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PREFACE

This volume examines various aspects of contemporary historiography in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. The term ‘contemporary historiography’ (Jacoby’s *Zeitgeschichte*) is usually applied to historical works that cover, in whole or in part, the periods of time through which the historians themselves lived. These works are typically valued for their proximity to the events they narrate, though they are not without their problems of interpretation. Through various devices, authors might attempt to give the impression of eyewitness status even when they themselves were not present; contemporary events could shift authors’ point of view and compel them to provide unrealistic or biased accounts; and memories of eyewitnesses were not always sharp. The papers in this volume examine how we might read and understand histories of this type. They demonstrate how contemporary historiography was practiced across time and how it was a constantly evolving part of the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition.

The papers on Herodotus and Thucydides, Julius Caesar, Cassius Dio, and Herodian originated in a session held at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Classical Studies in San Diego in 2019. To the original four papers presented there have been added chapters on Ptolemy I Soter, Sallust, and Tacitus.

My thanks go to the contributors to this supplement, for their dedication and persistence, and to John Marincola, for his help and patience in bringing this work to publication. I also thank the anonymous reviewers, who offered many criticisms and suggestions for the improvement of this volume as a whole.

A.G.S.
Philadelphia, November 2022

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BEING THERE: THREE EXAMPLES OF BRIEF DIALOGUE IN HERODOTUS AND THUCYDIDES*

Christopher Baron

Abstract: Though the idea of ‘eyewitness history’ held a central importance from the beginning, Greek historical writing did not typically feature the explicit citation of evidence provided by an eyewitness to an event. Rather, the Greek historians utilised a narrative style which elided any conceptual distance between the reader and the action. This narrative fiction raises the possibility of a different meaning for ‘eyewitness history’, one that shifts emphasis from the sources to the audience. In this essay, I examine three passages containing direct speech found in Herodotus and Thucydides which stand out from their surroundings in various ways. I suggest that the notion of ‘eyewitness history’ in its more reader-orientated sense may help explain the uncommon nature of these brief dialogues.

Keywords: Dialogue; Herodotus; Sources; Speeches; Thucydides; Vividness

The idea of ‘eyewitness history’ held a central importance from the beginning of the Greek tradition of historiography. Herodotus at various points emphasises his autopsy—not of events, obviously, since those he narrates took place at an earlier time, but of places and objects. Thucydides is able to position himself closer to his subject, given the contemporary events he writes about, and he underlines this fact in his

* I would like to thank Andrew Scott for his comments on a draft of this paper, as well as his vision, organisation, and patience in bringing this volume together. Audiences at the University of Notre Dame (October, 2018), the Society for Classical Studies San Diego meeting (January, 2019), and the University of Southern Denmark (November, 2019) heard versions of this paper or portions of others that have been incorporated here; my thanks especially to Lisa Hau, N. Bryant Kirkland, Lydia Spielberg, and Justin Yolles for their comments. And, as always, Jessica Baron’s keen and critical eye contributed valuable improvements.

opening sentence (and his second preface in Book 5). However, in practice, the explicit citation of evidence provided by an eyewitness to an event was not as prominent a feature of Greek historical writing as a modern historian, or a reader of modern works of history, might expect.¹ To whatever extent any ancient historian takes pains to note eyewitness evidence, they all as a rule utilise a narrative style which does, in fact, elide any conceptual distance between the reader/listener and the action. They write, ‘Such and such person/people did *x*’, without constantly reminding their audience of the source(s) of their knowledge for the event. Thus, while Thucydides claims in general to have witnessed the events of the war, only once does he explicitly place himself at the scene of the action (the loss of Amphipolis under his watch).²

This narrative fiction allows Greco-Roman historiography to take the form it does, of a generally continuous story told by a generally omniscient narrator.³ But it also raises the possibility of a different meaning for ‘eyewitness history’, one that shifts emphasis from the sources to the audience. The goal of much ancient Greek and Roman historical writing was not to present the reader/listener with eyewitnesses to events; rather, it was to produce a narrative which made the audience feel as if they were an eyewitness, a narrative whose vividness placed the scene before their eyes.⁴ Arguably one of the most memorable passages of ancient historiography is Thucydides’ account of the battle in the Great Harbour at Syracuse (7.71).

¹ See Pitcher (2009) 57–64 on eyewitnesses and autopsy in the Greek and Roman historians; Walker (1993) 373 on the importance of eyewitness history from the beginning of the genre. I am not concerned here with ‘autopsy’ as part of historical method, on which see Schepens (1980); Darbo-Peschanski (2021) on Herodotus.

² Thuc. 4.104–7, though even this is not strictly an autoptic statement: see Marincola (1997) 182–4.

³ de Jong (2013); Marincola (1997) 80; see Dewald (2006) 170–74 on the similar approaches Herodotus and Thucydides take in this regard. Of course, Herodotus does intrude on the narrative in order to comment on the sources of his knowledge far more frequently than most other ancient historians (on which see Dewald (2002)). Nonetheless, he relies on the narrative fiction described above for a large portion of the story he tells; in addition, those intrusions diminish noticeably in the final three books, which makes the passages I discuss here stand out even more.

⁴ As is the case with speeches (below), the explanation for this approach probably owes a great deal to the epic tradition of telling stories about the past. Boedeker (2002) 106 discusses the similar ‘mimetic quality’ shared by the narratives of Herodotus and Homer; see also Rutherford (2012) and Zangara (2007) 23–5 for the influence of epic on historical writing; Matijašić (2022) 15–22 for a review of scholarship on Homer and Herodotus; on Thucydides, Rengakos (2006).

Thucydides neither places himself at the scene nor cites any source as a witness of this event. But despite the lack of any explicit eyewitness statement, the effect of the passage is that the reader/listener can easily imagine being there.⁵

Now, this sort of vividness is a quality of narrative. But as even a first-time reader of almost any surviving ancient historian will notice, narratorial description is just one part of Greek and Roman historical writing. Direct speeches form another crucial component, composed by the historian and placed in the mouths of the characters in their history. It would of course be overly reductive to use ‘vividness’ to explain this phenomenon: the *purpose* behind Thucydides’ speeches, for example, is not to place his audience on the scene.⁶ Nonetheless, in this essay I want to consider along these lines three passages containing direct speech found in Herodotus and Thucydides which stand out from their surroundings—both the immediate narrative sections and other speeches—in various ways. I want to suggest that the notion of ‘eyewitness history’ in its more reader-orientated sense may help explain the uncommon nature of these brief dialogues within each author’s text.

