

## INTRODUCTION: WAR AND ITS NARRATIVES\*

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Warfare can be seen as a uniquely powerful driver of historical memory, and in particular of historiography. A visit to any popular bookstore today demonstrates that much contemporary interest in the past focuses on these violent turning-points in human events. Many of the most influential historical works of modern times, whether studies of leadership and political history (like Winston Churchill's *The World Crisis*) or of psychology (such as Joshua Phillips' *None of Us Were Like This Before*) or more popular writing (for example, David McCullough's *1776*) treat warfare as a particularly meaningful lens through which to study the past. Military history is very much not limited to the academic sphere; American Civil War re-enactments, for example, are a powerful demonstration of the purchase of historical events on the imagination. Both academics and the lay public, meanwhile, continue to argue over more fundamentally historiographic issues having to do with conflict, such as the supposedly universal validity of theories of power politics sometimes attributed to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

The favoured status of conflict as the subject of historical memory has held true since the birth of the genre of historiography, with the first Western historians writing about the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars. All three major pioneers of the genre, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, chose war as their focus, helping to cement the link between conflict and historiography, even as genres such as tragedy or lyric poetry, which had once produced plays such as Aeschylus' *Persians* and lyric such as Simonides' 'Plataea Elegy', largely ceded the ground. Herodotus and Thucydides each argue explicitly that the wars that are their subjects are worthy of being enshrined in their works: Herodotus notes the extraordinary deeds performed by the combatants on both sides of the Persian Wars (*praef.*), while Thucydides argues for his own war's exceptional length and scale (1.1.1, 1.23.1). Xenophon implicitly endorses this assertion when taking up his predecessor's unfinished work in the *Hellenica*. The claims and goals of these works can be seen as in some ways polemical. Early on, the public might not have accepted the implication that this particular genre had a uniquely

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meaningful role in safeguarding memories of the past. The tension over whose artistic output—whether physical, poetic, or historiographic—best serves to preserve memory is implicit, for example, in Pindar’s favourable comparison of his work to fragile statuary (Pind. *Nem.* 5.1–3). Similar assertions are evident among early historians,<sup>1</sup> while Thucydides seems to dismiss other genres’ ability to preserve historical memory in his assertion of a degree of accuracy that eludes poets (1.21.1) and in describing his work as lacking *τὸ μῦθῶδες* (1.22.4).

Historiography was compelled to engage in this struggle over control of the past partly because it was a relative newcomer, while other types of literature had long been claiming the role of the protector of memory. The close association between war and remembrance begins long before Herodotus undertook his inquiries into the Persian Wars. Already in Homer, Helen claims that the gods engineered the Trojan War to create memory through song, an idea that is common both in Homer (*Il.* 6.357–8; cf. *Od.* 8.579–80) and elsewhere (e.g. Eur. *Hel.* 41). The Sirens of the *Odyssey* also seem to be historians, proposing the Trojan War as the topic of their song (*Od.* 12.189–90). The gods are even understood as deliberately using war as a tool to create memory. Isocrates postulates that, while they were forced to allow their sons to die in the Trojan War, they thereby created an immortal memory of their offspring’s excellence (4.84): in controlling the course of human affairs, the gods also ‘write history’, albeit in a different way than human beings do. Efforts to preserve and control memory become increasingly intentional and self-conscious with the Persian War generation, however, when historiography continues to crystallise around war, with its most conspicuous pioneer Herodotus.

War was partly worthy of memorialisation for the Greeks, as for subsequent people, because of its centrality in shaping a sense of identity. They believed that the Trojan War—arguably the most famous conflict of all time—initiated the mythological Iron Age, defined by humanity’s separation from the gods and the attendant hardships of mortal life, such as the need to work to survive and the threat of disease. More historically, war brought peoples separated by vast distances into contact, prompting the Greeks to define both themselves and others more actively. One result of the Persian Wars of the early fifth century BCE was its enhancement of a sense of common identity consisting of shared language and culture among the many independent Greek states scattered across the Mediterranean. The Peloponnesian War and the troubled years that followed, however, forced a reconsideration of this commonality, as a fleeting sense of unity devolved into unprecedented levels of inter-Greek violence. On an individual level as well, war was ripe for self-definition, as the primary arena in which a man could demonstrate his excellence and value as a citizen. War was central to

