

INTERTEXTUALITY, PLAUSIBILITY, AND INTERPRETATION*

Abstract. Are there differences in principle between intertextuality in historiography and in other genres? This paper explores that question with detailed analysis of three cases, Herodotus' account of Marathon, Xenophon's of the seizure of the Cadmeia, and Plutarch's of the final days of Julius Caesar. Particular attention is paid to the value of intertextuality for interpretation, as echoes of classic models prompts reflection both on historical continuities and on changes. Any generic differences may be in terms of the different ways in which readers may care about real life experiences and those in fiction; it may also be that interpretations of other genres may apply, in a filtered way, the same reading techniques that historiography encourages for its real-life narratives.

I

Life is not a narrative fiction; but we often try to make sense of it by treating it as if it were. We tell stories about our own and others' past, present, and future which impose order on the messiness of reality, and we select what fits certain narrative templates of plot or character or moral import: the debonair chancer who will come to no good, the quiet man who should not be ignored, the talented woman who's in danger of hitting that glass ceiling. One influential (and admittedly controversial) school of psychotherapy works on our own narratives that we tell about ourselves, which are not always the most generous or even the fairest: think of what a hard time Aeneas gives himself and his colleagues for the enterprising switch of armour in *Aeneid* 2,¹ when an equivalent plot-line plays out marvellously and successfully with switches of uniforms in many a World War II film. There is evidence too that juries are more likely to accept narratives if they map on to familiar patterns that they know from fiction, more usually these days from television drama than from the *Iliad*. Alan Dershowitz once managed to save someone from what looked like a cut-and-dried prosecution case—his client had taken out a big insurance policy on his wife, then she died mysteriously and violently a week later—by arguing precisely that 'life

* The purpose of this paper was to prepare for and contribute to discussion in the 2011 APA panel, and it is published now in case anyone finds it useful for the continuation of that debate. I have thought it best to keep the feeling of immediacy by not changing references that were appropriate at the time, whether to current politics or to the state of scholarly discussion.

¹ Virg. *Aen.* 2.386–412.

is not a dramatic narrative':² what could never be coincidence if it were on the screen (*Double Indemnity*) might be exactly that in the untidy and unshaped realities of life. That story is as telling for what Dershowitz needed to argue against, the natural assumptions that a jury would bring to such a case, as for the defamiliarising rhetorical technique that he got away with using. Whatever else we say about the value of intertextuality in historical narrative, we should not lose sight of that simple truth: a narrative is simply *more plausible* if it already maps on to a pattern that its audience finds familiar, if the fighting in the Great Harbour at Syracuse echoes that in the straits of Salamis or if Cleon has something of the Thersites about him.³ Such things happen and such people happen; this is the way they happened before; why be surprised if they happen again?

Naturally enough, we apply similar narrative codes in making sense of politics or economics, often more or less consciously appealing to patterns familiar from our reading of or memories of the past. There is always a danger of a double dip in a recession; there will always be an ideological dimension to Conservative cutting of public expenditure, remember Thatcher—they all love doing it for its own sake; over-high expectations are always a problem for an incoming President; trouble always comes if you spend money on anything that a Founding Father wouldn't have popped down to the local shop and bought himself. Indeed, one school of historiographic theorising develops this insight in exploring the different ways that causal analysis works in science and in history.⁴ In science the whole point of claiming a causal relationship is to claim that if the preconditions were repeated the same result would ensue; but it is hard to believe that, even if *per impossibile* exactly the same circumstances were to obtain again as in 1989, the Soviet empire would collapse in exactly the same way, any more than exactly the same football match would always take place if the players took up the same initial positions with the same coaching instructions in the same pitch and weather conditions. One can still offer causal explanations in retrospect, but once again—so this school would suggest—this may be more a matter of applying familiar narrative codes, picking out from the conglomerate of confusing details the elements that fit a pattern. One can see the force of that argument without necessarily thinking that that procedure is wholly arbi-

² Dershowitz (1996) 99–105.

³ Cf. respectively Rood (1999) 159–62, stressing that 'the memory of the Persian Wars suggests points of contrast as well as points of comparison' (161), which fits my argument below); Cairns (1982).

⁴ On this contrast of scientific and historical explanation cf. esp. Mink (1987). Analysis of the various 'tropes' of historical narrative is of course particularly associated with the work of Hayden White, esp. White (1973) and (1987).

trary or fictional. We can be identifying patterns in the events as well as in our own minds, and not every interpretation or selection is as good as every other (think of the Founding Father and the local shop): departments of History and Political Science need not be built on a principle of massive fraud.

So: stories build on other stories; writers and readers apply familiar codes in order to make sense of what they say and what they read. This is highly relevant as we turn to consider how historiographic intertextuality is different in kind from any other sort of intertextuality. That question has been addressed in the last year both by David Levene and by Cynthia Damon;⁵ there could scarcely be a hotter topic for discussion.

II

One central point must be that historiography deals with events that really happened and (presumably) tries to get them right, within the historian's and audience's terms of reference for whatever 'getting them right' may mean. Damon stresses the difficulty of distinguishing allusions to earlier narratives from allusions to the events themselves that those narratives described, and that must be correct as well: for later authors, to allude to the Persian Wars must be to allude also to Herodotus, and to allude to the Peloponnesian Wars also to Thucydides⁶—indeed, if I was right in arguing (also within the last twelve months⁷) that Plutarch's or Dionysius' echoes summon up the whole world of Thucydidean civil war, with its brutality and its self-seeking and its imperialistic overstretch, it would be almost impossible to allude to the Peloponnesian War *without* making it also, distinctively, Thucydides' Peloponnesian War. Levene stresses that '[i]n practice events in real life may show striking resemblances to other historical events, and people in real life may deliberately choose to model their behaviour or public image on earlier figures';⁸ the second point is made by Damon as well.⁹ Yet, as

⁵ Levene (2010) 84–6; Damon (2010). As Damon says of her own paper (375), 'almost everything' that follows 'is *exempli gratia*—the same story could be told with other examples': the next few pages draw on cases which I have analysed more fully elsewhere, and I apologise for that. At least the discussion can therefore be briefer than it would otherwise be.