In Herodotus, the passages I have in mind (8.65 and 9.16) represent just two of the more than 200 ‘dialogues’ in the *Histories*—that is, two or more sets of words spoken by two or more figures occurring together, related by the author in direct or indirect speech.⁷ However, while these two selected chapters share some features common to many of Herodotus’ dialogues, they also exhibit others that are unusual or even unique in the work. Most importantly, in each passage Herodotus names the person who has reported the conversation (not necessarily to him, as we will see): Dicaeus, son of

⁵ See Zangara (2004) and (2007), esp. 55–89, and Walker (1993) on *enargeia* (‘vividness’) in the Greek historians; Pitcher (2009) 84–91 on ‘detail, vividness, autopsy’. All three scholars cite Lucian, *hist. conscr.* 51 for the sentiment: ‘The task of the historian is similar: to give a fine arrangement to events and illuminate them as vividly as possible. And when a man who has heard him thinks thereafter that he is actually seeing what is being described and then praises him—then it is that the work of our Phidias of history is perfect and has received its proper praise’ (Loeb trans. K. Kilburn). Plutarch (*De glor. Ath.* 347A–C) quotes from Thucydides 7.71 to illustrate the historian’s ‘pictorial vividness’ (*γραφικὴ ἐνάργεια*); Dionysius (*Thuc.* 26) quotes 7.69–72 at length as one of the passages most worthy of imitation.

⁶ See Foster (2012) for an enriching discussion of both direct and indirect discourse in the ancient historians. On the role of direct speech in ‘the recreation of reality’ (i.e., *mimesis*) as envisioned by ancient critics, see Gray (1987) 468–72.

⁷ As catalogued and classified by Lang (1984).

Theocydes, an Athenian (8.65); and Thersander, a nobleman of Orchomenus in Boeotia (9.16). As Angus Bowie points out, these are the only two places in the *Histories* where Herodotus allows a *named individual explicitly cited as a source* to give information in ‘his own’ voice at any length.⁸ Moreover, Thersander stands completely alone in combining this element with being one of the three individuals whom Herodotus names as having provided the author with information face-to-face.⁹

Other unusual and important features of these two brief dialogues will be discussed below. A number of scholars have commented on some of these aspects, and/or have brought these two passages together in passing, but for the most part this involves treating them as examples of ‘the speech-power relation in Persia’, as Vasiliki Zali has put it.¹⁰ I propose to examine them in more detail and specifically from the viewpoint of historical method and narrative technique. What is the significance of Herodotus’ decision to reproduce these brief exchanges in direct speech? I want to suggest that, in addition to commonly proposed answers (thematic significance, dramatic concerns, portentous signs, vividness), the unique citations of a participant as a source for the historian have the effect of making the reader (or listener) into an eyewitness—not of an event *per se*, but of a private conversation

⁸ Bowie (2007) 18. There are other important ‘secondary narrators’ in the *Histories*. The Corinthian Socles is perhaps the most notable example, who provides a long speech on the Cypselid tyranny (5.92); but Herodotus does not *cite* Socles (or anyone else) as his source for the speech. The uniqueness of 8.65 and 9.16 is sometimes missed: Gould (1989) 20–1, for example, says that Thersander in the latter passage is ‘*typical* of one sort of informant who *regularly* appears in Herodotus’ work, a notable Greek or non-Greek with whom Herodotus has been able to establish some sort of personal connection’ (my emphasis). Gould goes on to mention four others (see next note), without noting that these are the *only* such *named* individuals in the entire work.

⁹ The other two are Archias, son of Samius (3.55.2), and Tymnes, the steward of the Scythian king Ariapeithes (4.76.6); on these three, cf. the brief discussion of Grant (1967). The only other unambiguously named individual sources are the priestesses at Dodona, Promeneia, Timarete, and Nicandra (2.55, a passage which can be read to imply that Herodotus heard the information from the women themselves) and the Athenian Epizelus (6.117.3). Though he remains unnamed, the scribe of the treasury of Athena at Sais in Egypt (2.28.1) could be added to the list of specified individual informants. See Appendix 1 by Shrimpton and Gillis ap. Shrimpton (1997) 259–65; cf. the groupings provided by Marincola (1987) 122 and n. 5.

¹⁰ Zali (2014) 114–15, in her discussion of the ‘problem of communication’; she does not otherwise address or analyse these two dialogues. See also Scardino (2007) 297; Macan (1908) I.2.455 cites the two passages as evidence for (and examples of) actual Persian feelings of apprehension on the eve of battle.

which sheds light on the nature of history and the historian's task. I will conclude by bringing in for comparative purposes a similar passage in Thucydides. This is a brief dialogue, presented in direct speech, between an Ambraciot herald and an anonymous Acarnanian after a particularly devastating battle in northwest Greece (3.113). I will argue that this essentially unique Thucydidean passage, reminiscent of the Herodotean scenes I will analyse, has structural as well as thematic significance in addition to its eyewitness effect. It also stands out even more from its surroundings given the different texture of Thucydides' work.

The origin and function of direct speech(es) in ancient historiography is a rich and enormous topic and the subject of much debate. The technique was probably borrowed from the epic tradition, which complicates our efforts to discover why it was used by historians in the way and at the times that it was used. Furthermore, while a number of ancient authors offer explicit comments on the speeches found in their or other historians' works, our first extant historian, Herodotus, says absolutely nothing about his own use of this device. Unlike Thucydides, Herodotus offers no general statement of method concerning the place of speeches in his work.¹¹ Instead, in the eighth chapter of his first book, Herodotus introduces the Lydian king Candaules and his obsession with broadcasting his wife's extraordinary beauty:

οὗτος δὴ ὢν ὁ Κανδαύλης ἠράσθη τῆς ἑωυτοῦ γυναικός, ἐρασθεὶς δὲ ἐνόμιζε οἱ εἶναι γυναῖκα πολλὸν πασέων καλλίστην. ὥστε δὲ ταῦτα νομίζων, ἦν γάρ οἱ τῶν αἰχμοφόρων Γύγης ὁ Δασκύλου ἀρεσκόμενος μάλιστα, τούτῳ τῷ Γύγῃ καὶ τὰ σπουδαιέστερα τῶν πρηγμάτων ὑπερετίθετο ὁ Κανδαύλης καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τῆς γυναικὸς ὑπερεπαίνεε. χρόνου δὲ οὐ πολλοῦ διελθόντος, χρῆν γὰρ Κανδαύλη γενέσθαι κακῶς ...

