

THE DISCOURSE OF KINGSHIP IN CLASSICAL ATHENIAN THOUGHT

Abstract: Athenian foundation myth includes stories of kings, retold in different genres to pursue distinct political agendas and to reshape the Athenian political imaginary. This article explores the transition from drama to history as a vehicle for these stories, and the exploitation of this transition in Isocrates' political rhetoric, conflating myth and history. While Euripides' democratic king Theseus represented an idealised active citizen, Isocrates retold Athenian myth to show that the good qualities of Athenian democracy depend on their origins in the city's political foundation by Theseus, and that citizens should achieve the good life through imitating virtuous monarchs.

Keywords: Athens, kingship, Atthidography, Isocrates, Theseus

Even within the context of Athenian democracy, the figure of the king provided a powerful image with which a range of political ideas could be explored and arguments made. Athenian political thinkers and speakers could draw on a rich heritage of Greek mythology and foundation legend, including those specific to Attica, to explore and develop ideas about good citizenship and leadership, analogise characters to present-day politicians, or propose solutions to political problems. The reworking of kingship myth for political ends was a feature of several genres of Athenian literature across the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.¹ Both Isocrates and Lycurgus cited kingship myths for novel political and propaganda purposes, drawing on both tragic and historical accounts of the city's distant past. Their texts show the uses to which the ideal of the king as super-citizen and holder of a superior understanding of the *polis*, inherited from Euripidean tragedy, could be put; they also position the kings they use in a curious space between myth and history.

¹ All such texts can be seen to explore a political imaginary, which does not necessarily replicate the institutions or structures of day-to-day political realities: Castoriadis (1987); Castoriadis (1997); Taylor (2004); cf. Loraux (1981). None of the thinkers surveyed in this paper had any commitment to proposing monarchy as a form of constitution for present-day democratic Athens, even if they regarded contemporary leaders or citizens as lesser men than their mythical ancestors. Isocrates, for example, argues that Philip's father was aware that monarchy suited the Macedonians, but not the Hellenes (*To Philip* 106–7). Rather, the qualities displayed by mythical monarchs provide a tool for exploring an idealised polity, and also provide a focal point for the creation of a political identity, with the Athenians needing a focal point in a similar way to the post-revolutionary French in Claude Lefort's analysis (Lefort (1988) 213–55). All dates in this paper are BCE.

The transformation from drama to history as the favoured means of presenting the city's past is greater than the simple replacement of one, performative, genre by another, literary one, although this transition heralds significant changes in the depiction and use of kingship myth.² Engagement with kingship as a topos and particularly as a source of examples for imitation implies a changing approach to democracy, but even within the use of this topos there is space for disagreement. While Theseus, the king who united the city and was thus central to Athenian cult and festivals, was the predominant mythical figure, further figures could be exploited at different times for different purposes, Theseus for good citizenship and euergetism, Codrus for individual bravery.

One source for detailed accounts of kings was the emerging genre of local history, represented in Athens by a group of texts known as the *Atthides*.³ These histories began with the first kings and founders in the pre-historic past, working through lists of kings before moving on to the more recent past and contemporary history. The relationship between the *Atthides* and Athenian political life and theory has been much disputed, and the few surviving fragments make it impossible to establish, for example, clear verbal links between them and other genres, or in which genre the political elements of these myths first became emphasised. But the positioning of foundation myths on a calculable time-scale, and the continuing assimilation of deeds of figures like Theseus to those of contemporary political leaders, suggest a changing approach to the past that was exploited in political rhetoric and argument.⁴

There were two outcomes to these processes: Athenian writers such as Isocrates could cite their heritage of kingship to position their democratic city as equivalent or superior to rising *ethnos* state monarchies such as Macedonia, and citizens could be exhorted to imitate the virtuous deeds of kings presented as exemplary individuals, rather than those of the collective heroised citizenry of earlier democratic rhetoric.⁵ Where Euripides' Theseus

² Pownall (2007) explores the transition of Greek elite education alongside that from orality to literacy, cf. Nicolai (2004) 13–17 on rhetoric.

³ There is a vast literature on the fragmentary *Atthides*, beginning with Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1893) I.260–90 and Jacoby (1949), and represented more recently by Rhodes (1990) and Harding (2007) and (2008). The latter pair have fiercely criticised Jacoby's attempt, (1949) 51–70, to situate the *Atthides* in a political context, while also resisting Wilamowitz's assimilation of the works to Roman *Fasti*.

⁴ Mitchell (2008) 17–21 explores Thucydides' use of Theseus.

⁵ The use of mythical deeds to position Athens as superior to states with greater political or military power in the present is a signature move of Isocrates' political argumentation, seen in *Panegyricus* 21–27, 99 (Athenian superiority to Sparta), *To Philip* 128–31 (Ath-

could be seen to exemplify the *demos*, orators and philosophers now began to present the kings as examples for the citizens to imitate, and as patterns for their own educational practice and desire to benefit the city.

Structuring the Athenian Past in Time and Space

The conceptualisation of time and space as structuring principles for narrative changed in the late fifth century.⁶ This process continued as writers developed literary forms capable of encompassing great distances in time and space within single narrative structures, such as the universal history.⁷ This had implications for the development of historical narrative and its use in political discourse, within which claims to both time and space are contested. As organising principles for the past, mythical and otherwise, time and space are especially significant, as demonstrated by the liminal location of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.⁸ Source material for these myths originated in the scattered locations of different cult sites around pre-synoecism Attica, and Athenian myth itself required a process of unification to match. Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes historians organising their work either by time, *kata chronous*, or space, *kata topous*, and goes on to place Herodotus and Hellanicus within the latter category.⁹ The distinction he makes here seems to refer to the use of geography or *ethnos* to separate large-scale *logoi*, such as Herodotus' Egyptian *logos*, or Hellanicus' works on Egypt, Persia and other locations.

So in the fourth century, the manipulation of civic myth by Athenian dramatists was replaced by the manipulation of an accessible and narratable past, connected to the present by unbroken lists of office-holders. The 'intentional history' model, as elaborated by Hans-Joachim Gehrke, attempts to provide an explanation for the shape that Greek local histories took, as

ens as an equal ally for Macedon). Speusippus' *Letter to Philip* (sections 2–4) criticises Isocrates for failing to emphasise Philip's mythical links to Athens through his descent from Heracles. For Isocrates' use of myth see Masaracchia (1995), id. (2003), and Blank (2013), and for the incorporation of myth into his rhetoric Haskins (2004).

⁶ Jacoby (1954a) 242.

⁷ Marincola (2007a).

⁸ See Easterling (1997) on the political language of Sophocles' play, and Edmunds (1996) on its theatrical presentation of political space. Colonus' political significance was underlined when the 411 oligarchs moved the Athenian assembly there from its established city location (Thuc. 8.67.2).

⁹ D. Hal. *Thuc.* 9 = *FGrHist* 4 T 11; Toye (1995). Pausanias' guide to Attica (Book 1), and Strabo's geography (9.1), reverse this process, re-allocating myths to their cult sites and spreading them back across the cityscape of Athens.

their authors (consciously or otherwise) interpreted their mythical sources through the lens of their own political situation and to further their own political claims and objectives.¹⁰ Myth was retold as history or incorporated into historical accounts as part of this process.

The conceptual division between myth and history had a fairly precise temporal location for fourth-century historians, located at the return of the Heraclids to the Peloponnese after the Trojan War.¹¹ Ephorus, for example, started his universal history at this point, and framed the earlier period as a preface.¹² Local historians such as Athens' Atthidographers, however, breached these divisions in presenting the past of a city in its entirety, and although the nature of their narrative must have necessarily changed as the more recent past was reached, Plutarch's comment on the excessive concern for detail of the Atthidographer Kleidemos suggests that some historians attempted to narrate the distant past in the same way as contemporary history, after incorporating both into the same temporal structure.¹³

The construction of chronologies through lists of office-holders was a development of the late fifth century, closely associated with the development of local historiography, as Katherine Clarke observes.¹⁴ The *Atthides* were the fruit of this new way of writing about the past, using these developments to embed the mythical monarchs in the chronology of Athenian history.

Hellanicus' postulated work on the Athenian king-list was in step with intellectual and political developments in Athens.¹⁵ Sophists such as Hippias of Elis collated lists of games victors; Hellanicus himself also collated a list of

¹⁰ The concept of 'intentional history' (*intentionale Geschichte*) and its application to Hellenistic city history is set out in three articles by Gehrke (1994, 2001, and 2004), and further examined in Foxhall et al. (2010); Schepens (2001) applies this specifically to Athenian history, although Jacoby (1949) 133–43 makes a similar argument with a less explicit philosophical grounding. Raaflaub (2010) reduces the concept of intentional history to 'ulterior motives', while Grethlein (2010) 328–32 explores the origins of the model in phenomenological philosophy of history.

¹¹ Although in practice the narration of early history is more similar to mythical narrative than to the detail of contemporary history.

¹² Universal in extent of space and time covered (Marincola (2007a) 172–3; Schepens (1977) 102–5).

¹³ Plut. *Thes.* 19.4: earlier, Plutarch notes the mythical source material for this life (τὸ μυθῶδες, ἀρχαιολογίαν, 1.3) and asks readers to bear with it.

