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LEARNING FROM THUCYDIDES: AN ANCIENT HISTORIAN WRITES CONTEMPORARY HISTORY*

Abstract: Ancient writers of history such as Thucydides and Polybius had to depend mostly on eye-witness testimony, collected in personal interviews. Thucydides was explicit about the problems inherent in this method: eyewitnesses were biased, unaware, forgetful. In 2013–16, I had a unique experience for a modern historian of antiquity: while writing a book about radical guerrillas of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I personally interviewed many actual participants in dramatic historical events. I found that Thucydides' warnings about the pitfalls of the interview method were more than affirmed by my own direct experience.

Keywords: Thucydides; Polybius; eyewitness testimony; Weatherman; Tom Hayden; 'Days of Rage'

All three of our greatest preserved Greek historians depended primarily on oral informants. Herodotus makes this clear right from the introductory chapters of Book 1 (1.1.–5).[1] Polybius indicates that he chose the main period of his work—covering events from 220 BC onwards—because this was the period when eyewitnesses were available (4.2.2). Polybius depended on written narratives, too—for instance, on Fabius Pictor and Philinus of Agrigentum for the First Punic War (1.14)—but was harshly critical of historians whose work depended solely on other written narratives (see Book 12, *passim*).[2] As for Thucydides, in a famous passage (1.22.2–4), he not only acknowledges his dependence on oral informants in constructing his narrative of the Peloponnesian War, but he also articulates the serious problems he encountered in depending mostly on eyewitnesses. In trying to construct an accurate account of events on the basis of oral testimony by informants, Thucydides says:

> … far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but the narrative rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. Not that it was easy even so to achieve accuracy about the past under those circumstances, because of the differing accounts of the

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[1] See, e.g., Asheri–Lloyd–Corcella (2007) 16.

[2] Walbank (1972) 79–80.

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> same occurrences given by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue bias for one side or the other.[3]

Thucydides implies or emphasises the problems of depending on oral information in several other passages, as well as the labour involved in checking on its accuracy.[4]

The problems of depending on eyewitnesses are obviously not relevant to modern historians of Mediterranean antiquity: all of our eyewitnesses have been dead for 2,000 years or more. In that sense, our sources of information can only be indirect. These are, first, written historical narratives. Often these narratives, though worked up in high literary style, are themselves mostly based on oral interviews. But sometimes they are composed hundreds of years after the events, and based merely on what previous historians have written. For instance, Livy is explicit (30.45.5; 33.10.10) that he is using the *Histories* of Polybius for his own account of Roman expansion into the Greek world in the second century BC, and where we have both the Livian and Polybian text, the parallels are clear.[5] Second, we have inscriptions preserved on stone. But these are often documents that present only a government point of view, and we never have a complete dossier on any subject, since the inscriptions are discovered haphazardly. The treaty between Rome and the Aetolian League in 212/211 BC is a prime example of a wonderful document discovered by accident (in modern northwest Greece in 1949). But at least most inscriptions are contemporary with the events they record.[6] Third, we have archaeology and art. These sources can sometimes be tremendously helpful not merely in sketching the daily lives of ancient people, but even in constructing ancient politics: good examples here are the political figures prominently displayed, in a certain order, on the magnificent *Ara Pacis Augustae* (dedicated 9 BC), or on the exquisite silver Boscoreale Cups.[7]

So what I'm about to recount is an extremely rare experience for a modern historian of antiquity. I have personally experienced both the excitement and the frustrations in depending on oral informants. That is, although I'm an ancient historian by training, who has spent most of his academic career

[3] Morrison (2004).

[4] See 1.1.3; 1.20.1 and 3; cf. 5.26.5 and 7.8.2, with the comments of Morrison (2004) 110.

[5] See, e.g., Tränkle (1977).

[6] On the circumstances of the discovery of this text, see *SEG* III.382.

[7] See, e.g., Kleiner and Buxton (2008); Kuttner (1995).

analysing Greek and Roman texts, I've also delved into contemporary American history—where oral informants are still alive.[8]

In late 2012, Wm Roger Louis at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. asked me to give a lecture on the conflict between the counterculture and the New Left on college campuses in the late 1960s. Roger is an eminent historian of the British Empire; he and I had worked together on the nature of empires across time; and he knew that I had been part of the counterculture while a student at Berkeley. I agreed to do the project; it sounded like fun to revisit my youth. We set April 2013 for the lecture, and I began (naturally) to read books and articles: that's my trade. I became interested in the Weather Underground, the most famous American radical group to emerge from the late 1960s. Then, in March 2013, a colleague at the University of Maryland at College Park, Jeffrey Herf, informed me that 30,000 pages of previously classified FBI files on the Weatherman group had just been made available to the public at the National Archives II, which is located on the University of Maryland campus. You can imagine the impression made upon a historian of antiquity—us who are so desperate for information—when the staff at the Archives, pulling along two heavy hand-carts, produced 350 thick dossiers of FBI documents related to the Weather Underground. To help in my research, the staff even provided me with a detailed table of contents to the dossiers.

