

THUCYDIDES HOMERICUS AND THE EPISODE OF MYCALESSUS (7.29–30): MYTH AND HISTORY, SPACE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY*

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Abstract: Mycalessus, a city in Boeotia which Thucydides describes as ‘not big’, becomes the stage of one of the most atrocious episodes in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The question, ‘Why does Thucydides pay so much attention to this local incident?’ has been dealt with in the bibliography, together with that of the position and role of the episode in the narrative of the Sicilian expedition. This chapter suggests that the mentions of Mycalessus in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* must be viewed as significant intertexts for Thucydides’ interaction with epic material, and for the shaping of his historical narrative as a document of panhellenic memory.

Keywords: Thucydides, Homer, intertextuality, audience, Thracians, Euripus, Aulis, Sicilian Expedition

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the intertextual relation between two archetypal figures of Greek literature and war narrative, Thucydides and Homer. It focuses on the episode of Mycalessus (7.29–30), perhaps the most shocking description of death and destruction in Thucydides. The main idea proposed here is that the prominence of the Boeotian city of Mycalessus in Thucydides, as the stage of an atrocious episode of the Peloponnesian War, can be explained by the author’s allusive use of Mycalessus’ presence in Homer and the city’s mytho-religious background. Boeotia as a whole was a region of panhellenic significance, on

*At different stages of preparation of this chapter, I have benefited from discussions with colleagues and students in London, Crete (Rhethymno), and Cardiff, and feedback on written versions by Peter Agócs, Christy Constantakopoulou, Simon Hornblower, David Konstan, and Chris Pelling. I would like to thank them all for their suggestions; any errors and omissions are of course my own responsibility.

Abbreviations: *HCT* = Gomme–Andrewes–Dover (1945–81); *CT* = Hornblower (1991–2008); *IACP* = Hansen and Nielsen (2004); *Kent* = Kent (1953).

For Thucydides and Herodotus, I use the following translations with some modifications of my own: Hammond (2009); itemised translation in *CT* I–III; Waterfield (1998); Godley (1926–38); quotations from Thucydides are cited without indication of author (i.e., 7.29.5 = Thuc. 7.29.5).

account of not only its early political and military importance, but also its mythological and epic associations and its distinct presence in Homer.

At the centre of this investigation is Thucydides' communication with Homerically informed audiences, that is, audiences culturally familiar with the Homeric text, or better, the Homeric experience.¹ Homer played a key role in panhellenic self-definition and had an immense evocative power for the Greeks of the classical period (and beyond). How did Thucydides use the evocative power of the Homeric text to communicate with panhellenic and local audiences? Fleshing out and understanding aspects of this communication is essential for understanding Mycalessus' function in Thucydides. Literary questions (style, vocabulary, or narrative technique) along with questions of political and cultural history are involved in this discussion, as these two lines of enquiry are closely intertwined in the study of early Greek historiography.

The Mycalessus episode in Thucydides has attracted much attention,² but not as an instance of Homeric intertextuality. I will argue that the mentions of Mycalessus in Homer, namely in the *Iliad's Catalogue of Ships* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, should be viewed as significant intertexts in the process of Thucydides' shaping of a panhellenic historical narrative and collective memory. Fifth-century audiences communicated with Homer with an immediacy and fullness of a collective and co-constructed experience, which escapes modern readers. As has been aptly pointed out, Homer had a 'continuing presence ... in the minds of [Thucydides] and [his] audience'.³ Though Thucydides' influence by, and interaction with, Homer seems to be a scholarly *topos* nowadays,⁴ still more work needs to be done on this topic, and on continuities and affinities between early historiography and poetic genres more widely, including tragedy, on which this discussion will also touch; and on the ways in which this relation feeds into our historical interpretations.

¹ I am paraphrasing Burgess' 'mythologically informed audiences' ((2012) 169). The 'Homeric experience' could involve the study and use of the Homeric text, with Thucydides himself being a prime example (e.g., 1.9.4, 10.3–4), and/or the experience of live performance.

² Lateiner (1977); Connor (1984) Appendix 7, and id. (2010); Quinn (1995); Rood (1998a) 185; Kallet (1999) and (2001) 121–46; Stahl (2003) 136–8; Will (2006); Hornblower (2011a) 15–17 with *CT III*.587–600; Pothou (2011) 263, 266; Sears (2013) 250–63.

³ Howie (1998) 76.

⁴ On Thucydides (and historiography) and Homer: Smith (1900); Reinhardt (1961); Davison (1965); Strasburger (1982); Woodman (1988); Nesselrath (1992); Frangoulidis (1993); Hornblower (1994); Mackie (1996); Allison (1997); Marincola (1997), (2001), (2006), and (2007); Rood (1998b); Kallet (2001) 85–120; Nicolai (2001); Graziosi (2002) 111–24; Pallantza (2005) 175–200; Pelling (2006), (2013), and above, Ch. 1; Rengakos (2006a) and (2006b); Grethlein (2010) 205–80; Kim (2010) 22–46; Nagy (2010) 74–8; Funke (2011); Halliwell (2011) 19–24; Hornblower (2011a) 59–99; Rusten (2011); R. B. Rutherford (2012); Joho (2017).

My approach is in dialogue with that strand of scholarship which deals with Thucydides both as a historical source and as ‘a great artist’—to use the phrase of F. M. Cornford in his seminal study *Thucydides Mythistoricus* in 1907, to which the title of this chapter alludes. Although ‘intertextuality’ was not, and could not have been, part of Cornford’s critical vocabulary, his study was pioneering in showing Thucydides’ deep and subtle connections with poetic tropes, not least epic and tragedy. In the quest for these connections it is not only the words themselves that matter, but mainly their ‘life-cycles’ and transferable contexts. I do not wish to engage with the various views of what ‘intertextuality’ is or is not, but I do wish to explain that I will use the term in a broadened sense. This broadened ‘intertextuality’ involves shared cultural meanings and mytho-religious contexts.⁵ My intertextual quest is spurred by the word ‘Mycalessus’ and its presence in Thucydides and Homer; but beyond the level of verbal resemblance, it aims to explore the life-cycles and contexts of this word. Mikhail Bakhtin (via Julia Kristeva) has been key in this notion of intertextuality in modern (and post-modern) criticism:

The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of those concrete contexts into which it has entered.⁶

About the structure of the chapter: I will first present the episode of Mycalessus in Thucydides; then I will discuss selectively some of its themes and aspects in which a direct or indirect relationship with the Homeric text can be detected, often with Herodotus—the ‘most Homeric’—being an illuminating intertext.⁷ Having prepared the ground in this manner, at the end of my discussion, I will concentrate on Mycalessus’ mentions in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, and Thucydides’ use of the evocative power of this epic background.

2. The Mycalessus Episode (Thuc. 7.29–30)

In the summer of 413 BCE the inhabitants of Mycalessus, a small community of Boeotia, in central Greece, were slaughtered in a surprise attack by thirteen hundred lightly-armed Thracian mercenaries, who were being

⁵ Cf. Burgess (2006) 172–4 on ‘mythological intertextuality’ and ancient audience reception; and ‘textless intertextuality’ (Burgess (2012) 168); and Pelling’s perceptive remarks above, Ch. 1, esp. pp. 14–21.

⁶ Bakhtin (1984) 201.

⁷ [Long.] *Subl.* 13.3: *μόνος Ἡρόδοτος Ὀμηρικώτατος ἐγένετο; Στησίχορος ἔτι πρότερον ὅτε Ἀρχίλοχος, πάντων δὲ τούτων μάλιστα ὁ Πλάτων.*

escorted home by Diitrephes (7.29.1), an Athenian commander and a Thracian expert, like Thucydides himself.

The episode itself is part of a longer narrative unit which also includes the damaging effects for the Athenians of the fortification of Dekeleia in Attica and its long-term occupation by the Spartans (7.27–8). As we hear at the beginning of this longer unit, the Thracians were peltasts from the dagger-carrying tribe of the Dians from Thrace (7.27.1), who had been called to join the Athenian reinforcements sent to Sicily that summer; but as they arrived late and the Athenians could not afford to pay them ‘in view of the war from Dekeleia’ (7.27.2), they were sent back to Thrace. (On the connection of the episode with Dekeleia, see Appendix.)

Thucydides describes Mycalessus as a ‘not big’ city (*οὐ μεγάλη*, 7.29.3) with a feeble wall, dilapidated in parts or built low in others, and its gates left open because of the inhabitants’ lack of fear (*διὰ τὴν ἄδειαν*, 7.29.3). The Athenian general Diitrephes led the ‘bloodthirsty’ (*φονικώτατος*) Thracians (7.29.4–5) against Mycalessus early in the morning, after having spent the night unobserved near the temple of Hermes (7.29.4–5):

The Thracians poured into the city and began sacking the houses and temples and slaughtering the people. They spared neither old nor young, but automatically killed every person they found, children and women also, and even the very beasts of burden and any other living creature they could see. ... They brought total panic and destruction in every form (*ἰδέα πᾶσα καθειστήκει ὀλέθρου*), including the invasion of the largest school in the place (*διδασκαλείῳ παιδῶν*), where the boys had just come in for their lessons: they butchered the entire school (*κατέκοψαν πάντας*).

Detected by the Thebans, Thucydides continues, the Thracians were chased in flight down to the sea at the Euripus, that is, the channel separating Boeotia from Euboea, in a state of terror, trying to reach the ships waiting for them. The majority of the Thracians who died were killed by the Thebans during embarkation, ‘for they did not know how to swim either’ (*οὔτε ἐπισταμένους νεῖν*, 7.30.2), because the crews, when they saw what was happening on the shore, drew the ships back to moor out of Theban bowshot (*ἔξω τοξεύματος*, 7.30.2).

Thucydides gives the logistics of the losses: 250 out of the 1,300 Thracians (about one fifth), and of the Thebans 20 horsemen and hoplites. Enumerating losses is itself a Homeric feature, which intensifies pathos.⁸ As

⁸ Macleod (1982) *ad* Hom. *Il.* 24.495–7; Hornblower (1987) 34–5 (‘tragic *akribeia*’).

for the anonymous people of Mycalessus, ‘a certain [or ‘a good’] part lost their lives’ (*μέρος τι ἀπανηλώθη*, 7.30.3).⁹

Thucydides punctuates the description of the horrors perpetrated in the city by the Thracians with two pathetic statements: first, the phrase which rounds off the description of the appalling slaughter of the boys in the school—a climactic moment in the episode and a false closure (7.29.5):

This was the greatest disaster (*ξυμφορά*) affecting the whole city which they had ever suffered, more sudden and terrible than any other.

And second, the concluding statement and real closure of the whole episode (7.30.4):

Such was the fate of Mycalessus, visited by a calamity (*πάθει χρησαμένην*) which, relative to the size of the city, was more pitiable (*ὀλοφύρασθαι ἀξίω*) than any other in this war.¹⁰

The episode qualifies for an ancient case of genocide, mainly on account of the brutality and the scale of slaughter and destruction that befell the community, but it has not been discussed as such.¹¹ It has attracted attention though as a paradigmatic section on the cruelty of the war and Thucydides’ pathetic description of it; as an excellent unit for recitation (the two closures are part of the episode’s artful construction); as a strong proof of the author’s condemnation of ‘total’ warfare through his own authorial voice, and therefore a blow against those who perceive his work as lacking morality and humaneness; as a brilliant case for exploring historical causation and accountability in typically Thucydidean complexity. Who and what was to

⁹ In the light of the atrocities described most commentators over-translate *μέρος τι*: e.g., Jowett: ‘A large proportion of the Mycalessians perished’; Smith: ‘Of the population of Mycalessus a considerable portion lost their lives’; Warner: ‘Mycalessus lost a considerable part of its population’; Lattimore: ‘A fair number of the Mycalessians were gone’. Hobbes is an exception: ‘Of the Mycallesians there perished a part’. But Peter Agócs notes, ‘I’m inclined to line up with the over-translators.’

¹⁰ Note the significant similarity between these two closures and the closural statement of the Ambraciots’ slaughter in Acarnania (*πάθος γὰρ τοῦτο μὲν πόλει Ἑλληνίδι ἐν ἴσασι ἡμέραις μέγιστον δὴ τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τότε ἐγένετο*, 3.113.6), with Stahl (2003) 136–7.

¹¹ For ancient forms of genocide and their motives, see Konstan (2007), concentrating on emotions, such as anger and hatred, and van Wees (2010), on political and material motives. On the question of whether ‘genocide’ applies to the destruction of a community as small as Mycalessus, van Wees (2010) 244 is apt: ‘towns, and even villages, everywhere had sufficiently distinctive identities for their annihilation to constitute a form of genocide’. On the other hand in terms of intent behind genocides, the Thracian attack on Mycalessus is presented as outside the map of human behaviour: neither reason nor raw emotion can explain it. Peter Agócs points out to me: ‘the questions surrounding responsibility that the text raises but doesn’t answer are paradigmatic for the notion of “war crimes” in Western culture’.

be blamed? The uncouth nature of the Thracian troops? The Athenian general Diitrephes? The Athenians at large? Alcibiades, who instructed and encouraged the Spartans to fortify Dekeleia? The Athenians' financial weakness, aggravated by the fortification of Dekeleia and its moral implications? Mere chance (e.g., geographical position, time of the day)—just being in the wrong place at the wrong time? Questions of narrative and style intertwined with the pragmatic, moral and psychological parameters have also been addressed, and more specifically, the integration of the episode into the narrative of the Sicilian expedition, and resonances with other parts of the *History* and its intertextual relation with Herodotus.¹²

Ultimately, all these questions revolve around a central one: Why did Thucydides pay so much attention to this local incident? Scholars are often perplexed at Thucydides' treatment of a disaster that 'occurred at the obscure little Boeotian city of Mycalessus, a place so distant from the war in every sense—physically as well as psychologically'.¹³ I will argue that the tragic fate of Mycalessus was certainly a piece of local history, but the city itself was neither obscure, nor remote from the war, either as a geographical location or as a cultural locus of mytho-spatial significance. Part of the city's significance was due to Homer, as we will see. This piece of local history had all the credentials to find its way into Thucydides' panhellenic narrative and his own shaping of collective memory.