⁶ Damon herself puts it the other way round, and that also has force: 'Is it even possible, when alluding to a text narrating historical events, to keep the events themselves from drowning out the text?' (p. 380). But 'drowning out' there seems to me too strong; that depends on the text, and Thucydides or Tacitus would take a lot of drowning out—Homer even more so.

⁷ Pelling (2010)

⁸ Levene (2010) 85.

Levene also says, there is not a complete gulf here between historiography and other genres, prose or verse, and this is true in several ways. It is even more difficult to suggest the Trojan War without suggesting Homer than to suggest the Peloponnesian War without suggesting Thucydides. A Stendhalian or Dostoyevskian novelistic hero may also model himself on earlier real-life figures, perhaps Napoleonic or anarchist ones, and here too the presentation depends on an audience's precognition of the types, and to an extent of the history. If Demosthenes attacks Philip in oratorical terms that unmistakably recall Xerxes or casts himself in a Periclean mode, that point has features in common with the ways in which Books 6 and 7 of Thucydides recall both, intertextually, the Persian invasion and, intratextually, the Periclean model. And different novels, epics, or dramas in completely independent traditions can also describe similar sequences, presumably because they too are secondarily dependent on the ways that life-patterns can repeat.

Still, I agree that there remains a difference of some sort here, though it may depend less on how the intertextuality works, more on what readers may typically do with it: less what it is than what it is for. The boldly traditional can put that in terms of authorial project, what an author said or thought it was for; the more cautious can deal in terms of reader response, the sort of use which a reader—constructed reader, real reader, or both—would be invited by the text to make, and the meaning that would be duly created at the point of reception.¹⁰

So what is it for? Is it for plausibility, the point I have already mentioned? Yet a lover who gives all for love, a tart with a heart, a gum-chewing or beer-swilling detective at odds with his superior, a high-living and big-spending football star may also all become more credible figures in their respective genres if they fit a familiar pattern, just as a threatening tyrant, an over-reaching invader, or a masterful statesman does in oratory or historiography. The same goes for the narrative codes with which we would associate each one of those types: what would really be an innovative novel would be one where it was the detective's superior, insisting on the virtues of method and distrusting flair, who nailed the murderer. Perhaps we may *care* about

⁹ Damon (2010) 381.

¹⁰ I am of course aware that here I am tripping blithely through a theoretical minefield, and that no text—one may say—can ever command its readers what to do with it; they can use it as a dartboard or to set unseens if they like. But this may raise a further question: might here too historiography work in distinctive ways, with a historian using all the techniques that John Marincola (1997) has explored to build an authority that is more directive to readers than is typical in some other genres? That is far from meaning that historiography generates closed rather than open texts, insisting on single clear-cut answers; but it may at least set a reading agenda of the interpretative issues that a narrative raises. That is a big issue, but can perhaps here be left as separate.

the plausibility in a different way, just as we care about keeping a line between fact and fiction, whatever the familiar narrative codes that come into play, in saying whether it was really the British or the Americans who cracked the Enigma code (must be the ones or the others because, in this genre, it always is) or whether there really were, or at least were really thought to be, weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Perhaps this comes down to saying no more than that we care about history, at least recent history, not necessarily more than but *in different ways from* those in which we care about plays or novels. That is not an earth-shattering revelation, but it is surely true.

Or perhaps we should concentrate less on plausibility than on interpretation: we look at events in different ways if we think that the intertextual suggestions are capturing a recurrence of events, not just of story-telling tropes. Damon brings out the way that Tacitus' account of 69–70 CE so often suggests parallels with the earlier civil war of 100 years earlier, parallels of which—Tacitus brings out—observers and participants at the time were also aware: 'the past and the present are of a piece ... the historian, like his internal audience in 69, sees "the same thing" over and over again'.¹¹ If so, one asks oneself why: is it something deeply embedded in human, or at least Roman, nature? Is it because the agents themselves were too blinded to learn from past examples, as Damon says Galba should have learned from the precedent of Julius Caesar of the dangers that threatened on the day of his death?¹² If the accessions of Tacitus' Tiberius and then of his Nero evoke not merely each other but also that of Livy's Servius Tullius (1.41), does that too tell us about something of the pathology of one-man rule?¹³

Yet once again there are analogies in other genres. If arrival in Latium is going to produce the Trojan War all over again (*Aen.* 6.88–94, 7.321–2), one can again ask why; more challengingly, one can also ask why Turnus, originally cast as Achilles (6.89), ends by playing Hector to Aeneas' Achilles in the typology of Book 12; and we might draw conclusions about the nature of civil warfare or of humanity that are not so distant from those we might

¹¹ Damon (2010), 381–6 (quotations from 384).

¹² Damon (2010), 381–2: 'Galba should have known better', 382.