So then, this Candaules developed a passion for his own wife, and in this passion he believed that he had by far the most beautiful wife of all women. Believing this to be so, there was among his bodyguards

¹¹ Cf. Fornara (1983) 143: 'Although it was Herodotus who introduced the direct oration into history..., our proper point of departure is the well-considered decision of Thucydides to continue with its use'. But, especially given the passages I am treating here, we should also note a fragment of Hecataeus quoted by the author of *On the Sublime* ([Long.] *Subl.* 27.1 = *BNJ* 1 F 30), in which Hecataeus apparently included direct speech by a character without any narratorial introduction: see Laird (1999) 90–1.

one he especially liked, Gyges son of Dascylus; to this Gyges, Candaules used to communicate more serious matters, and he especially praised his wife's figure. When not much time had passed (for Candaules was fated to end badly) ...¹²

The author then writes, ἔλεγε πρὸς τὸν Γύγην τοιάδε ('he [sc. Candaules] said the following sorts of things to Gyges')—and suddenly we find direct discourse, immediately marked by a vocative address, a second-person pronoun, and a first-person verb:

Γύγη, οὐ γὰρ σε δοκέω πείθεσθαι μοι λέγοντι περὶ τοῦ εἶδους τῆς γυναικός (ἄτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἔοντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν), ποίει ὅπως ἐκείνην θεήσσαι γυμνήν. ὁ δὲ μέγα ἀμβώσας εἶπε· Δέσποτα, τίνα λέγεις λόγον οὐκ ὑγίεια, κελύων με δέσποιναν τὴν ἐμὴν θεήσασθαι γυμνήν; ἅμα δὲ κιθῶνι ἐκδυομένῳ συνεκδύεται καὶ τὴν αἰδῶ γυνή. ... ὁ μὲν δὴ λέγων τοιαῦτα ἀπεμάχετο, ἀρρωδέων μὴ τί οἱ ἐξ αὐτῶν γένηται κακόν. ὁ δ' ἀμείβατο τοισίδε· Θάρσει, Γύγη ... ἀρχὴν γὰρ ἐγὼ μηχανήσομαι οὕτω ὥστε μηδὲ μαθεῖν μιν ὀφθεῖσαν ὑπὸ σεῦ. ἐγὼ γὰρ σε ἐς τὸ οἴκημα ἐν τῷ κοιμώμεθα ὅπισθε τῆς ἀνοιγομένης θύρης στήσω ...

'**Gyges!** Since **I** don't think **you** are being persuaded by **my** words concerning my wife's figure (for it is true that their ears are less trustworthy to men than their eyes), arrange it so that **you might gaze upon** her naked'. With a loud shout Gyges said, '**Master**, what unhealthy suggestion **do you speak**, bidding me gaze upon my queen naked? A woman slips off her shame along with her clothes' ... He was resisting by saying such things, fearing lest something bad happen to him because of this. But the king responded in this way: 'Take heart, **Gyges** ... to begin with, I will contrive it so that she does not learn that she has been seen by you. For I will station you in the bedroom where we sleep, behind the opened door ...'.¹³

¹² Hdt. 1.8.1–2. Translations of Herodotus are my own unless otherwise noted.

¹³ Hdt. 1.8.2–9.2.

For the modern reader, at least, one effect of this brief dialogue is a feeling of being placed on the scene.¹⁴ We can *envision* the king and his trusted bodyguard exchanging their lines in the palace. True, perhaps we do so under the influence of modern visual media (Hollywood and HBO). But the episode certainly appears more vivid in dialogue fashion than it would if recounted in the omniscient narrator's voice:¹⁵

The king told Gyges that he did not think that Gyges believed what he was saying about his wife's figure (since, he said, men trust their ears less than their eyes), so he ordered Gyges to arrange that he gaze upon her naked. Gyges shouted and responded that the king's request to gaze upon his queen naked was improper; a woman (he said) takes off her shame along with her clothes ...

I think an ancient audience would have felt the same difference: notice that each speaker in Herodotus' dialogue begins his lines with a vocative address (Γύγη ... Δέσποτα ... Γύγη), which must have been striking to the Greek ear after seven chapters of nothing but the narrator's voice. The only other 'voices' we have heard so far have reached us via indirect discourse ('the Persians/Greeks/Phoenicians say that ...').¹⁶

¹⁴ Cf. Laird (1999) 90: with direct discourse, 'a voice other than the narrator's appears to take over and to confront us directly with the world of the story, and sometimes even to put us in it'. Anhalt (2008) 272 describes Candaules as one of the figures in Herodotus who serve as their own 'directors and choreographers of their respective displays', and in this case, the queen subsequently takes over the 'stage director' role. Anhalt also notes (274) that Candaules visualises the scene in more (lascivious) detail than Herodotus narrates it. These various gazes and counter-gazes are another effect of direct discourse, used to good advantage by a narrator whose account consistently leaves open questions surrounding the reliability of evidence.

¹⁵ Compare Dionysius (*Comp.* 3.18), who transfers Herodotus' prose into the Attic dialect but retains the original dialogue format; however, he concludes that 'the story has been told with great dexterity, and has made the incident better to hear described than to see done' (S. Usher, trans. (Loeb)). Plato has Socrates conduct the same experiment I have made (with different goals in mind), turning the first direct speech of *Iliad* I into narrative (*Rep.* 393d–394a).

¹⁶ See Stone (forthcoming) for an intriguing examination of Herodotus' 'oral prose performance', including the possible use of dramatic techniques, in his own voice, when reciting the speeches in his *Histories*.

In the case of Gyges and Candaules, there are other major benefits to portraying the scene as a brief dialogue.¹⁷ Being able to visualise the action is crucial to the audience's understanding of how the affair played out, and thus how the Heraclid dynasty of Lydia came to an end. Gyges' placement behind the door, the queen's placing her clothes on the chair, the chances of slipping out of the room without being seen—all this is clarified and emphasised by the direct speech exchanged between the king and Gyges.¹⁸ At stake is not just knowledge of the logistical details of the scene (the *what* and the *how*), but the answer to the question of *why* Gyges killed his king and a new dynasty was installed in Lydia. Furthermore, their discussion revolves around the act and the concept of viewing and being seen, which itself serves as an important theme throughout the rest of the *Histories*. The brief dialogue here allows Herodotus to install that theme (and others) in the audience's mind, as part of the first historical event he narrates, without having to interrupt that narrative with his own commentary: the action continues to flow, and the audience feels that they are at the scene.¹⁹ Finally, the dialogue format enables a stronger sense of what Mabel Lang calls 'prefiguration'.²⁰ It is the narrator who intervenes (1.8.2) to comment on Candaules' fate, but the direct speech of the dialogue allows the reader/listener to *witness* the king enacting that downfall, through visualisation of his behaviour and through the king's expression of his hubris in his own voice.