3. Greeks and Barbarians, Impiety and the Sea

i. 'Equal to Any of the Barbarians' (Thuc. 7.29.4)

If Herodotus is a seminal source on foreign cultures and ethnic Otherness from ancient Greece, Thucydides can be viewed as the master of what can be called 'internal ethnic Otherness', as he mainly concentrates on the character of the ethnic sub-divisions of the Greeks and the tensions within the *Hellenikon*.¹⁴ But Thucydides has important material on non-Greeks as well, and the Mycalessus episode is one such case. In this episode ethnically incompatible units (i.e., Thracian troops led by an Athenian general) participate in military operations with disastrous results. It is far from being a unique occurrence in Thucydides and ancient military practice—the Sicilian expedition of 415–413 itself, within which the Mycalessus episode takes place, was the result of a disastrous and misjudged alliance of the Athenians with the 'barbarian' Egestaeans, as Thucydides presents it.¹⁵ But

¹² For important discussions of the episode from these perspectives, see above, n. 2.

¹³ Price (2001) 214–15; cf. Dewald (2005) 224.

¹⁴ Fragoulaki (2013); ead. (forthcoming); on Athenian/Spartan polarity: Pelling (1997).

¹⁵ For the suppression of the Greek character of Egesta's mixed culture by Thucydides and a historiographic interpretation, see Fragoulaki (2013) 298–316. For the ethnic factor

in the Mycalessus episode the brutality of warfare is extreme, and the ethnic factor is inextricably bound with the moral responsibility of those involved in it.

The Thracians are generally presented as barbarians in our sources and Thucydides has a major contribution to this presentation. In the Mycalessus episode the mountain-dwelling Thracians of the Dian tribe from Rhodope are represented as disproportionately and senselessly savage, ignorant of the ‘correct’ skill, and impious. In fact this is their last appearance in the *History*, but the scene of their savagery has already been set in earlier parts of the work.¹⁶

In the narrative of the *Pentekontaetia*, we get a first mention of the major disaster the Athenians suffered at Drabeskos, in the area of the river Strymon in Thrace, at the hands of the local Edonians, in their attempt to colonise the area (c. 465 BCE; 1.100.3); they lost 10,000 men, we are told.¹⁷ In the context of Atheno-Thracian diplomatic contacts in the 430s, Thucydides inserts an allusive mention of a myth of sexual desecration (2.29.3), with which Sophocles’ lost play *Tereus* was occupied (staged between 430s–414 BCE). It is the famous myth of Philomela, who suffered rape and mutilation by the barbarous Thracian king Tereus, who had married her sister, the Athenian princess Procne.¹⁸ But most importantly, Book 2 contains the remarkable ethnographic digression on Thrace (chs 96–8), ‘the most detailed account we have of the extent of the Thracian realm in the fifth century’.¹⁹ In catalogic mode, Thucydides gives a description of the peoples living in this vast territory loosely defined in relation to a centre of power, that of the Odrysian kingdom. He records a parade of exotic tribal and place-names (mainly rivers and mountains), and makes an attempt to place these Thracian *ethnē* in what is presented as a vast wilderness. In this spectacular array of peoples, the tribe of the Dians—the Thracians of the Mycalessus episode—stand out among the mountainous Thracians with a double mention, almost in a ring structure: they carry daggers (*μαχαιροφόροι*, 96.2 and 98.4); they come from the wilderness of the mountain range of Rhodope (96.2 and 98.4), they are described as ‘independent’ (*αὐτόνομοι* 98.4, with 98.3) and the fiercest fighters (*μαχιμώτατοι*, 98.4). Later on, Thucydides reiterates the Athenian disaster of c. 465 at the river Strymon, mentioning

affecting fighting, see 3.112.4, 4.41.2; 7.44.4–6 (Ionian Athenians and Dorians fighting in the same ranks).

¹⁶ The royal house of the Odrysian kingdom of Thrace is an exception, though still exotic in its customs. Sadokos, the son of the Odrysian king Sitalkes, is admitted to Athenian citizenship and phratries (2.29; Ar. *Ach.* 145–6). Final reference to Thrace, as a region (*τὰ ἐπὶ Θράκης*), and indeed Diitrephes: 8.64.2.

¹⁷ Cf. Hdt. 9.75.

¹⁸ On the myth’s diplomatic background in the 430s, see Zacharia (2001). On mutilation as a generally barbaric and despotic feature: Munson (2001) 58, 135, 153–4.

¹⁹ Zahrnt (2006) 612.

the settlement of the Athenian colony of Amphipolis on the Strymon in 437 by the Athenian Hagnon (4.102.3). And in the same book, we get another glimpse of female Thracian barbarism and uncouthness in the murder of the king of the Edonians, Pittakos, partially committed by his own queen, Brauro (4.107.3).

So when the dagger-carrying mercenaries from Thrace make their appearance at the opening of the Mycalessus episode (7.27), an ethnic stereotype of barbarism, unruliness, and murderous nature, is evoked. This is affirmed by Thucydides' own comment about the nature of these people, which has a clearly racist flavour in the light of modern discourses of ethnicity: 'For the Thracian race, when they have nothing to fear, are extremely bloodthirsty, equal to any of the barbarians' (7.29.4). Although elsewhere Thucydides has a keen interest in explaining human nature and its behaviour in war, this statement places these Thracian troops almost outside the human species and the dilemmas of moral responsibility and choice, typical of human beings. He explains their crime with the scientific detachment of cause-and-effect, as in the case of a natural phenomenon (e.g. lightning is followed by thunder).²⁰

The avid desire for indiscriminate slaughter is central to Thucydides' construction of the barbarian Other and its destructive effects. This construction is shared with important intertexts. There are, for example, striking lexical and stylistic affinities between Thucydides' Thracians and Herodotus' Thracians and Persians.²¹ In the Mycalessus episode the phrase '[the Thracians] spared neither old nor young, but ... killed ... even the very beasts of burden and any other living creature' (*ἐφόνεον φειδόμενοι οὔτε πρεσβυτέρας οὔτε νεωτέρας ἡλικίας, ἀλλὰ ... κτείνοντες ... καὶ ὑποζύγια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ἔμψυχα*, 7.29.4) is remarkably similar—in style and vocabulary—to Herodotus' description of the Persians' night assault against the baggage train with food supplies coming from the Peloponnese to the Greeks at Plataea (Hdt. 9.39.2): 'they slew avidly, sparing neither man nor beast' (*ἀφειδέως ἐφόνεον, οὐ φειδόμενοι οὔτε ὑποζυγίου οὔδενος οὔτε ἀνθρώπου*).²² The verb *κατακόπτειν* ('butcher') used for the slaughter of the boys in the school in Mycalessus (7.29.5) is also used by Herodotus for another Thracian-

²⁰ On the connection between the natural environment and ethnic character (environmental determinism): Lateiner (1986); Thomas (2000), esp. 86–101; Romm (2010) 218–23; Kennedy (2016).

²¹ On Herodotus' subtle ethnic representations: Asheri (1990); Pelling (1997); Gruen (2011) 21–52. See also Rood (1999) 141–68 (for parallels between the Athenians in Thucydides and the Persians in Herodotus); Irwin (2007), esp. 71–7 for analogies between the Odrysians and the Athenians in Thucydides, and the Paeonians and Athenians in Herodotus); Munson (2001) and (2012), for Persians in Thucydides and interaction with Herodotus).

²² Cf. Cobet (1986) 12. Herodotus (9.39.2) also underscores the excess of Persian savagery by the Homeric *ἄδην εἶχον κτείνοντες* ('they had their fill of killing'), a *hapax* in his work; Hom. *Il.* 5.203, 13.315, 19.423, with Flower and Marincola (2002) 180. Cf. Hdt. 1.80.3 (*μὴ φειδομένους κτείνειν*) and Hdt. 3.147.

inflicted slaughter: this time the victims were the Persian troops in their quick and frightened return (*nostos*) (cf. ἀπενόστησε, Hdt. 9.90.1) to Asia after the battle of Plataea (κατακοπέντας κατ' ὄδον, Hdt. 9.89.4).²³

The Mycalessus episode is in fact a story of disastrous *nostos* ('return home'), in which the returning Thracians both inflicted and suffered death. Although the actual word is not used, the close relationship of *nostos* with suffering and destruction, which is distinctively Homeric, is central to the episode. Thucydides saves the explicit Homeric allusion for the memorable closure of the Sicilian expedition ('few out of many returned home', ὀλίγοι ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐπ' οἴκου ἀπενόστησαν, 7.87.6). But the damage caused by the *nostos* of the Thracians in the Mycalessus episode can be viewed as the harbinger of the disastrous *nostos* of the Athenians from Sicily.²⁴

As June Allison has shown, there is a particular concentration of epic forms in the climactic chapters of the Sicilian narrative in Book 7. Building on this idea, I would like to suggest that the Mycalessus episode is an important step in this climax, and that the episode's organic relationship with the surrounding narrative is also shown by its epic vocabulary. Key words in the episode, such as ὄλεθρος ('disaster') and ὀλοφύρεσθαι ('lament', 'weep', 'mourn') are poetic and belong to the epic register of disaster and destruction. ὄλεθρος in the phrase ἰδέα πᾶσα ... ὀλέθρου ('every form of disaster', 7.29.5) evokes Homeric contexts of death (e.g., *Il.* 11.441 αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος, 'death and black fate'). As has been pointed out, the cognate πανωλεθρία, with which Thucydides describes the calamity of the failure of the Sicilian expedition (7.87.6), alludes to Herodotus' πανωλεθρίη (2.120.5), used of the fall of Troy. This is the only appearance of πανωλεθρία before Thucydides in our corpus, though both passages might communicate with sources lost to us. In Plutarch's *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*, πανωλεθρία, paired with φθορά ('destruction'), are used to describe the Trojan, Persian, and Peloponnesian Wars.²⁵

As for ὀλοφύρασθαι ('mourn') at the closure of the Mycalessus episode (7.30.3), the Homeric overtones of the form are distinctive. In her discussion of the concluding chapters of the Sicilian expedition, Allison has drawn attention to Thucydides' influence by Homer in his creative appropriation

²³ Cf. *CT* III.599; Flower and Marincola (2002) 261.

²⁴ For the Homeric allusion of ἀπενόστησαν (7.87.6), see Allison (1997) 513–14. See the Appendix for the emphasis on the route of the Thracian *nostos* to the north. On *nostoi* in Greek historians, see Hornblower (2018).

²⁵ *Mor.* 1049C: αἱ τοσαῦται φθοραὶ καὶ πανωλεθρίαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἷας ὁ Τρωικὸς εἰργάσατο πόλεμος καὶ πάλιν ὁ Μηδικὸς καὶ ὁ Πελοποννησιακός, 'so much destruction and loss of human lives, such as those caused by the Trojan war, and later by the Persian and the Peloponnesian War'. The adjective πανώλεθρος ('utterly destructive') is used by Herodotus (6.37, 85) and evokes tragedy, especially Aeschylus: Aesch. *Suppl.* 414; *Sept.* 71, 932; *Pers.* 562; *Agam.* 535; *Choe.* 934; *Eum.* 552; cf. Soph. *Ph.* 322; *Aj.* 839; *El.* 1009; Eur. *Andr.* 1225. On πανωλεθρία in Thucydides, see *CT* III.745.

of ὀλοφυρ- stems.²⁶ The use of ὀλοφύρασθαι in the climactic moment of the Mycalessus episode anticipates the noun ὀλοφυρμός in the pathetic description of the final sea battle in the harbour of Syracuse (twice, 7.71.3; 71.4). In a *TLG* search of ὀλοφύρασθαι and cognates, Homer and Thucydides stand out as having the greatest number of uses in the entire corpus of our sources until the fifth century BCE.²⁷

It is worth pausing at another episode in Thucydides, in which both disaster and ethnic Otherness have pride of place, and which bears striking similarities with the disaster suffered by the Mycalessians, in language, themes, and epic mode of narrative. It is the description of the *Aitolikon pathos* (τὸ Αἰτωλικὸν πάθος, 4.30.1), a major and unexpected disaster the Athenians suffered in 426 BCE at the hands of the Aetolians, a culturally ambiguous group, with barbaric features, living in this case at the very heart of the Greek mainland, between Akarnania on the west and Phocis on the east.²⁸ The Aetolian episode (3.94–8) contains the only mention of the poet Hesiod in Thucydides and has attracted attention as a moment of Thucydides' epic interaction.²⁹ It contains a brief reference to the mythical tradition of the poet's death in the sanctuary of Nemean Zeus in the area, where the Athenian general Demosthenes had pitched camp the night before his defeat (αὐλισάμενος, 3.96.1; the same word is used for Diitrephes' camping near the Hermeion before attacking Mycalessus). This is another instance in the *History* where myth is incorporated into military narrative rather casually and unproblematically, and where a piece of local history is immortalised in Thucydides' narrative. As in the case of the Thracians in the Mycalessus episode, the Aetolians' dangerous nature and ability to harm is underestimated with disastrous consequences: the Athenian army attempted every form of escape and met every form of death. Disaster formulas are a feature of Thucydides' narrative, as noted, but it must be pointed out that the specific formulation πᾶσα ἰδέα ὀλέθρου appears only in these two episodes (3.98.3 and 7.29.5), together with the word πάθος, which is also found in the

²⁶ Allison (1997) 503.

²⁷ Thirty-eight occurrences in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (e.g., Hom. *Il.* 16.450; *Od.* 11.418, 24.328, in special relation to death and loss); two in the *Homeric Hymns* (both in *Hymn Dem.* 20, 247); and fourteen in Thucydides (1.143.5; 2.34.5; 2.44.1; 2.46.2; 2.51.5; 3.67.2; 6.30.2; 6.78.3; 7.30.3; 7.71.3 and 4; 7.75.4; 8.66.4; 8.81.2). Lyric: one in Tyrtaeus (fr. 12.27 West²), one in Theognis (*Eleg.* 1130), one in Pindar (*Paeon*, fr. 52k Maehler ὀλοφύ<ρομαι οὐ>δέν, ὅ τι πάντων μέτα πείσομαι). The word appears to be rare in surviving tragedy: never in Aeschylus; once in Sophocles (*El.* 148, on Itys; a myth mentioned by Thucydides); once in Euripides (*IT* 643, κατολοφύρομαι); one in ps.-Eur. (*Rhes.* 896). Herodotus uses the word only twice (2.141; 5.4.2); once in Pherecydes of Athens (*FGrHist* 3 F 11, p. 62.2); once in Democritus (D–K 68 B 107a). Aesop and the *Aesopica* claim seven uses.