I gave the lecture, but by then, thanks to the FBI documents, the project had evolved into a book. The documents contained some startling revelations. Here is just one. The FBI had about one hundred 'civilian informants' in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the major left-wing organisation on American campuses in 1965–69. The Bureau could not insert actual FBI agents into such student organisations in the late Sixties because J. Edgar Hoover, the famous FBI Director, insisted that all FBI agents have short hair and wear business-suits and wing-tipped shoes—dead giveaways. Consequently, for infiltrating SDS the Bureau had to depend on amateur volunteer informants. In spring 1969 SDS was split into two factions: the traditional Marxist-Leninist 'Progressive Labor' faction, and the more counter-cultural 'Revolutionary Youth Movement'. FBI headquarters in Washington ordered all its civilian informants to attend the national SDS convention in Chicago in June 1969, and there to support the 'Revolutionary Youth Movement' in its conflict with 'Progressive Labor'. At the convention, Revolutionary Youth transformed itself into Weatherman, and seized control of the organisation. As ordered, the FBI informants helped the process. The PL faction was defeated.

[8] Similar but not parallel is Stadter (1997); but his North Carolinians oral narrators are not recounting actual historical events, merely folk-tales.

An August 1969 FBI memo I discovered documented that Weatherman, the most dangerous of all the white revolutionary groups, was originally propelled into power in part by support from the FBI itself. The Bureau had misjudged the danger, thinking wrongly that PL was the greater threat because it was more disciplined. The FBI role in the rise of Weatherman was a previously unknown and striking fact; all previous histories of the Weatherman group (going back almost fifty years, to 1970) will need revision in its light. [9]

My direct experience with the surprises in a large archive makes me more confident than ever in the research in the archives engaged in by Polybius—and sympathetic with his sense of exhilaration at his findings. As is well known, the Achaean historian says he found a startling revelation when he took the step—unusual for an ancient history-writer—of actually examining state archives; in this case, it was the archives at Rome containing bronze copies of the treaties between Rome and Carthage. Polybius reports that in his time, in the 150s BC, both the Romans and the Carthaginians relied on the assertion of the historian Philinus of Agrigentum that at the start of the First Punic War a century earlier a treaty existed between Rome and Carthage that forbade Roman involvement in Sicily as it forbade Carthaginian involvement in Italy. Philinus claimed that the Romans had violated this treaty when they crossed to Sicily to protect the Mamertine rulers of Messana, thus precipitating war with Carthage (264 BC). It is clear, however, that though the existence of this treaty was non-controversial in Rome because (Polybius says) the Roman elite had read Philinus, the Romans did not think they had violated the treaty; on the contrary, in their view the Carthaginians had violated it first—when a Punic fleet appeared at Tarentum in Italy in 272. But Polybius is emphatic that his research in the archives had revealed a different truth: he found six other treaties on bronze tablets between Rome and Carthage—but no treaty of the kind that Philinus claimed. In fact, Polybius says (3.26), there was no such treaty at all. Both the Romans and the Carthaginians were wrong about this, but no one on either side had bothered in one hundred years to look in the archives to find out. The problem was that both governments used the existence of the treaty to prove their own propaganda that the other side had violated the treaty, and was therefore morally in the wrong.[10]

By the summer of 2014 it had become clear to me that I should also interview Weather veterans, to compare their testimony with what the huge trove of FBI documents showed. (Some of my interviewees were of course

[9] On the boastful FBI memorandum of August 1969, see Eckstein (2016) 60–3. The FBI compensated for its 1969 underestimation of the Weatherman threat by vastly overestimating that threat in summer 1970: they misjudged the actual number of Weatherman guerrillas and direct supporters by a factor of ten. See Eckstein (2016) 131–3.

[10] On the controversy in modern scholarship raised by Polybius' findings, see Hoyos (1985); Eckstein (2010).

shocked to learn that the FBI had helped them in 1969 to seize power in SDS.) Contacting Weather veterans turned out to be easy. For one thing, Professor Judith Hallett of the Classics Department at Maryland had gone to high school with Ron Fliegelman, who was a major figure in Weatherman. She had recently re-established contact with him at their fiftieth high-school reunion; she gave me his phone number in Brooklyn; and one thing led to another. Soon I was interviewing a whole network of Weatherman veterans. In doing these interviews I thus had the chance to experience directly the particular research with eyewitnesses that had been a primary task of Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius.[11]

The first thing to note is that I actually got to meet historical actors face to face (including the chief Weatherman dynamite-bomber). Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius could and did do this (see, for instance, Polybius' interview with King Massinissa of Numidia, a veteran of the Hannibalic War: 36.16). But we modern historians of antiquity obviously cannot. And meeting the actual historical actors was a startling experience. From what I had read about them in articles and books, I expected Weather Underground veterans to be rigid and self-righteous ideologues. A couple of them were indeed like that—and I was repulsed. But most of the ones I met were altogether different. Politically they were all still far on the left, of course; but the ones I met were helpful, humane and (above all) they were self-critical regarding their Weatherman pasts. One might even call them charismatic people.[12] My surprise at the actual Weatherman people I interviewed suggests how much we are actually in the dark when we write about individuals from antiquity. What were our three Greek historians really like, for instance—let alone Themistocles, Pericles, or Scipio Africanus? How much would our assessments of them change if we could actually meet them face-to-face?