¹³ Cf. esp. Martin (1955) and Goodyear (1972) on Tac. *Ann.* 1.5–6. Goodyear remarks (128 n. 2), 'If T. intended an allusion to Tanaquil to be recognized, it is hard to see what he hoped to gain by it, since as Charlesworth says [*CR* 41 (1927), 55–7], Tanaquil is usually represented as a type of female virtue, rather than anything like the sinister figure T. makes out Livia to be'. But (a) Livy's Tanaquil is not exactly a figure of exemplary virtue and (b), even if she were, it would be more telling, not less, if women at very different levels on the virtue scale found themselves replaying a similar role: that makes it less a point about villainy, more about the transitions of power.

draw from historiography. That is even truer if we wonder what to make of the *Aeneid*'s resonance of the recent past, with another *socer* and *gener* brought to combat: here too the same things may come back, and it would be a crass reader who failed to recognise the capacity of imaginative fiction to draw on, and suggest insights into, real-life experience. But the more immediate and obvious ways in which historiography narrates reality does mean that any interpretations bite on real human experience in a more direct way.

Perhaps, indeed, the *Aeneid*'s own purchase on its readers' recent experience is in a way parasitic on historiography's techniques: what happened in the distant past can illuminate more recent history and vice versa *just as if those distant events had really happened in that way*.¹⁴

III

Not all interpretative inferences or ponderings need be so weighty. If Appian evokes the Great Battle in the Harbour in describing Naulochus¹⁵ or Plutarch evokes both Salamis and Syracuse in describing Actium,¹⁶ it not only aids the plausibility of the account (above, p. 2); it also helps us to understand the tactics that were employed, and how they could be successful. If we sense Xenophon's *Anabasis* in the background of Antony's retreat from Parthia,¹⁷ that economically conveys the massiveness of the perils and hardships that Antony faced: it is a sort of shorthand, in fact, exploiting the knowingness of the reader—and incidentally short enough a shorthand to suggest that we should not here think of artistic *aemulatio*, rich though that approach often is in treating later *imitatio* of classic texts. Such allusions are simply too brief and undeveloped to offer any competition at all to the great texts themselves.¹⁸

¹⁴ As Damon comes close to suggesting in her final sentences, p. 386.—This 'in that way' is important: I accept that many, not perhaps all, of Virgil's audience would have been prepared to accept that Aeneas and Turnus were historical characters, just as more certainly Homeric readers would have thought Agamemnon and Achilles were historical. It is more difficult to think that readers would have felt that details of the fighting in *Aeneid* 12 were reliable; that would require a belief in the Muse's inspirational powers that is easier to believe for Homer.

¹⁵ Appian *BC* 4.71.301–4 with Gowing (1992) 197 n. 46: see also Pelling (2010) 108.

¹⁶ Plut. *Ant.* 65–6 with the notes in my commentary (Cambridge, 1988) on 65.8 (backing water), 66.1–3 (how smaller ships can defeat bigger ships), and 66.3 (a sea-battle that is like a land-battle).

¹⁷ Plut. *Ant.* 37–52, again with my commentary, esp. the introductory n. (p. 221) and those on 37.2, 41.3, 45.12 and 49.5.

¹⁸ Or so I argued in, once again, Pelling (2010) 108.

The Parthian example is interesting in other ways too, as this is one of those cases where the participant is very aware of the intertext (Plut. *Ant.* 45.12):

Antony, so the story goes, often exclaimed, ‘O, the Ten Thousand!’ This was to show his admiration for Xenophon’s army, which made an even longer march from Babylon to the sea and succeeded in forcing its way through to safety against even stronger opposition.

Two separate points here look forward to the themes of the second part of the paper. First is one stressed by both Levene and Damon, the way that intertextuality often points to a role consciously played by a character in the text: Antony here knows that he is playing Xenophon, even though at that point he does not yet know if he will get away with it. Second is the way that intertextuality is often most interesting when it underlines differences as much as similarities, or differences within similarities: it is *not* quite the same thing coming back, but a modern counterpart, and one in which Antony’s men have much less far to go than Xenophon’s (less than a seventh as far, in fact).

Here that may be no more than a suggestion of Antony’s humiliation—or perhaps rather of his humility, as whatever its length the retreat has still shown him and his men at their Xenophontic best (esp. *Ant.* 43). Elsewhere intertextuality can become more charged and more thought-provoking, and in particular it can be a tool for bringing out how, and how far, a world has changed. To take a simple and familiar example, the Catilinarian introduction of Sejanus at the beginning of *Annals* 4 can suggest that plotters happened in the principate and threatened the state just as they had done in the Republic; but when a mark of the threat is the way that *repente turbare fortuna coepit, saeuire ipse aut saeuientibus uires praeberere* (in Woodman’s translation, ‘suddenly fortune started to turn disruptive and the man himself savage—or to present control to savages’, *Ann.* 4.1.1) it is the difference as well as the similarity to Sallust’s *saeuire fortuna ac miscere coepit fortuna* (‘fortune started to be savage and bring everything into confusion’, *Cat.* 10.1) that is striking. It is *ipse* rather than *ipsa*: Tiberius’ own savagery has now taken fortune’s place as the disruptive force that acts in conjunction with the angry gods. And that is a difference that the principate has made.