¹⁴ Lévêque and Vidal-Naquet (1996) 9–17; Clarke (2008).

¹⁵ Clarke (2008) 64–70, 208–15; Fowler (2013) 685–7. Although Harding (1993) 49 argues that Thucydides' criticism of Hellanicus precludes any assumption that his *Attikê sungraphê* was a historical chronicle (1.97.2).

priestesses of Hera at Argos, enabling the development of dating mechanisms and synchronism across the Greek world.¹⁶ Sparta and Macedon already had king lists in the form of the royal pedigrees reported by Herodotus.¹⁷ Hellanicus' probable innovation was to preface Athens' (partly) historical archon list, whose epigraphic publication dates to the 420s, with a king list, connecting the *spatium historicum* to a transformed *spatium mythicum* and collapsing the distinction between the narration of the two, a distinction that is important to Greek contemporary historians such as Thucydides.¹⁸ This also enabled the development of a unitary history of Athens from its foundations, bridging the 'floating gap' that was observed by so-called 'great' historians with their focus on contemporary history that could be told from the oral evidence of living sources; it took history back beyond the accepted limit of the Heraclids, and thus to the time of Theseus. This development enabled the fourth- and third-century Attidographers to treat Athens' mythical monarchs as historical figures and exemplars as if they were contemporary politicians or generals, or rather, highly superior alternatives to them.¹⁹

Why was Hellanicus of Lesbos interested in exploring the Athenian past?²⁰ Hellanicus could not have been motivated by the emotional attachment to the city and involvement in its politics that drives later, fourth- and third-century, examples of the genre.²¹ But his Athenian audience and customers may have demanded these stories, just as the Spartans demanded ancient history and genealogies from Hippias.²² Hellanicus was probably

¹⁶ Hippias *BNJ* 6; Hellanicus *FGrHist* 4; Joyce (1999). Thucydides criticises these systems for imprecision (Th. 5.20.2) and adds the use of seasons to increase precision: Węcowski (2012); Möller (2001) 254–62.

¹⁷ Hdt. 6.52 (Sparta), 8.137.1, 139 (Macedon). Hornblower (1991–2008) II.490–3; Smart (1986).

¹⁸ This contrasts with the explicit separation drawn between the two (or the near past and the 'plupast', as identified by Jonas Grethlein) that characterises Thucydidean contemporary history: see Grethlein and Krebs (2012) 1–11. In Attidography this 'plupast' is not distinguished in kind from the recent past, but simply precedes it in continuous narrative, cf. Jacoby (1949) 88–9; Cartledge (2002) 293–8; Jacoby (1954a) 15–17; Jacoby (1954b) 11–12 n. 119. The Athenian archon-list: *ML* 6 = *IG* i³ 1031; Bradeen (1963).

¹⁹ Some ancient authorities, unlike Jacoby, regarded the fourth-century Kleidemos, rather than Hellanicus, as the first Attidographer (*FGrHist* 323 T1 = Paus. 10.15.5, ὁ ἀρχαιότατος): Jacoby (1954a) 61.

²⁰ It is not known in which Lesbian polis Hellanicus held citizenship, or whether he belonged to its oligarchic or democratic faction. If he were writing after the suppression of the 427 Mytilenean revolt, both factors might influence his attitude to Athens.

²¹ As suggested by the 'intentional history' model.

²² See below, pp. 337–8. The pseudo-Xenophonic Athenian constitution may provide a parallel: Bordes (1982) 20–21, 139–63; Jacoby (1949) 196–9, 292 n. 13; Ober (1998) 22–3.

writing during the 420s, as the city's dramatists turned to patriotic Athenian myth in the context of the Peloponnesian War.²³ Some testimony from lexicographers and scholiasts supports the view that mythographers and dramatists had shared interests: for example, both a Euripidean text and Hellanicus are cited together as sources for obscure figures of Athenian myth, such as Αλοϋς daughter of Kerkyon.²⁴ Ancient biographical tradition also groups Hellanicus with Euripides and Sophocles as visitors to the Macedonian court.²⁵

Later local historians have different citation patterns, suggesting that they were perceived as authoritative on different topics. Androtion is rarely cited in the context of tragedy, but often cited for specific details of Athenian topography and nomenclature, and for historical and political references in Aristophanes.²⁶ However, it may be that the non-Athenian willingness to regard the role of kings as central to Athenian history was a theme that later writers could take up and expand, as it served a different function within their own context.

For Herodotus, Athenian myth was a matter of largely topographical interest, explaining the mythical heritage of various locations; suggesting that the sources familiar to him were not arranged as chronologically sequenced histories but related to specific locations. His interest is in the collective Athenians as political actors (8.44.2); individual kings are rarely named as actors (the account of Theseus' abduction of Helen at 9.73.2, explaining the

Ober argues that the audience/readership for the [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* includes members of non-Athenian as well as Athenian elites, and this may also be true of Hellanicus' work if explaining Athenian myth was its focus.

²³ Jacoby (1949) 70–1; id. (1954a) 1–6.

²⁴ Harpokration, s.v. Ἀλόπη = 323a F 6 (*Atthis* Book 2). Hellanicus' other works are also cited as sources by scholiasts on Euripides: see *FGrHist* 4 F 21 (*Atlantis*; scholiast to Eur. *Phoen.* 159), 4 F 94 (*Phoronidos*; scholiast to *Rhesus* 29), 4 FF 96–8 (*Phoronidos*; scholiast to Eur. *Phoen.* 662, 61, 71), 4 F 133 (*Argonautikal/Deukonaleia*; scholiast to *Medea* 9).

²⁵ Suida s.v. Hellanicus, *FGrHist* 4 = 323a T 1. While the biographical tradition may be fictional, the grouping of writers and the implied assessment of their views may be valuable.

²⁶ Hellanicus and tragedy references: cited alongside tragedians (Euripides: F 323a F 6, 98; Sophocles: see n. 24 above for citations in *scholia* to Euripides). Androtion: cited in *scholia* to tragedy twice (F 39, scholion to Sophocles *OC* 698, on Archidamos' invasion of Attica; F 60 scholion to Eur. *Phoen.* 670, on the Spartoi), frequently cited by scholiasts to Aristophanes (identifiably from his *Atthis*: FF 8, 16, 35–7, 40–1, 45), usually for details of recent Athenian history. The third-century Philochorus is frequently cited for biographical information on the tragedians (biographies are listed at *FGrHist* 328 T 1 = Suda, s.v. Philochorus) and by scholiasts to Aristophanes, for details of Athenian history (e.g., *FGrHist* 328 FF 117–23, 127–35).

Spartan relationship with Decelea, is an exception to this).²⁷ His most prominent discussion of Athenian kings accompanies the description of specific cult sites around the Acropolis (8.52–5).²⁸ These passages are driven by topographical concerns, although for democratic Athenians the organisation of space was explicitly politicised.²⁹ Only at 5.76 does Herodotus use a king to establish a synchronism, when he places the first Spartan invasion of Attica in the time of Codrus.³⁰

For the Atthidographers, constructing a single linear sequence means that the joins between sequences need to be explained. This is where myth becomes history; the genealogical approach of mythographers such as Pherecydes (*FGrHist* 3) is augmented by a more precise approach to accounting for the passage of past time, and historical explanation of change.³¹ The Atthidographers' interest in changes of royal dynasty, such as that from the Erechtheid to the Medontid dynasty, apparent from the fragments (such as Hellanicus F 23, with its suggestion that there are divergent accounts of the events told) may therefore provide evidence of multiple separate kingship myths being collated into a linear sequence.³² Atthidography contains several episodes of political change, but it is not clear whether this integrates changes that were already part of the source myth, or represents the stitching together in linear time of events from the timeless ages of myth, which then requires historical explanations to be found for changes in dynasty.

Monarchy remains in the mythical period, but accounts of its end in Athens differ: for Isocrates, monarchy ended with Theseus' foundation of

²⁷ Flower and Marincola (2002) 238–9. This passage has a complex function in its prolepsis to the Peloponnesian War. It may catch the resurgent interest in Athenian kings as political actors that marked Athenian rhetoric towards the end of the war. Alternatively, Herodotus' Athenian sources were pro-democratic and uninterested in kingship myth, and he simply echoes their interests.

²⁸ Hdt. 9.97 mentions Neileus, son of Codrus, founder of a temple of Demeter of Eleusis at Mycale. This example falls into the topographic set. Luce (2005) contrasts the civic Athenian locations (the old agora) associated with Theseus with the cult locations (the Acropolis) associated with the other Athenian kings.

²⁹ Lévêque and Vidal-Naquet (1996) 9–17. D. Hal. *Thuc.* 9 = *FGrHist* 4 T 11; Toyne (1995).

³⁰ Although this synchronism falls within the period Herodotus elsewhere identifies as before history (3.122). More on Codrus in Herodotus: Jacoby (1954a) 44; id. (1954b) 51–2 nn. 14–16.

³¹ Carrière (1998); Gotteland (1998); Fowler (2013).

³² Hellanicus, *FGrHist* 323a F 23; Demon, *FGrHist* 326 F 5.