By the time the reader/listener has reached Book 8, he or she is well-accustomed to hearing characters in the *Histories* speak in their own voice, without any indication of how the narrator knows what was said. Thus, two brief dialogues in the final two books stand out for the manner in which Herodotus presents them. In the leadup to the Battle of Salamis, just after

¹⁷ See Flory (1987) 30–8 for an excellent discussion of the effect of the contrast between the vast scope and impersonal narrative of Herodotus' first seven chapters and the lively, passionate 'staged scene' of the Gyges and Candaules episode.

¹⁸ Fornara (1983) 166: this and other private conversations delivered in direct speech 'serve an explanatory purpose and further the action of the episode at the same time as they inject vividity and liveliness'. (Note, however, that this statement of Fornara's comes at the end of a rather problematic discussion of Herodotus' speeches in general.) See Schulte-Altdorneburg (2001) 126–31 for an analysis of the Candaules and Gyges episode which highlights the scene's tragic connotations and Herodotus' characterisation of the two figures; cf. Zali (2014) 22.

¹⁹ See Benardete (1969) 11–16 for further discussion of the way in which the Gyges and Candaules episode lays out the path Herodotus will follow in his work; and Mitsios (2016) 4–7 for a recent discussion of the episode in relation to the role of sight in the *Histories*.

²⁰ Lang (1984) 21.

Themistocles' speech persuading the Spartan commander Eurybiades to keep the Greek fleet in the narrow straits, Herodotus devotes a chapter (8.65) to a story told by an Athenian named Dicaeus, son of Theocydes, who had been exiled and gained a good reputation at the Persian court. Dicaeus said (*ἔφη δὲ Δίκαιος*) that he and Demaratus (the exiled Spartan king) happened to be on the Thriasian Plain near Eleusis while the Persians were ravaging Attica. The two men saw a huge dust cloud, such as one that would be kicked up by a large army on the march, and then a great voice which, to Dicaeus, sounded like the 'Iacchus' cry of initiates at the Mysteries (annual rites in honour of Demeter, whose procession ended at her temple in Eleusis). Demaratus, who was not an initiate, asked what the sound was, and Dicaeus responded (*αὐτὸς δὲ εἶπεῖν*). Up to this point, the story has been told in accusative and infinitive after *φημί*, but Herodotus now gives Dicaeus' response as direct speech which begins: 'Demaratus (*Δημάρητε*), this can only be a portent of disaster for the Persian forces ...'. Since Attica has been deserted, Dicaeus concludes, the dust cloud and the voice must be divine. He then, still via direct speech, gives a very brief explanation of the public events surrounding the Mysteries. Next, Herodotus reports, Dicaeus said that Demaratus responded (*πρὸς ταῦτα εἶπεῖν Δημάρητον*) with a warning not to mention this tale to anyone, since if the King were to get wind of it, there would be trouble for him; this too is given as direct speech (*Σίγα τε καὶ μηδενὶ ... εἴπης*). Herodotus as narrator ties off the episode by repeating, 'This is what Dicaeus said' and adding that Dicaeus 'used to appeal to Demaratus and others as witnesses'.²¹ Here are the relevant sections of the Greek (8.65.1–2, 4–6):

ἔφη δὲ Δίκαιος ὁ Θεοκίδεος ἀνὴρ Ἀθηναῖος, φυγὰς τε καὶ παρὰ Μήδοισι λόγιμος γενόμενος, τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον, ἐπεῖτε ἐκείρετο ἡ Ἀττικὴ χώρα ὑπὸ τοῦ πεζοῦ τοῦ Ξέρξεω, εὐῶσα ἔρημος Ἀθηναίων, τυχεῖν τότε ἐὼν ἅμα Δημάρητῳ τῷ Λακεδαιμονίῳ ἐν τῷ Θριασίῳ πεδίῳ, ἰδεῖν δὲ κονιορτὸν χωρέοντα ἀπ' Ἐλευσίνος ὡς ἀνδρῶν μάλιστα κη τρισμυρίων, ἀποθωμάζειν τέ σφεας τὸν κονιορτὸν ὄτεων κοτε εἴη ἀνθρώπων, καὶ πρόκατε φωνῆς ἀκούειν, καὶ οἱ φαίνεσθαι τὴν φωνὴν εἶναι τὸν μυστικὸν Ἰακχον. [2] εἶναι δ' ἀδαήμονα τῶν ἱρῶν τῶν ἐν

²¹ 'Used to appeal': the imperfect reflects the present participle *καταπτόμενος* (§6) modifying the subject of the imperfect verb *ἔλεγε* (Waterfield translates, 'he used to claim ...'). Plut. *Them.* 15.1 includes the vision at Eleusis in his account of the Battle of Salamis, but does not name either of the characters or refer to Herodotus.

Ἐλευσῖνι γινομένων τὸν Δημάρητον, εἰρέσθαι τε αὐτὸν ὃ τι τὸ φθεγγόμενον εἶη τοῦτο. αὐτὸς δὲ εἰπεῖν· Δημάρητε, οὐκ ἔστι ὅπως οὐ μέγα τι σίνος ἔσται τῇ βασιλέος στρατιῇ ... [4] πρὸς ταῦτα εἰπεῖν Δημάρητον· Σίγα τε καὶ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον εἴπης. [5] ἦν γάρ τοι ἐς βασιλέα ἀνενειχθῆ τὰ ἔπεα ταῦτα, ἀποβαλέεις τὴν κεφαλὴν καί σε οὔτε ἐγὼ δυνήσομαι ρύσασθαι οὔτ' ἄλλος ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ εἷς. ... [6] ταῦτα μὲν Δίκαιος ὁ Θεοκύδεος ἔλεγε, Δημαρήτου τε καὶ ἄλλων μαρτύρων καταπτόμενος.

This is, then, a brief dialogue, but the direct speech is deeply embedded in indirect discourse; in addition, the direct speech is presented as having been reported by the person who either originally delivered it ('Dicaeus said that he said [the following]: ...') or who heard it directly from his interlocutor ('To these things, [he said that] Demaratus said [the following]: ...'). The most obvious reading of Herodotus' presentation of this episode, in my opinion, is that he himself heard the tale from Dicaeus, though Herodotus does not state this explicitly.²² It is not the opening of the chapter on its own that gives this impression (*ἔφη δὲ Δίκαιος*), but rather the ending, with its notice that Dicaeus appealed to witnesses.²³ But there are other signs too. The story is attributed to a named individual, rather than introduced with *λέγεται* ('it is said that ...'), as so many others are.²⁴ As noted earlier (see above, n. 9), this is a rare move on Herodotus' part, and the previously named individuals in the *Histories* (the priestesses at Dodona, Archias,

²² A conversation between Herodotus and a descendant of Dicaeus is also possible: Gould (1989) 22. Not all scholars agree with me, e.g., Asheri–Vannicelli (2003) 264, who describe the 'confirmation' of Demaratus' testimony as 'clearly fictitious'. Fehling (1989) 188–9 sees Demaratus' presence on the Thriasian Plain and Herodotus' manoeuvre as an 'unequivocal example' of Herodotus' 'narrative economy'. On the other hand, Waters (1985) 93–4 n. 14 wonders who else Dicaeus would have told the story to. Dover (1998) 223, in his critique of Fehling, writes: 'Conversation, among men of whom some, at least, had distinguished forbears, or had travelled widely, or were simply interested in the past and expected others to be interested, should never be underrated as a medium of oral tradition'. Dicaeus would need to have lived to be an old man for Herodotus to have spoken with him, but no such 'calculations' along these lines can be performed with any certainty.

