²⁶

A fragment from Theopompus’ *Philippica* illustrates that the credibility of ancient exempla adduced by orators was indeed a subject for controversy. In the *Progymnasmata* of Theon we find the note that Theopompus blamed the Athenians for concocting (‘καταφύδεται’) the oath of the Greeks before Plataea, a peace with the King (generally identified with the Callias Peace or the Epilycus treaty with Darius in 424/3 BCE) and a wrong account of Marathon:²⁷ “the city of Athens also brags with other stories and deceives the Greeks” (“καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα” φησὶν “ἡ Ἀθηναίων πόλις ἀλαζονεύεται καὶ παρακρούεται τοὺς Ἕλληνας.” *FGrH* 115 F 153).²⁸ The numerous textual and historical problems which this fragment raises need not concern us here.²⁹ Crucial for my argument is that Theopompus seems to take issue with the rhetorical self-fashioning of Athens. According to Theon, Theopompus did not criticize historians, but the city of Athens, which suggests their public orators.

We can even make a conjecture about the context of their references to the documents that are not historical in the eyes of Theopompus. Book 25 from which Theon takes his quotation covers the year 348 BCE, as another fragment reveals.³⁰ In *De falsa legatione* dating from 343 BCE, Demosthenes reports that after the fall of Olynthus in 348 BCE Aeschines agitated against Philip and had the *psephisma* of Miltiades read out to take on the Persians without the Spartans as well as the *psephisma* of Themistocles to vacate Athens and the oath of the epebes (19.303). He swayed the assembly and was elected as one of the ambassadors sent out to the other poleis. The documents called into question by Theopompus are very much like the ones invoked by Aeschines: dating from or pretending to date from the fifth century BCE, they lent themselves to glorifying

²⁴ See, e.g., for σημείον *On ancient Medicine* 14; Melissus DK 30 B 8.1; for ἔλεγχος, Parmenides DK 28 B 7.5; *De diaeta* 1.1.

²⁵ We have very little oratory from the fifth century BCE, but see Antiphon 2.4.1 for ἀλήθεια and 4.3.1 for ἀκρίβεια.

²⁶ Cf. Grethlein 2010: 274-6.

²⁷ The last point is echoed in Plut. *De Herodoti malignitate* 862D.

²⁸ It is worth pointing out that the activities of both ἀλαζόω and παρακρούομαι are reproaches that are levelled against sophistic orators elsewhere, e.g. Isoc. 12.20; 271.

²⁹ See the discussion by Connor 1968: 77-92 and for further literature Flower 1994: 59 n. 60; Gauger 2010: 215-6. On the question of whether Theopompus assumes partial or total forgery of the documents, see Meister 1982: 59-60.

³⁰ Cf. Schaefer 1886: II: 168 n. 2 and 184 n. 1.

Athens' power. Given that book 25 covers the very period in which Aeschines' speech falls, it is a plausible suggestion that Theopompus challenges the historical exempla that were deployed by Aeschines or other speakers to mobilize the assembly after the fall of Olynthus.³¹ Theopompus' critique provides us with a background for Isocrates' concern with the credibility of mythical exempla that must have been even more liable to questioning than references to the fifth century BCE.

Modern scholars have not failed to follow up Theopompus' scepticism. In an important article from 1961, Habicht discusses a number of documents on the Persian Wars, some, including the above-mentioned *psephisma* of Miltiades, only available as literary sources, others also preserved in inscriptions such as the Themistocles-*psephisma*.³² Habicht notes that there is no evidence for most of these documents from the fifth century BCE and argues that they are forgeries mostly of the 340s BCE. Since there is no historian who is likely to be responsible for the invention of all these documents, he proposes that they were brought to life by orators to suit their argumentative needs. Habicht's thesis has triggered a controversial debate. While some scholars elaborated on and expanded his list of forgeries, others were more reserved.³³ Individual cases have been disputed and more generally it has been doubted that, given the ancient attitude towards documents, forgery is an appropriate category. While our understanding of documents requires the original or a copy *ad litteram*, for the Greeks 'only the content mattered, and the form had secondary relevance. The wording did not have to be identical in all details if the most important was said.'³⁴ That being said, some documents such as the Themistocles *psephisma* were undoubtedly invented³⁵ and Theopompus F 153 illustrates that fourth-century Greeks were not insensitive to the issue.

The practice of quoting documents, whether forged or not, reinforces the idea that quibbles about the veracity of historical references were more than a

³¹ Cf. Schaefer 1886: II: 168; Schwartz 1900: 108 n. 4; Jacoby 1929: *ad loc.*; Habicht 1961: 12-3. The other contexts that have been suggested for Theopompus' critique are far less convincing: a retrospect on the relations between Athens, Delphi and the Phocaeans in the Third Holy War (von Fritz 1970: 63); Olympian Games in Macedonian Dion after the capture of Olynthus (Pane 1957: 155-6).

³² Habicht 1961.

³³ Habicht's approach is taken up, e.g., in the contributions to Sordi 1971. For a more sceptical position, see Welles 1966. Thomas 1989: 91-3 reflects critically on the appropriateness of the notion of forgery for fourth-century texts. Davies 1996 offers some systematic reflections on the forgery of documents which in his view did not take place in the 340s BCE, as argued by Habicht, but right after 404 BCE (35-6). Robertson 1976 dates the forgeries in the decade from 378-68 BCE. For a survey focussing on possible forgeries of inscriptions, see Chaniotis 1988: 265-77, who presents a four-fold classification that aptly distinguishes between authenticity and historicity.

³⁴ Klaffenbach 1960: 34: 'Für sie kam es allein auf den Inhalt an, und die Form trat hinter ihm zurück. Der Wortlaut brauchte durchaus nicht in allen Einzelheiten identisch zu sein, vorausgesetzt, daß alles Wesentliche gesagt war.' See also Graham 1960: 109-10 for striking examples of this attitude towards documents.

³⁵ Cf. Habicht 1961: 2-11; Braccisi 1968: ???; Chaniotis 1988: 267.

retorical play of Isocrates.³⁶ That the orators cited documents in order to buttress the historicity of past events is made explicit by Lycurgus. After narrating how Pausanias was punished by the Spartans, he mentions that the Spartans made a law ‘concerning all who are unwilling to take risks for the fatherland’ (‘περὶ ἀπάντων τῶν μὴ θελώντων ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος κινδυνεύειν’). He introduces the reading of the law as follows: ‘So that you may know that I have not told a story without proof but one with true examples, take the law for them.’ (‘ἵνα δ’ εἰδῆτε ὅτι οὐ λόγον ἀναπόδεικτον εἴρηκα, ἀλλὰ μετ’ ἀληθείας ὑμῖν παραδείγματα, φέρε αὐτοῖς τὸν νόμον.’ 129).