Athenian democracy, but that seems to be a later tradition.³³ Earlier texts report a transitional period in which monarchs ruled badly.³⁴ One story from this transitional period provides negative exempla, criticising the misdeeds of Hippomenes.³⁵ The story of Hippomenes' cruel treatment of his daughter, for example, cited from the lost section of the *Ath. Pol.* in Heraclides' epitome (Heraclid. *Pol.* 1), seems like an archaic exploration of tyranny rather than kingship, or a problematisation of the nature of kingship, as with Herodotus' stories about the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis.³⁶ Hippomenes' story does not survive in any Attidographic source, although it most likely originated in one available to the compilers of the Aristotelian constitution.

The process of narrating myth is of course likely to generate problems when emplotted in historical time. A hero existing in mythical time can undertake many exploits without any need for them all to be in a plausible or fixed linear sequence. Nor do his exploits require detailed synchronisation with other mythical sequences. Fitting Athenian myth to the other mythical cycles, of the deeds of Heracles and the Trojan War, required a certain amount of finessing on the part of the Attidographers.³⁷ Additional duplicated kings fill out the Athenian king-lists in the surviving fragments from third-century historian Castor of Rhodes and the epigraphic chronography *Marmor Parium*, suggesting that these innovations were part of the process of constructing the Attidographic account of the past.³⁸

How to Talk About the Athenian Past

How to talk and write about the past were contested issues in Athenian intellectual culture, with a trend towards historicisation and rationalisation, as

³³ Jacoby finds two traditions present in the fourth century, one that interposed life archons between the kings and the archons (Jacoby (1954b) 11–13 nn. 119–21), and one that did not (which he regards as earlier). Cf. Eur. *Supp.* 352–3; Isoc. *Helen* 34–5.

³⁴ Jacoby (1954a) 47–8.

³⁵ Possibly equating to the eighth century (*MP* 31–2); Harding (2008) 84–5 notes the confusion in differing source traditions of what kind of rule these life-archons held.

³⁶ Hdt. 2.162–76; cf. *FGrHist* 90 F 49.

³⁷ This process is already evident in tragic use of kingship myth, such as the need to make Theseus' son Demophon rather than Theseus handle the crisis of the children of Heracles, if Theseus and Heracles are placed as contemporaries in mythical time; cf. Isoc. *Helen* 31.

³⁸ *Marmor Parium*, *FGrHist* 239 A 1–31; Castor of Rhodes, *FGrHist* 250 F 4. Grethlein and Krebs (2012). On duplications within king-lists: Jacoby (1929) 1140–1; Clarke (2008) 73–5; Jacoby (1930) 666–71, 823–4; Harding (2008) 12–13, 73–5; and especially the detailed analysis in Fowler (2013) 447–55.

the mythical past was historicised through chronographical developments such as the king-list and through the writing of texts such as the *Atthides*, which covered foundation to present in a single work. Thucydides, Isocrates and Plato are among the writers to explore this interface between history and myth.

Plato regards history as a poor source of educational exemplars, and particularly as a basis for political theory; it provides only negative exemplars of decline, as in the examination of the Dorian League, Athens and Persia in *Laws* 3, and the parody of rhetorical history in the funeral speech of the *Menexenus*.³⁹ The *Hippias Maior* identifies ancient history as a poor-quality topic, suitable only for use with unintelligent audiences, and resembling the stories that old women tell children (τὸ ἡδέως μυθολογῆσαι, *Hipp. Mai.* 286a1–2).⁴⁰ Hippias explains to Socrates that in Sparta, where his intellectualised form of sophistic education, including mathematics and harmonics, is forbidden, he is compelled to give talks on the ancestry of heroes and men, the foundation of cities, and in general ancient history (ἀρχαιολογίας, 285d8), precisely the topics of Atthidography (285d6–e2).⁴¹ The Spartans wrong-foot the celebrity sophist by forcing him to engage in this unpalatable discourse of antiquity.

Two passages from Thucydides elaborate the distinction between the focus on a rationalised past and the knowable near-present. Pericles' funeral speech (2.37–46) explicitly omits the great deeds of the Athenians, declining to speak at length about familiar things (μακρηγορεῖν ἐν εἰδόσιν οὐ βουλόμενος ἐάσω, 2.36.4).⁴² These might have been expected to feature as they do in other literary funeral speeches, but Thucydides' methodology is firmly focused on contemporary history.⁴³ In contrast, when Nicias addresses the beleaguered Athenians in Sicily (7.69.2), he speaks to each man of his tribe and ancestors and rehearses their famous deeds, without guarding against speaking in an old-fashioned way (οὐ πρὸς τὸ δοκεῖν τινὶ ἀρχαιολογεῖν φυλαξάμενοι). The verb ἀρχαιολογεῖν has been translated as 'talk of ancient

³⁹ Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1450a38–b11, on the lack of universality in history.

⁴⁰ *Hipp. Mai.* 285d6 = *FGrHist* 6 T 3; cf. Pownall (2007) 5–37; Thomas (1989). The *Hippias Maior* discussion of history seems to satirise both Hippias and his son-in-law Isocrates for reliance on historical argument (Marincola (1999) 293).

⁴¹ This is the earliest extant instance of the noun ἀρχαιολογία (*LSJ*).

⁴² *Lys* 2.3–16: section 2.3 stresses the educational function of remembering the great deeds.

⁴³ *Thuc.* 1.1.3, rejecting the possibility of sufficient knowledge of τὰ ἔτι παλαίτερα.

history', a meaning that its cognate noun certainly bears in Hellenistic times and later, but here it seems to mean 'talk in an old-fashioned manner'.⁴⁴

Thucydides had already set out his objection to the use and exploration of the ancient past and mythical material in his introduction, emphasising that it was impossible to learn about the distant past (1.1.3, 1.20.1), and that he would exclude mythical material from his narration (1.22.4).⁴⁵ By depicting Nicias deploying this mode of rhetoric on this occasion, he seems to suggest that that to speak in such an old-fashioned manner is to deploy a last resort in a desperate situation.

That there was a political edge to the way one handled historical material is confirmed by Isocrates in the introduction to his *Panegyricus*, which positions Athens as the city that should lead a Panhellenic force against Persia. He contrasts ways of talking about ancient things: one can achieve novelty and interest by speaking of ancient things in a new way, and the opposite (τὰ τε παλαιὰ καινῶς διελθεῖν καὶ περὶ τῶν νεωστὶ γεγεννημένων ἀρχαίως εἰπεῖν, *Paneg.* 8).⁴⁶ He goes on to add that the deeds of the past are an inheritance common to all (αἱ μὲν γὰρ πράξεις αἱ προγεγεννημέναι κοινὰ πᾶσιν ἡμῶν κατελείφθησαν, *Paneg.* 9); but handling this shared material enables individuals to demonstrate their skill.⁴⁷ Isocrates himself exemplifies this practice, using the familiar Athenian story of the return of the Heraclids to argue that Athens remained superior to Sparta in the contemporary world, and indeed that Sparta would always retain its dependence on Athens narrated in this myth. The contrast between status derived from myth and status derived from recent events is particularly acute in the *Panegyricus*.⁴⁸

How to narrate τὰ παλαιά in relation to the key value of *akribeia* became an established topos of methodological statements in fourth-century histori-

⁴⁴ Argued by Grube (1926), Tarrant (1928), Woodruff (1982), and supported by Hudson-Williams, (1948) 79–80, arguing that the prefix ἀρχαίω- acts as both an adverb and an object of the main verb, = ἀρχαῖα ἀρχαίως λέγειν, (in line with other -λογεω compounds such as the more common μακρολογέω, speak at length). But Hudson-Williams fails to link the ἀρχαῖα, the content of the speech with its frequent mentions of heroic past deeds, to the *patria* vocabulary (πατρόθεν τε ἐπονομάζων, 7.69.2; τὰς πατρικὰς ἀρετάς, πατρίδος τε τῆς ἐλευθερωτάτης), of the speech that precedes the authorial comment. It seems that the content, the listing of ancestors and heroic deeds, is at least part of what makes Nicias' speech old-fashioned, and not just his manner of speaking.

⁴⁵ Connor (1984) 20–32, noting how Thucydides' Archaeology tells Athenian pre-history in terms of thalassocracy rather than Theseus myth.

⁴⁶ D'Angour (2011) 223–4 notes the emphasis on novelty elsewhere in fourth-century rhetoric.

⁴⁷ Cf. Marincola (1997) 276–7.