IV

Those two points from the *Antony* example often go together. When Dionysius of Phocaea cries out that ‘everything now stands on a razor’s edge, men

of Ionia, whether we are to be free or slaves, and runaway slaves as that' (Hdt. 6.11.1–2), the echo of the Doloneia is surely felt (*Il.* 10.173–4); Dionysius is trying to do what the Stoa Poikile would do for Marathon in art and what Simonides would do for Plataea in literature, elevating the struggle against the Persians to the same level as the Trojan War. Whether or not he is to be a Nestor, his hearers are called upon to be heroes. But if so, the difference is also felt. First there is the twist to make this, not a matter of life and death as in the *Iliad*, but something that matters even more, that between freedom and slavery.¹⁹ Secondly there is the extremely poor show that the Ionians proceed to put on: the world has indeed changed, and such inspirational rhetoric is not enough to produce heroism any more. Or rather not yet. This is one of the ways in which the Ionian Revolt acts as a pre-play for the far more successful freedom fighting a few years later: there will be ways then in which such talk does succeed where Dionysius had failed. Change can go both ways, and change for the better is here plotted intratextually just as change for the worse was plotted intertextually in Dionysius' epic echoing. That may convey a compliment to the Greeks of 490 and 480–79, more freedom-conscious and more susceptible to inspiration than their Ionian cousins; this would not be the only time in Herodotus where the Ionians suffered in such comparisons. But it also has the further effect of reminding us what a close-run thing it was, how very easily events in either 490 or 480–79 could have fallen back into that Ionian pattern. The Greeks win through, but only just; and that only-just-ness matters almost as much as the victory.

Or take Leonidas. Herodotus' account of Thermopylae is especially rich in Homeric echoes,²⁰ and Herodotus' Leonidas himself catches the tone: when he hears the terms of the crucial oracle, he knows that μένοντι δὲ αὐτοῦ κλέος μέγα ἐλείπετο, καὶ ἡ Σπάρτης εὐδαιμονίη οὐκ ἐξηλείφετο ('if he stayed there, great glory would be left for him, and the prosperity of Sparta would not be wiped out', 7.220.2). The resonant echo of the proem is clear, and so are the Homeric terms in which he is thinking: the concern is eternal fame (κλέος), that fame which—as the recall of the proem suggests—Herodotus' own history will give Leonidas just as surely as the *Iliad* will give its Helen the role she seeks as an eternal object of song (*Il.* 6.357–8). The writer and the character are both carving out the Homeric role, and the Persian Wars are again, Stoa Poikile-like, being elevated to the same level as the fighting around Troy. But it is κλέος with a difference: yes, glory 'for him' in that passage, but a few sentences later the concern is to 'lay down the κλέος of the Spartans alone' (7.220.4)—not just glory for one, then, but

¹⁹ That is the point I stressed in Pelling (2006) 80–1.

²⁰ Pelling (2006) 92–3.

for three hundred, and indeed for the whole city. The whole Thermopylae narrative can be read as conveying a meditation on glory and heroism in the Trojan War past and in the narrative present:²¹ the play of individual and collective, the decidedly unheroic attitude of some of the allies, the need for self-sacrifice, the way that wrath is now exercised by the collective against the unsatisfactory individual rather than the other way round. And yet, on reflection, much of that was already there in the *Iliad* himself, in some form; and the important thing is that heroism is still possible, that Leonidas can still win that κλέος that matters so much.

Marathon offers something of the same. The Homeric tinges are just as plain. By the late afternoon of the battle attention is turning to the harrying of the fleeing Persians (Hdt. 6.113–4, tr. de Sélincourt):

Here again they [the Athenians, or perhaps the Athenians and Plataeans] were triumphant, chasing the routed enemy, and cutting them down until they came to the sea, and men were calling for fire and taking hold of (ἐπελαμβάνοντο) the ships. It was in this phase of the struggle that the War Archon Callimachus was killed, fighting bravely [lit. having become, or having behaved as, a good man], and also Stesilaus, the son of Thrasylaus, one of the generals; Cynegirus, too, the son of Euphorion, had his hand cut off with an axe as he was getting hold of a ship's stern (ἐπιλαμβανόμενος τῶν ἀφλάστων νεός), and so lost his life, together with many other well-known Athenians.

Where could this fire come from? A. R. Burn once conjured up a picture of camp-followers running behind the battle with braziers;²² not very plausible. Nor is there any mention of fire in our descriptions of the Marathon scene in the Stoa Poikile. No; that fire comes, not from the Greek camp, but from the *Iliad*: from the end of Book 15, when Hector is leading the charge upon the Greek ships (*Il.* 15.716–8, tr. Hammond):

Ἔκτωρ δὲ πρὺμνηθεν ἐπεὶ λάβεν οὐχὶ μεθίει
ἄφλαστον μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχων, Τρωσὶν δὲ κέλευεν·
“οἴσετε πῦρ, ἅμα δ’ αὐτοὶ ἀολλέες ὄρνυτ’ αὐτήν ...”

Hektor would not let go of the ship where he had grasped it at the stern, gripping the poop-end in his hands, and he called out to the Trojans: ‘Bring fire, and raise the war-cry all together ...’

²¹ That is how I read it in Pelling (2006) 92–8.

²² Burn (1962) 250.

Nor is it just the fire that evokes the *Iliad*. Hector too grasps a ship just as the Greeks do now (notice the repeated ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι)²³; Hector too will not let go, just as Cynegirus will not let go. And what both Hector and Cynegirus grasp is the ἄφλαστον, or several of them in Herodotus' odd plural: a very rare word indeed, translated by LSJ as 'curved poop of the ship' and by Janko as 'a carved stern-post'.²⁴ Outside these two passages it only crops up in passages that are surely evoking the *Iliad*,²⁵ just as this must be. And this, of course, is the crucial moment of both poem and war, the height of Hector's achievement—and yet the act that also begins the movement that will bring Achilles back to the fighting, sealing Hector's own death and the fate of Troy. So in the *Iliad* it is glory, but glory that presages disaster and annihilation; just as Marathon could so easily have done had events gone differently ten years later.