Walbank notes that ‘in both classical and Hellenistic Greece the past was important not simply as the subject-matter of historians, but also as an element in public life and sentiment. Consciousness of the past penetrated political activity to an extent which would seem strange today.’³⁷ Indeed, the past was omnipresent in ancient Greece, but the past was not a uniform entity and it is possible to differentiate various contexts conducive to the deployment of different parts of it. The larger-than-life frame and the malleability of myth rendered its stories highly suited to entertain audiences and negotiate issues of identity and moral conduct in the elevated settings of the symposium and public ceremonies. They undermined however its value for symbouleutic and forensic oratory. In the antagonistic debates of the assembly and law-court, ancient exempla were open to be challenged as not trustworthy. References to the non-mythical distant past, with notable exceptions such as the Persian Wars, lacked familiarity and were thus in danger of estranging the audience. Proximity to the world of the audience in general increased the persuasiveness of exempla marshalled by orators.

III. MYTH IN DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS

The trope of *praeteritio* signals that the remote past, while less compelling than events closer to the present, was not without argumentative value. Diplomatic controversies in particular feature mythical references.³⁸ A case in point is the famous Delian speech that Hyperides delivered to the Council of the

³⁶ This touches on the complex issue of the status of documents in classical Greece, especially the question as to what extent they were used as evidence. Especially the early historians seem to have made far less use of documents than one might suspect, cf. West 1985 on Herodotus; Smarczyk 2006 on Thucydides; Biraschi 2003 and Rhodes 2007 for surveys. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that in the fourth-century orators used written documents to prove the veracity of their accounts, see Lewis 1992: 12-18; Smarczyk 2006: 496. This use of written evidence has to be viewed against the backdrop of the increasing literacy in fourth-century Athens, as demonstrated by Thomas 1989: 83-93. Sickinger 1999: 173-6 seems to be more optimistic about the use of inscriptions in the fifth century BCE than Thomas. On the status of inscriptions in classical Greece in general, see Lewis 1992; Rhodes 2001.

³⁷ Walbank 2002: 179.

³⁸ Cf. Nilsson 1951: 81; 88; Perlman 1961: 159; Parker 1996: 227. For discussions on the use of myth in diplomatic speeches mostly from the fourth century BCE, see Bickermann 1928: 42-5; Parker 1996: 223-5; Natoli 2004: 67-8.

Delphic Amphictyony to buttress Athens' claims to manage the Apollo temple on Delos. Unfortunately, the speech has not been preserved, but we know from Maximus Planudes: 'striving to show them that the Athenian claims to the Delphic temple reach back far, he makes much use of myth' ('βουλόμενος γὰρ ἐκείνος ἐξ ἀρχαίου δεῖξαι τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τὰ ἐν Δῆλῳ ἱερὰ προσήκοντα πολλῶ κέχρηται τῷ μύθῳ ...', 5.481 Walz). More specifically, a fragment from the speech makes it likely that Hyperides did not fail to capitalize on the foundation of Delos as an Athenian *apoikia* (fr. 72), while another shows that he went back even further to underscore the Athenian claims: the pregnant Leto loosened her girdle at Cape Zoster near Athens and also seems to have passed by the temple of Athena Pronoia (fr. 67). Robert Parker suggests that Hyperides also invoked the mysterious offerings coming from the Hyperboreans via Prasiae and the first pilgrimage to Delos led by Erysichthon, which is mentioned in the contemporaneous *Atthis* by Phanodemus.³⁹

Aeschines provides us with another example of the deployment of mythical references in diplomacy. The speech that he gave as ambassador to Philip in 346 BCE, trying to justify the Athenian claim to Amphipolis, has not been transmitted either,⁴⁰ but in his defence against Demosthenes' charges that he accepted bribery from Philip three years later, Aeschines repeats its argument (2.31):

As to the original founding of the site, the so-called Nine Roads, and the sons of Theseus, one of whom, Acamas, is said to have received this territory as dowry for his wife, these were themes that it was appropriate to narrate at that point and that were dealt with in as much detail as possible; on this occasion, however, I suppose I must cut short my account.

περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς ἐξ ἀρχῆς κτήσεως τῆς χώρας, καὶ τῶν καλουμένων Ἐννεά ὁδῶν, καὶ περὶ τῶν Θησέως παίδων, ὧν Ἀκάμας λέγεται φερνὴν ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ λαβεῖν τὴν χώραν ταύτην, τότε μὲν ἤρμοττέ τε λέγειν καὶ ἐρρήθη ὡς ἐνεδέχeto ἀκριβέστατα, νυνὶ δὲ ἴσως ἀνάγκη συντέμνειν τοὺς λόγους.⁴¹

In his address to Philip, Aeschines thus traced back Athens' title to Amphipolis to Acamas who received the town as dowry for his marriage with the

³⁹ Parker 1996: 224-5.

⁴⁰ Thomas 1989: 69-71 notes that Aeschines' references to decrees are far more sophisticated than those of his contemporaries, as he uses them to establish chronologies and fully exploits the public records as part of his rhetoric.

⁴¹ The qualification ὡς ἐνεδέχeto ἀκριβέστατα reveals the concern with the credibility of mythical references that we have just studied in Isocrates. Concerning the recent events mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, Aeschines assures his audience: 'And for all my statements, I provided as witness the letters of the individuals concerned, the decrees of the people, and Callisthenes' truce.' ('καὶ πάντων ὧν εἶποιμι μάρτυρας τὰς ἐκείνων ἐπιστολάς παρειχόμεναι καὶ τὰ ψηφίσματα τοῦ δήμου καὶ τὰς Καλλισθένους ἀνοχάς.' 2.31).

Thracian princess Phyllis. In *De falsa legatione*, however, he decides not to spell out the mythical stories: ‘What I shall recall is the evidence I provided not from ancient myths but from events in our own time.’ (‘ἅ δὲ ἦν τῶν σημείων οὐκ ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις μύθοις, ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν γεγενημένα, τούτων ἐπεμνήσθη.’ 2.31). While cutting short the mythical part of his argument, Aeschines expands upon the reference he made to the Peace of 371 BCE, notably Amyntas’ vote ‘to join the Greeks in helping the Athenians to capture Amphipolis, Athens’ property’ (‘Ἀμφίπολιν τὴν Ἀθηναίων συνεξαίρειν μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων Ἀθηναίους’, 32). He continues to quote in direct speech his words to Philip: ‘What Amyntas renounced in front of the whole of Greece not only in words but also with his vote, it is not right for you, his son, to lay claim to.’ (‘ὦν δὲ Ἀμύντας ἀπέστη [ὁ Φιλίππου πατήρ] ἐναντίον τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀπάντων οὐ μόνον λόγοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ψήφῳ, τούτων ... σὲ τὸν ἐξ ἐκείνου γεγενημένον οὐκ ἔστι δίκαιον ἀντιποιεῖσθαι.’ 2.33). Carey notes that ‘the argument might well impress an Athenian audience, but it rests on the untested assumption that Athens still “owned” a city that had revolted from it two generations earlier and had never been recaptured’.⁴² Perhaps this argument had been less prominent in the speech levelled at Philip, which, it may be surmised, instead gave more space to the mythical precedent. Different contexts render different parts of the past attractive.