⁴⁸ Calame (1998) 139–41.

ography; Ephorus, possibly a student of Isocrates, argues that different modes of narration are appropriate to the distant and recent past, on account of the lack of precision possible in narrating the distant past.⁴⁹ Isocrates subverts this historiographical concern by asserting the priority of the distant past over the recent past, mythical strengths over recent failures. He likes to toy with the relative status of ancient myth and recent history; in the *Evagoras*, for example, he contrasts the status of Trojan war heroes with that of Evagoras of Salamis, who has opposed all of Asia on his own (5–6, 65–9).⁵⁰ It is also evident in Isocrates' use of *patrios politeia* arguments, where the ancient is exemplified by pre-Marathon Athens, the recent by contemporary politics.⁵¹

Thucydides' ambivalence towards maximally ancient history is replayed in the persistent view that the local histories were of purely antiquarian interest, a view that originates with Wilamowitz' argument that the *Atthides* were the Athenian equivalent of the various Roman *Fasti*.⁵² Jacoby's developmental model of Greek historiography, with its separate genres based on spatial focus, has also obscured rather than explicated the specific features of the *Atthis* and its politically significant conflation of history and myth into a single narrative structure.⁵³

The theme of monarchy connects the political, topographical and cultic interests of the Atthidographers with significant changes in the cultural context of the Athenian democracy, evident from the use of these transformed accounts in various other genres from the Aristotelian *politeia* to the political rhetoric of Isocrates and Lycurgus.⁵⁴ The past form of the city's constitution, and the characters of its past leaders, whether kings, aristocrats or democratic leaders, are increasingly used as exemplars by rhetoricians. This process parallels the increasingly didactic nature of 'great' history, with its similar emphasis on the character of leaders, such as Xenophon's *Hellenica*.⁵⁵

But the development of this pre-history of early Athens was itself a politicised act, which provided an alternative account of the origins of the democratic *politeia*, one that presented it as the gift of a monarch to the communi-

⁴⁹ *FGrHist* 70 F 9 = Harpokration, s.v. ἀρχαίως.

⁵⁰ Calame (1998) 136 n. 14; Gotteland (2001) 220–4.

⁵¹ *Areop.* 16–18.

⁵² See nn. 3 and 18 above.

⁵³ Jacoby (1909); Marincola (1999) 283–301; Schepens (1997).

⁵⁴ Isoc. *Helen* 18–37, especially 32–7; *Panathe.* 123–9; *Lyc. Leoc.* 86–7, 98–101.

⁵⁵ Dillery (1995), Pownall (2004) 65–112, and Gray (1989) examine Xenophon's *Hellenica* as historiography; Hägg (2012) 10–66 considers Xenophon's exemplary lives as biographies, along with Isocrates' *Evagoras*.

ty, rather than the product of popular and collaborative effort, as in the model posited by Ober.⁵⁶ While the *Atthis* is not a *politeia*, the separation between the two genres is far from complete, and more a question of focus.⁵⁷

The Focus on Theseus

The deeds of Theseus and the shifting signification of Theseus in Athenian texts are the central case of the processes of retelling myth as history and converting myths from sacred origins for political purposes. Theseus myth had long been incorporated into Athenian iconography for political purposes, notably by Cimon in the 460s.⁵⁸ Within the set framework of the king-list, competing versions of his stories appeared in the *Atthides*, while Isocrates' changes the signification of Theseus between the *Helen* and the *Panathenaicus*. Narratives may have been recast for political edge, or simply through the literary process of amplification, as they accreted yet more and more details. Plutarch's *Theseus* contains many Atthidographic fragments, enabling limited comparisons to be made between the Atthidographers, and demonstrating that Theseus was both central to the Athenian political imagination and a highly contested figure. Plutarch notes the tendency of Athenians to insert Theseus into many stories, suggesting that the Athenian perspective was 'not without Theseus' (οὐκ ἄνευ Θησέως, *Thes.* 29.3). But the many accounts from which he cites offer very different versions of Theseus myths, presented far from neutrally, as with his sarcastic comment on Kleidemos' excessive accuracy in telling Theseus' story (περιττώς, *Thes.* 19.4; ἐξακριβοῦν, *Thes.* 27.3).⁵⁹

Thucydides identifies Theseus as an important agent in Athenian political history, and one who is presented to make an explicit contrast with contemporary politics (2.15.2). Athens' foundation by Kekrops and synoecism by Theseus are retold as part of an elaborate comparison between these acts and Pericles' gathering of the citizens within Athens during the war (2.15.1).⁶⁰ The linkage between Pericles and Theseus is ambiguous, but Theseus is portrayed positively, not, as Henry Walker suggests, as an oriental despot; he acts with intelligence (μετὰ τοῦ ξυνητοῦ), and the language is the positive lan-

⁵⁶ Ober (1996): see also Azoulay and Ismard (2011), especially Flaig (2011).

⁵⁷ *Contra* Schepens (2001).

⁵⁸ *Ath. Pol.* F 4; Plutarch *Cim.* 8.5–6; *Thes.* 36.1; Blamire (1989) 119–20; Castriota (1992) 33–63. Fowler (2013) 468 notes that the interests of earlier mythographers concerning Theseus are different from those of Atthidographers.

⁵⁹ Kleidemos, *FGrHist* 323 F 17, F 18; Pelling (1999); id. (2002); McNerney (1994).

⁶⁰ Mills (1997); Mitchell (2008).

guage of unification and setting in order (*δικεόσμησε*), although the idea of compulsion is still present.⁶¹

From the fragments it is clear that the Atthidographers included many details from Theseus' career that could be integrated into a unitary narrative of Athenian history only with some difficulty. However, they did so in a way that normalised and rationalised the myth so that parts of their accounts read increasingly like the narratives of contemporary warfare; Theseus' sea-battle in Crete could be so recounted as to imitate Thucydides' famous set-pieces, for example, while his leadership skills could be assessed just like those of the generals of different Greek cities analysed in Xenophon's *Hellenica*.⁶²

So in Philochorus and Demon the minotaur becomes the Cretan general Tauros, who served King Minos (*στρατηγῶν ὄνομα Ταῦρος*, Philochorus F 17a; *τὸν Ταῦρον ἀναίρεθῆναί φησι τὸν τοῦ Μίνω στρατηγόν*, Demon F 5). The mythical hero and his fantastical opponents are rationalised in a way that enables them to be fitted into a continuous historical chronology without admitting the marvellous to the historical sphere.⁶³ The rewriting of Theseus' campaign as if he were a contemporary general makes it possible to place him in a human, linear chronology that does not require him to be operating in a mythical space where non-rational events and creatures are unproblematic. This process also normalises the presence of monarchs within the Athenian tradition. Where democratic generals predominated in contemporary histories, mythical kings provided exemplary leadership in the *Atthides*. One might note the Athenians' disaffection with their military leadership that is a feature of the first half of the fourth century; even for successful leaders, there were frequent *eisangelia* trials.⁶⁴ Theseus was, at least for some time, immune to such criticism.

There seems to be a turning point after 350 in which Theseus becomes more problematic as an exemplary king, as he becomes tarnished in some accounts through his association with democracy. That Theseus handed over power to a democracy that succeeded his monarchy becomes a reason to criticise him; a king who gives up his kingship in favour of the democratic

⁶¹ Cf. Hdt. 1.96–101 (Deioces' unification of the Medes); Walker (1994) 197–8. Calame (1996) 221–3 regards Thucydides' portrayal of Theseus as a link to his earlier description of thalassocracy (1.6).

⁶² The set-piece battle scene might show similarities between the genres of 'great' and 'local' history: while there is no evidence that Atthidography included such literary features, Plutarch's references to the Atthidographers suggest that there were places within their narratives where they could be included.

⁶³ Cf. Veyne (1988) 13–14, 133 n. 23.

⁶⁴ Hansen (1975); Xen *Hell.* 6.2.14–30 (Iphicrates), 5.4.64 (Timotheus).

mob can hardly be a good exemplar for conservative anti-democrats, as a slightly later text, from the *Characters* of Theophrastus, makes clear. The Oligarchic Man criticises Theseus for synoecism and increasing the number (and power) of the *demos*, and then giving up his kingship and opening up Athens to the evils of democracy (τοῦτον γὰρ ἐκ δώδεκα πόλεων εἰς μίαν καταγαγόντα τὸν δῆμον αὐξῆσαι, *Characters* 26.6–7). Talking about Theseus then becomes a sign of anti-democratic thought.⁶⁵ Kingship myth has changed in response to changing political circumstances.

The two writers who best exemplify the rhetorical use of Athenian kingship are Isocrates and Lysias, who each used Athenian kings as exemplars. Other orators make little use of them; Aeschines' reference to the sons of Theseus, justifying the Athenian claim to Amphipolis, is a rare example (*On the Embassy* 31).

Isocrates and the Discourse of Kingship in Athens

Isocrates' works can be read within the changing context of Athenian political discourse; he claims to be almost 98 years old as he completes the *Panathenaicus*, and is said to have died soon after the Athenian defeat at Chaironea in 338.⁶⁶ His extant works provide insights into changes in political discourse over the preceding 50 years, although his political works (as opposed to logographic works) cluster into periods of political activity in his later career.⁶⁷ When Isocrates revisits topics from earlier speeches in later ones, he does so self-consciously (*Panathenaicus* 126–7). Athenian monarchy as represented by Theseus is one of these topics, appearing in both the early *Helen* and the late *Panathenaicus*.

Attempts to produce a developmental model to explain changes in Isocrates' political thought are beset with difficulties. The construction of his speeches with internally opposed arguments, the adoption of the personae of different speakers, the engagement with different literary genres, all make it harder to assert that a viewpoint expressed in a speech reflects a specific staging post in the development of his thought. This has led some critics to

⁶⁵ Plutarch (*Thes.* 32.1) also addresses Menestheus' exploitation of aristocratic resentment of Theseus' reforms; Pelling (2002) 181–4. Theophrastus' caricature is particularly pointed in post-322 Athens.