[11] I could not meet with the FBI agents who tried to catch the Weathermen. They were of an older generation—World War II veterans. The specific men involved in the Weatherman hunt whom I would have wanted to interview—and they were all men; FBI agents were still all male in 1968–1972—had passed on by the time I began my research. The Weather people were a full generation younger than the FBI agents who went after them (a real generation gap), but even they are all in their 70s now.

[12] And after the Weather Underground collapsed through internal disputes in 1977, they have led fairly successful lives: one was a prominent defence lawyer; four were university professors (three historians and a mathematician); two were long-term high school teachers (one in mathematics, one in special education for autistic children); one was a fairly successful independent writer; one was a journalist. Their post-Weather bourgeois careers were possible because in late 1973 the government prosecutors had to drop all serious charges against them with the discovery of FBI law-breaking in the Weatherman hunt (and lying about it to a federal judge). None of the Weather Underground ever served prison time for what they did in Weather—including dynamite bombings.

We know that ancient history-writers' experience with interviewing historical actors face-to-face could bring much the same surprise. Here is a good example. Polybius tells the story of the Celtic princess Chiomara, wife of the king of the Gallic Tectosagi in Asia Minor. She was captured by Romans and raped by her captor. Later she was ransomed by her husband. As the exchange of gold for Chiomara was taking place in a creek, and her captor was kissing her good-bye, Chiomara signalled to her Gallic countrymen to cut off the Roman's head—which they did. So Chiomara escaped. But that was not the end of her revenge. She then took the Roman's head, wrapped in the folds of her dress, and brought it home, tossing it at the feet of her royal husband, saying that there could only be one man alive who had been intimate with her, and that was her husband.[13]

Polybius was a typical Greek misogynist. Throughout his *Histories* he uses the term 'woman-like' (*γυναικεῖος*) as a term of abuse (see 2.8; 30.18; 32.15). Chiomara was also a 'barbarian', and Polybius viewed barbarians negatively, as people incapable of self-control. Thus his depiction of Queen Teuta of the Illyrians (2.8): a lying, arrogant and violent barbarian woman.[14] One would have thought, then, that Polybius instinctively viewed Chiomara negatively: here was a barbarian woman (like Queen Teuta), who was both duplicitous and had inflicted violence on someone (as the Weathermen did). But if so, he must have been surprised when he gained a face-to-face interview with her in Asia Minor: he found Chiomara to be—as I in surprise found the Weather veterans to be—'dignified in demeanour and intelligent' (21.38).

Second, what I found in oral interviews with the Weatherman veterans confirmed all the problems in oral informants pointed out by Thucydides.

Here is an example of Thucydides' complaint that people simply forget. I had an FBI document that was a report from a civilian informant concerning a conversation with Weatherman leader Mark Rudd in late November 1969; there Rudd asserted the Weatherman line that even the largest peace demonstrations had failed to move government policy on Vietnam, and therefore Weatherman was going to 'bring the war home to the mother-country'. I asked Mark if he remembered this conversation. For one thing, it was an insight into Weatherman strategy in late November 1969, four months before they actually went underground to begin guerrilla war against the United States; for another, if he remembered the conversation, we would then know who this FBI informant *was*. Rudd responded that although this sounded very much like something he *could* have said at that time, he didn't remember the person he said this to—nor did he even remember the conversation. After

[13] Plut. *Mul. Virt.* 21–2 (based on Polybius); Liv. 38.24 (based on Polybius); Val. Max. 6.1 ext. 2; Pol. 21.38.

[14] For discussion, see Eckstein (1995) 154–6.

all, it was 45 years ago, and so many things were happening so fast then. Only the FBI memo preserved evidence that this conversation had taken place.[15]

Another example, this time of a 'Thucydidean' witness who simply misunderstood what was going on. I showed some of my material on the 'guerrilla war' strategy to a person who had been more than an ordinary 'soldier' in Weatherman, but did not belong to the innermost leadership, and he was never chosen to go underground. He told me that reading this material on the strategy suddenly reminded him, and made sense of, a violent argument he'd had with Weatherman leader Bill Ayers in late February 1970. He was arguing that Weatherman should not turn to lethal violence, real war, but should organise large (but street-fighting) demonstrations instead; and Ayers became furious at him. For 45 years, he had not been able to understand why Ayers should have cared so passionately about this particular difference of opinion. But after reading a draft of one of my chapters, things suddenly were clarified: the Weatherman inner circle had already secretly decided in late December 1969 on outright guerrilla war, and the secret plans among the leadership for undertaking and organising the war were far advanced by late February 1970. And now here he was, suddenly arguing for a different strategy! Now he could place the argument with Ayers in context.[16] A week after his argument with Ayers came the Townhouse Explosion—when three Weather leaders accidentally blew themselves up while assembling dynamite bombs for use that night at a non-commissioned officers' dance at a nearby U.S. Army base.[17]