<sup>1</sup> Moles (1999). See also Immerwahr (1960).

both the past and the present: in constructing an imagined ideal of a soldier citizen, the Greeks looked to their own past—at least as it was represented in the Homeric texts that many took to be accurate representations of historical events—projecting an epic version of the military onto the very different realities of fighting for a fifth-century democratic *polis*.<sup>2</sup>

Texts that nominally treat war can be the locus of conversations about ideological questions concerning identity and values in part because the very complexity of the task of writing history renders it inherently subjective, even if the writer is an ‘unbiased’, conscientious professional. Those who have experienced war first-hand often emphasise the chaotic and confusing aspects of the experience. The Duke of Wellington famously advised that a history of Waterloo not be attempted, because ‘the history of a battle is not unlike the history of a ball! Some individuals may recollect all the little events of which the great result is the battle lost or won; but no individual can recollect the order in which, or the exact moment at which, they occurred, which makes all the difference as to their value or importance’.<sup>3</sup> A few years later, Carl von Clausewitz coined the phrase ‘the fog of war’ to describe the effect of battle on the human mind, which stress often renders nearly incapable of accurate perception or comprehension. One officer in World War I offered more empirical evidence for these impressions by testing his troops’ memories after they returned from an encounter. He found that they vastly miscalculated how many shots had been fired (21 reported, 7 in reality), misremembered whether an officer’s revolver had been recharged (they reported it had been, but in reality it had not), and could not agree whether the night had a ‘bright moon’ or was ‘very dark’.<sup>4</sup> Later, others discovered that even whether or not a battle was going on could be unclear.<sup>5</sup>

It would have been particularly difficult to ascertain ‘what really happened’ on the Ancient Greek battlefield. The modern commanders cited above tended to be professionals leading relatively well-trained troops, as opposed to the essentially amateur background of the Greek soldiery. Nor did Greek generals, in the thick of the fighting, have a significantly clearer perspective on events than the average soldier did, again in contrast with typical combat in the modern era. One Peloponnesian general notably failed to realise that the majority of his troops had been defeated, with only his own

<sup>2</sup> Lendon (2005) 45: ‘Those who fought in the seemingly unheroic phalanx conceived of what they were doing in Homeric terms.’ Human behaviour in and understanding of modern wars is also influenced by ideas taken from literature (Fussell (1975), esp. 155–90). On the complex relationship between literature and historiography regarding battle scenes, see, e.g., Flower (1998).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Macaulay (1849) 412 from the Wellington Papers August 8 and 17, 1815.

<sup>4</sup> Whatley (1964) 121. Similar experiences were recorded by Jerome (1923), Bartlett (1932), Buckhout (1974) (cf. Woodman (1988) 17–18), and Keegan (1976) 141.

<sup>5</sup> Keegan (1976) 76.

wing achieving success.<sup>6</sup> The plight of men encased in the considerable armour of a Greek hoplite is vividly expressed by Theseus in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* (846–56):

one thing that I will not ask you, lest I bring laughter upon myself, is whom each of the men opposed in the battle... For these are meaningless stories for both the listeners and the one speaking, that anyone who has gone into battle, with spears sailing thick in front of his eyes, could report clearly who was honourable ... For only with difficulty is one able to see even what is obligatory when standing opposite enemies.

Most Greek adult men would have been familiar with such sensations; Lysias too describes without censure a type of fear in battle that caused men to 'believe they saw things they did not see, and heard things they did not hear' (2.39). When historians such as Thucydides offer orderly reconstructions of the events of a battle, then, the historiographic product may be impressive, but the account must be understood within the context of the confusion that reigned over such clashes.