⁶⁶ [Plut.] *Vit. Dec. Or.* 837E.

⁶⁷ Many, but not all, of Isocrates' works can be dated from internal historical references (Mandilaras (2003) I.6); purely mythical references make this difficult for the *Helen* and *Busiris*, and works' dramatic dates may differ from their composition dates: Too (1995) 42–5; Eucken (1983) 44, 173–83.

deny that he is politically engaged at all, but simply engaging in rhetorical exercises, in which different perspectives are allocated to speakers including himself; for others, the construction of his own identity is the primary interest.⁶⁸

However, Isocrates presents himself as engaged in debate with his contemporaries.⁶⁹ This is not just a binary opposition to Plato and the Academy, but to a range of others involved in education, of which the most important aspect is education in the science of government (*τῶν πολιτικῶν ἐπιστήμην*, 9); he characterises his works as *politikoi logoi*.⁷⁰ While he regards himself as contributing to this science, he disputes that others contribute: it is, for example, completely ridiculous (*πάντων ... καταγελαστότατον*) to regard the eristics as making a useful contribution to this domain.⁷¹

As a writer engaged in the critique of Athenian identity, Isocrates might be expected to make use of Athenian myth, and does so extensively, as noted by Masaracchia.⁷² Athenian myth is transformed into political argument in many of his works, buttressed by methodological concern about how to make use of myth and mythical prehistory in argument.

Theseus appears as an important example in two very different works, first in Isocrates' encomium to Helen (*Helen* 18–37), and later in the *Panathenaicus* (127–9). Isocrates expresses concern about the repeated use of the same example, part of the theme of repetition, age and novelty that permeates the *Panathenaicus*; but there are subtle and important shifts in the signification of Theseus myth in the later work compared with the earlier one.

Existing interpretations of the *Helen* fail to interpret the political content of the work with sufficient clarity, giving insufficient weight to the use of Theseus as part of a political argument in which the superiority of Athens over other cities and Isocrates over other educators within Athens will be asserted. While the external, Panhellenic aspect of Isocrates' political discourse has been carefully analysed, less attention has been given to the Theseus discourse within its Athenian political context. The Panhellenic interpretation

⁶⁸ Too (1995); Harding (1988).

⁶⁹ As suggested by *Helen* 1–13 and *Against the Sophists*. Eucken (1983) presents the case for Isocratean thought as a series of responses to Plato. Mathieu (1925) 200–2 also links him to historiographers, as their teacher; Too (1995): 233–4 considers Isocrates as a voice of 'otherness' subverting the language of democratic participation with his individualism.

⁷⁰ Eucken (2003).

⁷¹ This seems to point to the themes and language of Plato's *Euthydemus*, in which competing types of education (eristic/Sophistic, Socratic) are contrasted before an Isocratean style of education is introduced by Crito as a third, intermediate option.

⁷² Masaracchia (2003).

offered by Jaeger underemphasises the specifically Athenian context of the discussion of the deeds of Theseus.⁷³

The *Helen* is a complex work with multiple purposes; its unifying principle has proven elusive.⁷⁴ At one level Isocrates is engaged in debate with the sophistic tradition of Helen as a paradoxical example of a virtuous woman wrongly maligned, producing an epideictic display as a critique of Gorgias' encomium of Helen (14–15).⁷⁵ But just as in Plato, dialogic encounters with fifth-century sophists in Isocrates can represent contemporary fourth-century encounters with a newer generation; Isocrates is also offering more than a critique of his predecessors, as he makes explicit (2–5).

The introduction presents a context of intellectual disputation, in which different groups are found lacking in different respects, but the strongest criticism is reserved for the eristics (ἄλλοι δὲ περὶ τὰς ἔριδας διατρίβοντες τὰς οὐδὲν μὲν ὠφελούσας, 1).⁷⁶ Among the forms of philosophy that Isocrates rejects here are eristic disputation, Platonic philosophy (οἱ δὲ διεξιόντες ὡς ἀνδρία καὶ σοφία καὶ δικαιοσύνη ταῦτόν ἐστιν), and Antisthenean logic (οἱ μὲν οὐ φάσκοντες οἶόν τ' εἶναι ψευδῆ λέγειν οὐδ' ἀντιλέγειν). Isocrates requires speeches to be useful (ὠφελούσας), which, he claims, eristic disputation is not; this same criterion will be used later of political acts, to argue that Theseus' deeds were more useful (ὠφελιμωτέρους) than Heracles' (24–5), in terms of benefit to the Greeks and especially the Athenians.⁷⁷

The importance of usefulness as a criterion for the assessment of political acts is emphasised again at the close of the digression on the career of Theseus, thus linking the digression to the argument outlined in the proem (and thereby bringing some unity to the work). Theseus' political reforms were useful to Athens, and of communal benefit (τὰς δ' ὠφελείας ἅπασιν εἰς τὸ

⁷³ Jaeger (1939) 71–83.

⁷⁴ Questioning the structure and unity of the *Helen* is itself an established rhetorical topos: Arist. *Rhet.* 3.14.1414b27–28; Papillon (1996); Poulakos (1986); Kennedy (1958).

⁷⁵ Varying composition dates have been proposed for the *Helen* within the 380s/370s (Van Hook ap. Norlin and Van Hook (1928–45) III.59; Zajonz (2002) 58–9). Kennedy (1958) 82–3 argues that it is a 'fanciful counterpart' to the *Panegyricus* and thus contemporary with it. Heilbrunn (1977) 147 argues that it is a 'sophistic-rhetorical' work rather than a political one, but no Athenian discourse about Theseus can be apolitical.

⁷⁶ The identity of the eristics is unclear; they are neither the Antisthenic nor Platonic heirs of Socratic thought implied in the opening paragraph, but possibly the Megarics, cf. Plato's *Euthydemus*. Blank (2013) 11 n. 28 notes the connection to the *Euthydemus* but treats this as Isocrates' subsidiary project.

⁷⁷ This theme and imagery connect the *Helen* to the *Euthydemus*, where Socrates fails to become Heracles (*Euth.* 297b10–c5).

κοινὸν ἀπεδίδου, 36).⁷⁸ Reading this claim through the lens of the proem's argument, shows that Isocrates, like Theseus, is beneficial to Athens.

The digression, occasioned by Theseus' role as the first abductor of Helen, marks this as a *politikos logos*.⁷⁹ Isocrates' explicit justification for the digression is rhetorical: that showing the pre-eminence of those who sought Helen will provide the grounds for praising Helen (22). He suggests that we are not in a position to dispute the contemporary judgement of events so far in the past and should simply agree with those of that time who were of sound opinion (τοῖς κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον εὖ φρονήσασιν, 22); if Theseus thought Helen the most beautiful, we should accept his view.⁸⁰ This paradoxical assertion is an extension of Isocrates' use of myth in argument, playing with his readers' inability to know anything with certainty about a distant past which was nonetheless valorised as a source of important values and exempla.

However, the digression also serves to characterise political virtue as an inherently Athenian quality, and thus to legitimate the Athenian claim to hegemony over the Panhellenic alliance that was Isocrates' over-arching political project, as suggested by Too and Kennedy.⁸¹ But these interpretations do insufficient justice to Isocrates' use of the discourse of kingship to convey his argument. Isocrates takes elements from the myths of Theseus, often related to Athenian cult, and transforms them into political myths, narratives that exemplify Theseus' possession of important political capabilities and character virtues, and that are directly responsible for the present political character of the city and its citizens. The emphasis on usefulness (1, 24, 36) links Isocrates and Theseus as benefactors of Athens; like Theseus (36), Isocrates has taken the more laborious (ἐπιπινώτερον) path, by producing discourses that are in the public interest and trustworthy (κοινοὶ καὶ πιστοί, 11) unlike those of his rivals.

Isocrates' detailed account of Theseus in the *Helen*, floating as it is between history and myth, lacks some of the synchronisms that mark later *Atthides* and earlier tragic accounts. While he links Theseus to Heracles (as in

⁷⁸ Kennedy (1958) 77.

⁷⁹ Reading the *Helen* as a response to Gorgias is one way to provide a degree of unity: Kennedy (1958); Papillon (1996).

⁸⁰ Isocrates acknowledges the length of the digression (αἰσθάνομαι δ' ἐμαντὸν ἕξω φερόμενον τῶν καιρῶν, 29), but in terms that suggest that this appears as a failing only to those who have misunderstood his purpose.

⁸¹ Too (1995) 129–30; Kennedy (1958) 80–1. Kennedy links the praise of Athens in the digression to that in the *Panegyricus* (citing 39 and 80ff.), and interprets the *Helen* as praise of Hellenism, and as advancing the Athenian claim for hegemony of a Panhellenic alliance over Sparta's.