And here is an example of the problem of bias to which Thucydides also points. In summer 1970, four Weathermen who had dropped out of the group published a critique of what they saw as the fundamental Weatherman strategy. The essay was entitled, 'It's Only People's Games You Have to Dodge'; like the original 'Weatherman Manifesto' a year earlier, which gave its name to the group, 'People's Games' drew its title from a Bob Dylan song. The authors asserted that Weatherman's strategy for revolution was to attack police who were oppressing the black community, which would in turn increase police brutality towards poverty-stricken black people, and so would in turn ignite uprisings like those of summer 1967 in Newark and Detroit and spring 1968 in Chicago and Washington, D.C. The authors of 'People's Games' complained that this plan actually sought to make black people suffer. They urged the Weatherman leadership to publicly acknowledge that their

[15] Mark Rudd email to Eckstein, 8 May 2014.

[16] Interview with Eckstein, 3 August 2015.

[17] See Eckstein (2016) ch. 1.

provocations against the police were coming from white people.[18] This critique of Weatherman had wide impact. For instance, David Barber—both a Weatherman veteran and a university historian—presents 'People's Games' as a powerful intellectual indictment of Weatherman's basic strategy.[19]

The authors of 'People's Games' used pseudonyms in 1970; but the main author showed up at an engagement party for me in Berkeley in March 2017: Joe Blum, now an award-winning photographer in San Francisco. Blum agreed for me to interview him.

It turns out that in mid-1970 Blum wasn't only concerned about what he saw as the amoral strategy of Weatherman towards the black community. Blum was furious with Weatherman for far more personal reasons. Blum had been a supporter of Weather, but then Blum's wife abandoned him—and their six-month old son David—in order to join a Weatherman collective. A bit later, Weatherman people had 'appropriated' the pistol Blum kept in his house, intending to use it in their guerrilla war. This infuriated Blum even more, because—since he was the registered owner of the gun—it could be traced back to him. He'd be arrested. So not only had Weatherman deprived Blum of his wife, but Weatherman was recklessly risking his baby son David's future well-being if he were to be deprived of *both* parents and put at the mercy of Social Services.

Blum got others to sign the manifesto, but his was the heat behind 'People's Games', and he wrote most of it. In fact, in my interview with him fifty years later Blum was *still* furious. So it was his personal anger at Weatherman recklessness that led him to be the force behind an influential essay that makes—in itself—important and legitimate arguments against Weatherman strategy. No one knew this until now.[20]

It's a little like discovering that the animus between Cicero and Clodius in 60–58 BC—supposedly based on high principle, namely Clodius' accusation that Cicero as consul had put Roman citizens to death without trial during the Catalinarian crisis—had really to do with Cicero wishing to mollify his wife Terentia, who hated Clodius because he had prosecuted her half-sister, the Vestal Virgin Fabia, for unchastity. Hence Cicero testified against Clodius in 60 at the Bona Dea trial, setting the personal feud in motion.[21] And, more uncomfortably, there is Thucydides and Cleon. Thucydides' portrait of this Athenian politician and general is, famously, a hostile one: Cleon was a demagogue, a rabble-rouser, an advocate of atrocity (in the Mytilene debate),

[18] Reed–Camilo–Jones (1970).

[19] Barber (2010) ch. 5.

[20] Author's interview with Joe Blum, 7 August 2017.

[21] See Epstein (1986).

not a good strategist or tactician, simply lucky in his victory over the Spartans at Pylos, and in 425 he blocked what would have been a victorious peace for Athens in the Peloponnesian War.[22] No doubt much of this criticism is deserved. But it is disturbing that Thucydides does not tell us that Cleon in 424 engineered a vote of the Assembly exiling Thucydides' from Athens; the cause was Thucydides' failure as a general to prevent the fall of the crucial town of Amphipolis to the Spartans. We only know this from the much later biography of Thucydides by Marcellinus, who emphasises Cleon's hatred of Thucydides and calumnies against him; by contrast, Marcellinus' depiction of Thucydides is as a truth-teller.[23] Still, it is not difficult to believe that Cleon's role in Thucydides' exile had at least some impact on Thucydides' portrait of Cleon, though if all we had was Thucydides' own narrative, we would never know about it.

Thucydides was also concerned, of course, with the problem of the historicity of the speeches which he periodically inserted into his narrative at points of crucial decision-making (1.22.1):

> With reference to the speeches in this history, what particular people have spoken when they were about to enter into the war or when they were in the war itself, these were hard for me to remember exactly, whether they were speeches which I have heard myself or have received at second hand …

In writing the history of Weatherman, I ran into this too.