They did not, and the glory remained unqualified. Yet still one senses the differing texture of this modern glory. Let us have a look at the speech of Miltiades to Callimachus. The generals are split, and the vote of the polemarch becomes crucial; Miltiades is trying to win Callimachus to his side, and his rhetoric there has something of the same ring as Dionysius' before Lade (Hdt. 6.109.3–6, tr. de Sélincourt):

'It is now in your hands, Callimachus,' he said, 'either to enslave Athens, or to make her free and to leave behind you for all future generations a memory more glorious than even Harmodius and Aristogeiton left. Never in our history have we Athenians been in such peril as now. If we submit to the Persians, Hippias will be restored to power—and there is little doubt what misery must then ensue: but if we fight and win, then this city of ours may well grow to pre-eminence amongst all the cities of Greece. If you ask me how this can be, and how the decision rests with you, I will tell you: we commanders are ten in number, and we are not agreed upon what action to take; half of us are for a battle, half against it. If we refuse to fight, I have little doubt that the result will be bitter dissension; our purpose will be shaken, and we shall submit to Persia. But if we fight before the rot can show itself in any of us, then, if God gives us fair play, we can not only fight but win. Yours is the decision; all hangs upon you; vote on my side, and our country will be free—yes, and the first city of

²³ This is weakened unduly in Waterfield's translation, 'began to take over the ships'.

²⁴ Janko (1992) 306.

²⁵ Especially Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.1089 and Lyc. *Alex.* 26 and 295.

Greece. But if you support those who have voted against fighting, that happiness will be denied you—you will get the opposite.’

As with Leonidas, there are echoes of the proem: Miltiades encourages Callimachus to aspire to the sort of ‘memorial’ that Herodotus’ history will indeed give him. Yet the rhetoric is not what we might expect, and not exactly glorious. There is talk of freedom, but in a form that, jarringly at least to modern tastes, dwells particularly on the power that Athens may hope to get from it all, becoming ‘the first city of Greece’. There are no funeral-speech-style fine words about Athens as the champions of Greece who set an example to others, the confidence to be had in autochthons fighting for their own land, the trust that the gods are on their side (as there will be at 8.143.2): *θεῶν τὰ ἴσα νεμόντων*, that is all—the gods dispensing things equally, and even that has an air of the conditional about it, as in de Sélincourt’s translation, ‘if God gives us fair play’. There may well be gods around,²⁶ but that is not the way Miltiades is thinking or talking. No ‘we will never surrender’: that sort of finest-hour rhetoric too is left for the end of Book 8, where its interpretation is anything but straightforward. The argument is simply that there is so much danger of *stasis* that any sort of delay may shake the Athenian resolve so that they may Medise; ‘something rotten’ may set in, something *σαθρόν*—Stein and Nenci may be right in sensing nautical jargon for this rotting ‘ship of state’.²⁷ The argument makes sense: true or false, the currency which Herodotus attests for the Alcmaeonid-shield story shows that there was indeed *stasis* in the air; and earlier in the book Herodotus himself has described a refusal to Medise as ‘folly’, *ἀγνωμοσύνη* (6.10)—glorious, wonderful folly, no doubt, but folly nonetheless.

Still, the argument is not very glorious, even if the upshot is. It is certainly a different world from that of the *Iliad*: no hint here of the fine words of Odysseus at *Iliad* 11.407–10, for instance, though admittedly that is not the only attitude to flight-or-fight in the *Iliad*; certainly nothing so uplifting as Sarpedon’s classic speech at *Iliad* 12.310–27. But it introduces a theme that is going to be strong in the next two books. Remember why Athens is the saviour of Greece at 7.139: no beacon-of-freedom rhetoric on the city as an inspiration to others, and nothing—perhaps pointedly—to do with what they did in 490: they just did not run away or Medise in 480 when so many other cities did. Remember too what weighs with Themistocles before Salamis: the way Mnesiphilus convinced Themistocles, and in his turn Themistocles

²⁶ Notice the epiphany of Pan to Pheidippides (105.2–3), the further hint of an epiphany with the monstrous figure who looms over Epizelus (117), and it is surely not coincidence that the action moves from one sacred area of Heracles to another (108.1, 116.1).

²⁷ Stein (1901) and Nenci (1998) ad loc.

convinced Eurybiades, was by stressing that if they withdrew to the Peloponnese too many of those other cities would ‘run away’, *διαδρήσονται* (8.60.1, cf. 8.57). The famous *δρόμῳ* advance of the Greeks at Marathon—‘running’ into battle (6.112.2)—is so close to presaging a very different sort of ‘running’ later on. It could so easily have happened that way, and everyone knew it; this could indeed have been the *Iliad* over again, with the height of glory starting the movement that led to total disaster. What eventually persuaded the Greeks to fight at Salamis was Themistocles’ threat that the Athenians would sail away to Siris and leave the rest of the Greeks to their fate (8.62.2); what persuaded Xerxes to fight was Sicinnus’ message (8.75.2), which in its blend of truth and falsity had the news that the Greeks were thinking of running away (*δρησιμόν*) and that Themistocles was really on the Persian side. All these claims were effective precisely because they were wholly plausible.