The work of Antipater of Magnesia has been described by Jacoby as ‘übles produkt einer adulatorisch-höfischen historie, das respect vor der Haltung des Isokrates und Theopompos erweckt’ (*FGrH* 69), but one of the few testimonies grants us a further glimpse of the discussion about Amphipolis. In his letter to Philip, Speusippus warmly recommends the historian. One of the points singled out by Speusippus is Antipater’s account of how Heracles freed the area of Amphipolis from Syleus, entrusting it to Dicaeus, but that later ‘Athenians and Chalcidians took Amphipolis that belonged to the Heracleidans’ (‘τὴν δὲ Ἀμφιπολιτῆν Ἡρακλειδῶν οὔσαν Ἀθηναίους καὶ Χαλκιδεῖς λαβεῖν’, 6). Speusippus caps his list of further similar deeds of Heracles with the comment: ‘and this is not a pretext à la Isocrates and not mere noise of names, but words that can aid your empire’ (‘καὶ ταῦτά ἐστιν οὐ πρόφασις Ἰσοκράτους οὐδὲ ὀνομάτων ψόφος, ἀλλὰ λόγοι δυνάμενοι τὴν σὴν ἀρχὴν ὠφελεῖν’, 8). Whilst Hyperides had anchored the Athenian title in the Athenian king Acamas, Antipater would allow the Macedonians to do one better and reach back even further into the past by invoking Heracles. As the controversy about Amphipolis suggests, the mythical past offered diplomatic capital fiercely fought over by speakers.

Does this use of mythical exempla in diplomatic exchanges challenge my thesis that the remote past, while dominating in the festive contexts of poetry and epideictic speeches, was of less value in more pragmatic interactions? Diplomats negotiated the weighty matters of foreign politics and nonetheless seem to have

⁴² Carey 2000: 106 n. 58.

relied on myths. This being said, a further look at *De falsa legatione* intimates that the same reservations applied to the distant past in diplomatic speeches as in other oratory, and that mythical exempla were significant for a specific point that was prominent in diplomatic exchanges. In the paragraphs preceding the passage quoted, Aeschines attempts to prove Athens' *eunoia* and *euergesiai* toward Macedonia. For this, he mentions the support for Amyntas III (2.26), who in the second half of the 380s BCE had lost his power to Argaeus for two years and was then reinstalled with the help of the Athenians. In 368 BCE the Athenian general Iphicrates protected Eurydice and Perdicas against Pausanias (2.27-9). Despite the war Perdicas started with Athens to acquire Amphipolis, the Athenians, victorious in 363/2 BCE, showed *philanthropia* towards Macedonia and granted it a fair truce (30). Given that the Macedonian kings traced their ancestry back to Heracles, it would have been easy to capitalize on mythical stories to highlight Athens' benevolence toward Macedonia.⁴³ And yet, instead of referencing, for example, the reception of the Heraclidae in Athens, Aeschines opts for the history of the last fifty years. Recent events, he obviously sensed, presented more powerful evidence of Athens' helpfulness than the venerable mythical tradition.

References to the ancient past, on the other hand, are found especially where questions of origin are at stake. As Hyperides' *Delian speech* and Aeschines' *Amphipolis speech* illustrate, myths constituted precious capital for claims to land and other titles in foreign affairs.⁴⁴ The distance from the present that in other contexts tended to undermine the relevance of myth increased its value in cases as when the original ownership of a plot of land was being investigated. This value applied not only to conflicting claims to some rights, but also to alliances.⁴⁵ At the conference in Sparta in 371 BCE, for example, the Athenian ambassador Callias strengthened his argument for peace by referring to myth, if we follow Xenophon's account (*Hell.* 6.3.6):

... the first strangers to whom Triptolemus, our ancestor, revealed the mystic rites of Demeter and Core were Heracles, your state's founder, and the Dioscuri, your citizens; and further, that it was upon Peloponnesus that he first bestowed the seed of Demeter's fruit.

... λέγεται μὲν Τριπτόλεμος ὁ ἡμέτερος πρόγονος τὰ Δήμητρος καὶ Κόρης ἄρρητα ἱερὰ πρῶτοις ξένοις δεῖξαι Ἡρακλεῖ τε τῶ ὑμετέρῳ ἀρχηγέτῃ καὶ Διοσκούροιον τοῖν ὑμετέροιον πολίταιν, καὶ τοῦ Δήμητρος δὲ καρποῦ εἰς πρώτην τὴν Πελοπόννησον σπέρμα δωρήσασθαι.

⁴³ For an argument focusing on Heracles as Macedonian ancestor, see Iust. 11.4.5-6, who reports that in 335 BCE the Thebans reminded Alexander that the city he was about to destroy was the birthplace of Heracles.

⁴⁴ Cf. Parker 1996: 227, who balances the use of mythical arguments with the observation that such questions seem to have been decided by considerations of exigency rather than of the past.

⁴⁵ For further examples, see Gotteland 2001: 343-50.

The argument has particular force in the mouth of Callias, a scion of the Ceryces family that traditionally held one of the chief offices at the Eleusinian Mysteries.

While Callias' speech, as reported by Xenophon, presents a mythical precedence for amiable relations between two poleis, myth lent itself in particular to claims to kinship, a connection that was often invoked when favours were being asked.⁴⁶ An inscription from Xanthus reports a late, but striking instance of kinship diplomacy (SEG XXXVIII 1476).⁴⁷ In 206/5 BCE an embassy from Cytinium beseeched Xanthus to support the rebuilding of their wall, tracing back the kinship between the poleis to the age of gods and heroes. While only giving 500 drachmae, the Xanthians went out of their way to record details of the embassy epigraphically, including the references to ancient history in the speech of the Cytinians. In this and other cases of kinship diplomacy, references to origin helped to make claims in the present and thereby rendered the tales of myth precious material.

IV. THE DISTANT PAST IN LYCURGUS' *AGAINST LEOCRATES*

While being most prominent in diplomatic negotiations, references to myth and distant epochs of history are by no means limited to interstate encounters. Take for example Dinarchus' speech against Demosthenes: trying to dissuade the jurors from revising their condemnation of Demosthenes for his role in the Harpalus affair by the Areopag, Dinarchus invokes the trials of Poseidon vs. Ares and the Erinyes vs. Orestes. In both cases, he points out, the persecutors accepted the acquittal of the accused by the Areopag, while Demosthenes is unwilling to bow to its verdict (1.87). Note that Dinarchus does not marshal myth to appropriate the origins of a title, but to have a parallel to the present situation. The comparison with gods and heroes permits him to conclude *a maiore ad minus*. Such references to the remote past, though, are not frequent in our corpus of non-epideictic and non-diplomatic speeches. A noteworthy exception that merits a closer look is Lycurgus' *Against Leocrates*.⁴⁸

In 331 or 330 BCE,⁴⁹ Lycurgus charged in an *eisangelia*-trial the Athenian blacksmith Leocrates with treason for having left Athens in the aftermath of the defeat at Chaeronea (338 BCE). References to the fifth century BCE as well as to the mythical age abound in his speech: Lycurgus touches on Troy and Messene to illustrate the fate of destroyed cities (69), contrasts Leocrates' cowardly departure with the ancestors who left Athens to counter the Persians' attack at Salamis (68-

⁴⁶ On kinship diplomacy in ancient Greece, see Jones 1999 and Clarke 2008: 347-63.