²³ Macan (1908) I.2.454 disagreed: 'The words with which the anecdote, and the chapter, conclude ... look more like an appeal to the *vox viva*, but are hardly conclusive in this respect, and certainly leave Hdt. himself out of audible range of Dikaios'. But Macan took the initial *ἔφη* to indicate a written source. This line of thinking was taken to its (absurd?) extreme by Trautwein (1890), who posited that Herodotus consulted 'Memoirs of Dicaeus'.

²⁴ Dewald (2002) 275: 111 times, to be precise.

Tymnes, Epizelus) are neither cited for stories of this length nor allowed to speak in their own voices.

Dicaeus' sudden appearance in the narrative is no different from that of the informants named above, nor is the fact that this is his only appearance in the *Histories*. What does make this dialogue even more striking, however, is the identity of his interlocutor. Demaratus, unlike Dicaeus, has been a recurring character since Book 6, and Herodotus has already composed in direct speech three conversations that the former Spartan king had with Xerxes, before and after the battle of Thermopylae (7.101–4, 209, 234–35). So one could imagine introducing the story of the dust cloud from Eleusis via Demaratus: 'Now Demaratus, the exiled Spartan king, happened to be in the Thriasian Plain with an Athenian named Dicaeus ...'. Instead, Herodotus allows the previously unknown Dicaeus to deliver the narrative, first indirectly, then directly. Deborah Boedeker has described Demaratus' disappearance from the text after this episode as 'poignant and fitting'—he has served his purpose as 'a powerful reminder of the ever-potential tragic consequences of division within the Greek world', but now the Greeks are united and ready to fight.²⁵ Thus it is not just the content of the dialogue that bears thematic significance (the Persians' ignorance of their fate, the role of the divine), but its form as well, providing Demaratus one last appearance but in a muted fashion which allows him to exit the stage quietly.

There is nice irony in the fact that Herodotus reports a story which, at the time, could not have been told, as per Demaratus' instructions to Dicaeus to avoid incurring the King's wrath. But Dicaeus' appeal to witnesses indicates that he did tell the tale at some point—perhaps after the battle, and away from the Persian court? As we will see, each of these elements—a private conversation, dangerous to repeat publicly at the time, but followed by a claim to have witnesses to the tale soon thereafter—as well as the overall structure of the passage recur in another example of brief Herodotean dialogue.

In the summer of 479, the Persian general Mardonius constructed a fort along the Asopus River in Theban territory (9.15.2–3). During this period of construction, a Theban named Attaginus hosted an elaborate feast, to which he invited one hundred men: fifty from the Persian high command, and fifty Greek noblemen. Herodotus then offers a rare explicit source citation of a named individual for the rest of the story: 'The following things I heard from Thersander of Orchomenus, a man held in the highest esteem at

²⁵ Boedeker (1987a) 200.

Orchomenus' (9.16.1). Next, we enter indirect discourse (*φημί* plus the accusative and infinitive construction). Thersander told Herodotus that he was among the fifty Greek guests at the dinner, and that each couch was occupied by one Persian and one Theban.²⁶ After dinner, Thersander's partner asked him (in Greek, Ἑλλάδα γλώσσαν ἰέντα) where he was from. Upon receiving the answer, the Persian launched into a dire and tearful prediction of doom for his own side in the upcoming battle, which is given as direct speech (9.16.2–3). A brief question by Thersander is then answered by the Persian, both again given as direct discourse but still introduced by the accusative and infinitive framework (9.16.4). The Persian's final response includes three gnomic statements (9.16.4–5):

Friend, [#1] it is impossible for men to avoid that which the gods have destined to happen; though many Persians know these things, we are bound by necessity to follow [our orders]. [#2] For no one wants to believe even what trustworthy people say. [#3] This is the bitterest pain of all for mankind: to have much knowledge but no power.

The narrator caps off the story, in his own voice, by repeating that he heard this from Thersander; here, he adds that Thersander also said he repeated the story to others already immediately after the fact, before the battle took place at Plataea (9.16.5). I include the Greek of the entire passage here (9.16.1–5):

ἔχόντων δὲ τὸν πόνον τοῦτον τῶν βαρβάρων Ἀτταγίνος ὁ Φρύνωνος ἀνὴρ Φηβαῖος παρασκευασάμενος μεγάλως ἐκάλεε ἐπὶ ξείνια αὐτόν τε Μαρδόνιον καὶ πεντήκοντα Περσέων τοὺς λογιμωτάτους, κληθέντες δὲ οὗτοι εἶποντο· ἦν δὲ τὸ δεῖπνον ποιούμενον ἐν Θήβησι. **τάδε δὲ ἦδη τὰ ἐπίλοιπα ἤκουον Θερσάνδρου** ἀνδρὸς μὲν Ὀρχομενίου, λογίμου δὲ ἐς τὰ πρῶτα ἐν Ὀρχομενῷ. **ἔφη δὲ ὁ Θέρσανδρος** κληθῆναι καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπὸ Ἀτταγίνου ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦτο, κληθῆναι δὲ καὶ Θεβαίων ἄνδρας πεντήκοντα, καὶ σφῆων οὐ χωρὶς ἑκατέρους κλῖναι, ἀλλὰ Πέρσῃν τε καὶ Θεβαίων ἐν κλίνῃ ἐκάστη. [2] ὡς δὲ ἀπὸ δείπνου ἦσαν, διαπινόντων τὸν Πέρσῃν τὸν ὁμόκλινον Ἑλλάδα γλώσσαν ἰέντα εἰρέσθαι αὐτὸν ὁποδαπὸς ἐστί, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑποκρίνασθαι ὡς εἴη Ὀρχομένιος. τὸν δὲ

²⁶ Or, at least in the case of Thersander, a Boeotian. Pavlidis (2012) 28–29 discusses the possible resonance of the Theban setting for Attaginus' banquet.