We are left, then, with a paradox of freedom. The positive aspects, that inspirational aspect that was initially so stressed at 5.78, are not forgotten; perhaps indeed they are taken for granted.²⁸ But there are also negative aspects to that individualism, with everyone acting for themselves in the way that 5.78 heralded—the perpetual danger that states may be torn apart by *stasis* as everyone pursues their own interests and vendettas; the perpetual danger that the self-interest of particular cities may fragment an alliance. And at these crucial moments it is the worst aspects of freedom, not the best, that prove the key to Greece’s triumph—that danger of *stasis* that drives Athens to fight and win at Marathon; that fear of fragmentation that brings on the battle of Salamis; that inter-city factionalism and self-interested scheming that led Sparta to tell Plataea to turn to Athens (6.108.3), and that would generate the war between Athens and Aegina that proved the ‘salvation of Greece’ by stimulating the Athenians to ‘become sea-people’ (7.144.1).

Yet once again—is that *totally* different from the world of the *Iliad*? There would be no *Iliad* at all without its own inter-Greek squabbling, disaffection, dissent, and distrust; Achilles too, not just Themistocles, can threaten to sail away; there too it is the antagonism, mingled with a lingering if battered comradeship, that eventually triggers the decisive step, with Patroclus’ return leading eventually to Hector’s own death and, at least emblematically, to the sealing of Troy’s doom. This is an inter-city version, of course, and we are firmly in the world of the *polis*. That much has changed. But there are those elements of continuity as well as contrast, and these are modern *counterparts*.

²⁸ We are going to hear enough of those, too, in the next few books, strikingly often in Spartan mouths: notice esp. 7.101–4 and 7.135.3.

Most important, heroism was still possible, and the events of Marathon proved it. Callimachus died ‘having behaved as a good man’, ἀνὴρ γενόμενος ἀγαθός (6.114, above, p. 9). Epizelus is blinded when similarly ‘behaving as a good man’ (117.2).²⁹ The Athenians fought ἀξίως λόγου (112.2): worthy of note, worthy of being talked about, and worthy of Herodotus’ own λόγος as it grants them that eternal, epic memorial.

V

Consider another case: Xenophon’s turning of the liberation of the Cadmeia (378 BCE) into his own version of the Seven against Thebes. This has been well handled by Schmitzer,³⁰ who brought out the differences from the rest of the tradition: not twelve returners, as in Plutarch, but seven; no mention of Pelopidas and the important dimension of the plotters within the city. Schmitzer also identified a further intertextual perspective, with the close similarities of this sequence to that at the court of Alexander of Macedon at Herodotus 5.17–20. Here too we have the drunken alien tyrant-figures (in Herodotus they numbered—seven), the promise of (in Xenophon) the ‘most respectable and beautiful women’ in town (though the Spartans casually say ‘bring on the *hetairai*’, 5.4.4–5), and then the discovery that the women are rather less female and biddable than they expect. Schmitzer’s interest was to bring out the highly dramatic texture of the sequence, and that point is well taken. He was right to observe the effective use of dialogue as well as such distinctively theatrical features as the hammering on the door (5.4.7). That suggests we would be right here to think, not just of the myth itself, but of its theatrical presentation in plays (not just Aeschylus’ play, of course).

Here too one can go further, and think about the intertextual suggestions for what they tell us about change and continuity. The Herodotean echo casts the Spartans as the new Persians, bullying, insensitive, and autocratic; we are used to discussing how Herodotus himself and Thucydides cast fifth-century Athens as the new Persia, a world where one could talk of ‘Atticising’ as the new ‘Medising’, and this is not the only passage where Xenophon does something of the same. We should also remember what comes next in Xenophon’s account (*Hell.* 5.4.20):

²⁹ And in this modern world such ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός locutions are particularly frequent when people show themselves ‘good men’ in fighting, and often dying, *for freedom*: cf. 5.2.1, 6.14.1, 7.224.1 (Leonidas), 9.17.4, and 9.75.1 (but also 7.53.1 on the Persian side).

³⁰ Schmitzer (1998).

The Thebans were now afraid themselves of what would happen if they were the only ones to be at war with Sparta, and so they hit on the following trick. They persuaded the Spartan harmost at Thespieae, Sphodrias—bribery was suspected—to invade Attica; the aim was to bring about a war between Athens and Sparta ...

And Sphodrias duly invades, very hamhandedly; and war ensues. We therefore also have a counterpart of the next phase of the Seven story, with Athens deciding that it is time to intervene in what was originally someone else's quarrel. But there is no question here of Athens measuring the rights and wrongs of this case of other people's quarrelling: none of those fine words so familiar from tragedy about the city's traditional role in defending the weak and the oppressed, or in upholding what the gods demand. In fact their feet are initially so cold that they punish the two generals who were involved in the liberation itself (5.4.19). When their involvement comes, it is a straightforward response to aggression; they get involved in other people's quarrel because it is no longer simply other people's: they have been attacked, and they must retaliate (5.4.34). The world has indeed changed, with self-interest and revenge taking the place of altruism, and in this new world the other intertextual model, that of a sequence of empires where Xenophon's Sparta is replaying Herodotus' Persia, is the one that dominates.

Yet it has not changed completely. The sequence begins with an unusually strong statement of the role of the gods (*Hell.* 5.4.1):

There are many other instances one could quote, both Greek and barbarian, to show that the gods do not overlook those who are impious or do unholy things: now I will tell the tale. The Spartans who swore that they would respect the cities' autonomy but then occupied the Theban acropolis were punished by the very people they had wronged, when no-one had ever defeated them before; and the local citizens who had brought them to the acropolis and wanted to enslave the city to the Spartans in order to get tyrannical power for themselves had their rule destroyed. A mere seven of the exiles were enough to bring this about. I will tell how it happened.