²⁸ The Aetolians are referred to as part of Greece as early as in the *Archaeology*, where we first hear of the old-fashioned conditions of their way of life, such as carrying weapons (1.5.3).

²⁹ Scodel (1980); Finglass (2013).

concluding statement of the Mycalessus episode (7.30.3).³⁰ But there is also a significant difference between the two episodes: the swimming ability of those in flight. In the Aetolian disaster, the Athenians were saved when they reached the sea,³¹ whereas for the Thracians in Mycalessus the sea was their watery grave, because they did not know how to swim. Knowledge of the sea and swimming had a place in ethnic assumptions about, and representations of, non-Greek groups, such as the Persians and the Thracians. It was the ‘correct’ skill which the barbarians lacked.³²

ii. ‘Because They Didn’t Know How to Swim’ (Thuc. 7.30.2)

Ability to swim is part of a set of sea skills related to a broader conception of knowledge and intelligence, as Plato’s famous pairing of ‘letters’ and ‘swimming’ suggests in his definition of the ignorant person: ‘they know neither letters nor swimming’ (*μήτε γράμματα μήτε νεῖν ἐπίστωνται*, *Laws* 3.689d3). The context of Thucydides’ *History* confirms the Greeks’ (and especially the Athenians’) close relationship with the sea and their mastery of what could be called the ‘art of the sea’.³³ The lack of this skill is generally a feature of mountain or inland peoples, who ‘do not know the sea’ in Homer’s words (*οἱ οὐ ἴσασι θάλασσαν*, *Od.* 23.269), or, in Thucydides’ words, people who do not possess an ‘intimate knowledge of the sea’ (*θαλάσσης ἐπιστήμονες*, 1.142.6).³⁴ Death by drowning is viewed in Greek and Roman sources as a barbaric way of dying, often synonymous with lack of manliness and effeminacy, and has also been related to impiety.³⁵

In Thucydides (and Herodotus) the ability to swim is presented as a ‘national’ characteristic of the Greeks, which draws a line between the Greeks and the non-Greeks, such as the Thracians and the Persians.

³⁰ See *CT* III.600, with Rood (2006) 248 about ‘pathos statements’; cf. 1.109.1 (*πολλὰ ἰδέαι πολέμων*), with *CTI ad loc* for this as a possibly medical turn of phrase.

³¹ The sea as shelter: *ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ... οἱ περιγενομένοι κατέφυγον* ‘the survivors ... made their way to the sea’ (3.98.3).

³² On Greeks and the sea, see, for example, Lesky (1947); Vryonis (1993); Constantinakopoulou (2007).

³³ In addition to the Aetolian disaster, see also 2.90.5: Athenian sailors swim to safety; 8.102.2–3: escape by swimming, with *HCT* V.350. Cf. the Athenian ingenuity (*ἐμμηχανῶντο*, 7.25.5) and use of professional divers and underwater operations in the harbour of Syracuse (7.25.5–8)—just two chapters before the narrative unit of Dekeleia/Mycalessus.

³⁴ Also: *τὸ ναυτικὸν τέχνης ἐστίν*, 1.142.9; cf. the emphasis on *μελέτη* ‘practice’: *μελετῆσαι*, 1.142.7; *μὴ μελετῶντι ἀξυνετώτεροι ἔσονται*, 1.142.8; *μελετᾶσθαι*, 1.142.9. Cf. 2.83–92, the results of *μελέτη* put into practice by the Athenian general Phormio with excellent results in 429 BCE.

³⁵ A famous example is the alleged death of Protagoras on a sea voyage after having been tried and convicted of impiety at Athens: Philochorus, *FGrHist* 328 F 217; but see Pl. *Meno* 91e3–92a2. Cf. Kerferd (1981) 43; Colaiaco (2001); Schiappa (2003) 144–5 (fabricated story). For swimming in Greek, Roman, and later European nationalistic discourse, see Hall (1993); cf. Sanders (1925) 566–8.

Herodotus provides many examples: we may recall the violent storm off Athos in 492 BCE which cost the lives of over 20,000 Persians: some were eaten by sea ‘beasts’ (*θηρία*: sharks presumably?), some were hit on the rocks, others died of cold, and others because they did not know how to swim (*νέειν οὐκ ἠπιστέατο*, Hdt. 6.44.3). Again after the battle of Salamis (480 BCE), the naval triumph of the Greeks, ‘the majority of the barbarians died at sea as they did not know how to swim’ (*νέειν οὐκ ἐπιστάμενοι*, Hdt. 8.89).³⁶

The description of the siege of Potidaia, in northern Greece, by the Persians in 480 BCE in Herodotus is another context where water proves to be a treacherous element for the ‘ignorant ethnic Other’ in close relation with morality, namely the theme of *tisis* (punishment for one’s crimes so that balance is restored).³⁷ After a three months’ siege of Potidaia, the Persian Artabazos and his men decide to use an unusual ebb-tide to march against the city, by leading his troops through what was previously water (Hdt. 8.126–9).³⁸ Potidaia lay on Pallene, the western prong of the Chalkidiki peninsula, and was separated from the land by a channel. When the Persians were less than half-way across and with some distance still to cover, an unexpected flood tide came, the biggest ever, according to the locals, which swept away and drowned ‘those of them who did not know how to swim’ (*οἱ μὲν δὴ νέειν αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐπιστάμενοι*, Hdt. 8.129.2). The Persians who lost their lives by the sea, Herodotus continues, were thought by the local people to have been punished by Poseidon himself (the god who had also given his name to Pot(e)idaia), because they had desecrated his sanctuary in the area. This is an explanation on grounds of divine retribution, with which Herodotus unequivocally agrees on this occasion.³⁹

It can be suggested that the drowning of the Thracians in the waters of Euripus in the Mycalessus episode is a similar story of barbarian ignorance,

³⁶ Cf. Hdt. 6.44.2; 7.188–89; 8.13; also: Aesch. *Pers.* 504–7 (the melting of frozen Strymon); Timotheus (of Miletus, c. 450–360 BCE), *PMG* 791.79 ‘old object of hate’ (*παλαιομίσημα*), most probably alluding to the chain of sea disasters of the Persians. Timotheus’ *Persians* provides the most detailed dramatic description of a drowning person: Hall (1993); Hordern (2002) 152–3, 171–2; more recently LeVen (2014) 178–88, with subtle analysis of Timotheus’ creative appropriation and reshaping of Homeric and tragic stylistic features, and late fifth-/early fourth-century audiences’ response to this interplay. See Arr. *Anab.* 2.21 on the skill of Tyrian swimmers.

³⁷ E.g., Hdt. 5.56.1; 7.8β; Lateiner (1989) 140–4. On *tisis* in Herodotus and the fine boundaries between impiety and injustice, see, for example, Harrison (2000) 102–21; Mikalson (2003) 141–50; Scullion (2006); Baragwanath (2008) 244–5; Fowler (2010) 329–30 (on divine punishment).

³⁸ For a reading of this episode as reaction to Thucydides’ description of the siege of the city by the Athenians in 430/29 (1.56, 60–64; 2.70), that is, the reverse intertextual relation than what is more often assumed, see Hornblower (2011a) 277–82.

³⁹ Scullion (2006) 194–5 dissociates too much Poseidon’s punishment here from Xerxes’ ‘haughtiness and defeat’; cf. Fowler’s just objection ((2010) 330 n. 31). In Aeschylus’ *Persians* ignorance, impiety, and drowning underlie the death of the Persians in the waters of sacred Strymon (*ἀγνοῦ Στρυμόνος*, 497).

impiety, and punishment, which must be viewed in the light of Thucydides' reticence when it comes to religious and metaphysical explanations.⁴⁰ The Mycalessus episode contains the only explicit reference in Thucydides to drowning at sea as part of a military operation, all the more so because of lack of swimming skills: as we saw, the ships that were going to transport the Thracians back home were moored in the sea out of Theban bowshot, so the Thracians had to swim to them to embark, and those who could not swim were drowned ('for they could not swim either', οὐτε ἐπισταμένους νεῖν, 7.30.2).⁴¹ It must be noted that there are strong connections in myth between Boeotia and Poseidon, already in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* (*Il.* 2.506).⁴²

The use of space is a fascinating and complex problem of Homeric scholarship. Here I would only like to consider the combination of selective detail with non-realistic vagueness as relevant to what can be called Thucydides' 'epic use of space'. A well-known feature of the use of space in the *Iliad*, for example, is the plethora of vivid and detailed battle scenes taking place in the geographically vague 'Trojan plain' that lies between the walls of Troy and the Achaian camp, close to their ships at the sea shore.⁴³ Thucydides' use of space in the Mycalessus episode is similar. By selective close-ups and dramatic vignettes he creates a powerful and sweeping image of utter disaster, both in the community of the Mycalessians and in the Thracian troops. Within Mycalessus, the massacre of 'every living being' in the city, culminating in the slaughter of the boys in the school (7.29.4–5) is one such vignette. Like many other readers, second-century CE Pausanias (1.23.3; cf. 9.19.4) was influenced by Thucydides' description and—in the light of the relatively depressed state of the area between Thebes and the Euripus in his own time—thought that Mycalessus was uprooted for good,

⁴⁰ For Thucydides' religious silences, see Hornblower (2011a) 25–53.

⁴¹ For death at sea in Thucydides, see also: 8.34 where ἀποθνήσκουσι probably suggests death by drowning as a result of a storm at sea; 3.89.2, drowning on account of a tsunami, but outside a war setting; a more open-ended statement about Theramenes' disappearance at sea in a cutter (ἐν κέλητι ἀφανίζεται, 8.38.1).

⁴² On the precinct of Poseidon in Boeotian Onchestus, see below, p. 56. Cf. Hesiod fr. 219 M–W, connecting Boiotos, the constitutive figure of Boeotia, with Poseidon (though composed in c. 580 BCE, the source reflects traditions at least as early as the seventh century BCE); Hellanikos, *FGrHist* 4 F 51, Boiotos, son of Poseidon and Arne, with Fragoulaki (2013) 102–3.

⁴³ Cf. Burgess (2015) 115: 'Troy and its environs may be real ... but the Homeric positioning of significant landmarks is poetically functional'. For the uses of space in Homer (and ancient Greek literature), see Purves (2010); Clay (2011); de Jong (2012a); Skempis and Ziogas (2014); Gilhuly and Worman (2014); Barker–Bouzarovski–Pelling–Isaksen (2015); McInerney and Sluiter (2016). See Funke and Haake (2006) 374 for Thucydides' spatial vagueness and his use of geography and topography to 'reinforce the pathos of the description', but without reference to the Homeric background.

apparently wrongly given that the city struck coins from 387 (or earlier) to 374 BCE (or later).⁴⁴

The description of the space outside the city walls up to the channel of Euripus is poetically non-realistic too. The dominant geographical spot outside the city is the channel of Euripus, at the expense of a more pragmatic charting of the city's territory and key locations, such as the harbour(s) where the ships carrying the Thracians were anchored. The day before the massacre in Mycalessus, Diitrephes had made a quick raid in the territory of Tanagra, which is south of the straits of Euripus, and he 'then' Thucydides says, 'sailed across the Euripus in the evening from Chalkis in Euboea and disembarking in Boeotia led them against Mycalessus' (7.29.2). We are not told to which part of Boeotia Diitrephes sailed across and disembarked the Thracians (i.e., south or north of Euripus).⁴⁵ Again, after their assault against Mycalessus, we only hear that the Thracians, frightened by the Thebans, were chased 'to the Euripus and the sea' (*ἐπὶ τὸν Εὐριπον καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν*, 7.30.1), but not to which sea or harbour of Boeotia the Thebans were heading to reach the ships which would carry them back home.⁴⁶ The combination of topographical specificity ('the Euripus') and vagueness ('the sea') within the phrase *ἐπὶ τὸν Εὐριπον καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν* makes the Euripus a focal point of action. At the same time, the frightened chase of the Thracians to a narrow stretch of treacherous water brings to mind the chase of the Trojans by Achilles to their watery death in the eddying Scamander (Hom. *Il.* 21.7–11).⁴⁷ The theme of retreat to a death involving water—and a river at that—appears magnified in the slow and tortured retreat of the Athenians from Sicily, and in the haunting scene on the banks of the river Assinaros (7.84). Vividness (*enargeia*) and visualisation have been acknowledged as main avenues of emotionality and memory (Arist. *De memoria* 450b20–451a2; Quint. 8.3.61–72), and Thucydides' *enargeia* and epic use of space in the episode of Mycalessus must be seen, I suggest, as a device for imprinting the tragic fate of the city on the minds of his audience and memorialising it. As

⁴⁴ Coins: *LACP*, p. 88. Farinetti (2011) 220 n 64: '[Mycalessus] flourished in the mid-6th c. BC (rich necropolis) and declined in the 5th c. BC. Destroyed during the Peloponnesian War, but was still alive in the 4th c. although under the control of Tanagra'. Hope Simpson and Lazenby (1970) 23, on the strategic position of Mycalessus. For Mycalessus in Pausanias' time, see Schachter (2016) 135. Rhitsona, possibly the modern site of Mycalessus, was the theatre of a Second World War crime, when the Germans executed 110 Greek men as a reprisal (*CT* III.597).

⁴⁵ *ἐκ Χαλκίδος τῆς Εὐβοίας ἀφ' ἑσπέρας διέπλευσε τὸν Εὐριπον καὶ ἀποβιβάσας ἐς τὴν Βοιωτίαν ἤγεον αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ Μυκαλησσόν*. Fossey (1988) 84 thinks the Thracians were disembarked south of Euripus, somewhere near Chalkis.

⁴⁶ Cf. *HCT* IV.409. Strabo (9.2) says that Boeotia had three seas and a number of harbours: Aulis, Oropos (with two harbours), Delion, and north of the channel Salganeus, Anthedon, and Larymna. See also Bakhuizen (1970); Gehrke (1988); Schachter (2016) 97 (on the challenges of locating Mycalessus).