To *Demonicus* 8), and compares the usefulness of their separate labours (*Helen* 23–5), he does not try to synchronise the two heroes into the same generation, so that his Theseus can receive the Heracleidae into Attica (*Helen* 31).⁸²

This emphasis on the mythical kings as the sole authors of the great Athenian deeds marks a significant change in the discourse of kingship in Athens. Isocrates in his *Helen* moves on from the depiction of the Athenians themselves as collective authors of their great deeds to a focus on an exemplary individual of high status. In contrast, his *Panegyricus* retains the traditional version of the canonical great deeds (54–5), in which they are performed by the collective Athenians: unnamed collective actors take up war (*ἀνελόμενοι γὰρ πόλεμον*, 58) and compel (*ἠνάγκασαν*, 58) their opponents, in the case of the Heraclids and the Argive dead. In the wars against the Thracians under Eumolpus and the Amazons, the emphasis is on Athens itself as a single, unitary entity contrasted with all the others (*μίαν μὲν πόλιν ... ἀπασῶν δ'*, 68). The review of the Athenian great deeds closes in conventional comparison between the men of the earlier days and the Marathon generation (71). Throughout this work Isocrates' purpose is to establish the claim of Athens to leadership of the Panhellenic alliance he proposes (*ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν ἡγεμονικῶς εἶχεν*, 57).⁸³ But here he retains the conventional attribution of the city's deeds and character virtues to its collective citizenry, as displayed in funeral speech rhetoric.⁸⁴

Compared with this conventional description of Athenian greatness, the different account of Theseus' military and political career in the *Helen* becomes salient.⁸⁵ The great deeds are subsumed into Theseus' career, along with the political development of the *polis*, more traditionally attributed to Theseus. While, as noted, Isocrates comments on the space he allocates to various elements of the Theseus story (29), none of the elements is misplaced for his argumentative purposes, which require a change of focus from the mythical deeds beloved of vase painters to the political actions that explain Theseus' role in unifying Athens and establishing its political identity.

Isocrates uses the traditional mythical narratives to establish Theseus' character virtues, and also to establish Athens' superiority through myth. Linking and comparing Theseus and Heracles was a feature of Athenian

⁸² Whereas Euripides allocates this to Theseus' son Demophon (*Heracleidae*).

⁸³ Bringmann (1965) 19–27; Kennedy (1958).

⁸⁴ Treating [Lys.] 2.17–19 as the classic example of early fourth-century funeral speech rhetoric, in which the collective strength of the Athenians is based on their autochthonous origin, shared democratic values and subjection to law and reason.

⁸⁵ And so Kennedy's attempt to parallel the two speeches' arguments can be questioned.

culture, evident in civic imagery such as the frieze of the Hephaestion, overlooking the Agora. Isocrates remakes the comparison, examining the usefulness of the deeds performed by the two heroes. Heracles' greater suffering and greater fame are compared to the greater usefulness of the deeds performed by Theseus (24–5). Being Athenian enables Theseus to be superior, because unlike the enslaved labouring Heracles, he is his own master and able to choose his own labours (ὁ δ', αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ κύριος ὢν, τούτους προηρέετο τῶν ἀγώνων ἐξ ὧν ἤμελλεν ἢ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἢ τῆς αὐτοῦ πατρίδος εὐεργέτης γενήσεσθαι, 25). Not only is he an exemplary actor in making his own choice, he is also a good example in choosing the deeds that enable him to become a benefactor. So, for example, he takes on his mission to Crete to free Athens from the subjection that requires it to send children as sacrificial victims; better to die than to live as ruler of a city compelled to pay this tribute (κρεῖττον εἶναι τεθνάναι μᾶλλον ἢ ζῆν ἄρχων τῆς πόλεως ... ἠναγκασμένης, 27). The deeds of the narrative myths are re-interpreted to fit the political profile that Isocrates is building, and to display the character virtues that Isocrates attributes to Theseus as part of this process.

In particular, Isocrates presents Theseus as making a clear choice between tyranny and good rule (*Helen* 32–4). Bad rulers who oppress their fellow citizens are not rulers but diseases of the state (οὐχ ἄρχοντας ἀλλὰ νοσήματα τῶν πόλεων, 34).⁸⁶ Theseus rejects this option by adopting a virtuous but unconventional one-man aristocracy in which he simultaneously retains political power and yet escapes the personal restrictions of tyranny (ἅμα τυραννεῖν καὶ μηδὲν χεῖρον διακεῖσθαι τῶν ἐξ ἴσου πολιτευομένων, 35).

This focus on the change of constitution is typical of those included in *politeiai* (cf. *Ath. Pol.* 41), and is also a feature of the *Atthides*. Here the change is emphasised by a detailed consideration of the kind of constitution that Theseus could have adopted. His rejection of tyranny in favour of good kingship is made explicit; he rejects such markers of tyranny as the use of bodyguards, constant warfare, the use of foreign troops to oppress citizens, impiety and the arbitrary use of capital punishment (33), while he exemplifies in his deeds a range of virtues.

The characterisation of Theseus owes as much to philosophical and sophistic accounts of the good statesman as to historical or mythical narrative accounts. The list of Theseus' political virtues is almost canonical (31): ἀνδρίαν, ἐπιστήμην, εὐσέβειαν, and linking them all, τὴν δ' ἄλλην ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην.⁸⁷ The collection of these virtues under an overarching con-

⁸⁶ Cf. *Pl. Rep.* 8.544c6. The metaphor of tyranny as disease is used elsewhere by both authors; Zajonz (2002) 200.

⁸⁷ Kehl (1962); Zajonz (2002) 192–3 notes that *sophrosune* is a key political virtue for Isocrates, cf. *Nic.* 30, 43; *Evag.* 22.

ception of *sophrosunê* is a more typically fourth-century response.⁸⁸ In recounting Theseus' political virtues through a narrative account of two of the Athenian canonical great deeds, Isocrates displays his rhetorical virtuosity.

Although Isocrates has established that Theseus demonstrated virtue through his heroic deeds (*ἐν τε τοῖς προειρημένοις*, 31), his virtue and *sophrosunê* were even more apparent in his political administration (*καὶ μάλιστ' ἐν οἷς τὴν πόλιν διώκησεν*, 31). The remainder of the digression provides a political analysis of the constitutional arrangements made by Theseus for post-synoecism Athens. Here Isocrates' analysis is somewhat different from other accounts, in emphasising continuing leadership by Theseus.⁸⁹

The most important political deed traditionally attributed to Theseus was the synoecism of Athens, the unification of the twelve original villages of Attica, founded by Cecrops. Isocrates narrates this briefly (35); before the synoecism, the Athenians lived scattered in villages (*σποράδην καὶ κατὰ κόμας*); afterwards, they are free-souled fellow citizens (*συμπολιτευομένων*) living in a shared polity (*κοινὴν τὴν πατρίδα*).

Isocrates describes the constitution established by Theseus after his synoecism as a sort of aristocracy of virtuous equals (*ἐξ ἴσου τὴν ἄμιλλαν αὐτοῖς περὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐποίησεν*), within which Theseus knows that nonetheless his superior skill and judgement will enable his opinions to prevail (*πιστεύων μὲν ὁμοίως αὐτῶν προέξειν*, 35). There are no surviving fragments from the Atthidographers to compare; Plutarch becomes coy about his sources at this point, and his description of Theseus' political changes suggests that it was proposed to the elite as a mixed constitution, a non-monarchical democracy (*ἀβασιλευτον πολιτείαν προτείνων καὶ δημοκρατίαν*, 24.2), with Theseus acting as a military commander and legal guardian (*αὐτῷ μόνον ἄρχοντι πολέμου καὶ νόμων φύλακι*), although equality (*[πολιτείαν] ἰσομοιρίαν*) was emphasised in his offer to the masses.⁹⁰ This account of the constitution of Athens as a mixed constitution, a political theory concept that underwent much development in and beyond the fourth century, seems to draw on accounts later than Isocrates', but more likely works of political theory rather than Atthidographers.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Or at least, a response to the Socratic doctrine of the unity of the virtues and its associated intellectualism.

⁸⁹ It most closely resembles Euripides' model in *Supp.* 352–3, particularly in the emphasis on freedom as a consequence of Theseus' constitutional reforms.

⁹⁰ The latter point also appears in Heracleides' epitome of the *Ath. Pol.* I, although the text is uncertain: *Θησεὺς δὲ ἐκήρυξε καὶ συνεβίβασε τούτους ἐπ' ἴση καὶ ὁμοία [μοίρα].*

⁹¹ Rowe (2000) 394–5.

The Aristotelian *Ath. Pol.*, post-dating the *Helen*, goes only so far as to say that Theseus' constitution had the form of a *politeia* (ἔχουσα πολιτείας τάξιν) and somewhat moved away from kingship (μικρὸν παρεγκλίνουσα τῆς βασιλικῆς, 41.2), but the narrative section of the work which might have provided more detail is lost.