εἰπεῖν. Ἐπεὶ νυν ὁμοτράπεζός τέ μοι καὶ ὁμόσπονδος ἐγένεο, μνημόσυνά τοι γνώμης τῆς ἐμῆς καταλιπέσθαι θέλω, ἵνα καὶ προειδῶς αὐτὸς περὶ σεωυτοῦ βουλευέσθαι ἔχῃς τὰ συμφέροντα. [3] ὁρᾶς τούτους τοὺς δαινυμένους Πέρσας καὶ τὸν στρατὸν τὸν ἐλίπομεν ἐπὶ τῷ ποταμῷ στρατοπεδευόμενον; τούτων πάντων ὄψαι ὀλίγου τινὸς χρόνου διελθόντος ὀλίγους τινὰς τοὺς περιγενομένους. ταῦτα ἅμα τε τὸν Πέρσῃν λέγειν καὶ μετιέναι πολλὰ τῶν δακρύων. [4] **αὐτὸς δὲ θαμάσας τὸν λόγον εἰπεῖν πρὸς αὐτόν.** Οὐκῶν Μαρδονίῳ τε ταῦτα χρεόν ἐστι λέγειν καὶ τοῖσι μετ' ἐκείνων ἐν αἴνῃ εἶοῦσι Περσέων; **τὸν δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα εἰπεῖν.** **Ξεῖνε,** ὃ τι δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀμήχανον ἀποτρέψαι ἀνθρώπων. [5] ταῦτα δὲ Περσέων συχνοὶ ἐπιστάμενοι ἐπόμεθα ἀναγκαίῃ ἐνδεδεμένοι. οὐδὲ γὰρ πιστὰ λέγουσι ἐθέλει πείθεσθαι οὐδεῖς. ἐχθίστη δὲ ὀδύνη ἐστὶ τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι αὕτη, πολλὰ φρονέοντα μηδενὸς κρατεῖν. **ταῦτα μὲν τοῦ Ὀρχομενίου Θερσάνδρου ἤκουον,** καὶ τάδε πρὸς τούτοισι, ὡς αὐτὸς αὐτίκα λέγοι ταῦτα πρὸς ἀνθρώπους πρότερον ἢ γενέσθαι ἐν Πλαταιῆσι τὴν μάχην.

We find a very similar structure to the Dicaeus episode in Book 8: initial use of indirect discourse attributed to a named individual; the eventual appearance of direct speech within the indirect framework; a brief exchange of questions and answers; the narrator's voice re-entering at the end and restating that the whole story was told by someone. But in this instance from Book 9, Herodotus is explicit about the fact that he himself heard the story directly from Thersander. Like Dicaeus, Thersander too calls witnesses, in a sense, by claiming that he told people the story even before the battle (and thus before the disastrous outcome predicted by his Persian couchmate). There are two further points of similarity: Herodotus notes that Dicaeus is well-esteemed (*λόγιμος*) at the Persian court, as Thersander is at Orchomenus; and one of the interlocutors in each episode (Demaratus and the anonymous Persian banqueter) essentially tells the other to remain silent. Thersander is not actually *ordered* to keep quiet, but he is told that reporting what he knows will be useless.

Scholars have highlighted the programmatic role of the Thersander scene: the Persian's speech conveniently expresses and illustrates Herodotean themes on the eve of the climactic battle of the war. In a recent analysis, Katrin Dolle examined the scene as a 'potential *mise-en-abyme*' of Herodotus' entire project, one designed to raise the question of whether

knowledge and discourse do, in fact, have any power.²⁷ Michael Flower and John Marincola have also suggested that Herodotus' repetition of his source's name (and perhaps even the imperfect ἤκουον) reflects his awareness that his audience will probably think this anecdote is too good to be true.²⁸ So, in response to our question 'Why brief dialogue?', here at least a clear answer is, to emphasise overarching themes at a significant moment (as with Gyges and Candaules in Book 1).²⁹

But there is more. First, the placement of this dialogue within Herodotus' overall narrative structure resembles that of the conversation between Dicaeus and Demaratus: both occur between Herodotus' reporting of the troop movements on both sides before major battles. Lieselotte Solmsen noted how both passages (plus 6.107.4) predict disaster for the Persian army.³⁰ In this case, there is an additional effect. Max Pohlenz's description of the Thersander episode as an 'opening act' or 'prelude' (*Auftakt*) could be applied to the Dicaeus episode as well.³¹ In fact, in narrative terms the Thersander scene occurs in literally no time at all: chapter 16 begins with a genitive absolute ('while the barbarians were engaged in this labour [building the fort], Attaginus arranged a feast ...') which is then resumed at the opening of chapter 17 ('while Mardonius was setting up camp in Boeotia, the Greeks ...').³² Finally, there is also the attention paid to logistical detail—

²⁷ Pavlidis (2012) 21: 'With the figure of the Persian, Herodotus provides an explanation for the emergence of a new space for discourse (*Diskursraum*), which underlies that of his own work' (my translation).

²⁸ Flower–Marincola (2002) 127; see also Asheri–Vannicelli (2006) 195–6. Gould (1989) 19–20 is more credulous. The comments of Macan (1908) I.2.622 are a fascinating mix of seeing the conversation as a faithful report from a first-hand witness for genuine Persian sentiment (below the highest officers) on the eve of Plataea, and as a specimen of Herodotean drama and characterisation.

²⁹ Marincola (1987) 134–5; Scardino (2007) 298.

³⁰ Solmsen (1944) 248. Although she differentiates the Thersander episode as 'interpret[ing] the defeat as an expression of the will of the gods', surely the same can be gathered from the Dicaeus episode too. Other scholars have noted the strategic placement of each episode without connecting them: Scardino (2007) 257–8 illustrates how Demaratus' unwillingness to speak up in 8.65 foreshadows the lack of success Artemisia's sound advice will have shortly thereafter; Immerwahr (1966) 140 describes how the *logos* of the Greek councils before Salamis (8.40–64) is 'followed by a *logos* on Persian battle preparations (8.66–70), with the omen seen by Dicaeus and Demaratus at Eleusis placed in the pause (8.65)'. Cf. Macan (1908) I.2.458.

³¹ Pohlenz (1937) 155.

³² Pavlidis (2012) 18, on the 'slowing down of the narrative speed'; she also notes the effect of the introductory genitive absolute (23).

the couch set-up, the exchange taking place in Greek—which adds vividness and verisimilitude.³³ As with Gyges and Candaules in Book 1, here on the eve of the climactic battle of the war Herodotus has chosen to place a conversation fraught with thematic significance before the eyes and ears of his audience.