⁴⁷ Cf. de Jong (2012a) 30.

has well been shown, *enargeia* bestows the quality of experience, actuality, and present time to Thucydides' narration of the past; simultaneously, it reconfigures the narrated event, re-embedding it, as it were, back into the past as indelible collective memory.⁴⁸

iii. Impiety and the Athenian Diitrephes

An inability to swim is one criterion of ethnic Otherness in the Mycalessus episode. Another distinctive feature closely related to ethnicity is the degree of moral responsibility that seems to fall on the 'barbarian' and Greek perpetrators of the atrocities described. As mentioned, the Thracians are presented as almost void of any human feature, falling upon the city with the violence and unexpectedness of a natural phenomenon.⁴⁹ The disastrous outcome of the close contact and cooperation in a military mission between the 'savage' Thracians from Rhodope and the 'civilised' Athenian Diitrephes might be seen to suggest the diachronic contrast between nature and culture, also prominent in the intellectual atmosphere of the fifth century BCE. Although not explicitly, Thucydides seems to point to the Athenian Diitrephes as responsible for the disaster, on account of misjudgement and misuse of this uncontrollable force under his command. Being an Athenian, a Thracian expert, and a military man himself, Thucydides, the ethnic 'insider', would expect Diitrephes to be able to perceive and avert the consequences. One stylistic means by which Diitrephes' moral responsibility might be detected is the number of singulars which describe the actions of the Thracian troops under his leadership (e.g. ἀπεβίβασεν ('disembarked') ... ἦγεν ('led') ... αἶρεῖ ('captures') ... ἐπιπεσών ('falling upon'), 7.29.2); among them the decision to pitch camp for the night close to the sanctuary of Hermes (πρὸς τῷ Ἑρμαίῳ ἠύλισατο 'he camped by the temple of Hermes', 7.29.3) stands out, suggesting impiety. Thucydides might have been able to say something more about Diitrephes, given his familiarity with Thracian matters. The absence of Diitrephes' patronymic and title of office (we are

⁴⁸ For visibility and *enargeia* in Homeric poetics, see Clay (2011), esp. 16–17 and 23–30 on the close connection between visual imagery and remembering and the role of visual memory in story telling in oral traditions. For *enargeia* in Thucydides as a means of experientiality and presentism, see Grethlein (2013); cf. Walker (1993). For *mimesis*' equation with *enargeia* and historiography's (and Thucydides') mimetic dimension, see Halliwell (2002), esp. 292–4 with n. 23; cf. id. (2011) 19–24 on Thucydides' attitude to poetic amplification and his own commitment to historiographic truth (as opposed to, and in dialogue with, poetic truth).

⁴⁹ A parallel from modern Welsh history, in which both contingency and human mishandling had contributed to a tragedy involving children in a school, is the Aberfan disaster (21 October 1966, 9:00 AM): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/150d11df-c541-44a9-9332-560a19828c47>.

never told he was a general) can be viewed as an authorial technique of non-naming, suggesting the condemnation of the man.⁵⁰

Diitrephes' disgraceful conduct at Mycalessus left a mark through the centuries. Pausanias reports having seen a bronze statue of him on the Athenian Acropolis pierced with arrows. But he finds the image puzzling, because, he says, it is mainly the Cretans who use this weapon, and not the Greeks in these areas, and he goes on to name some of the *ethnē* around Mycalessus, such as the Opountian Lokrians, the Malians, or the Boeotians (Paus. 1.23.4). Arrow-shots could be a way of execution: for example, in the concluding phase of the *stasis* in Kerkyra, Thucydides describes the group execution of a number of Kerkyraians by the opposite faction, with arrows and tiles shot at them from the roof of the building (4.48.2–3).⁵¹ As we saw (above, p. 40), the Thracians were chased by the Theban archers all the way down to the Euripus, so Diitrephes could have died indeed pierced by arrows, but apparently he did not: in 411 we find a Diitrephes elected again to a Thracian command, who must be the same man (8.64.2).⁵² But I am interested in the artistic imagination behind the statue of Diitrephes on the Athenian Acropolis, which Pausanias saw, and the potential symbolism of death by arrows. This symbolic dimension could point to Diitrephes' punishment not by the human archers operating in the area, that is, the Thebans who chased the Thracians to the sea, but by mythical archers, who were part of the shared and living culture of Thucydides' audience. We would not expect mythical archers and divine retribution to surface in Thucydides, as often happens in Herodotus or tragedy—let alone Homer. But although overt interaction between the divine and human levels is not part of Thucydides' explanatory apparatus, it culturally informs and underlies his and his audience's constructions of meaning.⁵³

4. Mycalessus and Euripus: Geography, Myth, and Religion

i. Mythical Archers

In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Boeotia and Mycalessus are places where the god stops on his way to Delphi: from Euboea's Lelantine plain, the 'far-shooter' (ἑκατηβόλος) Apollo crosses Euripus (Εὐριπον διαβάς) and goes up 'the green, holy hills, going on to Mycalessus and grassy-bedded Teumessus'

⁵⁰ Ar. *Birds* 797–800, with Sommerstein (1987) 249; 'shameless beast' in Kratinos (fr. 251 K–A).

⁵¹ Cf. 3.34.3, an Arcadian commander of a mixed body of Arcadians and barbarians is arrested and shot down by Paches (ξυλλαμβάνει καὶ κατατοξεύει), the Athenian general, at the Ionian city of Notion, when he manages to quell a Persian-led *stasis* in the city.

⁵² Cf. *CT* III.941.

⁵³ For the intersection of divine and human levels in Homer and the historians, see Pelling, above, Ch. 1.

(*Hom. Hymn Ap.* 222–4). Apollo has in fact a conspicuous presence in Thucydides, often named as ‘the god’, in cases of oracular consultation (e.g. 1.118.3, 1.123.1 *et passim*). One of the god’s explicit mentions is in the context of the Athenian campaign against Delion, a coastal area of Boeotia south of Euripus and one of its seven harbours.⁵⁴ Thucydides says that in the summer of 424 the Athenians planned to capture the temple of Apollo in the area ‘in the district of Tanagra looking towards Euboea’ (4.76.4). This operation known as the ‘Delion campaign’ ended in Athenian disaster, with a part of the Athenian troops running towards the sea chased by the Boeotian cavalry (4.96.7), just like the Thracians in the Mycalessus episode. But unlike the latter, for those Athenians who managed to escape the sea was a route to safety, as in the case of the Aetolian campaign (3.98.3).⁵⁵ The Delion narrative is often discussed in the context of international law in ancient Greece, because the Athenians were accused by the Boeotians of desecrating the precinct of Apollo in the area and thus violating panhellenic practices (τὰ νόμιμα τῶν Ἑλλήνων: 4.97.2–4, 98.2).

Apollo was perhaps the most famous divine archer of the Greek world, and his female counterpart was none other than his sister, Artemis. Artemis had a sanctuary at Aulis and her localisation is related to another case of desecration, famous in myth, on account of which the goddess sent adverse winds obstructing the departure of the Achaean army for Troy.⁵⁶ Aulis, from where the Trojan expedition sailed, so close to Mycalessus, was a dense locus of collective memory for all the Greeks. ‘Rocky Aulis’ (Ἀυλίδα πετρήεσσαν, *Il.* 2.496) had a prominent place in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* and this illustrious panhellenic background was a major component of the community’s identity still in the Roman period: according to Pausanias, in his time the people of Aulis claimed that they preserved in Artemis’ temple what survived of the plane-tree mentioned by Homer (*Il.* 2.307). In the sanctuary there are two statues of Artemis, Pausanias says: one carrying torches, and the other being ‘like to one shooting an arrow’ (τὸ δὲ ἔοικε τοξευούσῃ, Paus. 9.19.6).

The sanctuary of Artemis was ‘a little further from that of Demeter Mycalessia’ Pausanias reports (9.19.6). The precise location of the sanctuary of Demeter Mycalessia is unknown, as the site has not been excavated, but according to Pausanias’ description it must have lain outside the urban

⁵⁴ Strabo 9.2.2 (cf. above, n. 46).

⁵⁵ On the connection between the two passages (7.30.1 and 3.98.3), see above pp. 46–7.

⁵⁶ Neither the sacrilege nor its expiation are found in Homer, though the story possibly underlies Agamemnon’s burst against Calchas: ‘never have you given me a favourable prophecy’, *Hom. Il.* 1.106. The *Cypria* and *Ehoiai* are our first sources for Iphigenia’s sacrifice (Gantz (1993) 582); cf. Davies (1989) 44–5 and Burgess (2001) 150–1. Aesch. *Agam.* 146–55, 184ff.; Eur. *IT* 1–27.

centre and on a downward slope ‘on the way to the coast’ (9.19.5).⁵⁷ This might be one of the sanctuaries the Thracians came across in their flight to the sea, in Thucydides’ account. According to Pausanias (9.19.5), the cult of Demeter Mycalessia was related to a miracle (*θαύμα*), which took place during the *thalysia*, the harvest festival in honour of the goddess: people placed before the feet of her image all the fruits of autumn, and these remained fresh throughout the year. These local *thalysia* must have stood out as particularly notable among the surrounding towns and villages of Boeotia.⁵⁸ Interestingly the earliest associations of the festival must have been with Apollo and Artemis rather than Demeter (Hom. *Il.* 9.533–5).⁵⁹

Pausanias himself connects Demeter’s sanctuary ‘on the way to the coast’ with another famous mythical archer, Heracles: ‘They say that each night it [Demeter’s sanctuary] is shut up and opened again by Heracles, and that Heracles is one of what are called the Idaean Dactyls’ (9.19.5). The Idaean Dactyls were minor divinities, inventors of metalwork, associated with Zeus’ secret upbringing in a cave on Mount Ida in (most often) Crete (Str. 10.3.22), and they were probably associated also with a mystery cult. ‘Dactyl’ in Greek means ‘finger’ and the Dactyls, Heracles and his brothers, were five in number, or multiples of five, also known as Kouretes (Paus. 5.7.6).⁶⁰ The gates of Demeter’s sanctuary seemed to be opened and closed in a miraculous way by its divine doorkeeper. In the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Demeter’s association with the figure of Iacchos-Dionysus would be a more expected one, but the goddess’ connection with Heracles, though unusual, is not unparalleled (cf. Paus. 8.31.3, for a similar association in Megalopolis).⁶¹ The association of Heracles with the Idaian Dactyls suggests some antiquity in the cult of Demeter Mycalessia. A. D. Ure has made a powerful case for connecting fifth-century iconographic evidence probably from the area of Tanagra with the cult of Demeter Mycalessia. She concludes: ‘the vases ... suggest that we may find there traces of some sort of

⁵⁷ It probably lay along the coast of Euripus, close to the church of Hagios Nikolaos, south-west of the sanctuary of Artemis Aulideia, whose remains have been found along with the fountain construction in it (Moggi and Osanna ((2010) 323); cf. Papahatzis (1981) 128–31. Cf. McAllister (1976) 600: ‘[P]robably near the modern village of Megalovouno above Aulis’; but Fossey (1998) 81 considers the entry ‘very inadequate’. Cf. <http://web.uvic.ca/~bburke/EBAP/> (Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project (EBAP) excavating on the plains surrounding the modern villages of Arma, Eleon, and Tanagra). (Accessed 2 August 2017.)

⁵⁸ A. D. Ure (1949); on the *thalysia*: Nilsson (1940) 21; Burkert (1985) 67, 265. Athenian *thalysia* (Haloa): Farnell (1907) 45ff.

⁵⁹ J. L. Larson (2007) 72.

⁶⁰ A. D. Ure (1949) 23; Schachter (1981–94) I.158; I. Rutherford (2011) 115; Stafford (2012) 161; Fowler (2013) 43–5 and 389; Coldstream (1973); Guettel Cole (2000).

⁶¹ Moggi and Osanna (2010) 323.

the worship of a Mother (*Iliad* 2.498) goddess whose cult goes back to the days when εὐρύχορος Μυκαλησσός sent a contingent to Troy'.⁶²

At the same time the local tradition of Heracles the Idaean Dactyl as attendant in the sanctuary of Demeter has also a panhellenic dimension, through the association of Heracles the Idaean Dactyl with the foundation of the Olympic games, as Pausanias explains (5.7.9):

To the Idaean Heracles, therefore, belongs the glory of having arranged the games at this time and first giving them the name 'Olympics'; he established that they should be held in every fifth year, because he and his brothers were five in number.⁶³

The story was supported by 'the most learned antiquaries of Elis' (Paus. 5.7.6), the region of the Peloponnese where Olympia is located, and maps nicely onto myths of long-standing conflicts within the Peloponnese. At the hands of the Eleians, permanently uneasy with the Spartans, Heracles the Idaean Dactyl as the founder of the Olympic games becomes a counter image of Theban Heracles the son of Alcmene (Hom. *Il.* 19.98–9), who was also known as founder of the Olympic games in anti-Eleian versions (Pi. *Ol.* 10.43–60).⁶⁴ This Heracles too, therefore, had both a panhellenic and a local dimension, and his local importance was famously connected with Spartan identity. Through the myth of the Return of the Herakleidai (his sons) to the Peloponnese, Heracles the son of Alcmene was the founder of Dorian Sparta and its royal houses, and gave his own name to Spartan foundations across the Greek world.

Idaeian Heracles also offers an insight into the ancient Ionian background of Mycalessus and its colonial ties with the eastern side of the Aegean. The link is provided again by Pausanias and concerns Thespieae, another city of Boeotia, where the Idaean Heracles had an old sanctuary. In connection with this Heracles and his sanctuary in Thespiiai, we are told that Heracles also had a cult at Erythrai in Ionia and Tyre in Phoenicia (Paus. 9.27.8).⁶⁵ It

⁶² A. D. Ure (1949) 24. For cult activity in Boeotia related to the Mycenaean past, see, e.g., Schachter (1981–94) II.50, s.v. 'Hermes (Thebes)': a place in Thebes, east of the Kadmeia, called the Herms, where the so-called Seven Pyres were located; site of cultic activity in the Classical period.

⁶³ Cf. Diod. 5.64.6, in defence of the story; but cf. Str. 8.3.30.

⁶⁴ Hornblower (2004) 113–14; Hubbard (2007) 32, who argues that 'the identification of one of the dactyls as "Heracles" was probably a reaction to the growth of the more famous Heracles' myth as an Olympic etiology'; Fowler (2013) 282.