There is a strong whiff of Herodotus about that too, not least in the 'both Greek and barbarian' (*Hdt. praef.*), the strong statement of divine justice (*Hdt.* 2.120.5, 4.205), and perhaps even the authorial first-person. But that hint of a divine role is not just Herodotean, it too recalls the world of tragedy and of the Seven against Thebes. Here too impiety and transgression is punished, even if in less direct a way than (say) Capaneus being smitten as he broaches the battlements (*Soph. Ant.* 127–37). The punishment of tyranni-

cal aspirations does not merely affect the local Thebans but also presages the fate of the whole Spartan empire. Its excesses are seen in Cleombrotus' mindless brutality in response to the liberation (5.4.17–18), and it is no coincidence that the end of the panel has a mention of Leuctra (5.4.33), clearly relying on an audience's full awareness of what is going to happen next. Various Spartan reversals and Theban successes (esp. 5.42–6) are also shaping the narrative in an unmistakable direction. There are certain rhythms that reassert themselves even in a modern world, rhythms of divine involvement to punish tyrannical excess, rhythms of the rise and fall of empires, and there is both continuity and change.

Nor are we done with the Seven yet. Leuctra comes and goes; Thebes is the master now. What are the Athenians to do? At 6.5.38–48 Procles of Phlius urges them to support Sparta against their traditional enemies. The same intertextual flavouring recurs. What would happen if the barbarian were to attack again? Would it not be Sparta you would trust in a new Thermopylae (6.5.43)? And remember your distant ancestors 'who would not allow the Argives who died at the Cadmeia'—the phrasing accentuates the similarity between the Seven and the 378 liberation—'to remain unburied'; remember too how those ancestors sprang to the defence of the Heraclidae; remember finally how the Spartans saved your city at the end of the Peloponnesian War when the Thebans sought to destroy it (6.5.46–7). So, just as in the Stoa Poikile, the continuity of mythical and historical is asserted; the Athenians are called upon to play their heroic role again. This of course is the stuff of funeral speeches too, material that the Athenians (and Xenophon's audience too) had heard so often before—though rarely in a plea to rush to the aid of Sparta, and that paradox too is surely felt. Now the more worldweary and informed reader might well wonder how realistic all Procles' rhetoric would be in this modern world, especially all his confident references to the good-hearted and reliable Spartans; a reader has only to think back to the Cadmeia and to Sphodrias to feel some doubts, and if they thought back further to Thucydides they would feel stronger doubts still. But Procles wins, whether or not the Athenians' motives were now quite so high-minded: opposition speakers are shouted down, and Iphicrates is despatched. Several circles and reverses have now been completed, and yet a further paradox is that everything has settled down to fill the traditional mythical pattern after all. Athens does find itself moving proudly against Thebes and smacking down this new wave of tyrants, just as the funeral-speech rhetoric loved to recall; and just as they had defended the Heraclidae, so now they defend the children of the children of Heracles, their Spartan descendants.

So the old narrative code has reasserted itself after all, once the pieces of the jigsaw had rearranged themselves in some unexpected configurations

along the way; the intertextuality has helped the reader to plot the patterning as it happened, giving some shape to the bewildering flow of events. Still, of course no intertextuality can *quite* control the reader, and there are different further moves that different readers might make. Some might respond by feeling that some sort of order has been re-established, with tyranny and imperialism cast down yet again and Athens in the right place (triumphant and freedom-fighting, though evidently not every reader would have shared those Athenian complacencies; Xenophon would not have shared them himself). Some might even have believed Procles, and looked forward to the sunny uplands of a future where Thebes would know its place and the honourable Spartans would repay the debt of gratitude they should owe. Yet some might reflect rather on the self-interested and pragmatic motives that had driven events back to that pattern, and thought of how and why the ‘code’ had re-established itself. And, if they thought of the Heraclidae and the funeral-speech tropes, they might also recollect another twist found in tragedy itself—to dwell on, precisely, the gratitude that the Heraclidae and their descendants should owe to Athens, with the rombusiously clodhopping implication that the gratitude had been notable for its absence (Eur. *Hclid.* 307–19). Can any more gratitude be expected of the Spartans now? Or is that just part of the instability and unpredictability that the end of the *Hellenica* marks as characterising the even newer world after Mantinea (7.5.27), with no patterns and no new rising-or-falling empire to be seen? (Or not yet!—but it will not take long ...) All one can say is that intertextuality might still be thought-provoking, not just in identifying a reassuring narrative code but also in intimating some further, less reassuring questions that the patterning might generate.

VI

So far this paper has been dealing with narrative models; let me return to Plutarch at the end to suggest how a philosophical model, Plato, might also affect the reading of a narrative, once again by providing a template and once again with differences that are as telling as similarities.³¹ In particular, Platonic political philosophy can be a powerful analytic tool, affording a repertoire of, and for, historical evaluation. Take the analysis of the cycle of constitutions in *Republic* 8–9. Echoes of this are heard at the end of *Caesar*, where the resonant phrase marking the inception of Caesar’s monarchy—‘This was acknowledged tyranny: he already enjoyed a monarch’s unac-

³¹ This section previewed some material that is now set out more fully in Pelling (2011) 63–4, 277–8, 421, 424, and 427–8.