⁴⁷ For the *editio princeps*, with translation and commentary, see Bousquet 1988; for a succinct overview, see Osborne 2011: 108-12.

⁴⁸ On this speech, see Burke 1977; Allen 2000; Engels 2008; Scholz 2009; Steinbock 2011.

⁴⁹ For literature on the date, see Steinbock 2011: 280 n. 1.

70) and praises the empire which their victory helped to establish (72-4). The quotation and discussion of the ephebic oath and the oath sworn by the Greek allies before Plataea (75-82) lead to the exemplum of the mythical king Codrus who sacrificed himself to avert the danger of a Spartan invasion (83-8). A further legendary tale about a pious man who risked his life to save his father from an eruption of Mount Etna underscores the gods' moral concern with human affairs (95-7). The mention of Erechtheus is backed up by a lengthy quotation from Euripides' play (100-1), followed by passages from the *Iliad* (102-3) and Tyrtaeus (105-7). The heroes of the Persian Wars are evoked again as a contrast foil to Leocrates (104; 108-10) before Lycurgus presents a list of exempla of rigorous punishment from the fifth century BCE, namely the general Phrynichus (112-16), Hipparchus, the first Athenian to be ostracized (117-19), the ψήφισμα against deserters issued in the Deceleian War (120-21), a counsellor who was executed on account of having pleaded to accept Mardonius' peace offer (122), the Demophontes decree (124-6) and the Spartan Pausanias (128-29).

The pervasiveness of myth and fifth-century history in our only preserved speech from Lycurgus is striking.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, *Against Leocrates* betrays the same scepticism towards the distant past as other speeches in the fourth century BCE. Lycurgus introduces the reference to Troy and Messene as follows: 'if I can mention the more distant past' ('εἰ καὶ παλαιότερον εἰπεῖν ἐστὶ', 62) and qualifies the quotation of the oath taken before Plataea as 'deeds happened long ago' ('παλαιῶν ὄντων τῶν τότε πεπραγμένων', 80). Likewise, he feels obliged to justify the Sicilian legend: 'There is a story, which, even if it is rather fantastic, is suitable for all you younger men to hear.' ('εἰ γὰρ καὶ μυθωδέστερόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἀρμόσει καὶ νῦν ἅπασιν τοῖς νεωτέροις ἀκοῦσαι', 95). Lycurgus hence shares his contemporaries' qualms about the distant past. His indulgence therein must be explained by the way in which he engages with it.

It is not incidental, I suggest, that two of the qualifications are added to non-Athenian exempla which do not feature acts of virtue that throw into relief Leocrates' alleged crime: Troy and Messene only illustrate the fate of destroyed cities. The piety of the Sicilian may implicitly contrast with Lycurgus' lack of *eusebeia*, but it is primarily invoked to prove divine concern with moral standards in general. It is also noteworthy that the third justification for bringing up ancient history pertains to Plataea, which, being associated with the Spartans, was the least prominent of the great battles against the Persians in Athenian memory.⁵¹

⁵⁰ It is impossible to reach safe conclusions about the role of myth and ancient history in Lycurgus' speeches in general, but there are signs that *Against Leocrates* may not have been that exceptional: our meagre corpus of fragments reveals that in the speech against Lycophron, Lycurgus referred to Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, and to Erichthoneus (F X-XI 6 and 7) while conjuring up the achievements of Pericles at another occasion (F IX 2). It is also worth noting that Hermogenes *Περὶ ἰδεῶν* B p. 416 (H. Rabe p. 402, 14) notes Lycurgus' penchant for digressions on myth, history and poetry in general.

⁵¹ Cf. Jung 2006: 293.

That there are no comparable qualifications for the bulk of Athenian exempla immediately contrasting with Leocrates reveals their special character: Lycurgus marshals past deeds as evidence of standards still valid in the present but flagrantly violated by the accused. The past on which he draws is not past but still present. Besides highlighting the abjectness of Leocrates, the presence of the past helps Lycurgus exert pressure on the jury. He repeatedly reminds the jurors of the paradigmatic significance of their verdict (9; 27; 150; cf. 119; 127). They are deciding not only the fate of an individual, but much more profoundly about whether or not the great patriotic tradition will be continued.

A couple of passages nicely illustrate that Lycurgus evokes a past that he considers still present.⁵² Codrus belongs to the distant age when Athens was still a monarchy, but Lycurgus nonetheless asks: ‘When the Peloponnesians invade Attica, what do your ancestors do, gentlemen of the court?’ (‘ἐμβαλόντων δὲ τῶν Πελοποννησίων εἰς τὴν Ἀττικὴν, τί ποιοῦσιν οἱ πρόγονοι ὑμῶν, ἄνδρες δικασταί;’ 85)? Present tense, the reference to ‘your ancestors’ instead of the king and the direct address to the jurors help to obliterate the boundary between mythical and democratic Athens. The past is endowed with presence so that it does not surprise when Lycurgus goes on to describe the decision of the mythical Athenians in light of Leocrates’ treason (85):

They did not abandon the country, as Leocrates did, and flee, nor did they betray the land that had nourished them and its temples to the enemy. No, although few in number, they were cut off and besieged and endured hardship for their country.

οὐ καταλιπόντες τὴν χώραν ὡσπερ Λεωκράτης ᾤχοντο, οὐδ’ ἔκδοτον τὴν θρηψαμένην καὶ τὰ ἱερά τοῖς πολεμίοις παρέδοσαν, ἀλλ’ ὀλίγοι ὄντες κατακλεισθέντες ἐπολιορκοῦντο καὶ διεκαρτέρουν εἰς τὴν πατρίδα.

In 69, Lycurgus raises the question: ‘What man is so grudging or so completely lacking in ambition that he would not pray to have taken part in their great deeds?’ (‘τίς δ’ οὕτως ἢ φθονερός ἐστιν ἢ παντάπασιν ἀφιλότιμος, ὃς οὐκ ἂν εὐξαιτο τῶν ἐκείνοις πεπραγμένων μετασχεῖν;’). So close is the battle of Salamis that present-day Athenians could, it seems, step into it without further ado. The heroes of Salamis are inversely imagined to consider Leocrates’ flight: ‘Would any of these men of old have perhaps tolerated such a crime? Wouldn’t they have stoned to death the man who brought shame on their own courage?’ (‘ἢ που ταχέως ἂν ἠνέσχετό τις ἐκείνων τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοιοῦτον ἔργον, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἂν κατέλευσαν τὸν καταισχύνοντα τὴν αὐτῶν ἀριστείαν;’ 71)? In accordance

⁵² See also Steinbock 2011, who argues that Codrus was an eponymic age-set hero (283-306) and traces ephebic themes throughout the speech that would have strongly resonated with the Athenian audience (306-11).

with this interweaving of past and present, Lycurgus muses that in 338 BCE even ‘the countryside was sacrificing its trees, the dead their tombs’ (‘ἡ μὲν χώρα τὰ δένδρα συνεβάλλετο, οἱ δὲ τετελευτηκότες τὰς θήκας’, 43). Lycurgus on the other hand is blamed for returning to Athens without feeling shame when he passes the tombs as if they could chide him (45, see also 142). The dead are re-awakened just as the landscape is personified.