⁶⁵ Cf. Hdt. 2.44 on the sanctuary of Heracles in Tyre. The Phoenician Heracles Melqart looks more related to Heracles the Idaean Dactyl than the son of Alcmene (e.g. Malkin (2011) 126). In Diodorus' version (3.74.4–5) there were three (not two) different Heracleses of different mythological chronologies and partly overlapping life-stories. The youngest of all, Diodorus says, was the son of Zeus and Alcmene, born a little before τὰ Τρωικά, who

is not my purpose to get into the murky area of the different personas and mythological chronologies of Heracles. I am interested in the suggested links between Mycalessus in Boeotia with Erythrai in Ionia, through cultic continuity around the ancient mythical figure of Heracles the Idaean Dactyl (if we accept Pausanias' view that it would be better to relate the sanctuary of Heracles in Thespiiai with this Heracles rather than the son of Alcmene). Cultic affinities provide good grounds for cultural politics, and in Mycalessus' case a claimed association with Ionia could be a means of resistance to Theban federal pressures and a useful statement of ethnic and civic individuality within the space of Boeotia.⁶⁶

ii. Mycale-Mycalessus

The name of Mycalessus itself points to the other side of the Aegean and the promontory of Mt. Mycale (facing the island of Samos), site of the Panionion, a sacred place for the Ionians dedicated to Poseidon Heliconius, as Herodotus says (1.148.1). The Panionia, the ancient festival of the Ionians, also took place there.⁶⁷ The epithet 'Heliconius' probably derives from Mt Helicon in Boeotia, where Poseidon had deep roots. A precinct of the god in Boeotian Onchestus is mentioned in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* (*Il.* 2.506) and remains of a sixth-century temple have been found.⁶⁸ According to tradition the names 'Mycale' and 'Mycalessus' both derived from the verb *μυκάομαι* ('moo'). Boeotian Mycalessus was the spot where the cow that led Cadmus to Thebes stopped and mooed (Paus. 9.19.4). Mycale in Ionia was associated with the angry lamentations of the Gorgons at the beheading of Medusa by Perseus, although this tradition could apply to Mycalessus as well.⁶⁹ Recent archaeological work on possible sites for the Panionion has identified the city Mycalessus-Mycale in Ionia as a Boeotian colony founded

inherited the exploits of the other two. The second in this succession was the Cretan Daktyl and founder of the Olympic Games.

⁶⁶ Cf. below pp. 57–8 on Mycalessus' walls. Prominent cases of this resistance to Thebes were Plataea (3.61.2–3, 65.2–66.1, 68) and Thespiiai (4.133.1). The Homeric background of Phaiakian Corcyra (Homeric Scheria) (1.25.4, 3.70.4) and Minyan Orchomenus in Boeotia (4.76.3) were used as tools of fifth-century kinship diplomacy (more recently, Fragoulaki (2013) 78–80).

⁶⁷ Cf. Diod. 15.49.1. Hornblower (2011a) 170–81. Cf. Erythrai: Hom. *Il.* 2.499; Hdt. 1.142.4; 9.19, 22.

⁶⁸ Schachter (1981–94) II.207. Cf. Pind. *I.* 1.32 (Poseidon's sanctuary at Onchestus); Σ Hom. *Il.* 2.508: Ἀνθηδών δὲ παρὰ τὰ ἄνθη ἢ Ἄνθιον τὸν Ποσειδῶνος. ἔστι δὲ παρὰ τὸν Εὐριπὸν; a more remote probability (linguistically) is that 'Helikonios' relates to Helike in Achaia in the Peloponnese (J. L. Larson (2007) 58), an ancient centre of the Ionians before their migration to Asia Minor (Hdt. 1.145; Hom. *Il.* 8.203 for Poseidon's cult in Helike; Diod. 15.49.1–2). Hornblower (2011b) 105, on the Dark Age Boeotian emigration to Anatolia and Boeotian-type place names.

⁶⁹ Suda, s. v. 'Μυκάλη καὶ Μυκαλησός' (M 1390 Adler): ὄνομα πόλεως. παρὰ τὸ ἐκεῖ μυκάσθαι τὰς Γοργόνας. Steph. Byz. s.v. 'Μυκάλη'. Cf. Eust. *Comm. ad Il.* 1.406–8.

in Protogeometric or Geometric times, which gave its name to the Mount Mycale massif, and evolved into a dependency of Miletus, one of the proudest centres of Ionianism, intimately related to Athens (Hdt. 1.142.3, 146; 6.21.2).⁷⁰

The Dark Age Boeotian migration across the Aegean and Mycalessus' representation in this movement reveals an Ionian aspect in the kinship profile of this Boeotian community, which helps us explore further the impact of the massacre on the Athenians, who had seen themselves as the cradle of Ionia already in the sixth century BCE (Solon F 4a W²). Seen in this light, Mycalessus appears to be close to Athens not only in geographical but also in emotional and moral terms, and the slaughter that took place in the city in 413 BCE could have been perceived by the communities involved as an almost self-inflicted calamity; for the Athenians it could have felt as disaster 'near at home', to recall Herodotus' famous statement about the sack of Miletus by the Persians in 494 BCE (*οἰκῆμα κακά*, 6.21.2).

To take this point further, the case of Mycalessus affords some comparisons with Plataea, with which the Athenians had a quasi-colonial relationship, well-attested in our sources, although the city was allegedly a Theban settlement (3.61.2; cf. Hdt. 6.108.1). Plataea too had a pitiable fate in the Peloponnesian War (427 BCE), being razed to the ground by Theban-led Spartans (3.68). Here too Thucydides' pathetic description creates the feeling of permanent annihilation of the community, though the city continued to live on in the fourth century, like Mycalessus. Last but not least, both the Plataean and the Mycalessian drama involve the reader in a questioning about the Athenians' moral responsibility (if not condemnation) for the tragic end of both communities.⁷¹

iii. 'Because of Lack of Fear' (7.29.3): Thucydides' Religious Silences

Thucydides describes the disaster that befell Mycalessus on that summer morning of 413 as a unexpected calamity, and disproportionate to the small size of the city and its general inconspicuousness (7.29.3):

The assault took the inhabitants off guard as they had never expected that people would come up so far inland to attack them; furthermore their wall was weak, and at some points had even fallen down, while elsewhere it had been built low, and at the same time the gates [sc. of

⁷⁰ Herda (2006) (Melia, Thebes, and Kadme-Priene were also Boeotian settlements on mount Mycale).

⁷¹ Pelling (2000) 67–72; S. West (2003); Hornblower (2007); Fragoulaki (2016).

the city wall] were open because of their feeling of security' (or 'lack of fear') (πυλῶν ἅμα διὰ τὴν ἄδειαν ἀνεωγμένων).⁷²

As has been suggested, the walls of Mycalessus could have been deliberately dilapidated to facilitate Theban control.⁷³ For the smaller communities of the plain towards Thebes, such as Mycalessus, Eleon, and Harma, massive defensive walls, in many cases dating from the Archaic period, have been viewed as efforts of these communities 'to demonstrate their autonomy and their pursuit of *polis* status in front of both Tanagra and Thebes. Mycalessus, for instance, retained limited autonomy at least as far as control over its small territory was concerned'.⁷⁴ With these considerations in mind and Boeotia's central position on the map of Greece and the war route, Thucydides' confident reporting of the Mycalessians' feeling of security and their expectation that an attack against their city was unlikely deserves a rethinking.

In addition, though Thucydides says Mycalessus was 'not big', at the same time he mentions houses and sanctuaries (in the plural) and more than one school: the Thracians attacked the *largest* of the schools in the area (7.29.4–5). The material record testifies to a city which was not that small (50–100 sq. km), and can be traced back to the third millennium BCE (EH II), with remains of the Archaic and Classical periods, including massive walls, as we saw, and a large cemetery that indicates a peak of population in the sixth century BCE.⁷⁵

Boeotia as a whole was geographically focal and well connected, with much mobility in its population. Citing Ephorus, Strabo says (9.2.2) that Boeotia is superior to its bordering *ethnē* because 'it alone has three seas (μόνη τριθάλαττος ἐστί) and a greater number of good harbours'—it is in one of these harbours that the Athenian ships were moored waiting for the Athenian-led Thracians to embark after their raid and slaughter.⁷⁶ Epaminondas' calling Boeotia the 'dancing-floor' (ὀρχήστρα) of Ares, the god of war (Plut. *Marc.* 21.3), might reflect a more traditional idea about the region. Thucydides himself points out that Boeotia was one of the 'best lands' (1.2.3), and in the description of the Dark Age migrations presents the Boeotians playing a pioneering role in these movements (1.12.3);⁷⁷ as for the period of the *Pentekontaetia* and the Peloponnesian War itself, he offers ample

⁷² This long sentence in Greek (part of a longer eight-line period in the OCT) is an excellent example of the interdependence of causal statements in Thucydides, or multiple causality.

⁷³ Buck (1994) 19, with Hornblower (2011a) 118 n. 5.

⁷⁴ Farinetti (2011) 218 n. 53.

⁷⁵ *IACP*, p. 446; P. N. Ure (1940); Hansen (1995); *CT* III.597.

⁷⁶ Bakhuizen (1985) 118; cf. above, n. 46.

⁷⁷ S. L. Larson (2007) 56–64.

evidence that Boeotia was a hot area.⁷⁸ So there was not such a thing as a safe city in Boeotia, which was politically and economically important,⁷⁹ busy and coveted. It was also closely connected with Euboea, another busy area, with intense traffic and commercial activity, especially in the straits and in Chalkis, a major Euboean harbour.⁸⁰ A good early example of Boeotia's centrality and traffic is Herodotus' casual mention of the presence of Spartan troops under Cleomenes in the area around Plataea towards the end of the sixth century: 'they happened to be nearby' (*παρὰτυχοῦσι*, 6.108.2).

It should not be a cause of surprise if a body of armed men marching along the Boeotian coast on the Euboean gulf went out of their way inland for the purpose of raiding. The day before the massacre of Mycalessus, following Athenian instructions, Diitrephes had disembarked the Thracians in the territory of Tanagra and made a hasty raid (7.29.1–2). Sudden attacks or raids were standard practice in ancient warfare, already known in the *Iliad*, and in Thucydides' account we see them happening even in areas that were much more off the beaten track and difficult to access: for example, Demosthenes made a hasty attack in 426 on Aigion (called a *πόλις*), in a mountainous area of Aetolia, about 80 stades (*c.* 15 km) inland from the sea (3.97).⁸¹ Mycalessus was just 6.5 km from the coast/Euripus and about halfway between was the sanctuary of Hermes, near which, we are told, Diitrephes and the Thracians had camped for the night before their morning attack.⁸² So these light-armed Thracians would need no more than an hour to march 3–4 km from the Hermaion to Mycalessus. If there is anything to cause consternation in the Mycalessus episode it is the scale and the brutality of the attack, rather than the fact that an attack did take place. So what are we to make of Thucydides' statement about the Mycalessians' 'lack of fear' (*ἄδεια*)?

Let us pursue further the analogies between Mycalessus and Plataea, this time comparing the attack against Mycalessus with that of the Thebans against the Plataeans in 431, because of the latter's pro-Athenian allegiances, which is placed at the opening of the main war narrative (2.2–6). They are both surprise attacks which take place in the summer, at a quiet time (night

⁷⁸ Oropos (on the border with Attica), Tanagra, and Delion are only some key spots that receive much attention (Oropos: 2.23; 4.99; Tanagra: 1.108.1; 3.91; 4.97; Delion: 4.89–101.2). Cf. *CTI*.279; Rusten (1989) 130; Hornblower (2011b) 32–3. Thucydides presents as a motive for Demosthenes' operations in Aetolia in 426 his intention to make an overland attack on Boeotia without using Athenian forces (3.95.1), resulting in the *Aitolikon pathos*, mentioned above.

⁷⁹ Hornblower (2011a) 118–19 and (2011b) 104–5.

⁸⁰ Bakhuizen (1985) 15.

⁸¹ Hornblower (2007) 44–6; Aigion: *LACP*, p. 382.

⁸² According to Thucydides, the Hermaion was 3.5 km away from the city (sixteen stades, 7.29.3). Livy 35.50.9 (with Briscoe (1981) ad loc.); but see Fossey (1988) 84. Schachter (1981–94) I.42: 'not certain that Thucydides' Hermaion is the same with that of Livy'.

or early morning), and take the inhabitants off guard. Like Mycalessus, Plataea too is described by Thucydides as ‘not big’ (οὐ μεγάλη, 2.77.2) and, according to Heraclides Criticus (third century BCE), it deserved to be called a *polis* only during the celebration of the Eleutheria (the ‘Freedom festival’ commemorating the victorious outcome of the battle of Plataea).⁸³ But as in the case of Mycalessus, Plataea’s archaeological record indicates a territory of about 170 km², that is, about double the size of Mycalessus. Like Mycalessus and Aulis, Plataea too had an entry in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* (Il. 2.504), and, together with Delion (4.89–101), attracts a fair amount of Thucydides’ attention regarding its cults and festivals.⁸⁴

So the analogy with Mycalessus is that the Plataeans too were caught by surprise and had not set a guard to protect their city (2.2.3), just as in Mycalessus the gates of the dilapidated city wall were left open. But the difference is that in Plataea’s case we are told later in the narrative that when the Thebans invaded the city, it was a time of truce and a day of a sacred festival (ἐν σπονδαῖς καὶ ἱερομηνίᾳ, 3.56.2). Narrative displacement might be a means of downplaying a piece of information, and on this occasion this piece of delayed information tones down the religious background of the night assault against Plataea—not a surprising technique in Thucydides, who is generally reluctant to provide details about religion.⁸⁵ We can also think of the metaphysical aura of an unexpected rain that saved Plataea from fire (2.77.6),⁸⁶ or the suggestive reporting of a seer leading the perilous night-time escape of the Plataeans from their city, without further religious details or any visible connection with the practice of *monosandalism* in the same operation, which is attributed to purely practical reasons (3.22.2).⁸⁷ In the light of these analogies and also considering the time of the year, there might be a religious dimension to the Mycalessians’ ‘lack of fear’. A summer celebration of Demeter, the goddess of grain, would not be improbable (such as the local harvest festival of the *thalysia* or something similar) and would justify a low security level, such as the open gates of the city walls and the community’s lack of fear.

iv. Euripus and Aulis

Euripus is the channel separating Boeotia from Euboea through which the Thracians sailed into, and out of, Attica (see Appendix). Although it is men-

⁸³ Pfister (1951) 78; cf. Austin (2006) 198–201. On the festival, see Plut. *Arist.* 21.2; Boedeker (2001) 151–2, on date and evolution.

⁸⁴ Hornblower (2011a) 132–4.

⁸⁵ Oost (1975); Marinatos (1981); Jordan (1986); Furley (2006); Hornblower (2011a).

⁸⁶ The resonance with the rescue of pious Croesus from the pyre by Apollo-sent rain in Herodotus (1.87.2) reinforces the point. For different takes on Thucydides’ handling of the allegation of the Plataeans’ perjury (2.5.6), see S. West (2003) and Hornblower (2011a).