In addition to the challenge of obtaining an organised understanding of tumultuous occurrences, historians must engage in extreme selectivity in deciding which parts of the data they have collected should be used to construct their narratives, and how and at what length each event should be presented. As the narratologist Manfred Jahn points out: 'contrary to the standard courtroom injunction to tell "the *whole* truth", no one can in fact tell all. Practical reasons require speakers and writers to restrict information to the "right amount"—not too little, not too much, and if possible only what's relevant'.<sup>7</sup> The act of converting real-world events into a verbal, narrative description is thus inherently reductive. This is true of any effort to distil a coherent narrative thread out of the complexity of real, historical life, but is especially so for complicated events with many moving parts, like warfare. Because this work of capturing or constructing a 'plot' from reality necessarily involves some degree of subjectivity,<sup>8</sup> even historians sincerely committed to accuracy and objectivity can engage in bias.<sup>9</sup> This is the case because the obligatory process of selection inherently implies interpretation, as the significance of any event is suggested by the length and form it takes in the narrative text. Omission indicates irrelevance; many readers have been puzzled, for example, about Thucydides' apparent downplaying of the Megarian Decree, as his reticence suggests that he did not consider it a

<sup>6</sup> Paul (1987) 308.

<sup>7</sup> Jahn (2007) 94.

<sup>8</sup> Benson and Strout (1961).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Chakrabarty (2000), esp. 27–46.

significant cause of the Peloponnesian War, though many of his contemporaries did. The simple fact of inclusion, by contrast, can be taken to mean that an event is considered important—whether literally or symbolically—by the author.<sup>10</sup> Even among events privileged with inclusion, however, the very structure of the text imbues different elements of the story with varying degrees of significance, as the amount of text dedicated to any particular detail suggests *how* important the author views it as. Prominent placement and other literary techniques are likewise employed in works of historiography in ways that imply historical analysis even when none is made explicit.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to implying the significance (or insignificance) of historical events, the process of selection also often indicates causation, as accounts of past events are structured in storylines whose sequential nature implies cause and effect. But such relationships are not always simple or uncontroversial, and historiographic texts often conflate intent and result.<sup>12</sup> Both Herodotus and Thucydides suggest their awareness of the general difficulty in retrospectively identifying causation when they proudly claim to have discovered the origins of their wars: Herodotus takes as his first explicit subject the reasons why the barbarians and the Greeks fought each other (*praef.*), while Thucydides, always attempting to best his predecessor, claims to have identified both the superficial and underlying causes of the Peloponnesian War, and writes ‘so that nobody will ever wonder how such a war among the Greeks came about’ (1.23.5–6). The causes of more minor events can also be elusive, and may appear much clearer in a text than they were in real life. Even modern generals have difficulty distinguishing what was foreseen, intended, or accidental in retrospect,<sup>13</sup> and early historians may have responded to this interpretative challenge with the very human impulse to extrapolate plans from results.<sup>14</sup> Chains of intention, cause, and effect may thus appear more straightforward than they were in reality, or the narrative may even impose them where they did not exist. Outcomes of a war, or any given action, that were in no way obvious at the time can seem predetermined or inevitable through the author’s strategic hindsight or literary

<sup>10</sup> Megill (1989) 637–41.

<sup>11</sup> For only one example, on the interpretative function that literary allusion can serve in Thucydides, see Rood (1998).

<sup>12</sup> Whatley (1964) 121: ‘There is the greatest difficulty in distinguishing what was foreseen from what was unforeseen, able generalship from a stroke of good luck. It is particularly difficult to discover what was in the mind of a general. The general himself may not find it easy. No battle follows one simple plan. There are not only constant improvisations to meet new situations, but constant flukes and, above all, constant mistakes. But it is only human to forget the mistakes if they do not lead to disaster and the flukes if they lead to success. Similarly, outside opinion inevitably tends to regard what happened as having been carefully thought out and intended, which is by no means always the case.’

<sup>13</sup> Whatley (1964) 121.