On the evening of October 8, 1969, the Weatherman group, now in control of the national SDS organisation, set off 'the Days of Rage' riots in Chicago. Their strategy was to attack the police and the wealthy districts of Chicago directly, whereas previously it had been the police who attacked demonstrators. They hoped in this way to radicalise the populace, especially young people. The disturbances went on for four days of real street-fighting; hundreds of Weathermen were arrested, a dozen were shot by the police (some were seriously wounded, though no one were killed). It was an escalation in violence. Before the first attacks began, Tom Hayden gave a speech to the Weathermen assembled in Lincoln Park to take the offensive.

Hayden later would marry Jane Fonda, and pursue a successful traditional political career in California as a liberal Democrat (State Assembly, 1982–92; State Senate, 1992–2000). In California politics he was, in fact, a noted

[22] 'The most violent man in Athens': Thuc. 3.36; Mytilene: 3.37–41; Pylos: 4.22, 27–9; opposition to peace with Sparta: 5.16.

[23] Marcell. *Vit. Thuc.* 46 (hostile to Cleon); his depiction of Thucydides as a truth-teller: see *Vit. Thuc.* 20–1, 26–7, with Burns (2010), esp. 9–10.

compromiser who could reach across the aisle and work with Republicans in order to pass important legislation.[24] But Hayden in October 1969 was not that person. He was one of eight radicals on trial in Chicago for 'conspiracy' in setting off the famous anti-Vietnam War demonstrations the previous year at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Those demonstrations had begun in Lincoln Park. Now he arrived back at Lincoln Park again, at the Weatherman assembly, with two other co-defendants, Abbie Hoffman and John Froines. What did Hayden say to the Weathermen gathered for combat, and in what tone?

Writing in 1988, in the middle of what was then a traditional political career, Hayden was dismissive:

> Someone handed me a bullhorn. I took the bullhorn and hesitated. I said something ambiguous and largely inaudible like 'The conspiracy defendants send their greetings; we welcome any efforts to intensify the struggle,' and handed the microphone back … I drifted into the shadows with John [Froines]; I don't remember where Abbie [Hoffman] went … I went back to the car and drove off.[25]

Hesitant, ambiguous and largely inaudible … In 2009, at the end of his career and now forty years after the event, Hayden's statement concerning what he had said to the Weathermen in Lincoln Park that night was similar. It was, he says, a bland and distracted speech. He didn't understand what was going on or what was about to happen:

> I was experiencing a breakdown of reality in the presence of the unexpected, and therefore felt there was nothing to say. I was familiar with young people fighting back after the police had assaulted and gassed them. But this was the reverse, a feverish preparation before an attack … I could not fathom why all these people were going to run amok straight into the guns and cameras … I said that we [the Chicago Eight defendants] were not opposed to an escalation of militancy … but I did not know what I was talking about … No one was paying any attention to the words … Then the crowd started running. I was left looking for the car I came in, to take me back downtown. Feeling bypassed, either by history or insanity, I went back to my trial chore of preparing the cross-examination of witnesses.[26]

[24] Former California Speaker of the State Assembly Willie Brown, in a memorial ceremony for Hayden, witnessed by the author, 7 February 2017.

[25] Hayden (1988) 361. Abbie Hoffman and John Froines were fellow defendants with Hayden in the 'Conspiracy' trial, and they had come with him to Lincoln Park.

[26] Hayden (2009) 113.

But the recollection of Hayden's speech by Weatherman leader Bill Ayers, first published in 2001, is starkly different:

> When the chanting slowed, Tom Hayden, on trial in federal court with seven others on conspiracy charges for leading the demonstrations at the Democratic Convention, emerged from the crowd. 'I bring greetings from the Chicago Eight,' he said. 'We love you! We are with you!' Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi Minh, we sang in answer, and Hayden added: 'Anything that intensifies our resistance to this war is in the service of humanity. The Weathermen are setting terms for all of us now. Tear the monster down!' Tom was caught up in the spirit of the moment, and unlike his careful demeanor in court, became the old inciter. Our chants escalated again. I felt giddy and newly emboldened.[27]

And Ayers was even more emphatic in private about the tone of Hayden's speech. Jonah Raskin tells me of a conversation he had with Ayers, in which Tom Hayden at Lincoln Park seemed not merely intense and inspiring. He was specific about what he wanted to happen, and what he wanted to happen *did* happen; it was the riot of the Weatherman street-fighters:

> I talked to Ayers about this. He told me that Hayden had encouraged people to riot and cause material damage. Bernardine [i.e., Bernardine Dohrn, a Weatherman leader very active herself during the Days of Rage, and wife of Ayers] was present in their kitchen in Chicago when Bill said the above to me. She promptly criticized him for talking about Tom without checking with Tom.[28]

Who is more accurate in his memory and depiction of Tom Hayden's speech to the assembled Weathermen before they attacked the police and tried to ransack Chicago's Gold Coast? Was the speech bland and ambiguous, or was it fiery and inciting? Hayden has honestly acknowledged that Bill Ayers' memory differs from his own.[29] Here it is disturbing that Ayers has an entire chapter in his own memoir devoted to the failures and gaps in his memory.[30]

[27] Ayers (2001) 169.