⁸⁷ Hornblower (2011a) 28–9.

tioned thrice in the Mycalessus episode (7.29.1, 29.2, 30.1), and in the *History* as a whole, nowhere is there a mention of its famous current; commentators of these passages are also silent about it. Euripus is 40 m. wide at its narrowest point, about 8 m. deep, and its waters are in almost constant movement, as its own name also indicates (< εὐ + ῥίπτω/ῥιπή, meaning something like ‘good/quick flow’). Apparently hinting at existing debate about the causes of the phenomenon, Strabo says that ‘not much can be said about the tide of Euripus except for the fact that it changes its course seven times each day and night; let others think of the reason’ (9.2.8).⁸⁸ Livy stresses the military dangers of the straits (28.6):

A more dangerous station for a fleet can hardly be found. Apart from the fact that the winds rush down suddenly and with great fury from the high mountains on either side, the strait itself of the Euripus does not ebb and flow seven times a day, at stated hours, as report says; but the current, changing irregularly, like the wind, from one point to another, is hurried along like a torrent tumbling from a steep mountain; so that night and day ships can never lie quiet.⁸⁹

‘The phenomenon was celebrated in antiquity; ... the reasons for it have only been explained in modern times’.⁹⁰ From the fourth century onwards the word εὐριπος is used both for the specific location between Euboea and Boeotia and for any narrow stretch of sea (e.g., Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.23; Str. 17.1.25), or, metaphorically, to denote the opposite of steadfastness and stability (Plat. *Phaedo* 90c; Aeschin. *Ctes.* 90; Arist. *EN* 1167b). Aristotle himself seems to have been occupied with the observation of Euripus’ current in his final years in Chalkis.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Wallace (1979). Cf. Aesch. *Agam.* 190–95; Eur. *IT* 6ff.; metaphorically: Pl. *Phaedo* 90c; Aesch. *Against Ctes.* 90; Arist. *EN* 1167b.

⁸⁹ Roman sources: Lucan 5.234–5; Sen. *Herc. Oet.* 779–80; Cic. *Mur.* 35.1 (metaphorically). Currents and tides were for the Greeks an everyday phenomenon, as Herodotus characteristically says (7.198.1), and for the whole of the Mediterranean too (cf. Hdt. 2.11.2); cf. Constantakopoulou (2007) 4, 25. Although they had been the subject of critical examination and scientific analysis since the sixth century, natural phenomena were often related to the supernatural and the divine in the collective consciousness of the ancient Greeks: winds, earthquakes, sudden storms, eruptions and of course currents: e.g., 2.8.2–3, 3.89.1, 7.50.4. Cf. Plut. *Per.* 6.1. Thucydides either takes pains to offer a scientific explanation of the phenomenon in question (the tsunami off Euboea, 3.89; the flooding of river because of heavy rain, 4.75.2), or detaches himself from the *communis opinio* (e.g. 3.88.3, νομίζουσι ‘people think’ for volcanic activity), or refrains from relating the phenomenon to supernatural causes (e.g., Aetna at 3.116), even in cases with some metaphysical potential (e.g., 2.8.3, 77.6; 3.87.4).

⁹⁰ Fraenkel (1950) 116 ad Aesch. *Agam.* 191.

⁹¹ Some false traditions, in which the conditions of Aristotle’s death are associated with his failure to solve the riddle of Euripus, probably reflect his interest in the current; Chroust (1973) I.177–8.

In the regular phases (about 22–3 days every month) the water in Euripus normally changes direction from north to south and vice-versa four times in 24 hours, with a break of stillness of about 8 minutes between the changes. In the irregular and most enigmatic phase (i.e., the remaining 6–7 days of the month) the current behaves unforeseeably and may change direction from once up to 14 times per 24 hours.⁹² The speed of the water may reach a maximum of 9 knots, and, like today, in antiquity it would also have been extremely dangerous for a ship to sail against the current, or for anyone, even able swimmers, to fall in these waters. Today port authorities are extremely cautious in the opening and the closing of the bridge, checking not only the timetable with the expected times of the change of the current but also the water itself, because the ‘mad waters’, as they are called by the locals, might also change at whim. The rare instances when the waters stay still for longer than usual are taken by the locals as a sure sign of a coming violent storm or an earthquake.⁹³

The current of Euripus is often matched in modern studies with that of the straits of Messina (mod. ‘Messene’), between Rhegion in Italy and Messene (former Zancle) in Sicily. This is a considerably broader passage, although in our sources the fierceness of its current is generally more pronounced than Euripus’. The Straits of Messina is the only explicit reference to currents in Thucydides. In this passage he uses Homer’s mythical geography in order to locate this largely unknown and exotic place: ‘it is the so-called Charybdis, where Odysseus too is said to have travelled’ (4.24.5).⁹⁴ Thucydides reports that in the Straits of Messene the waters form currents and are dangerous, because of the narrowness of the passage and the quantity of the water falling into it from two great seas, the Tyrrhenian and the Sicilian (4.24.5).⁹⁵ In the dangerous current of these straits so far from

⁹² Morton (2001) 44–5, 86–7; also, Passas (1975–), s.v. ‘Εὐριπος’.

⁹³ I thank the Port Authorities of Chalkis for information provided. Morton (2001) 5–6 notes that the meteorological and sea conditions in the Mediterranean, particularly waves and currents, have remained unchanged since antiquity; cf. Morton (2001) 149, where it is pointed out that although tides in the Mediterranean are generally negligible when one travels in the open sea, navigation in coastal waters, such as in the straits of Euripus and Messina, can be challenging owing to tides, and safe passage is possible only at certain times. The bridge was constructed for the first time in 411/10 BCE (Diod. 13.47.3–6); ‘Negroponte’ (its Venetian name), with Bakhuizen (1985).

⁹⁴ In Homer (*Od.* 12.73–126) Charybdis (a destructive whirlpool) and Scylla (a monster), opposite Charybdis, are almost in the same location with the ‘Wandering Rocks’ (πλανκταί) in NW Asia Minor, at the Bosphorus, the entrance of the Black Sea (Pontus) (*Od.* 12.55–72; 23.327–8); the Rocks also known as Συμπληγάδες (e.g., Eur. *Medea* 2; Str. 1.2.10). Herodotus too (4.85.1) locates the Wandering Rocks at the Bosphorus; but Thucydides—subtly correcting Herodotus—locates Charybdis and Scylla (and presumably the Rocks themselves) in the West, a tradition well established in Polybius (34.2–4); for the problem of location, see Heubeck on *Od.* 12.55–72; *CT* II.180–2.

⁹⁵ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 12.73–112, 230–59; Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.920ff.; Theophr. *Vent.* 29 (generally on the phenomenon). A strong reflux Mediterranean current: Morton (2001) 44–5, 86–7.

home, and with fewer ships than those of the Syracusans and their allies, the Athenians forced their enemy into an evening naval battle and won (4.25.1–2). The narrative of the Sicilian expedition opens with the famous statement that most Athenians were ignorant (*ἄπειροι οἱ πολλοί*) of the size of Sicily and its population (6.1.1). This is in line with the tradition of early poetry and geography, in which Sicily and Italy (and landmarks such as the river Eridanos or Etna) are placed in the western extremities of the world, shrouded in myth.⁹⁶ At the opening of his Sicilian books Thucydides advertises his authority, by providing the width of the Straits of Messene, as a piece of information beyond the grasp of the average Athenian and a token of his superior knowledge: the strait, he says, is about twenty stades of sea (6.1.2), that is about 3.5 km, a generally correct number.⁹⁷ In contrast to his description of the Sicilian straits and current, Thucydides has nothing to say, as we saw, about the dangers of the more familiar waters of Euripus, and neither has Herodotus, despite the traffic in the channel in his narrative of the Persian Wars.⁹⁸

The silence about the current of Euripus in early historians is consistent with the treatment of Euripus in epic poetry. Hesiod (*WD* 650–5) says nothing about the current in his reference to his crossing over to Chalkis in Euboea on a boat for the games of Amphidamas. The Boeotian location named in Hesiod is Aulis in Boeotia, as the place ‘where the Achaeans once stayed through much storm when they had gathered a great host from divine Hellas for Troy’ (*WD* 651–3). There is nothing about Euripus in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* either. But there is a mention of Euripus in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, cheek by jowl with Mycalessus, as two stopping-places of the god on his way to Delphi in search of his oracle, as we saw in our discussion of divine archers in the area. This is the first and earliest mention of Euripus in our

⁹⁶ Keyser (2011) 39–40; cf. Hdt. 3.115.

⁹⁷ In the narrowest point; or perhaps about 2.8 km. For the problem of calculation and Thucydides’ stade measurements, see *CT* III.261–2. His account of the Greek colonization of Sicily is another conspicuous tour de force of (antiquarian) knowledge.

⁹⁸ Hdt. 5.77; 7.173, 183; 8.7.5, 15.8 (Euripus as the counterpart of Thermopylae at sea), 66.4. But see tides in Hdt. 2.11.2 (Egypt) and 7.198.1 (Maliac gulf). Thucydides is silent also about the current of the Hellespont, another narrow stretch of sea with a huge role in the mythical imagination of the Greeks, although in the description of the battle of Kynossema he mentions the narrowness of the passage (8.106.1); but see Diod. 13.39.4–5, 40.3, for the role of the current at Kynossema. Diodorus’ description of the battle is easily dismissed as confused, but the current of the Hellespont should have affected the battle and its outcome, *pace* Lazenby (2004) 197–98. On the current of the Hellespont, Hdt. 7.36.1 with Macan (1908) 50–2, pointing out the many puzzles of the narrative. On the role of the current in later times, see Polyæn. 4.6.8, on the defeat of Nicanor, the admiral of Antigonos, by Kleitos, because of the stream of the Hellespont, 317 BCE (not in Diod. 18.72.4); Lenski (2011) 75–6 (Crispus, Constantine’s son, outmanoeuvring Licinius’ armada off Elaious (Seddülbahir) using the swift current at the point).

sources.⁹⁹ But even here there is no reference to the current of Euripus. Strabo (1.2.30) says of Homer's silences: 'In general, silence is no sign of ignorance; for neither does Homer mention the reflux currents of the Euripus, nor Thermopylae, nor yet other things in Greece that are well known, though assuredly he was not ignorant of them'.

In the collective memory of the Greeks, Euripus, and Aulis in particular, are localities loaded with mythical and poetic connotations. Throughout Greek literature Aulis often appears as the mythical locus of the mustering of the Greek armada under Agamemnon, its delayed departure for Troy, and Iphigenia's sacrifice (e.g. Eur. *IT* 26; *IA* 87–8; Paus. 1.35.3; 3.9.3). Famously, Aulis' own name was thought to derive from the verb ἀυλίεσθαι ('to gather').¹⁰⁰ As expected, in a number of passages in Euripides' two *Iphigenias*, Aulis and Euripus are mentioned almost paired (e.g. *IT* 6–9; *IA* 11–14; 165–6), as in *IA* 1320–3, where Aulis is the harbour in which the ships are moored and Euripus is the place on which Zeus blows contrary winds, at times favouring mortal plans for sail, at times obstructing them—a case in which the natural element is explicitly the agent of divine will. There are also cases where the two places are used interchangeably: for example, in Pindar (*Pyth.* 11.22), it is Euripus, and not Aulis, which is mentioned as the place where Iphigenia was slaughtered (Ἰφιγένει' ἐπ' Εὐρίπω | σφαχθεῖσα τῆλε πάτρας); or, in Aesch. *Ag.* 190–1 the whimsical waters of the straits and their metaphysical connection with *tuchē* ('fortune', Sommerstein's trans.) are evoked simply by the mention of Aulis: 'opposite Chalkis, in the place where the waters surge back and forth, at Aulis'.

I would like to suggest that Thucydides' silence about the current of Euripus and its dangerous waters is consistent with the poetic function of the word and its evocative power. Operating like a poet, Thucydides did not need to explain or remind his audience of the dangers of the place, or rather held off from doing so, in this highly dramatic episode. The simple mention of Euripus as a focal point of action conjured up the mythopoetic geography of this telling space in Greek literature, in which nature, human transgression and retribution are so closely intertwined. Aulis is never mentioned in Thucydides, whilst Euripus appears three times, all in the Mycalessus episode. Both are powerful and interchangeable *loci* of collective memory for the Greeks of the classical period and beyond, and certainly for Thucydides' audience. The poetic background of the place enables Thucydides to refer his audience to a whole nexus of moral dilemmas related to crime, expiation, and human responsibility, recurrent in tragedy and real life, and especially in war, in the most unmediated way.

⁹⁹ Mycalessus' presence in the *Hymn* has been seen as an indication of some form of the city's religious association with Delphi: Richardson (2010) 115–16. Cf. below, p. 67 for Delphic influences on the Homeric Catalogue.

¹⁰⁰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀυλίεω ἀυλίσω Αὐλῖς, *Etymologicum Gudianum*, s.v. 'Αυλίδα' (de Stefani I.233).

5. Thucydides *Homericus*: Pulling the Threads Together

In line with his criticism of oral tradition and the stories of poets and mythographers, Thucydides expressed some mistrust towards the credibility of the poets. At the same time though, as is well acknowledged, like most of his contemporaries he drew on Homer both for historical knowledge and for pleasure. In what follows, I will pull the threads together, focusing on Thucydides' explicit engagement with Homer and more precisely the presence of the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in his work. A point of special significance, which has escaped attention so far, is that in the totality of the Greek literature available to us the *Catalogue of Ships* and the *Hymn to Apollo* are the only two texts before Thucydides in which Mycalessus gets a mention.

i. The Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* in Thucydides

The Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*, a long section of two hundred and sixty-six hexameters in Book 2 of the *Iliad* (494–759) recording the Achaean forces and their leaders that had sailed to fight at Troy, is one of the most famous units of Homer. But at the same time, at least for a modern audience, it is arguably a dry and technical piece, also obscure in its compilation of place- and personal names. Many of these place-names remain unlocated today, while some of those names apply to leaders who play minor or moderate roles in the rest of the poem. This is so, because the *Catalogue of Ships* is considered to be older than the *Iliad* and to belong to 'a more complete view of the Trojan myth'.¹⁰¹ As M. L. West has argued, the poet of the *Iliad* adapted his *Catalogue of Ships* from an earlier poem which must have dealt with the mustering of the Achaean forces in Aulis and early battles.¹⁰² Entries are often accompanied by minimal descriptive material, and, occasionally, by mini-narratives, related to the lives and careers of people and places mentioned. This feature has been viewed as a morphological proof of the familiarity of Homeric audiences with these stories, which made most (though not all) of these names more intelligible to them than they are to us.¹⁰³

Boeotia has a prominent presence in the *Catalogue*. The Boeotian entry opens the *Catalogue* and is the longest one dedicated to a single contingent (twenty-two lines). Here are the first lines, where among the Boeotian

¹⁰¹ Kullmann (2012) 214.