<sup>14</sup> Hunter (1973) 18.

foreshadowing. Edith Foster, in this volume, similarly studies the way that narrative itself can suggest futility. Because of the subjectivity inherent in historiography, lines of causation can tell us a great deal about the author or his or her culture. For example, one author may view, and thus represent, a moral or religious transgression as the ominous precursor to a disastrous military defeat inflicted by the gods; another might tell the same story with an emphasis on the greed that inspired strategic overreach and doomed an army, with no reference to the divine; and a third might focus exclusively on tactical mistakes that caused the same loss. None of these narratives would be ‘wrong’ or even remarkable for their approach to the defeat, but they would differ greatly from one another, illustrating how the objectivity of historiography can lend itself to the same kind of interpretation typical of other, more overtly ‘literary’ genres as well.

War’s tendency to drive the construction of narrative is equally fraught after the conflict is over. As has been famously stated, ‘mere description’ is impossible,<sup>15</sup> and ‘narrative is not innocent’,<sup>16</sup> and the memory of any war can be harnessed to various non-innocent agendas in its aftermath. This is especially the case when states, groups, or individuals have a vested interest in how their actions are remembered, or in the inevitable changes in identity wrought by war. Sometimes such concerns are baldly self-interested, for example the situation of warlords seeking validation or absolution for wartime atrocities, such as are discussed by Frances Pownall and Stoyan Panov in this volume. The establishment of peace is another moment of great social upheaval to be negotiated in the public eye through the use of narrative, as is explored by Stylianos Chronopoulos. Later, the collective society must determine how the war is remembered, both because of dislocation caused by the violence and as a means to negotiate the group’s role as villain, victim, or hero. This is especially so because in real life, these roles are often not neatly distinguishable. The Plataeans discussed by Mark Marsh-Hunn, for example, came from a city with a fabled past and heroically resisted the Peloponnesians, but they also brutally slaughtered Theban captives in the Peloponnesian War. When large numbers of Plataean refugees moved to Athens, they, and their Athenian hosts, seem to have worked actively to weave a narrative out of the historical facts that would support an understanding of them as purely heroic. The Athenians, meanwhile, were motivated to create a historical memory of themselves as the big-hearted saviours of Plataea, though they in fact declined to come to the city’s aid at its most desperate moment.

<sup>15</sup> Megill (1989).

<sup>16</sup> Dewald (2009) 114. White (1987) argued for the significance of the structure of historiographic texts and their literary facets. Indeed, the idea that there can be any objectivity whatsoever in the study of history has come to require defenders over the past few decades: e.g., Haskell (1990), Evans (1997).

Modern studies of war usually fall into the third category of analysis mentioned above, focusing primarily on tactics, organisation, and military manoeuvres. Indeed, today's readers sometimes assess the quality of ancient historical work by how similar it seems to such strategically-oriented studies. Thucydides, for example, has often been judged favourably for seeming compatible with modern tastes in military history-writing, and the assumptions that come with this mode of reading have often shaped, and possibly distorted, understandings of his text.<sup>17</sup> This modern approach to comprehending and envisioning war is profoundly influenced by the type of strategic planning that typically defines modern warfare, in which a far-off commander 'visualizes the events of and parties to the battle, again because for efficiency's sake he must, in fairly abstract terms: of "attack" and "counter-attack", of the "Heavy Brigade", of the "Guard Corps"—large, intellectually manageable blocks of human beings going here or there and doing, or failing to do, as he directs'.<sup>18</sup> While often providing a clearer sense of the big picture, however, this is not an objectively superior perspective. The abstract conception of soldiers, for example, tends to gloss over diverse individual experiences,<sup>19</sup> while pushing the reader to give special consideration to tactical aspects of war at the expense of other facets, such as the role of emotion in one of humanity's most violent and terrifying practices.<sup>20</sup> John Keegan has similarly identified homogenising techniques that are normally deployed to make a 'battle piece' more comprehensible: 'uniformity of behaviour', 'discontinuity', 'stratification' of combatants, 'over-simplified human behaviour', and 'omission of dead and wounded'.<sup>21</sup>