[28] Jonah Raskin email to author, 7 April 2018. This is the first time this information has been published.

[29] Hayden (2009) 113.

[30] Ayers (2001) 276–93: a chapter entitled 'Memory'. Some reviewers, including Weather veteran Cathy Wilkerson (who escaped the Townhouse Explosion), were cynical about this

And historians are in fact divided on this issue. John Schultz, a prominent writer on Sixties and Seventies radicalism in Chicago, stresses that Hayden came to Lincoln Park to express the solidarity of the Chicago Eight in supporting the upcoming Weatherman action; but Jeremy Varon, whose book on Weatherman has become a standard reference, stresses instead Hayden's statements attesting to his inner doubts about what was happening.[31]

Thucydides in fact provides us a method to get close to the true event, just as he underlined the original problems with eyewitnesses. The method: to get hold of as many witnesses as one can (1.22.2–4).

Some eyewitnesses at Lincoln Park present a classic Thucydidean conundrum: they weren't paying attention. One doesn't remember any speech by the leaders as being different from any other encouraging speech before the Weathermen all set off to attack the police; yet she also says that she was too depressed by the small number of battle-ready radicals who had actually shown up to pay much attention.[32] By contrast, another Weatherman says he was too excited—about the prospect of attacking the police and trashing a wealthy neighbourhood of Chicago—to pay attention to any the speeches.[33] A third wrote to me: 'I didn't hear any speeches, or if I did, I don't remember them. But I really don't think I heard any. In fact, if anybody had asked me, I would have confidently said there *weren't* any'.[34] A fourth remembers nothing of the preliminary speeches, or even if any were given—just her terror about what they were about to do, and her determination to do it.[35]

But there is another group of Weatherman eyewitnesses. It is noticeable that in Jonah Raskin's account of the conversation in Bill Ayers' kitchen, Bernardine Dohrn, who was herself a direct eyewitness to Hayden's speech that night, does not at all question or protest Ayers' version of what Hayden said. She merely tells Ayers that he should have checked with Hayden before telling Raskin.[36] Weatherman leader Mark Rudd agrees with Ayers too. Hayden's speech was fiery: 'It's a lie that the Chicago Eight oppose this

chapter, noting that it allowed Ayers in *Fugitive Days* to omit actions and speeches in 1969–70 which he preferred to leave undiscussed: see Eckstein (2016) 19–20.

[31] Schultz (1993) 207; Varon (2004) 80. In Burrough (2015), Hayden's speech has completely dropped out, though other speakers are named (78). By contrast, in Berger (2006)—a book very sympathetic to the Weatherman group—Hayden's speech is the *only* one specifically mentioned (109).

[32] Stern (1975) 133.

[33] Ono (1971) 256.

[34] Jonathan Lerner to author, email, 16 April 2018.

[35] Kit Bakke to author, email, 17 April 2018. She says that if *pushed*, she would finally say she has a vague memory of someone speaking, but not who.

[36] Raskin to author, email, 7 April 2018.

Weatherman demonstration. It's good to see people coming back to Chicago, back to Lincoln Park. We welcome any intensification of the struggle.' Hayden's speech of support, Rudd says, had a cheering impact on the assembled street-fighters.[37] Weatherman leader Jeff Jones, who spoke to the crowd in Lincoln Park immediately after Hayden, offers similar recollections. Hayden, Jones says, was already helping turn the Chicago Eight trial into a powerfully subversive theatre of radical protest; now he took the bullhorn and told the crowd:

> 'I want you to know that those reports in the establishment press about the eight of us not supporting your action this week are pure bullshit … We are glad to see people back in Lincoln Park.' Hayden, Jones says, was standing next to Abbie Hoffman, another Chicago Eight defendant—and the person, Jones says, who actually invented the term 'Days of Rage'.[38]

Another eyewitness says that Hayden was there both with Abbie Hoffman and a third Chicago Eight defendant, John Froines; he says that Hayden denied that the Eight, however much they had their internal differences, were at all disunited in their support of the Days of Rage: 'We are all united in the need to intensify the struggle to end the war. We are glad to see people back in Lincoln Park. We are glad to see the militancy of Chicago increased.'[39]

It is noticeable that Hayden himself, in his earliest account of the scene in Lincoln Park (1970), indicates that both Hoffman and Froines, when asked by the Weatherman leaders to speak, were too fearful of another indictment to address the Weatherman crowd—unlike himself. That is, in 1970 Hayden was proud of his courage. He also says that in his speech to the Weathermen, he 'praised the new militancy'. This accords with Ayers, Rudd, Jones, and others. But he adds, 'it was the first army I had ever addressed, and speaking seemed out of place'. Further, he was nervous about being photographed by the cops or by journalists, fearing it would indeed lead to a second indictment when he was already on trial for his actions the previous year; so he left immediately after speaking. But in 1970 Hayden viewed the Days of Rage as fundamentally a 'defensive' response of leftist youth to the unfair indictment of the Chicago Eight. That is, in 1970 he defended the Weatherman decision to take action

[37] Rudd (2009) 172.