Isocrates describes a complex mutual transaction between Theseus and the Athenians after the synoecism. Theseus hands over power to the Athenian *demos* (ὁ μὲν τὸν δῆμον καθίστη κύριον τῆς πολιτείας, 36), which promptly recognises its own best interests and returns it to him as the only worthy ruler (οἱ δὲ μόνον αὐτὸν ἄρχειν ἠξίουσιν, 36). Eucken notes the use of the imperfect tense to describe the continuity of the relationship between Theseus and the Athenians (ἠξίουσιν, προσέταπτεν, ἀπέλαυνεν, 36).⁹² That Theseus does not 'derive pleasure' from the exercise of power is significant; ἀπολαύω often has a negative connotation of improper pleasure or free-riding in a political context.⁹³ This picture of harmony contrasts with the threat of tyranny in the political choices that Theseus rejected (33–4). It is not so much that Theseus has rescued the Athenians from an actual tyranny, as that he has rejected tyranny himself in favour of a better form of monarchical rule; political life no longer takes place in public but in the private soul of the individual. Good kingship and bad tyranny are presented as an explicit choice for the individual monarch, but Theseus the Athenian can be relied upon to choose the better option. Isocrates thus presents Theseus as entirely and personally responsible for the political character of his city.⁹⁴

Isocrates' presentation of Theseus' rule combines the two earlier versions available to him, in which he appears as a unifying king (as in Thuc. 2.15.2) and as a leading citizen in democracy (as in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*).⁹⁵ His complex presentation of the Athenian polity becomes part of the complicated argument of his paradoxical dialogue. In disclaiming his kingship, and being chosen in return by the citizens who deem him to be superior to them, Theseus truly becomes a king, a king who is acceptable within a framework that seems to be established within a democratic context. Election to kingship by worthy citizens is a feature of Herodotean kingship narratives, and marks those kings whom he regards as more than simple des-

⁹² Eucken (1983) 97.

⁹³ See also *Panath.* 129 and n. 99 below.

⁹⁴ Isocrates similarly collapses Plato's city-soul analogy in his aphorism (ἔστι γὰρ ψυχῆ πόλεως οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ πολιτεία, *Areop.* 14)

⁹⁵ Jacoby (1954b) 226 nn. 9 and 10; id. (1954a) 309–12 (ad *FGrHist* 328 F 19); Zajonz (2002) 205–7.

pots.⁹⁶ What Isocrates is not claiming here is that Theseus gives up his kingship and turns his back on politics: he is not a Platonic philosopher king seeking the contemplative life, nor is he like Herodotus' Solon, leaving the Athenians to manage themselves under the pretext of seeking knowledge (Hdt. 1.29.1). It is his continuing presence that has created the mild character that persists in Athens to the present day (ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἕχνος τῆς ἐκείνου πρώτης ἐν τοῖς ἡμέσιν ἡμῶν καταλελειφθαι, 37).

The presentation of Theseus as king in the much later *Panathenaicus* is a different matter, although it retains the view that the good features of the Athenian constitution are dependent on its monarchical origins. But this Theseus does give up his political role in Athens to return to his other role performing heroic deeds, in what at first sight is a version of the Euripidean model (127–8). He does this in the prime of life (ἀκμάζων, 129), so that he can leave and perform useful and heroic deeds, on behalf of both Athens and Greece as a whole. This inversion of the usual chronology makes it the novelty that Isocrates claims; it also allows Isocrates to separate Theseus and his continuing Panhellenic heroism from good government in Athens. Close reading of the *Panathenaicus* reveals a strand of praise of Macedon at odds with the apparent praise of Athens that should be the subject of the speech.

While in the *Helen*, Isocrates represented Theseus choosing between kingship and tyranny, and preferring the choice which enabled the Athenians to live equally in freedom, here the choice the king makes is more complex and perhaps owes something to the philosophical debate about the choice of lives. Withdrawal from politics had not been an acceptable choice in earlier times (at least in the version of democratic ideology presented by Thucydides in the funeral speech), but the fourth-century picture was more complicated. Isocrates has moved the signification of Theseus away from the usual link with Athenian leaders such as Pericles, and towards monarchical figures such as Philip. This is a choice of lives different from that available to any Athenian citizen. Theseus has been reassigned: where in earlier accounts he clearly represents the democratic politicians of Athens (typically Pericles), here he has been transformed into a cipher for Philip of Macedon.⁹⁷ Isocrates' argument can be read as anti-Philip and pro-democratic, rather than a pro-Macedonian partisan; in such a reading, he provides Athenian politicians with an argument to persuade Philip away from in-

⁹⁶ Deioces, chosen to be king of Medes by the free Medes (Hdt 1.97.2–3) is the prime example, but Psammetichus (2.147–52) and Darius (3.83–5) are also chosen, albeit from more limited pools and by the more indirect means of fulfilment of prophecies and agreements to revert to one-man rule.

⁹⁷ Kehl (1962); Masaracchia (1995) 109–10; Roth (2003) 162.

volvement in domestic Athenian politics, should he gain direct control of the city.

Again, there are complications within the presentation of the argument, and typically Isocratean rhetorical games to disentangle. Isocrates here engages in a form of *praeteritio*, where he deliberately seeks out a new angle so that he does not need to repeat his previous work (126–7). But there are other changes, suggesting that Isocrates is reshaping his thought in response to others: Theseus' virtues are now characterised as *τῆς ἀρετῆς τῆς ἐκείνου καὶ φρονήσεως* (127); *sophrosuné* has been replaced by *phronésis* as the form of intellectual virtue.⁹⁸

Isocrates' new Theseus narrative differs from other accounts, which start to appear in this period, in which Theseus' loss of rule is an unhappy one, caused by the introduction of demagoguery to his democracy. What Theseus turns his back on is a secure monarchy (*βασιλείαν ἀσφαλεστάτην καὶ μεγίστην*, 129); Isocrates presents this as an example of austere virtue, in that he prefers heroic toil abroad to an easy life at home, and that he does this before he has derived enjoyment from participation in the *polis* (*ἀπολελαυκῶς ἦν τῶν ἀγαθῶν τῶν παρόντων*, 129).⁹⁹

The digression on Agamemnon (72–83) is widely regarded as a nod to Philip, underlining the hopes that Isocrates expressed in his *Philip* that the Macedonian king would serve as a Panhellenic leader, just as Agamemnon had done during the Trojan War.¹⁰⁰ Agamemnon is an example where the earlier tradition praises the individual leader, as well as the collective; Homer was a reliable source of political exempla for many theorists.¹⁰¹

This account of Theseus is preceded by a brief Athenian king-list, as Roth notes (126).¹⁰² Perhaps even more than in the *Helen*, Isocrates is drawing on the local historical tradition. But this is different from the invocation of the Athenian monarchical past that has been seen developing in the Atti-

⁹⁸ In line with Aristotle and the later Plato (*Laws* 1.631c5–d1), although the terms are equivalent but separate at 1.630b1.

⁹⁹ Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 1.330d2 (Socrates asks Cephalus to identify the greatest good he has derived from his life; Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.2, where Antiphon alleges that Socrates' students have failed to derive the usual benefits from studying philosophy. *Apolausis* and related terms in Aristotle seem to be purely physical pleasures (*Pol.* 1.10.1258a3; 5.11.1314b28; *NE* 1.5.1095b14–22) but, within a civic context, ones derived from improper relationships to the polity.

¹⁰⁰ Race (1978).

¹⁰¹ Thuc. 1.9.1: Homeric kings are also used as examples by Antisthenes (as in his surviving declamations of Ajax and Odysseus, FF 53–4 Giannantoni) and Xenophon (*Smp.* 4.6, *Mem.* 3.1.4, 3.2.1), cf. Giannantoni (1990) IV.257–64, 327–30.

¹⁰² Roth (2003) 156.

dograppers.¹⁰³ Isocrates has appropriated the structures of Athenian patriotism for his own Panhellenic purposes, and to fashion a role within his recreated imaginary for Philip as the absent king.¹⁰⁴ An ostensible homage to Athenian foundation myth notes the activities of Philip, contemporary with the drafting of the speech. The continuance of the dynasty is stressed (125) and identified as something rare, which the Macedonian dynasty certainly was when judged against the recent political history of Greek *poleis*. Philip, a monarch in his prime (*ἀκμάζων*, 129, as Roth notes), had left Macedon in the hands of the young Alexander while he pursued foreign campaigns in 340; this matches the new model of Theseus' career that Isocrates introduces here.¹⁰⁵

The pay-off from Isocrates' invocation of Athenian founder myth is that Theseus, so often identified with democratic politicians such as Pericles, is repositioned and now presented as an analogue of a foreign king.¹⁰⁶ The repositioning of Athenian kingship which had begun with the development of Attidography had changed pace and direction; here is a text aimed at a non-Athenian audience, providing Athenian exemplars for how non-Athenians, in this case Philip as king, should behave.

The vision of Athens which Isocrates develops is one in which a monarch, absent from the city on heroic duties, entrusts power to a group of virtuous leaders who are in sympathy with democracy but resemble the monarch in character (139). These leaders then go on to establish an idealised constitution that emphasises virtue (143–4). This seems remarkably similar to the constitutional arrangements put in place after Athens' surrender to Alexander in 323.