I want to end by bringing in for comparison with Herodotus' use of brief dialogue an essentially unique passage in Thucydides: the short, rapid dialogue between an Ambraciot herald and the victorious Acarnanians after a military disaster suffered by the Ambraciots (3.113). Near the end of Book 3, Thucydides provides a detailed narrative account (3.105–14) of operations in northwest Greece in 426/5. A force from Ambracia, allied with the Peloponnesians, manages to seize a fortified spot in Amphilochia along the Ambracian Gulf named Olpae; they are soon joined by a Peloponnesian force led by the Spartan Eurylochus. A small Athenian army led by Demosthenes then arrives, joined by Acarnanians and Amphilochians and supported by an Athenian fleet of twenty ships. The Athenian side wins the ensuing land battle, killing Eurylochus and inflicting heavy casualties on the Ambraciots. The surviving Peloponnesians strike a separate, secret agreement with Demosthenes under which they may retreat safely the next day, but the attempted escape is botched and a couple hundred more Ambraciots are killed; some escape to friendly territory in the mountains of Agraeis.

In the meantime, a relief force from Ambracia, which had been summoned before the battle, finally sets out; but Demosthenes gets wind of it (on the same day as the botched retreat) and sets up an ambush at a pair of hills called Idomene. At dawn the following day, the Athenians and their allies attack the unprepared camp of the Ambraciot relief force, leading to a massacre. The Acarnanians strip the bodies of their armour and take the spoils back to Amphilochia.

The next day, a herald arrives in Amphilochia representing the Ambraciots from the original force who had managed to escape to the mountains, in order to recover the bodies of their comrades who had died in that first battle. Seeing the armour of so many fallen Ambraciots, the

³³ See Pavlidis (2012) 30–1 on how the setting of the banquet reflects the *Diskursraum*. Here I might add a minor qualification to Pavlidis' statement that Herodotus, 'without guiding and restricting our imagination through more detailed descriptions, brings words and people into our heads as living and present subjects' (34, my translation). But in fact he does provide scene-setting details, as I note in the text above, which function to make the audience into eyewitnesses.

herald marvels at the number, thinking that these belonged to the original army and not knowing about the second disaster. Thucydides writes: (3.113.3–6)

καὶ **τις** αὐτὸν [sc. the herald] ἤρετο ὅτι θαυμάζοι καὶ ὁπόσοι αὐτῶν τεθνᾶσιν, οἰόμενος αὐτὸν ἑρωτῶν εἶναι τὸν κήρυκα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Ἰδομεναΐς.

ὁ δ' ἔφη διακοσίους μάλιστα.

ὑπολαβὼν δ' ὁ ἐρωτῶν· Οὐκ οὖν τὰ ὄπλα ταυτὶ φαίνεται, ἀλλὰ πλέον ἢ χιλίων.

αὐτὸς δὲ εἶπεν ἐκεῖνος· Οὐκ ἄρα τῶν μεθ' ἡμῶν μαχομένων ἐστίν.

ὁ δ' ἀπεκρίνατο· Εἴπερ γε ὑμεῖς ἐν Ἰδομενῆι χθὲς ἐμάχεσθε.

Ἄλλ' **ἡμεῖς** γε οὐδενὶ ἐμαχόμεθα χθὲς, ἀλλὰ πρόην ἐν τῇ ἀποχωρήσει.

Καὶ μὲν δὴ τούτοις γε **ἡμεῖς** χθὲς ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως βοηθήσασι τῆς Ἀμπρακιωτῶν ἐμαχόμεθα.

ὁ δὲ κήρυξ ὡς ἤκουσε καὶ ἔγνω ὅτι ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως βοήθεια διέφθαρται, ἀνοιμώξας καὶ ἐκπλαγεὶς τῷ μεγέθει τῶν παρόντων κακῶν ἀπήλθεν εὐθύς ἀπρακτος καὶ οὐκέτι ἀπῆτει τοὺς νέκρους. **πάθος γὰρ τοῦτο** μὴ πόλει Ἑλληνίδι ἐν ἴσαις ἡμέραις **μέγιστον** δὴ τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τόνδε ἐγένετο. καὶ **ἀριθμὸν οὐκ ἔγραψα τῶν ἀποθανόντων**, διότι ἀπιστον τὸ πλῆθος λέγεται ἀπολέσθαι ὡς πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος τῆς πόλεως.

Somebody, mistaken too in thinking the herald was from the Ambraciots at Idomene [the relief force destroyed in the ambush], asked him why he was surprised, and how many of them had died.

He said about two hundred.

'These are obviously not the arms of two hundred', replied the other, 'but of more than a thousand'.

'So then', said the herald, 'they are not from the men in our fight?'

'Yes they are', came the reply, 'if you were fighting yesterday at Idomene'.

'But yesterday we did not fight anyone: it was the day before, in the retreat'.

'Well, we did fight yesterday. We fought these here—the Ambraciots coming to your rescue from the city'.

When the herald realised this and realised that the relief force from the city had been destroyed, he gave a cry of horror: appalled

by the scale of the calamity now inflicted, he turned straight back without completing his mission or staying to ask for the dead. This was indeed the greatest disaster to befall a single Greek city over so few days in the whole of this war. I have not given the number of those who died, because the reputed loss would seem incredible in proportion to the size of the city. (trans. M. Hammond)

A number of features of this passage make it unique or unusual in Thucydides' work.³⁴ There is the dialogue, of course, whose only parallel is the lengthier and more famous Melian Dialogue at the end of Book 5.³⁵ The direct speech of 3.113, however, is not introduced in a typical fashion ('he/they spoke as follows'), but instead emerges out of otherwise unremarkable Thucydidean narrative: the chapter begins, in the narrator's voice, 'The next day a herald arrived ...'—then two lines of reported speech (§3)—then direct dialogue (§4). Other striking elements exist. The unnamed speaker on the Acarnanian side, simply introduced as *τις*, is a relatively rare occurrence.³⁶ As Donald Lateiner has shown, Thucydides' comment on the gravity of the disaster is reinforced by his use of the word *pathos* twice in one chapter—a word which only appears fifteen times in the whole work.³⁷ Finally, the episode ends with the narrator's first-person refusal to give the number of the dead, even though his speaking characters have just put numbers out there.³⁸

The progression is marvellous—notice how the narrator's introductions to each line of dialogue grow shorter and then disappear completely with the last two lines.³⁹ As the historiographical framework fades, the fiction of 'being

³⁴ See Lapini (1991), esp. 124–5 n. 11, for further discussion of the stylistic anomalies and 'tragic' nature of the passage; Lang (2011) 163–4.

³⁵ See Shrimpton (1997) 61–2 for the Melian Dialogue as 'an extended dramatization of meaning'; Fornara (1983) 155–7.