¹⁰² M. L. West (2011) 32–3, 112, and id. (2013) 4.

¹⁰³ On Homer, performance, and collective memory: Minchin (1996), (2001), and (2017); Sammons (2010); Pucci (1996), on catalogue as memory and ritual in a private context. On the *Catalogue of Ships*: Allen (1921), Giovannini (1969); Hope Simpson and Lazenby (1970); Marcozzi–Sinatra–Vannicelli (1994); Visser (1997); Marks (2012). Arist. *Poet.* 1459a36 (as an artful device for narrating the Trojan War).

localities ‘rocky Aulis’ appears early on, unsurprisingly given the city’s importance in the Trojan myth, and Mycalessus features as *εὐρύχοπος* (‘with broad dancing places’) (*Il.* 2.494–502):

The Boeotians were led by Peneleos and Leitos and Arkesilaos and Prothoenor and Klonios. These were men who lived in Hyria and rocky Aulis, Schoinos and Skolos, and the mountain spurs of Eteonos, Thespia, and Graia and **Mycalessus** with the broad spaces for the dance (*εὐρύχοπος*); those who lived about Harma and Eilesion and Erythrai; those who held Eleon and Hyle and Peteon, Okalea and the well-founded citadel of Medeon, Kopai and Eutresis and Thisbe where the doves abound ...

Boeotia’s prominence in the *Catalogue* is incongruent with the small importance of the region in the rest of the *Iliad*; this has been a central question in the bibliography. Some of the suggested answers are pertinent to my inquiry. Firstly, Boeotia’s prominence in the *Catalogue* might be seen as a sort of homage to the vein of catalogic poetry, which has a special localisation in Boeotia. Hesiod, a Boeotian himself, provides the best example of Boeotia’s association with the genre of catalogic poetry and the antiquarian strand of compilers, genealogists, and mythographers. Secondly, Boeotia’s prominence in the *Catalogue* is probably a homage to ‘rocky Aulis’, the second of the twenty-nine localities mentioned in the Boeotian entry.¹⁰⁴ Aulis’ prominent position in the *Catalogue*, and the very presence of the *Catalogue* itself in the *Iliad*, have been viewed as compensations for the absence of naval battles from the Iliadic narrative. Battles in the *Iliad* take place on the plain between the Trojan walls and the Achaean camp and ships, and never at sea. The simple mention of Aulis conjures up the mustering of the Achaean fleet before departure, while the position of the *Catalogue* so early in the *Iliad* creates a sense of beginning where the naval aspect has a dominant role. Thirdly, as repository of collective memory and a collective cultural possession, the *Catalogue* was a chart of Greek ethnicity, where local and panhellenic identities coexisted and interacted, and a favourite piece for performance throughout antiquity.¹⁰⁵ Cult is a major criterion for tying heroes with certain localities, and the Homeric *Catalogue* has been seen ‘as a roll-call of the Homeric heroes on a Panhellenic scale’, in which the heroes

¹⁰⁴ Giovannini (1969) 24.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Ancient audiences and readers must have been fascinated in different ways by the document’s coverage’: Kirk (1985) 169. ‘Panhellenes’ (*Πανέλληνες*, *Il.* 2.530): a *hapax* in Homer and ‘a slightly more urgent expression than “Hellenes”’, Fowler (1998) 10; *ibid.* 10–11, on the extended meaning of *Ἑλλάς* in the *Odyssey* to encompass the whole Greek world; Kirk (1985) 202, Mitchell (2007) 44–5, on the impact of the term *Panhellenes* on later audiences as symbol of ethnic distinctiveness and collective Greek identity.

are ‘assigned to homelands in line with the site of their primary cult’.¹⁰⁶ Scholars have gone even further to see Delphic traditions behind the systematisation of the *Catalogue* and its geographic distribution of heroes on the map of Greece.¹⁰⁷ If we accept the possibility that Delphi, this major panhellenic centre with a remarkably long life, had a decisive influence on this archaic map of ethnic claims that the Homeric *Catalogue* was, then Boeotia’s prominence in it looks more intelligible. The region’s ethnic identity was crystallised already in the archaic period, and its early ethnogenesis is congruent with its historical importance from the archaic period onwards.

Thucydides includes catalogues in his work and draws on antiquarian material; these are, of course, typical features of the historiographic genre. So his engagement with the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* is not unexpected. What is perhaps less expected and deserves a comment is that his ‘most Homeric’ predecessor, Herodotus, never engages explicitly with the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*, although he engages closely with the catalogic genre.¹⁰⁸ By contrast, Thucydides in the *Archaeology*, acting as a Homeric commentator, uses the *Catalogue* to make inferences about the numbers of the Achaian forces, based on the *Catalogue* (1.10.3–5); and he cites a line from the Homeric scene of the delivery of the sceptre (1.9.4, citing *Il.* 2.108). He also alludes to the *Catalogue* by using Homeric city-epithets found in it. In the first mention of Corinth, Thucydides introduces the city as powerful and rich in the past, reminding that the early poets called the place ‘wealthy’ (ἀφνειόν, 1.13.5; cf. *Il.* 2.570).¹⁰⁹ And he refers to Orchomenus in Boeotia as ‘Minyan Orchomenus’ (4.76.3), the same epithet as that used in the *Catalogue* for the city (*Il.* 2.511; cf. *Hdt.* 1.146.1). All this leaves no doubt that Thucydides possessed, and took for granted in his readers, a high degree of familiarity with Homer, and certainly with the *Catalogue of Ships*.

This degree of familiarity is felt even more powerfully in Thucydides’ comment about the settlement of Boeotia in the so-called Dark Ages in his *Archaeology*: ‘There was a portion of them [= the Boeotian group] in that land [= Boeotia of the classical period] before, which took part in the Trojan expedition’ (ἦν δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀποδασμὸς πρότερον ἐν τῇ γῆ ταύτῃ, ἀφ’ ὧν καὶ

¹⁰⁶ Howie (1998) 120.

¹⁰⁷ Nagy (1979) 120. Kullmann (2012) 221 on the political strategy and interstate dynamics behind the *Catalogue of Ships*, drawing on Giovannini (1969) 57–8, 60, who argues for a correspondence between the longest list of *theōrodoikoi* from Delphi we possess (late third century BCE) and the order of the cities in the *Catalogue of Ships*.

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Xerxes’ army, 7.61–99; the Greek fleet before the battle of Salamis, 8.43–8 (for the figure 1,207 for the ships at Salamis (*Hdt.* 7.89.1) and its mythological connotations, perhaps going back to the Homeric *Catalogue*: see, e.g., Briant (2002) 527). Homer’s few explicit mentions in Herodotus should not be taken to mean lack of engagement with the poet; quite the opposite: Pelling (2006) and above, Ch. 1; R. B. Rutherford (2012).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Pi. Enc.* fr. 122.2.

ἐς Ἴλιον ἐστράτευσαν, 1.12.3). This has been viewed as another moment of Homeric exegesis and an attempt to reconcile his own version of date and geography of Boeotian migration with those emerging from the Homeric *Catalogue*, with special reference to Arne.¹¹⁰ Stephanie Larson's comment is apt:

This parenthesis undoubtedly refers to epic tradition, specifically to the *Catalogue of Ships*. ... Its presence in Thucydides' split-second account of early Boeotian history implies that the historian simply could not have omitted reference to the *Catalogue*: its hold was too strong in the tradition and thus also in the minds of his audience.¹¹¹

Within this web of intertexts, it could be argued that the simple reference to 'small' Mycalessus in Thucydides would be enough to evoke in the mind of his audience the reference to εὐρύχορος Μυκαλησσός ('Mycalessus with broad dancing-places', *Il.* 2.498) in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*. In addition, if we take into consideration the question of recitation, not only of the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* but also of certain parts of Thucydides, such as the *Archaeology* and the Mycalessus episode itself, then the relationship between these two Thucydidean sections and the *Catalogue of Ships* emerges more powerfully.¹¹²

ii. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in Thucydides

Another major Homeric link in Thucydides' narrative, also relevant to performance and oral tradition, is the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. Delos was an epicentre of Athenian identity and imperialist politics of increasing importance in the fifth century. Thucydides describes the Athenian purification of Delos and the re-establishment of the Delian festival in 426 BCE, also quoting two passages from the *Hymn to Apollo* (3.104). The *Homeric Hymns* were songs in which gods were invoked and praised. They were thought to have been composed probably within the archaic period, but both authorship and time of composition are contested matters; but on this occasion, we have Thucydides' assertive attribution of the *Hymn* to 'the blind man of Chios'.¹¹³ Thucydides also provides details about the Delian festival:

¹¹⁰ *CTI*.38–9; Nicolai (2001) 271–2.

¹¹¹ S. L. Larson (2007) 58; Cf. *HCT* I.118; Schachter (2016) 101, noting that of the Boeotian cities in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* only Aulis and Mycalessus survived into the classical period and beyond.

¹¹² For possible recitation units in Thucydides (including the episode of Mycalessus), see Hornblower (2011a) 283 with *CT* III.31.

¹¹³ The question of the authorship and unity of the *Homeric Hymn* is irrelevant to this discussion; cf. *CTI*.530, also quoting M. L. West (1984) 166: 'if other people said it was by Homer, there was nothing to make [Thucydides] suspect otherwise'. On the *Homeric Hymns*

‘a competition was held ... both athletic and musical and the cities brought song-and-dance groups (χοροί)’ (3.104.3). Thucydides’ quotation from the *Homeric Hymn* is his longest direct quotation from any literary source, also constituting the ‘primary external evidence of the performance of the *Homeric Hymns* at festivals’ and ‘the most valuable piece of evidence about ancient ideas of Homer’.¹¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, given his focus on Delos, Thucydides quotes from the (first) Delian part of the *Hymn to Apollo*, and not from the (second) Pythian part, in which Mycalessus (together with Euripus) appears as a stopping place of Apollo on his way to Delphi, as we saw. One potential reason for Thucydides giving us this uniquely long quote from the Delian part was that it might have been less performed and thus less well known; such a motive would have been consistent with the historian’s claim to superior knowledge and to the shaping of panhellenic memory.¹¹⁵ The Athenian initiative on the island at the time had both a domestic and a panhellenic aspect and the *Hymn* was certainly the best vehicle for the rhetoric of panhellenism (‘an all-encompassing vision that surpasses the perspective of any one place of cult or any one song, [tying] them all together in one general picture of common significance’).¹¹⁶ And surely the absence of Mycalessus and Euripus from the lines of the *Hymn* quoted by Thucydides should not have prevented his audience from making the connection between the episode of Mycalessus and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.

iii. Local and Panhellenic Histories: Homer as Living Experience

The focal moment of the Thracian war crime in Mycalessus, and one that creates the feeling of total annihilation and *olethros* in the city (cf. above, p. 52 on Paus. 1.23.3), is the moment of the slaughter of all the boys who had just come into the school (7.29.5). A comparable disaster we find in Herodotus, when a roof in Chios collapses on a group of ‘boys learning their letters’ (παισὶ γράμματα διδασκομένοισι, 6.27.2) killing all of them, one hundred and twenty, except for one. In line with Herodotus’ openness to religious explanations, and in contrast with Thucydides on this matter, this unex-

(and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* more specifically), see Förstel (1979); Miller (1986); Malkin (2000); Clay (2006); Chappell (2006) and (2011); Athanassaki–Martin–Miller (2009).

¹¹⁴ See Nagy (2011) 282 and 322; Graziosi (2002) 222–6; Nagy (2010) 74–5; Hornblower *CTI*.523. See also Calame (2001) 104–6; Kowalzig (2007), esp. 69–72.

¹¹⁵ There are many questions about the relationship between the two parts of the *Hymn*, such as the meaning of the word *προόμιον* (‘prelude’) used by Thucydides for the Delian part (3.104.4); e.g., *CTI*.529–30; more recently, Vergados (2016) 177–9 (in relation to Aelius Aristides’ use of Thucydides).

¹¹⁶ Gagné (2015) 92.

pected evil that takes the lives of innocent children is interpreted as a portent of more disasters to come.¹¹⁷

But what letters should we imagine the boys studying at the school in Mycalessus when the Thracians burst in, or the boys on the island of Chios in Herodotus, or other, less unfortunate, boys across the Greek world? The poems of Homer, ‘the blind man from Chios’, were not only a repository of collective memory for the Greeks, but also the source of every kind of knowledge: historical, geographical, ethnographical, medical, theological, ethical, and so on. In Xenophon’s *Symposium* (3.5–6; 4.6) we hear Nikeratos, the son of the Athenian general Nikias, boasting that he was made to learn by heart the whole of Homer’s poetry and that this qualifies him to teach a number of subjects.¹¹⁸ Iconographic evidence from the classical period has been interpreted to suggest that the *Homeric Hymns*, or at least some of them, were also used as school texts at this period.¹¹⁹ The first two books of the *Iliad*, and the *Catalogue of Ships* in particular, were staples and favourites throughout antiquity.¹²⁰ The entry of εὐρύχορος Mycalessus in the Homeric *Catalogue* was, like every entry, a cause for national pride and a major node of collective memory and self-definition for this Boeotian community within a panhellenic frame.¹²¹

It is in this light that we can even imagine the boys in the school of ‘not big’ Mycalessus preparing to sing and read from the *Hymn to Apollo* about the god who passed through Euripus and their own city on his way to Delphi, or about the heroes of Boeotia in the *Catalogue of Ships*, among them heroes from their own city, when disaster struck. Even if the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was not regularly performed at the festival of the Panathenaia in the fifth century BCE, which might have been one reason why Thucydides gives us such a long quote from the *Hymn*,¹²² it was the sort of performance piece with a strong local appeal, especially to the communities mentioned in it, such as Boeotian Mycalessus. Another such area is Phocis in central Greece, which has an important representation in the *Hymn* and in the *Catalogue of Ships*, coming immediately after Boeotia. The placing of the Phocian contingent next to

¹¹⁷ CT III.599.