Isocrates' Athenian example of good government relies on the presence of kings to set it going. The good qualities of his Athenian *patrios politeia* are due to its kingly origins; it is in effect endowed with a kingly soul, responsible for its good qualities (*ἐπενέγκοιμεν τὴν αἰτίαν τοῖς βασιλεύσασιν αὐτῆς*, 138).¹⁰⁷ Isocrates uses the model of Athenian kingship that has been developed through the recasting of Athenian history to attribute the most characteristically positive quality of the Athenian citizen body to the individual acts

¹⁰³ The *Panathenaicus*, dating from 326–323, most likely predates the late-fourth or early-third century *Attides* of Demon and Phanodemos.

¹⁰⁴ Roth (2003) 162; Masaracchia (1995) 109–10.

¹⁰⁵ Roth (2003) 159 n. 343.

¹⁰⁶ The biographical tradition (ps-Plutarch, *Vit. Dec. Or.* 837e) suggests that Philip's actions immediately subsequent to Athens' defeat led the elderly Isocrates to refuse further food and give up on life.

¹⁰⁷ Masaracchia (1995) 110–11.

of its kings. Athens, unlike Sparta, which will be the focus of criticism in the next section of the speech, provides the best model for monarchical rule.

Reading this section (138–48) with the Theseus/Philip link in mind produces a much more powerful re-statement of Isocrates' political thought, in which the relationship between Athenian domestic politics and an external monarch is established, providing a blueprint for Athens' future under Macedonian domination. Norlin's view that the *Panathenaicus* is a tired, feeble work with nothing new to say becomes untenable.¹⁰⁸ The central passages of the *Panathenaicus* contain the most detailed exposition of Isocrates' thought on the government of Athens, as well as a further assertion of Athens' superiority to Sparta, this time presented as Lycurgus' imitation of the Athenian *patrios politeia* (153–4). The relationship between Athenian democracy and its founding monarchy can remain the same, whether the monarch is the imaginary Theseus or the absent Philip.

Lycurgus, Phanodemos and the Discourse of Kingship

Although Theseus was the central culture hero of Athenian myth, he was not immune to criticism, as his story was retold and repurposed by rival writers; this is evident from the many different sources and stories contained in Plutarch's *Life of Theseus*. Retelling the story of Theseus could involve all the measures described above for talking about the past: rationalisation of myth, expansion to achieve *akribeia*, changing signification to attach the story to new contemporary events.

Fortuitously, the Athenian store of mythical kings could cope with the devaluation of Theseus as an exemplar by anti-democratic writers. Theseus was always an outsider king and therefore somewhat problematic in the city that valued autochthony. Other kings were arguably more Athenian, and could be better exemplars than the autochthonous first kings from the time before Theseus and his synoecism. Exploring these earliest kings also promoted Atthidography's prime claim, the assertion that Athenian culture stretched far into an unbroken past.

Kekrops, Erechtheus/Erichthonios could be pressed into service, and especially Codrus. For example, when Xenophon depicts Socrates and the younger Pericles discussing how the young Athenian can become a better general (*Mem.* 3.5), Socrates urges him to encourage the Athenians to rediscover their ancient character virtues. The way to do this, Socrates suggests, is to recall their most ancient ancestors (*τούς γε παλαιάτους*, 3.5.9); Pericles needs little prompting to suggest the story of contest of the gods at the foun-

¹⁰⁸ Norlin and Van Hook (1928–45) II.369–71.

dation of Athens, which Cecrops and his advisers were allowed to decide through their virtue/excellence (οἱ περὶ Κέκροπα δι' ἀρετὴν ἔκριναν, 3.5.10). Socrates follows through with a miniature funeral speech, in which Theseus' leadership is mentioned, but virtue attributed to the collective Athenians under his leadership (ἐκείνοι δηλοὶ γεγόνασι τῶν καθ' ἑαυτοὺς ἀνθρώπων ἀριστεύσαντες, 3.5.10).¹⁰⁹

Codrus has received less attention than Theseus, but he was important in Athenian cult, had seen this cult develop during the Peloponnesian War (*IG* 1³ 84), and seems to have become the ideal monarch to represent individual courage and virtue, especially as his heroism saved the city from the Spartans during an earlier Spartan invasion of Attica.¹¹⁰ When the priestess Diotima provides exemplars for Socrates to imitate on his intellectual journey, Codrus is one of the elite examples she enlists (*Pl. Smp.* 208d₄–5). But this mention of Codrus, made as it is by an imaginary priestess, remains within the mythical usage of the kings, just as in the *Phaedo* Plato analogises Socrates' intellectual journey to the travels of Theseus.

However, in the changing context of Athens after defeat by Philip of Macedon at Chaironea, the Athenian politician Lycurgus presents Athenian kings as models of behaviour for citizens in a forensic speech.¹¹¹ His speech *Against Leocrates* presents both Erechtheus and Codrus as exemplars of courage and good citizenship for citizens to emulate in the sacrifices they made for the city; Erechtheus giving up his daughter, Codrus his own life. Codrus becomes the standard of Athenian courage that the unfortunate Leocrates has failed to emulate, in a forensic speech rather than a drama; the use of the story in this different genre emphasises the shift in usage of kings from the mythical to the historical.¹¹² Lycurgus contrasts Codrus' self-sacrifice in fulfilment of an oracle with Leocrates' decision to leave Athens, in a case which itself is a dubious extension of the *eisangelia* charge to the private life of a citizen.¹¹³ Codrus' decision to sacrifice his life is represented as a typical but

¹⁰⁹ Loraux (1993) 86–7, 371 n. 159; McNamara (2009) 235; Bandini and Dorion (2011) 297–300. Loraux notes the re-orientation of funeral speech motifs here, as an example of fourth-century political exploitation of Theseus myth, but does not consider the implications of highlighting Athens' other kings. The emphasis on Macedon in the description of the Persian War here (τῆς Εὐρώπης μέχρι Μακεδονίας, 3.5.11) perhaps indicates the contemporary reshaping of this story, anachronistically given by Xenophon to his Socrates.

¹¹⁰ Lawton (1995) 83–4; Kearns (1989) 56–7; Kearns (1990).

¹¹¹ Although which sections of the published speech were delivered in the *eisangelia* trial is unclear.

¹¹² *Lyc. Leoc.* 86–7. Athens' mythical kings are notable absences from the majority of forensic rhetoric; Lysias, representing an earlier political phase, never mentions them.

¹¹³ Azoulay (2011) 197–204.

note-worthy instance of the deliberately chosen behaviour of ancient Athenian kings in general (οὕτως ἦσαν ἄνδρες γενναῖοι οἱ τότε βασιλεύοντες, ὥστε προηροῦντο ἀποθνήσκειν, 86), a phrase echoed in the closing of the anecdote (88). Athenian kingship myth is here linked to the fourth-century interest in the political consequences of individual choice (*prohairesis*); the choices attributed to kings are more patriotic and praise-worthy than those of individuals who have failed to exemplify the desired values.¹¹⁴

Lycurgus, in using Codrus and Erechtheus as exempla, was perhaps drawing on the knowledge of his ‘minister of public worship and education’, as Jacoby labelled him, the Attidographer Phanodemos.¹¹⁵ While Lycurgus acknowledges the role of the assembled Athenians in both military encounters, framing both stories within the context of the deeds of the Athenians’ ancestors (οἱ πρόγονοι, 85; οὐ γὰρ ἀποστήσομαι τῶν παλαιῶν, 98), he holds up the choices made by the royal individuals, including Praxithea, wife of Erechtheus, for imitation. There is the implication that the ancient king exhibits a standard of virtue and courage that is not achievable by ordinary citizens; the citizens become bystanders, rescued from defeat by a pre-eminent individual. The present Athenians should acknowledge the heroism of their eponymous heroes by honouring those distinguished by virtue (τοὺς τῇ ἀρετῇ διαφέροντας, 89) with honours equal to those of the gods (ἰσοθέων τιμῶν, 88). The Cleisthenian appropriation of Athenian myth for democratic purposes is further re-invented for a new context in which the virtue of individual leaders (such as the kings of Macedon and their Athenian opponents) becomes the focus of debate.

Conclusion

The discourse of kingship in Athens spread across many literary genres as they developed in the growing literary culture of the city in the fourth-century, from narrative history to political rhetoric. While king-lists served as a way to connect with the distant past, narratives of the mythical deeds of the founder kings, retold using the generic features of historical narratives, could be used to provide exemplars of good citizenship and personal virtue. Euripides had used Theseus as a model citizen, representing the Athenian citizen on stage, but Isocrates adapted myths and historical accounts based on them to produce a model Theseus who served as an example for citizens

¹¹⁴ Allen (2006) 210–14 notes Lycurgus’ use of this theme but does not investigate the attribution of desirable *prohairesis* to Athenian kings, as exemplified by Isocrates’ Theseus.

¹¹⁵ Jacoby (1954a) 172; see also: Allen (2000); Azoulay (2009); Humphreys (2004) 77–129; and Steinbock (2011) on Lycurgus and his use of myth.

to imitate. The idea that the mythical, or re-imagined as historical, monarch should serve as an example for imitation would be further developed by Isocrates, Lycurgus and others. But such use of historical and mythical exemplary individuals as *paradeigmata* would be opposed by Plato, in the course of the exposition of his own political thought in the *Statesman*, *Timaeus/Critias* and the *Laws*.¹¹⁶

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