³⁶ Couch (1944) refers to Thucydides' 'principle of meiosis' which 'is calculated to arrest by under-emphasis the attention of the reader'. Lapini (1991) 123 n. 4 drew my attention to this; he cites an abstract of Couch's paper published in the 1936 issue of *TAPhA*. The short 1944 piece appears to be the same paper.

³⁷ Lateiner (1977); *pathos* appears in sections 2 and 6 of 3.113 (the first is just prior to the Greek I have quoted in the text).

³⁸ On Thucydides' use of the first person, see Lang (2011) 129–38.

³⁹ Although the syntax does not work in exactly the same way, this Thucydides passage is reminiscent of Polybius' technique of beginning a speech in indirect discourse before switching to direct discourse, on which see Usher (2009). The most striking example is Agelaus' speech at Naupactus (5.104). Polybius presents this mostly in indirect discourse; but

there' grows.⁴⁰ I find it interesting that both Lateiner and A. W. Gomme suggest that perhaps Thucydides himself heard this conversation. I think it unlikely that Thucydides meant for that to be the major effect—otherwise, what would we make of every other scene in the work that does *not* involve brief dialogue? Conversely, I don't think anyone today would suggest that the Melian Dialogue appears in that form because Thucydides witnessed the exchange. Rather, the Melian Dialogue is designed to dramatise major themes of power and justice, imperial rule, and perhaps to foreshadow Athens' subsequent downfall. Lateiner suggests that Thucydides' presentation of the Ambraciot disaster is meant to highlight issues of perception, the difficulty in discovering the truth of an event. If so, we would find ourselves in similar territory as with Herodotus' brief dialogues, which vividly portray key thematic messages in his work.⁴¹ With Thucydides, however, the message can be seen as operating at an even more meta-historical level: less about the nature of events and more about the process of investigating them.⁴² Thucydides elsewhere relies on his own narrative for vivid description: the escape from Plataea, the battle in the Great Harbour of Syracuse. That strengthens the claim for thematic significance here, as does his subsequent narrator's claim that the Ambraciot losses were the worst to befall any single city within such a short time during the whole of the war.⁴³

at the end, just after the famous metaphor of 'clouds in the West', there is a shift to direct discourse in mid-sentence (§10): '*he said that he was exceedingly anxious ... lest it happen that the games which we now play with each other...*' (Usher's translation (494) eliminates the abruptness of this transition, by introducing first- and second-person pronouns earlier than they appear in the Greek). Scardino (2012) 75–9 provides a few further examples of this technique from Herodotus.

⁴⁰ Kurke (2000) 132, commenting on Plutarch's evaluation of Thucydides' narrative vividness: 'Part of this effect of immediate emotional engagement is achieved by the absence of explicit authorial intervention and commentary, so that events seem to be conjured up directly before the reader without any mediation'.

⁴¹ Lateiner (1977) 47–51. Marinatos (1980) 306, in a discussion of Nicias as a 'tragic warner': 'The dramatic aspects of Thucydides' history bring him much closer to his predecessor Herodotus than is often acknowledged'; similar comments in Macleod (1983) 157.

⁴² A message which is reinforced by his refusal to provide the casualty figure: that is, the direct speech can serve as a buffer between the author and an audience who, he assumes, will share his scepticism about the number (my thanks to Bryant Kirkland for this suggestion).

⁴³ See Grant (1974) on Thucydides' 'instinct for the superlative'.

I want to suggest a possible structural significance of this brief dialogue between two unnamed figures in northwest Greece. Both it (at the end of Book 3) and the Melian Dialogue (end of Book 5) precede pivot points in the war: Book 4 opens with the events at Pylos in 425, which ultimately lead to the Peace of Nicias; and Books 6 and 7 are devoted completely to the disastrous Athenian expedition against Sicily. It has been remarked that Pylos and Sicily represent mirror-images of each other. Thus, it is not just that they mark crucial junctures in the war, but that Thucydides has fashioned his account of each episode in a manner which highlights their tragic irony.⁴⁴ Perhaps the two dialogues are designed to function as part of this complex: the narrator ceding the stage to anonymous characters signals to the reader that (to put it somewhat casually) something big is about to happen.⁴⁵ This would be similar to Herodotus' use of the brief dialogues we examined earlier. The parallels within Thucydides' work are not exact, of course. The Melian Dialogue is (also) an extended disquisition on justice and power, while the brief Ambracian/Acaranian exchange is more along the lines of a tragic recognition scene.⁴⁶ But this difference reflects that which is found in the scope and scale of the following episodes (Pylos and the Sicilian Expedition) as well.

My goal is not to force too much significance onto 3.113, but to try to explain Thucydides' decision to present the denouement of the 426 campaign in such an unusual fashion. We could envision the whole complex of 3.113 through 4.41 (the end of the Pylos campaign)—brief dialogue conveying the depth of disaster in a peripheral locale, followed by stunning reversal in a conflict between the two major powers—as a prelude to the larger, longer, and more disastrous sequence of the same nature which occurs between 5.84 and 7.87. The narratorial statements at the beginning of the first of these sequences and the end of the second can then be seen as confirming the mirroring effect: 'the greatest disaster to befall a single Greek

⁴⁴ Macleod (1983) 142–3.

⁴⁵ Macleod (1983) 59–60, on the position of the Melian Dialogue. In another essay, writing of Thucydides' speeches in general, Macleod says Thucydides 'does what any artist and any historian must do: he refashions his subject in order to draw out its significance' (69). Cf. Rengakos (2006) 297–8.

⁴⁶ Stahl (2003) 134–5 draws this comparison, and suggests that the dialogue form emphasises the immense suffering of the Ambraciots—the only way to communicate this is to eliminate the normal distance between author and reader. See also Hornblower (1987) 117–8.

city over so few days in the whole of this war' (3.113.6); 'this proved the most significant occurrence in the whole of this war' (7.87.5, trans. M. Hammond).

We have seen three examples of our two earliest surviving Greek historians experimenting at the narrative level with reader-orientated eyewitness history. Herodotus implicitly (8.65) or explicitly (9.16) cites an eyewitness for a private conversation; Thucydides allows two anonymous speaking partners to deliver their lines directly. None of these passages concerns historical 'events' in the strict sense. But they are attached to major battles, in Herodotus' case, or battles which proved to be among the most disastrous of the war for the defeated party, in Thucydides' estimation. They also reinforce major themes in the historian's work. In their quest for causes, truth, and accuracy, each historian could have chosen to place much more explicit emphasis on autopsy and eyewitness testimony for the events they narrate. Instead, they relied on the narrative fiction of the omniscient narrator. This makes the three passages I have analysed here all the more conspicuous. In all three cases, the brief dialogue format allows the historian to place his audience on the scene of the occasions, and it encourages them to discover how each encounter is momentous in its own way.

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