The significance of a past still present is reflected in the samples of poetry that Lycurgus inserts into his speech. The samples are obviously chosen to throw into relief Leocrates’ depravation and its danger for the polis: the justification that Praxithea gives for the sacrifice of her daughter on behalf of the polis contrasts effectively with Leocrates’ disavowal of Athens. Likewise, Hector’s appeal to face death in order to protect family and home zeros in on the loyalty that Leocrates should have shown. Tyrtaeus, heavily drawing on the epic model, not only lavishes praise on those dying for their polis, but also condemns the kind of flight of which Lycurgus accuses Leocrates (107):

But it is most wretched of all if he leaves behind
His city and rich fields and goes begging,
Wandering with his mother and old father, with
His small children and his wedded wife.
He will be hated by all those whomever he meets,
Yielding to poverty and hateful need;
He brings shame on his family, disgrace to his noble shape;
Complete dishonor and wretchedness follow him.
ἦν δ’ αὐτοῦ προλιπόντα πόλιν καὶ πίονας ἀγρούς
πτωχεύειν πάντων ἔστ’ ἀνιηρότατον,
πλαζόμενον σὺν μητρὶ φίλῃ καὶ πατρὶ γέροντι
παισὶ τε σὺν μικροῖς κουριδίῃ τ’ ἀλόχῳ.
ἐχθρὸς μὲν γὰρ τοῖσι μετέσσειται, οὓς κεν ἴκηται
χρημοσύνη τ’ εἴκων καὶ στυγερῇ πενίῃ,
αἰσχύνει δὲ γένος, κατὰ δ’ ἀγλαὸν εἶδος ἐλέγχει,
πᾶσα δ’ ἀτιμὴ καὶ κακότης ἔπεται.

It seems that later Lycurgus even echoes specifically Tyrtaeus’ dark sketch of the fate of the refugee when he comments on Leocrates’ exile: ‘For this reason no city has allowed him to live there as a metic, but they have driven him out as if he were worse than a murderer.’ (‘τοιγαροῦν οὐδεμία πόλις αὐτὸν εἶασε παρ’ αὐτῇ μετοικεῖν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τῶν ἀνδροφόνων ἦλανεν, εἰκότως.’ 133).

As much as the quotations from Euripides, Homer and Tyrtaeus resonate with the case of Lycurgus, it is important to take into account also the framework in which they are set. Euripides, Lycurgus writes, chose the Erechtheus myth as a paradigm through which the Athenians ‘would get accustomed to love their

fatherland with their souls' ('συνεθίζεσθαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὸ τῆν πατρίδα', 100). The didactic intention that is here still vague ('These verses, gentlemen, formed part of our fathers' education.' – 'Ταῦτα ὧ ἄνδρες τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν ἐπαίδευε.' 101) is specified in the case of Homer (104):

Your ancestors listened to these verses and were eager to imitate such deeds; they were so courageous that they were willing to die not only for their own country but for all of Greece as if it were their own land. When they took their stand against the barbarians at Marathon and defeated an army from all of Asia, by risking their own lives they gained a security that was shared by all Greeks. Their fame did not make them arrogant but inspired them to live up to their reputation. They made themselves leaders of the Greeks and masters over the barbarians.

Τούτων τῶν ἐπῶν ἀκούοντες ὧ ἄνδρες οἱ πρόγονοι ὑμῶν, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἔργων ζηλοῦντες, οὕτως ἔσχον πρὸς ἀρετὴν, ὥστ' οὐ μόνον ὑπὲρ τῆς αὐτῶν πατρίδος, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης <τῆς> Ἑλλάδος ὡς κοινῆς <πατρίδος> ἤθελον ἀποθνήσκειν. οἱ γοῦν ἐν Μαραθῶνι παραταξάμενοι τοῖς βαρβάροις τὸν ἐξ ἀπάσης τῆς Ἀσίας στόλον ἐκράτησαν, τοῖς ἰδίοις κινδύνοις κοινὴν ἄδειαν ἅπασιν τοῖς Ἑλλησικτῶμενοι, οὐκ ἐπὶ τῇ δόξῃ μέγα φρονοῦντες, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ ταύτης ἄξια πράττειν, τῶν μὲν Ἑλλήνων προστάτας, τῶν δὲ βαρβάρων δεσπότης ἑαυτοὺς καθιστάντες.

Lycurgus presents the *Iliad* as the source that inspired the exemplary deeds at Marathon. By the same token, Tyrtaeus' elegies impelled the Spartans to achieve greatness, notably the defence of Greece at Thermopylae: 'The men who heard them were so inspired to bravery that they competed with our city for leadership and rightly so ...' ('οὕτω τοίνυν εἶχον πρὸς ἀνδρείαν οἱ τούτων ἀκούοντες, ὥστε πρὸς τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν περὶ τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἀμφισβητεῖν, εἰκότως.' 108). Aware of the potentially estranging effect that a Spartan exemplum may have on his Athenian audience (128), Lycurgus emphasizes that the Spartans 'were not as lucky' ('ταῖς ... τύχαις οὐχ ὁμοίαις ἐχρήσαντο') as the Athenians (108) and subscribes to the tradition that Tyrtaeus was an Athenian whom the Spartans made their general following the Pythia's advice (106). Besides furnishing the still valid ethics that Leocrates had compromised, the quotations from Homer and Tyrtaeus are thus presented as the force behind the exemplary comportment in the Persian Wars. Poetry not only 're-presents' the past, but also helps to sustain the continuation of its spirit.

The poetic samples in *Against Leocrates* are often only seen as a welcome addition to the remaining fragments of Euripides and Tyrtaeus. They warrant however attention in and of themselves for their function just mentioned reveals

that Lycurgus' speech is more sophisticated than scholars are willing to admit.⁵³ I suggest that the quotations offer a meta-rhetorical reflection and can be interpreted as a *mise-en-abîme*. Scholars have not hesitated to read *Against Leocrates* as part of Lycurgus' restoration programme. Burke, for example, argues that, together with Demosthenes' speech *On the Crown*, it attests the attempt to recover a role for Athens outside the shadow of Macedonia.⁵⁴ I am not sure about the exact political context of these efforts, but in my interpretation the poetic samples are a signal, encapsulated in the speech, that its goal extends beyond the persecution of an individual. Lycurgus marshals the exempla of ancient virtue not only to highlight by contrast Leocrates' guilt, but also to spur their imitation by his audience just as Homer and Tyrtæus provided the spirit for the Persian Wars. The effect of poetry as conceived of by Lycurgus thus mirrors the impact that he envisages for his exempla-laden speech.