countability, and now he had a monarch's permanence as well' (*Caes.* 57.1)—echoes the 'acknowledged tyranny' that at *Republic* 569b marks the end of the cycle when the demagogue emerges as tyrant (565c–566d). In one way that suits Caesar, for his demagogic techniques have been traced throughout the *Life* (4.4–7, 5.8–9, 7.1–4, 20.2, 57.8). The internal disorder that typified Plato's unruly democracy (563e–4b) also fits the 'evil state of politics' (*kakopoliteia*) that Plutarch has traced at *Caes.* 28, and this picks up an insight of Greek theorising that goes well beyond Plato: 'if anyone thinks that a king or a tyrant comes about from any other cause but lawlessness and greed, that person is a fool' (*Anonymus Iamblichi* 7.12–14).³² Still, by now the picture has become complicated, and it is more interesting to note the ways that Caesar does *not* fit the traditional stereotype. Plato's demagogue does not shrink from bloodshed (566e) and ruthlessly eliminates anyone who is a threat (567b–c); but Caesar practises clemency (57.4), even giving honours to old adversaries (57.5), and fails to move against Brutus and Cassius despite his suspicions (62.9–10). Plato's tyrant protects himself with a bodyguard (566b, 567d–e); Caesar refuses one (57.7). Plato's tyrant behaves well in his first days in power, 'smiling and greeting everyone he meets ... and pretending to be benign and gentle to everyone' (566d–e). Caesar's 'gentleness' (57.4)—*praotês* again, the same word as in Plato—goes deeper, and he knows that popular goodwill is a better way to protect one's power (57.1). The whole point, then, is that Caesar is *not* the conventional Platonic tyrant, and so far that would seem to be in line with a principle that Plutarch sometimes makes explicit, the need to be as generous as truth will allow in treating a historical figure (*Cimon* 2.2–5; the idea is developed more elaborately in *On Herodotus' Malice* 855b–856d).

Yet it is not just a question of being nice. For all Caesar's own good behaviour in power (not unrelieved, but still emphasised) and for all his awareness of the danger (esp. 62–3), the telling point is that Caesar is still doomed, and the Platonic outcome reasserts itself after all. Perhaps that is because the pattern is more universal still than Plato suggested. Just as Herodotus' various Eastern tyrants replicate a similar pattern of behaviour and overstretch despite all their differences in individual character, so here the insightful and careful tyrant may be falling into the same pattern as the more predictable rash and transgressive counterpart; that is an even bigger and bolder thesis about tyranny and its typical trajectory, something about what tyranny itself imposes rather than about the multifarious figures who become tyrants. Or perhaps the reasons here are more specific, Caesar-shaped rather than tyranny-shaped. His army, his friends, and his popular support have carried him to power; now all three are turning against him (*Caes.* 51), with the ex-

³² Cf. also Arist. *Pol.* 1304b19–a10, 1319b27–32.

cesses of friends and the unruliness of troops disaffecting the people too. Whatever he does, he is trapped—trapped by his own past. The ‘narrative code’ that he falls into is not simply one that readers sense, it is one that is seen coming by Caesar himself. We earlier saw cases where awareness of historiographic models led figures in a text to role-play, yet here Caesar is desperate *not* to role-play, to distance himself from the model. But here too the pressure of events is too great, and the Platonic cycle relentlessly turns.

VII

In case after case, then, we have seen two different types of dialogue: a dialogue of an author with a predecessor, summoning up a past storyline to illuminate a present one; and a dialogue of two voices within that same modelling, one of continuity and one of change. We should not lose hold of those initial points about plausibility. The classic target texts carry such authority that one can certainly be more persuaded, not merely about the accuracy of a particular item, but also of the credibility of a storyline if it fits into a familiar pattern: those narrative codes, once again. But the changes matter too, and the narrative codes themselves can be put up for analysis. If the story of the Seven comes back in a different world and with different motives, or if Caesar falls into a Platonic pattern for very unPlatonic reasons, why should that be? Those are fundamentally interpretative questions, and the defamiliarisation of the intertextual templates plays just as important a role in prompting them as the familiarity of the patterns we see.

Once again, not much of this is confined to historiography. The questions one might ask about the ‘heroism’ of Aeneas against a Homeric template might move through something of the same terrain, again asking how much of the world has changed—and not excluding the possibility that some of the tensions visible in the *Aeneid*, including that between individual glory-hunting and collective civic duty, may have been there already in the Homeric poems themselves, just as Herodotus’ Leonidas may be reflecting a fraught balance between individual and collective that is present in the *Iliad*. Perhaps, in searching for that distinctive quiddity of historiographic intertextuality, we have still only rephrased it in terms that reflect the different ways we care about real life.

Or perhaps that too needs to be put differently, by saying that other genres also deal with real life, but in a filtered transposition. If the *Aeneid* is exploring and rephrasing heroism, or if Ovid is developing a different template for what a girl (he hopes) might look for in a man, or if Euripides’ *Medea* makes an audience think differently about familiar ideas of womanhood, those genres too are prompting thoughts not just about literature as a

hermetic complex but also of literature as it draws and tells upon life. Of course the reflection of life is not one-to-one, either in the sense of literal truth or even of precise verisimilitude; the filtering is complex. But literature—at least narrative literature, but surely more than that—presents in some sense *οἷα ἂν γένοιτο*, even if not *τὰ γεγόμενα* (Arist. *Poet.* 1451a37–9); and the intertextual moves that readers make in historiography about what happened are closely analogous to those that they make in weighing potential happenings in other genres—in thinking what they *would* believe and *would* make of such things if they *were to be* a real-life counterpart, or as close to a counterpart as the genre might allow. Once again, we see that sense in which non-historiographic intertextuality can be parasitic on its historiographic counterpart, or at least (given that other genres doubtless got there first) on the reflectiveness about real experience which was then to surface in historiography in its clearest form.

So, at least in these respects, historiographic intertextuality need not be ‘different from’ intertextuality in other genres, even if it is used more directly and less obliquely ‘for’ real-life events and we therefore care about our inferences in a different way. It is not deviant; it is foundational.

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