¹¹⁸ See Richardson (2006) 63. See Plat. *Rep.* 10.606e (with Halliwell (2011) 7 with n. 15) ‘with a possible echo of Xenophanes B 10 DK, “from the start everyone has learnt according to Homer”, ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ’ Ὀμηρον ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες’.

¹¹⁹ Beazley (1948) on an Attic lekythos (c. 470 BCE) showing a boy holding an open roll, bearing the inscription Ἐρμῆν ἀείδω, from the *Hymn to Hermes* (no. 18), a formulaic opening; cf. *Hymn to Hera* (no. 12) and *Hymn to Artemis* (no. 27): Richardson (2010) 153 and Clay (2016) 30–1.

¹²⁰ Crihiore (2001) 194–5.

¹²¹ Kirk (1985) 166–240; S. L. Larson (2007) 32–40.

¹²² See above, pp. 68–9.

the Boeotian (*Iliad* 2.525–6) is ‘probably a political interpolation ... in any case an addition to the Aulis catalogue’.¹²³

Analogies have been drawn between the entries on Boeotia and Phocis in the Iliadic *Catalogue*, and Panopeus in Phocis is a case in point. Panopeus is mentioned a few lines after Mycalessus in the *Catalogue*, though without an epithet (*Il.* 2.520). But it is called *καλλίχορος* in the *Odyssey* (11.581 *καλλιχόρου Πανοπηῆος*), whose meaning (‘with beautiful dancing places’) closely resembles *εὐρύχορος*.¹²⁴ In the case of Panopeus we get a valuable glimpse of the lasting legacy of epic background in a community’s process of ethnic self-definition. Pausanias says (10.4.1–4) that Panopeus hardly deserved to be called a *polis* in his time, but was the site of an ancient choral ritual by women in honour of Dionysus—hence the well-deserved *καλλίχορος*.¹²⁵ Surely the people of *εὐρύχορος* Mycalessus told similar stories about themselves.

iv. Cities in Time: from *εὐρύχορος* to ‘not big Mycalessus’

The epithet *εὐρύχορος* used in the Homeric *Catalogue* for Mycalessus is spelled with an omicron and is not specific to Mycalessus. We find it in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* for other cities as well, and quite significant ones, such as Sparta or Thebes.¹²⁶ It means, as we saw, ‘with broad dancing-places’ and its component *χορός* points to public religious ceremonies. But we know that by Pindar’s time its meaning came to be conflated with that of *εὐρύχωρος* (‘with broad spaces’, ‘spacious’), that is, the opposite of Thucydides’ *οὐ μεγάλη*.¹²⁷

But ‘smallness’ or ‘bigness’ of cities are relevant notions and are also dependent on time and narratives of the past. As Herodotus famously notes at the beginning of his work, cities change sizes and fortunes in the course of their life (Hdt. 1.5.3–4). Thucydides too has a word about this: Mycenae in the Peloponnese is presented in Homer as ‘rich in gold’ and ‘broad-wayed’

¹²³ M. L. West (2011) 115.

¹²⁴ Like Mycalessus, Panopeus too gets a mention in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, not in its name, but as ‘the city of the Phlegyae, arrogant men, who have no regard for Zeus’ (*Hymn Ap.* 278–9), with Paus. 10.4.1 and Richardson (2010) 122. See McNerney (1999) 120–53 for the rich mythology associated with Panopeus; at 128–9 there is a good discussion of the political use of the Phlegyan origin by the people of Panopeus to negotiate their identity within the Phocian *ethnos*. The city appears as *Φανοτεύς* in Thuc. 4.89.1, 76.3; *Πανοπεύς*: Hdt. 8.35.1, in connection with Xerxes’ invasion of Phocis in 480, when the town was burnt to the ground.

¹²⁵ Cf. *κλειτῶ Πανοπηῆϊ*, *Il.* 17.307 (*κλέος*, famous Panopeus). Eustath. *Commentarii ad Homerī Odysseam*, p. 435, ll. 42–3: *ἔοικε δὲ καὶ καλὸς εἶναι τόπος ὁ Πανοπεύς, διὸ εὐηρέστηται τῷ ποιητῇ μὴ εὐρύχορον αὐτὸν εἰπεῖν ἀλλὰ καλλίχορον* (Vers. 581).

¹²⁶ E.g., *Od.* 15.1; cf. 13.414 (Sparta); *Od.* 11.265 (Thebes). Also for Sikyon (*Il.* 23.299), and Iolkos (*Il.* 11.256); cf. Hypereie, *Od.* 6.4. (Cf. *Il.* 9.478 for Hellas, close to Phthia). This does not mean that it is pure poetic convention: Kirk (1985) 173ff. Cf. Pol. 34.4.

¹²⁷ Cf. Pi. *O.* 7.18: *Ἀσίας εὐρυχόρου*. See Agócs, below, Ch. 3, pp. 106–7 for *εὐρύχορος Λιβύα* in Pi. *P.* 4.

(πολύχρυσος, *Il.* 7.180; 11.46; *Od.* 3.305; εὐρύαγυια, *Il.* 4.52; like Troy, *Il.* 2.141, 9.28),¹²⁸ where Agamemnon the leader of the Trojan expedition had his palace. Thucydides says that Mycenae was certainly a small place (μικρὸν ἦν, 1.10.1) and that many of these Mycenaean centres might seem small and insignificant in the fifth-century BCE, but this, he says, is not enough evidence for rejecting what the poets and tradition have to say about the size of the expedition.¹²⁹ By the same token, Mycalessus could be both the οὐ μεγάλη Boeotian city of the classical period and the εὐρύχο/ωρος city of the epic past.

6. Conclusion: Collective Memory, Poetry and Historiography

Works on the relationship between Thucydides and Homer, and more generally on the relationship between early historiography and poetic genres, have made modern readers more alert to Thucydides' dense and subtle interplay with his literary and cultural context. At times this interplay remains invisible to us, because of our cultural distance and the problem of our sources. In this chapter I have tried to show that the episode of Mycalessus is an instance of Thucydides' interaction with epic material as attested in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. I have argued for the cultural resonance of this epic material with fifth-century audiences, and for Thucydides' use of the Homeric background in his construction of the Mycalessus episode, as part of his panhellenic historical narrative. I suggested that fifth-century audiences in Athens and elsewhere were readier to recognise and communicate with the historian's interaction with the Homeric references to Mycalessus, on account of these audiences' familiarity with the Homeric text as shared cultural experience and possession.

The section on Mycalessus is one of the most tantalizing moments of authorial intentionality and selectivity in the whole of Thucydides. In the course of my discussion, I explored the web of mytho-religious meanings that underlie the episode, which involve the local and panhellenic significance of the area in myth and cult, and Mycalessus' closeness to Athens. The theme of closeness to Athens has also been connected in my discussion with: moral questions, in particular the accountability of Athens as a whole and Diitrephes as a key individual; Plataea as a more conspicuous doppelgänger city, and the construction of barbarian/Thracian 'Otherness' in Thucydides. Moral questions are closely related to Thucydides' claim of a unique and

¹²⁸ A small place itself at the start: Str. 12.8.7; Σ Lyc. 1341.

¹²⁹ Thucydides' argument is complex: it is partly the standard idea about the exaggeration (but not necessarily falseness) of the poets, but also a more elaborate argument about what makes a city significant; the answer is certainly not its appearance (*δῆμις*, 1.10.3); *CT* II.138, on the Herodotean resonance.

distinctive way of explaining history in the tradition of his genre, and at the same time to his dealing with metaphysical anxiety and the role of the gods in human affairs.

There is no reason to deny the historicity of the tragic fate of Mycalessus in the summer of 413; nor should we fail to take into consideration the role of currents in naval warfare, such as Euripus, even if they do not surface in early historians. But as this chapter argues, this piece of historical narrative is a powerful token of Thucydides' own aspiration to immortality, his antagonistic dialogue with the epic tradition, and Homer in particular as the great archetype of war narrative, and Thucydides' answer to the commemorative function of historiography.

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APPENDIX

A Note on the Translation of Thuc. 7.27.2:

διενοοῦντο αὐτοὺς πάλιν ὅθεν ἦλθον ἐς Θράκην ἀποπέμπειν

This Appendix proposes a new interpretation and translation of the underlined phrase. The whole phrase is usually translated '[the Athenians] decided to send them back to Thrace, where they had come from'. Word-arrangement and style have justifiably attracted attention; especially the cluster *πάλιν ὅθεν ἦλθον ἐς Θράκην* creates a feeling of redundancy, stylistically enacting the feeling of urgency of the Athenians to get rid of these costly and unwanted Thracian mercenaries.¹³⁰ There is no doubt that the pleonastic style creates a powerful emotional effect on the reader or hearer. Yet I would like to suggest that there is also a very pragmatic meaning in the phrase, according to which the translation should be as follows:

[the Athenians] decided to send them back to Thrace, taking the same route from which they had come.

If my reading is correct, *ὅθεν* indicates the actual itinerary of the Thracians out of Attica, which must be understood as being precisely the same with that taken into it. This pragmatic geographical meaning has escaped attention precisely because the emotional effect of the phrase tends to take over. In order to illustrate my explanation, I will provide some context on the structure of the whole section 7.27–30.

Nowadays there is a consensus that the whole set of chapters containing both the Mycalessus episode and the preceding digression on the financial harm the Athenians suffered from the fortification of Dekeleia by the Spartans in 413 form a narrative unit. The interrelated sections are:

Thracians I: First instalment of the section on the Thracians:

a. 7.27.1–2: *ἀφίκοντο δὲ καὶ Θρακῶν ... διενοοῦντο αὐτοὺς πάλιν ὅθεν ἦλθον ἐς Θράκην ἀποπέμπειν*: The dagger-carrying Dians from Thrace came late (*ὑστερον ἦκον*) and must be sent back home because the Athenians cannot afford to pay them in their present conditions. Why? Because of 'the war from Dekeleia':

¹³⁰ The phrase "back, where they had come from" is strictly pleonastic, and "to Thrace" hardly necessary in view of *Θρακῆς above*: CT III.589.

b. 7.27.2–28: τὸ γὰρ ἔχειν πρὸς τὸν ἐκ τῆς Δεκελείας πόλεμον ... αἱ δὲ πρόσοδοι ἀπώλλυντο: The damaging effects of ‘the war from Dekeleia’ for the Athenians.

Thracians II: Resuming the Thracian narrative (The Mycalessus episode):

c. 7.29–30: τοὺς οὖν Θρᾶκας τοὺς τῷ Δημοσθένει ὑστερήσαντας ... τοιαῦτα ξυνέβη

The pragmatic geographical meaning of ὅθεν ἦλθον is reinforced by the fact that geography plays a crucial role in the whole narrative section to which the Mycalessus episode belongs. In the chapters on Dekeleia in particular (27–8), the description of space and the land- and sea-routes are vital for the reader’s understanding of the damaging effects of the fortification of Dekeleia for the Athenians. Thucydides takes pains to explain that the importation of goods into Attica by land via Oropos was quicker, and was the one followed in the past. But since the fortification of Dekeleia took place, this route had been no longer tenable and supplies had to be carried now by sea, that is, on boats sailing round Sounion, which was expensive (πολυτελής, 7.28.1).¹³¹ The same word is used at the opening of the section of Dekeleia for the Thracians, whose daily payment of one drachma also seemed expensive to the Athenians: τὸ γὰρ ἔχειν πρὸς τὸν ἐκ τῆς Δεκελείας πόλεμον αὐτοὺς πολυτελὲς ἐφαίνετο (7.27.2). The γὰρ-clause opens the narrative ‘window’ for the Dekeleia section, which functions not only as the reason for which the Thracians had to be returned home, but also as the reason for which they had to be returned home *through a certain route*, if we take ὅθεν ἦλθον to mean ‘the same route from which they had come’, as I suggest.

The route of the Thracians out of Athens is provided later in the narrative, at the beginning of the Mycalessus episode, which is a further indication of the significance of geography and war routes in this episode. It was going to be a coastal march ‘through Euripus’ (ἐπορεύοντο γὰρ δι’ Εὐρίπου, 7.29.1). Routes of armies into and out of territories were matters of consequence, and historians of all times have an eye for them. In Thucydides, for example, we might also recall the description of the Peloponnesians’ first invasion into Attica under Arkhidamos (431 BCE): Oenoe–Eleusis and the Thriasian plain–up to Acharnai through Kropiai and Mt Aigaleos (2.18.1, 19; cf. 2.21.1). Then, Thucydides says, the Spartans returned through Boeotia, and not from where they had entered (ἀνεχώρησαν διὰ Βοιωτῶν, οὐχ

¹³¹ The route via Dekeleia (one of the major routes to and out of Attica for armies; see Ober (1985) 115) was no longer available, since the fortification had already taken place (sometime in or after March of 413, 7.19.1). Cf. Hdt. 8.34, 50, for Xerxes’ route into Attica through Boeotia (Orchomenus, Thespieae, Plataea) and Hdt. 8.113.1, for taking the same route out of Attica after his defeat (ἐξήλαυνον ἐς τοὺς Βοιωτοὺς τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδόν); cf. Mardonius’ route out of Athens, 9.15 (through Dekeleia).

ἤπερ ἐσέβαλον, 2.23.3), passing by Oropos and laying waste the surrounding area (Graiki).

So if ὅθεν ἦλθον indicates that the return-journey of the Thracians out of Attica to the north was going to be the same as that taken during their coming *into* Attica, then we could surmise that this latter route was exactly the reverse. That is, they must have marched south up to a point, from where they would have been picked up by Athenian boats, probably from a harbour north of Euripus, and they would have sailed through the channel to Athens (again δι' Εὐρίπου), following the sea-route round Sounion and being imported into the city like disastrous goods, since the land via Oropos and through Boeotia was blocked. This longer route might also have been the reason for the Thracians' delayed arrival in Athens. The text's arrangement encourages such a possibility, since the double statement about the Thracians' delayed arrival frames the statement about the delayed importation of goods from Euboea in an ABA pattern:

A: ὡς ὕστεροι ἦκον (7.27.2; the Thracians)

B: ἢ τε τῶν ἐπιτηδείων παρακομιδῆ ... διὰ τῆς Δεκελείας θάσσω οὐσα
(7.28.1; imported goods from Euboea)

A: ὕστερήσαντας (7.29.1; the Thracians).

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