Lycurgus' reflections on the function of poetry corroborates this reading (102):

... the laws because of their brevity do not teach but merely order what one should do; the poets, on the other hand, by representing human life and selecting the noblest deeds, persuade men by using both reason and clear examples.

οἱ μὲν γὰρ νόμοι διὰ τὴν συντομίαν οὐ διδάσκουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐπιτάττουσιν ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν, οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ μιμούμενοι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον, τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ἔργων ἐκλεξάμενοι, μετὰ λόγου καὶ ἀποδείξεως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους συμπεΐθουσιν.

Lycurgus himself lays claim to the activity of διδάσκειν which is here ascribed to the poets (13; 111). In 124, Lycurgus even links it with his presentation of paradigms: 'teaching with many examples makes your decision easy' ('τὸ γὰρ μετὰ πολλῶν παραδειγμάτων διδάσκειν ῥαδίαν ὑμῖν τὴν κρίσιν καθίστησι.' 124). Moreover, whilst here arguing that the laws are complemented by poetry, Lycurgus also classes them together with prosecutor and jury as what 'protects and saves the democracy and the fortune of the polis' ('διασώζει τὴν δημοκρατίαν καὶ τὴν τῆς πόλεως εὐδαιμονίαν') in 3-4. That both the poet as well as the prosecutor together with the judges, are alternatively named as reinforcing the guidance provided by the laws for the polis underscores the parallel between them. Besides reporting and convicting criminals, prosecutor and juror also fulfil the function that is assigned to poetry: not only Euripides strives to pick the 'noblest paradigm' ('κάλλιστον ... παράδειγμα', 100), but also Lycurgus throughout his speech and explicitly so when he refers to the Areopag as 'noblest paradigm' ('κάλλιστον ... παράδειγμα', 12), while the

⁵³ Allen 2000 is a noteworthy exception.

⁵⁴ Burke 1977. For a critique of Burke, see Scholz 2009: 182 with further literature in n. 44.

jurors are repeatedly reminded of the paradigmatic function their decision will have.⁵⁵

The use of the superlative form of *καλός*, rare in forensic speeches,⁵⁶ indicates that the function ascribed to poetry and oratory ultimately challenges the *logos-ergon* dichotomy, which Lycurgus wields to flag the gravity of Leocrates' crime, e.g. in 71: 'Since they considered it justified to take revenge for just a speech, wouldn't they certainly have punished with the harshest penalties the man who by his actions betrayed his country into the hands of the enemy?' ('ὅπου δὲ καὶ τοῦ λόγου τιμωρίαν ἤξιουν λαμβάνειν, ἢ που τὸν ἔργῳ παραδόντα τὴν πόλιν ὑποχείριον τοῖς πολεμίοις οὐ μέγαις ἂν ζημίαις, ἐκόλασαν;').⁵⁷ *Κάλλιστον* not only applies to the paradigm presented by the orator, but also to the deeds as illustrated in the passage quoted above (102) and the rant against those who dare to compare Leocrates' flight with the departure of the heroes of Salamis: 'This man is so foolish and holds you in such complete contempt that he thinks it right to compare the noblest of deeds with the most shameful.' ('καὶ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἀνόητος καὶ παντάπασιν ὑμῶν καταπεφρονηκώς, ὥστε τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν ἔργων πρὸς τὸ ἀσχιστον συμβαλεῖν ἤξιωσε.' 68). Not only do the noblest deeds translate directly into the noblest paradigms praised in oratory, but by provoking great actions the paradigms further blur the boundary between word and deed: 'choosing the noblest of actions' ('τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ἔργων ἐκλεξάμενοι'), the poets 'convince the people with word and presentation' ('μετὰ λόγου καὶ ἀποδείξεως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους συμπεῖθουσιν', 102) and inversely the ancestors, 'hearing these words' ('τούτων τῶν ἐπῶν ἀκούοντες'), 'are eager to imitate such deeds' ('τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἔργων ζηλοῦντες', 104). This destabilization of the *logos-ergon* dichotomy is crucial to the presence of the past for which I have argued. When the mimesis of past deeds in poetry and oratory triggers their imitation by new deeds, then the past does not pass, but continues to live in the dialectic of *logos* and *ergon*.

These observations may help to explain the massive deployment of the distant past in *Against Leocrates* that jars with the general preference for recent exempla in forensic and symbouleutic speeches. Not all ancient deeds marshalled by Lycurgus feature in the *epitaphioi logoi* – Codrus, for example, is a noteworthy absence – but others such as the Persian Wars do. More importantly, Lycurgus' attitude toward the past is strongly reminiscent of the epideictic take on history.⁵⁸ The notion of tradition aligns *Against Leocrates* with the funeral speeches, which sketch Athenian history as a continuum of virtuous deeds stretching from the past to the present. As I have argued elsewhere, the funeral speeches also present themselves as part of the dialectic between *logos* and *ergon* that is the engine of

⁵⁵ See above.

⁵⁶ Allen 2000: 20-1.

⁵⁷ See also 116; 123; 127 and for other uses of the *logos-ergon* dichotomy 29; 102.

⁵⁸ Stylistic parallels to the *epitaphioi logoi* are pointed out by Petrie 1922: xxxiii-xxxiv; Allen 2000: ???

Athens' glorious history.⁵⁹ The manner in which this view of the past is used rhetorically differs however in *epitaphioi logoi* and *Against Leocrates*. The former, glorifying the war dead, use it to compensate the individual experience of contingency with the unbroken continuum of the polis; the latter deploys it to chastise Leocrates. That being said, at a deeper level both are aligned in their admonition of the audience to keep the flag of Athens' virtue flying. Lycurgus shares, as we have seen, the scepticism about the ancient past pervading forensic and symbouleutic oratory, but, following the practice of epideictic oratory, he turns to it to find edifying exempla that suit the needs of the present. While of lesser value for other argumentative needs, the larger-than-life frame of the ancient past lent itself to providing paradigms of exemplary conduct.⁶⁰

V. CHALLENGING THE VALUE OF THE PAST IN ANCIENT GREECE AND TODAY

Myth, endowed with much authority in the symposium and at festivals and predominant in poetic genres, was less popular in oratory. As we have seen, mythical exempla were used to buttress diplomatic claims and myth was well-suited to enchant the audiences of epideictic performances, but the assembly and the courtroom showed in general a preference for the recent past. At first sight, this reticence on myth as well as distant history is reminiscent of the modern disregard for the topos of *historia magistra vitae*. It is not incidental that Ford refers to ancient Greece to support his assertion that 'history is bunk'. If our attempts to learn from history are not limited to contributing to the formation of our identities and to enhancing our understanding of the world in general,⁶¹ but dare to evoke specific events as foils to the present, then we tend to concentrate on recent events. A case in point is the infamous Chequers affair in 1990. Margaret Thatcher had invited the country's big shot historians to discuss what history could teach about Germany and the character of its people.⁶² When the minutes of the meeting was leaked to the press, several less than favourable comments on the German national character caused a scandal. Concerning history, the discussion foregrounded recent events, notably the Third Reich and the decades after it. It is

⁵⁹ Cf. Grethlein 2010: 117-21; 123-5.