[38] Abbie Hoffman's claim in Hoffman (1980) 246; Jeff Jones' agreement: in Jones (2004) 177–8. Jones notes, though, that Hayden didn't accompany the rioters when they charged down into Chicago (178).

[39] Tom Thomas, in Jacobs (1971) 201.

that night.[40] Hayden did go on to say that Weatherman went too far, because their violence in the street was random: what did trashing a Volkswagen have to do with defending the Vietnamese? Instead, he held up as an ideal street action the burning of the Bank of America building near the University of California at Santa Barbara campus a few months later (February 1970, after guilty verdicts in the Chicago Eight trial had been delivered), because it was focused on a capitalist target.[41]

This judgment of Hayden's in 1970 about the Bank of America burning is, I think, an indication of the real radicalism of Hayden's thinking in this period. In August 1968 he'd been shoved through a plate-glass window by Chicago police during the anti-war demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention—and then he'd been indicted for 'conspiracy' for those demonstrations; on that evening in Lincoln Park in October 1969 he was on trial for his role in them. In between had come the People's Park disturbances in Berkeley (May, 1969), in which he had had a role, and in which police had shot and killed one man (who wasn't even part of the street-fighting), and wounded many more. This had embittered him. One must also say how unlikely it is that Hayden went to Lincoln Park to calm down the Weathermen. John Schultz gets it right: Hayden went to the Weathermen in the park to stress the unity of the Chicago Eight with their street-fighting action.[42]

It may be that Hayden, by 1988, when he was pursuing a conventional political career in California as a left-wing Democrat, also preferred not to focus on the most radical actions he engaged in during 1969–70; and this was even more so by 2009. 'The Tom I knew is mostly hidden today: a passionate and dedicated human being who was also a political extremist', says one close friend.[43]

For instance, neither in his memoir *Reunion* nor in *The Long Sixties* does Hayden mention his leading role in the creation of the Berkeley Liberation Program of May 1969 (written during the People's Park disturbances), which among other things advocated that radicals acquire guns for self-defence. Nor does Hayden mention in his memoirs his leading role in the creation of the International Liberation School in Berkeley that summer of 1969, a school whose purpose was to educate students into revolutionaries. Firearms were

[40] Tom Hayden, in Jacobs (1971) 296.

[41] Hayden, in Jacobs (1971) 298–300. In 1970 Hoffman made the same criticism of Weatherman—violence that was pointless: Hoffman (1980) 249. Hoffman says that he had gone into the crowd, but that Froines was standing right next to Hayden when Hayden spoke.

[42] Schultz (1993) 91. Perlstein (2008) 416 is similar. Perlstein's book in fact begins with a scene from the conspiracy trial (xi).

[43] Albert (2017).

stored in the school building; the staff engaged in rifle and pistol practice; and in December 1969—that is, during the Conspiracy Trial and two months after the Days of Rage—the School issued a 50-page pamphlet on firearms use for radicals.[44] This was the month when Weatherman was itself preparing to go underground and wage guerrilla war.[45] Because of actions such as this (including his visiting Hanoi during the Vietnam War), when Hayden died in 2016, obituaries on the right were hostile and called him a traitor to the United States.[46] On the other hand, some on the far left depicted him as a sell-out because of his later long and productive career as a traditional California State elected office-holder, where he was known as a compromiser.[47]

And none of these problems surrounding Hayden's various memoirs would have been surprising to the Hellenistic historian Polybius. He faced similar problems with memoirs himself. By Polybius' time politicians were writing them, and Polybius in Book 2 of his *Histories* employed the memoirs of Aratus of Sicyon, the statesman who during his long career made the Achaean League a power in southern Greece, as a framework for his narrative. But Polybius, an Achaean himself, who thought of Aratus as a great man, did not use Aratus' memoirs naively. He pointed out to his readers that Aratus sometimes left out significant but embarrassing information. In particular, Aratus concealed his secret negotiations in the mid-220s BC with the ruler of Macedon, Antigonus III Doson, to gain Macedonian military aid for the League against Sparta—a policy which he actually overtly opposed in public meetings of the Achaean assembly. Polybius knew about these secret negotiations from local informants in his own hometown of Megalopolis, men who were employed by Aratus as envoys to Antigonus because of the especially good relationship the city had with Macedon. This does not take away Polybius' judgment that Aratus was a great man.[48]

[44] Berkeley Liberation Program (May, 1969) Point 10: 'The people of Berkeley must arm themselves and learn the basic skills and tactics of self-defense and street fighting.' Note also Point 7: 'We will protect and expand our drug culture.' The Program ends with emphatic statements in italics, one of which is: '*Fight for a revolutionary Berkeley / With your friends, your dope, your guns.*' The International Liberation School pamphlet on firearms use: *Firearms & Self-Defense: A Handbook for Radicals, Revolutionaries and Easy Riders* (December, 1969). ILS staff at the firing range: Albert (2017).