⁶⁰ In this context, it is worth noting the tendency to elaborate on the deeds of *honorandi* in honorary decrees of the Lycurgean era, cf. Rosen 1987 and Lambert 2011, who observes 'a particularly heightened sense of the need for a paideutic engagement with the past and the capacity of inscriptions, particularly (though not only) inscriptions placed on the acropolis, to contribute to the fulfilment of that need at both monumental and textual levels.'

⁶¹ For a survey of such toned down versions of the topos of *historia magistra vitae*, see Kocka 2005. It is however important to note that the early modern age already saw a surge of scepticism about exemplary uses of the past, see Burke 2011. For some further philosophical reflections on the fate of the topos *historia magistra vitae* in the modern age, see Bubner 2000.

⁶² For the minutes of the meeting published in *Der Spiegel* of July 16, 1990, see Wengst 1992: 122-8. For comments of the participants of the meeting, see Craig 1990; Ash 1992; Stone 1992; Stern 1992.

emblematic that the ‘Reichsgründung’ in 1871, but no other potential parallels from early modern or even medieval Germany were discussed as foils to the current process of German re-unification that caused the British Prime Minister so much discomfort.⁶³

And yet, the modern reluctance to derive lessons from the past, especially distant times, is distinct from the tendency of ancient orators to privilege recent exempla.⁶⁴ A quotation from Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* illustrates that it is rooted in a different concept of history: ‘Rulers, statesmen and nations are often advised to learn the lesson of historical experience. But what experience and history teach is this – that nations and governments have never learned anything from history or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it. Each age and each nation finds itself in such peculiar circumstances, in such a unique situation, that it can and must make decisions with reference to itself alone (and only the great individual can decide what the right course is). Amid the pressure of great events, a general principle is of no help, and it is not enough to look back on similar situations [in the past]; for pale recollections are powerless before the stress of the moment, and impotent before the life and freedom of the present.’⁶⁵

The distance of the mythical age and the fifth century BCE was one of the reasons that prompted fourth-century orators to favour exempla from contemporary history, but the modern emphasis on the individual character of each age strikes a different chord. For the ancient orators, temporal proximity heightened the persuasiveness of their exempla just as exempla from their own history were felt to be more compelling than those from alien poleis. The modern reservations against learning from the past are more profound. Beginning with Enlightenment historiography and then reinforced by the movement of Historicism, history started to be conceptualized as a unified process with a dynamic of its own.⁶⁶ This ‘temporalization of history’ created a strong awareness of the individual character of ages that undermined the value of juxtaposition of events across ages. The qualitative difference between past and present that makes the moderns question the didactic function of history is far more unsettling than

⁶³ Cf. Craig 1991: 620.

⁶⁴ For the following, see also Grethlein 2010: 281-90. In Grethlein 2011, I compare the ambiguity of exempla in Herodotus and Thucydides with the modern scepticism about lessons to be learnt from history.

⁶⁵ Hegel 1970 [1837]: 17: ‘Man verweist Regenten, Staatsmänner, Völker vornehmlich an die Belehrung durch die Erfahrung der Geschichte. Was die Erfahrung aber und die Geschichte lehren, ist dieses, dass Völker niemals etwas aus der Geschichte gelernt und nach Lehren, die aus derselben zu ziehen gewesen wären, gehandelt haben. Jede Zeit hat so eigentümliche Umstände, ist ein so individueller Zustand, dass in ihm aus ihm selbst entschieden werden muss und allein entschieden werden kann. Im Gedränge der Weltbegebenheiten hilft nicht ein allgemeiner Grundsatz, nicht das Erinnern an ähnliche Verhältnisse, denn so etwas wie eine fahle Erinnerung hat keine Kraft gegen die Lebendigkeit und Freiheit der Gegenwart.’ Translation from Nisbet 1975: 21.

⁶⁶ See especially Koselleck 1979: 17-37.

the pre-eminently quantitative difference that led ancient orators to search for recent instead of ancient exempla.

Certainly the notion of progress was not unknown in classical Greece⁶⁷ and the play with heroic and contemporary codes in some tragedies attests a feeling for the gap that separates the present from the mythical era.⁶⁸ Just think of the Sophoclean *Philoctetes*: clashing with Odysseus' utilitarian ethics that smacks of the ideas of the contemporary sophists, Philoctetes' heroic values appear not only overtly rigorous, but may also seem dated, if not anachronistic. That being said, as Christian Meier demonstrated, the notions of change and improvement thriving especially in the fifth century BCE did not amount in any way to something similar to modern concepts of progress.⁶⁹ Linked to changes experienced and rarely encompassing such crucial areas as ethics, society and economy, the ancient 'Könnens-Bewußtsein' did not produce an abstract and all-embracing concept of progress that would extend to the future. Accordingly, no term emerged that, equivalent to our 'history', would have signified *res gestae* as a single inherently dynamic process.⁷⁰ The observation of changes did not challenge the plausibility of exemplary history as the example of Thucydides demonstrates: in his *Archaeology*, he astutely notes the differences between archaic and contemporary Greeks, paying heed to customs and infrastructure. Nevertheless he does not shy away from paralleling the heroic expedition to Troy with the Peloponnesian War.⁷¹ What is more, referring to the ἀνθρώπινον, he programmatically announces his conviction that his account can impart precious lessons to future generations (1.22.4).⁷²

How far does this thesis about different attitudes to past and present extend? While trying to do justice to the variety of attitudes in different genres, I have focused on texts of the Classical Era. Subsequent times, however, saw profound changes. Recent work has started to explore in particular the complexities of the references to the Classical past that are so pervasive in Imperial literature.⁷³ One of the points noted is an increasing awareness of the gap separating the present from the past. And yet, the often playful, sometimes subversive engagement with the classical past notwithstanding, it retained, even heightened its force as model for the present. That the difference between ancient

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Edelstein 1967; Dodds 1973; Meier 1980: 186-221. D'Angour 2011 produces much rhetorical self-fashioning, but little that is new.

⁶⁸ See Neumann 1995 on Euripides and Altmeyer 2001 on Sophocles.

⁶⁹ Meier 1980: 435-99.

⁷⁰ Meier assumes that the Greek notion of time was too weak to generate the idea of history as a directional process. The opposite is true, I think. It is the force of time, especially in the form of chance, that prevents the emergence of a notion of history in the modern sense. Cf. Grethlein 2010: 287 and, more extensively on the example of Homer, 2006: 97-106.

⁷¹ Cf. Kallet 2001: 97-112.

⁷² Cf. Grethlein 2010: 268-79.

⁷³ For the prominence of the past in Imperial literature and culture, see Bowie 1970; Swain 1996: 65-100. On the many facets of the engagement with the past, see, for example, Whitmarsh 2001: 41-89; Kim 2010. In this volume, see the papers by Caspar and Kim.

and modern uses of exempla for which I have argued also applies at least to some Imperial authors is illustrated by a passage taken from Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft* (814a):

... the officials in the cities, when they foolishly urge the people to imitate the deeds, ideals, and actions of their ancestors, however unsuitable they may be to present times and conditions, stir up the common folk and, though what they do is laughable, what is done to them is no laughing matter, unless they are merely treated with utter contempt.

... οἱ δ' ἄρχοντες ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀνοήτως τὰ τῶν προγόνων ἔργα καὶ φρονήματα καὶ πράξεις ἀσυμμέτρους τοῖς παροῦσι καιροῖς καὶ πράγμασιν οὔσας μιμεῖσθαι κελεύοντες ἐξαίρουσι τὰ πλήθη, γελοῖά τε ποιοῦντες οὐκέτι γέλωτος ἄξια πάσχουσιν, ἂν μὴ πάνυ καταφρονηθῶσι.

The critique of exempla that are 'unsuitable to present times and conditions' seems to anticipate the modern awareness of the autonomy of historical epochs, but Plutarch goes on (814a-b):

Indeed there are many acts of the Greeks of former times by which the statesman can recount to mould and correct the characters of our contemporaries, for example, at Athens by calling to mind, not deeds in war, but such things as the decree of amnesty after the downfall of the Thirty Tyrants ...

πολλὰ γὰρ ἔστιν ἄλλα τῶν πρότερον Ἑλλήνων διεξιόντα τοῖς νῦν ἠθοποιεῖν καὶ σωφρονίζειν, ὡς Ἀθήνησιν ὑπομιμνήσκοντα μὴ τῶν πολεμικῶν, ἀλλ' οἷόν ἐστι τὸ ψήφισμα τὸ τῆς ἀμνηστίας ἐπὶ τοῖς τριάκοντα.

Further instances from the fifth and fourth centuries BCE follow. Far from questioning the logic of an exemplary use of the past, Plutarch takes issue with the character of some exempla that 'make the common folk vainly to swell with pride and kick up their heels' ('οἶδεῖν ποιεῖ καὶ φρυάττεσθαι διακενῆς τοὺς πολλούς', 814c). Despite the feeling of decadence and a stronger awareness of differences between past and present in the Imperial Age, the Classical Era did not cease to serve as a rich source of paradigms in a way that is hard to think of in the Modern Age.

Three points may help to illustrate how the gravitational centre of ancient attitudes toward the past differs from ours. The first is iconography: by and large, ancient artists used the same iconographic typology for distant and recent history. Making a strong case against the assumption that the Boeotian shield serves as a marker of heroic action, Luca Giuliani concludes: 'Archaic vase painting does not

then, include temporal indicators. When, as is so often the case, two fully armed warriors face each other with raised spears, there is nothing in this scene which would force or justify the observer to relate it to a duel between two mythical heroes of the distant past or to a fight in the present. Past and present are not distinguished.⁷⁴ Accordingly, in some cases, scholars do not agree on whether ancient paintings depict mythical or contemporary scenes.⁷⁵ The application of the same iconography to myth and contemporary history betrays an attitude for which qualitative differences between historical epochs do not play a major role.

The same discrepancy between modern and ancient Greek concepts of history comes to the fore in the attitude towards old buildings in the Archaic and Classical Ages. The modern emphasis on the specific character of historical epochs provided the ground for an increasing wish to conserve historical edifices. As Lowenthal notes, the modern historical consciousness ‘heightened concern to save relics and restore monuments as emblems of communal identity, continuity, and aspiration ... Only in the nineteenth century CE did preservation evolve from an antiquarian, quirky, episodic pursuit into a set of national programmes ...’⁷⁶ In ancient Greece, on the other hand, there are only very few signs of deliberate restoration before the Hellenistic age.⁷⁷ While taking a strong interest in the past, ancient Greeks, especially those of the Archaic and Classical Ages, did not foreground its otherness that is crucial for the idea of conservation.

The arguably most salient expression of the modern take on history is the museum. Having its roots in aristocratic collections of the *ancien régime*, the idea of the museum was essentially shaped under the auspices of nineteenth-century Historicism.⁷⁸ There were collections of old items in archaic and classical Greece too, most notably in temples, but they do not constitute museums in our sense.⁷⁹ While our exhibitions introduce the visitor to a world different from hers, temple collections were inextricably linked with the legitimizing needs of the present.⁸⁰ Showing how the Lindian Chronicle served to embed Lindus in important traditions, Robin Osborne notes: ‘These dedications are spoils from the past, appropriating both epic and history, not to commemorate past deeds by others, but

⁷⁴ Giuliani 2010: 49.

⁷⁵ Cf. Grethlein 2010: 285-6.

⁷⁶ Lowenthal 1985: xvi-xvii. On the idea of restoration and the modern age, see, for example, Althöfer 1987; Wagner 1988.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dally (forthcoming). It was, however, common practice to reuse material from older temples in Greek sanctuaries, cf. Miles 2011: 670-2.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Sheehan 2000.

⁷⁹ For a diachronic overview of practises of collecting from antiquity to the present, see Pearce 1995. It seems that the in the Hellenistic and the Imperial Ages collections became much more similar to our idea of the museum, cf. Bounia 2004: 19. See also Rutledge 2012 on ‘ancient Rome as a museum’ and Miles 2008 on ‘art as plunder’.

⁸⁰ Needless to say, modern museums also generate some kind of cultural capital, in the nineteenth century CE in particular for the bourgeoisie (for a Foucaultian approach to the ‘birth of the museum’, see Bennett 1995), but their primary or at least their professed intention is the exhibition of objects as representations of the past.

to show off Lindos' present pre-eminence.'⁸¹ Modern museums as well as restoration programmes are at least partly motivated by the sense of a rupture that separates the present from the past. The little prominence of both in archaic and classical Greece bespeaks the approach to the past that we have noticed in Lycurgus' speech against Leocrates: here, the past is still present in the form of tradition. Needless to say, there is a strong concern with traditions in our days that prompted Lowenthal to speak of a heritage crusade.⁸² Inversely, ancient Greeks could highlight the gap that separated them from the past; as we have seen, the Attic orators were at pains to find exempla close to the here and now. These and further qualifications notwithstanding, modern and ancient ideas of history are balanced differently. To the Greeks, the past was far less of a foreign country. The orators' preference for recent exempla not only co-exists with the prominence of myth in festivals and symposium, but also has roots different from the modern unease with ancient exempla.

Notes:

Clarke 2008: 251: emphasis on recent past unlike in local historians with penchant for remote past

- Clarke 2008: 257, 279f.: Dem., *de falsa leg.* 16, 307: chastising Aeschines for tendency to forget ancestors

- Clarke 2008: 251: private speeches nearly devoid of historical references

- Isocr. 4,8: casting recent past in mythical mould

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⁸¹ Osborne 2011: 118. On the Lindian Chronicle in general, see Higbie 2003.

⁸² Lowenthal 1996.

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