[45] See Eckstein (2016) 77–80.

[46] See, e.g., Sol Stern's hostile obituary in the conservative *City Journal*, entitled 'American Turncoat' (4 November 2016).

[47] Hostile attitudes of some on the far left: see Jane Fonda's unhappy comments about this in the Hayden retrospective in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 February 2017.

[48] See, e.g., Eckstein (2013); Hau (2017).

Eve Rosahn, in a recent essay about people's memories of the Columbia University student strike of spring 1968, remarks that people sometimes don't remember correctly or speak correctly about the past, not because they're lying but because they have to survive emotionally.[49] Perhaps this, too, explains the nature of Hayden's self-portrait at Lincoln Park. It was not only that looking back from a successful and substantial political career, he did not want to be reminded of what he had encouraged in the dark days of 1969 and 1970. Perhaps Hayden's fear of being photographed by the police and journalists, clear to him in 1970, had become in his memory in 1988 and 2009 a more general reluctance and hesitation. Although he acknowledges in his 2009 memoir that his memory of the tone of the speech is different from what Ayers remembers, Hayden also says that Ayers, in his thick street-fighting clothes, boots, and helmet, was over-excited, literally hopping up and down in his eagerness to get going; perhaps that's why Ayers remembered Hayden's speech as inciting and inspirational. That is, the emotional state of the eyewitnesses conditioned what they thought they heard.[50]

And Thucydides (not surprisingly) was well aware of this problem, too—that is, the impact of powerful *emotions* on the memories of eyewitnesses.[51] Thus in discussing the plague that devastated Athens in 431/430, he remarks that 'people shaped their memories in accordance with what they had suffered' (2.54.3). And a little later, in discussing the speech of Peloponnesian leaders, he stresses again the impact of powerful emotion on memory—and in this case it is fear (*phobos*: 2.87.4). Yet memory was what Thucydides mostly had to depend on in compiling his history.[52]

If it were only Ayers' memory against Hayden's, we would be in a quandary. But the situation is different: it is Hayden's memory and self-depiction against the memory of many other individuals. No one else remembers his speech being 'ambiguous'.

Strikingly, and giving us some hope of some accuracy, there *is* overall agreement on three of the actual phrases that Hayden used. He praised the 'increased militancy' of the Weathermen, and praised 'the intensification of the struggle'; and he dismissed stories in the newspapers that the Chicago Eight defendants opposed the Days of Rage—on the contrary, he asserted that

[49] Rosahn (2018) 277–8.

[50] Hayden (2009) 113.

[51] This is different from the bias underlined in Thuc. 1.22.3.

[52] See Morrison (2004) 101 and n. 18. Edmonds (1993) 850 argues that 'when Thucydides speaks of memory, he is usually disparaging'. Note that in the case of four eyewitnesses to the scene at Lincoln Park, powerful emotions felt at the time had wiped out the memory that there even were speeches made (above, p. 108).

the Chicago Eight defendants supported Weatherman's action that night: 'We're glad to see people back in Lincoln Park.'[53]

So was Hayden ambiguous, or was he fiery? Was he lost, or did he help incite the Weathermen to set off to attack the police and ransack a wealthy Chicago neighbourhood? Since Hayden was an important figure in the history of the Sixties Left for a full decade (1962–72), and his later turn to traditional politics (1972–2000) was equally stunning, this is a question of substance. Employing the method recommended by Thucydides, I think we have come to a conclusion: it is probable (but not quite certain) that Hayden's rhetoric was fiery on the night the Days of Rage was launched.

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In sum, my direct experience as a historian engaged in oral history about the late Sixties in the United States confirms all of Thucydides' warnings in Book 1 about the undependability and bias of eyewitnesses. One last thought: if it took so much effort to work out the probability (not certainty) of what Tom Hayden said that night in 1969 and how he said it—and we are dealing here with a single and relatively simple event—and this, despite being aided not only by personal interviews but even more by the convenience of email, I am humbled by how much more difficult it must have been for our ancient writers of history to gather reliable information. Thucydides emphasised the toil involved in questioning oral informants and checking on their accuracy as far as one could.[54] My own experience bears this out. How much more difficult was the research-effort of the ancient history-writers! My admiration for the achievements of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius has only deepened after having an experience similar to theirs.

ARTHUR M. ECKSTEIN
University of Maryland College Park ameckst1@umd.edu

[53] Hayden himself remembers saying these things (see above, p. 106). Might this work also in Thucydides? People may have remembered particularly striking phrases (e.g., from the Funeral Oration) rather than detailed arguments. The outlier regarding Lincoln Park is the memory of one Weatherman who believed that Hayden thought he was actually at a *peace* demonstration: Roger Lippman via Kit Bakke to Eckstein, 18 July 2018. This is belied by Hayden himself.

[54] Morrison (2004) 98 and 110.

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