Much influential recent scholarship on military history has begun to break with these limitations, considering aspects of war beyond the ones focusing on strategy, and these studies provide fruitful strategies for approaching ancient historiography as well. The Greeks themselves seemed to have viewed war as having other significant facets; as a recent overview of the subject notes, ancient writers were among the first to struggle with the challenges of depicting war and its effects as both a technical and a moral problem,<sup>22</sup> encouraging readers to study features beyond the technical. Keegan's *The Face of Battle* (1976) has been an influential forerunner of this broader perspective, as it attempts to reconstruct conflict as an individual soldier would have experienced it, rejecting the bird's-eye commander narrative that has dominated military history in modern times. Keegan

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Immerwahr (1956) 242 criticises this understanding.

<sup>18</sup> Keegan (1976) 46.

<sup>19</sup> Keegan (1976) 65–6.

<sup>20</sup> Åhäll and Gregory (2015), *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Keegan (1976) 38–9.

<sup>22</sup> Pitcher (2009) 71.

argues that any individual combatant would have great difficulty comprehending or accurately recalling his own experiences, and by exploring the cases of three famous battles, he brings to light the difficulties with reconstructing battles after the fact. This argument fits well both with the individual's experience of battle as described in most ancient sources and with the observations of N. Whatley, who suggested that ancient battlefields cannot be as neatly reconstructed as is sometimes assumed.

The expanding definition and practice of war in the twenty-first century have also pushed scholars to reconsider the very nature of the phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> In an era of a global 'War on Terror', it is no longer clear precisely when a nation is at war and when it is not. In addition to the problem of defining a war fought against a hostile phenomenon rather than an enemy nation, modern attempts to regulate and curtail war have resulted in a tendency for states to engage in undeclared, unofficial, or even secret conflicts. As a consequence, the clear and formal declarations of war that were standard in the twentieth century have become obsolete in the twenty-first. While this nebulous brand of conflict has little in common with the prescribed and declared wars of the recent past, it finds parallels in ancient literature. The thesis appears in Plato, for example, that peace is only a name, and that states are in fact in a condition of constant war with one another (*Leg.* 626a), much as cyber war seems to fill the internet even in 'peacetime'. Thucydides, similarly, asks us to consider the elusive question of when, exactly, a war exists—and when it does not—in his enigmatic representation of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, complicated by his concepts of *aitia* and *prophasis*,<sup>24</sup> and in his depiction of his subject as a single war encompassing a period of peace during the Peace of Nicias.<sup>25</sup>

Explicit ancient discussions of the causes of war, whether mythological or historical, also emphasise its complexities and unexpected or uncontrollable trajectory, aspects that tend not to dominate modern ideas about the phenomenon. Starting in the Archaic period, texts tend to treat war's causes as elusive, complex, and even overdetermined, as 'outside human initiative and ... within the domain of nature or the realm of the gods'.<sup>26</sup> Even the interventions of the Homeric gods in the Trojan War, for example, are only partly driven by their own desires, as they are limited by the dictates of Fate (e.g., *Il.* 8.61–72). Tragedy and comedy often play on the theme of the seemingly trivial origins of major conflicts, sometimes formulated as the 'beginning of evils' (*ἀρχὴ κακῶν*). Greek texts also almost always treat conflict as somehow overdetermined, brought about by a combination of human

<sup>23</sup> Brooks (2016).

<sup>24</sup> For some important discussions of *aitia* and *prophasis*, see Pearson (1952); Kirkwood (1952); de Ste. Croix (1972) 51–62; Rawlings (1975).

<sup>25</sup> For monograph-length treatments of the outbreak, see, e.g., Kagan (1969); Jaffe (2017).

<sup>26</sup> Garland (1975) 18.

and external factors. The Trojan War, for example, is variously blamed on Paris, Helen, and the gods' will (e.g., Eur. *Hel.* 40; cf. *Il.* 3.172–5). Among philosophers, Heraclitus lists war and peace among natural fluctuations like winter and summer (22 B 67 D–K), suggesting their inevitability. And although Thucydides views war as deriving from human nature, he presents it as inescapable in human history (1.22.4) and as something that unfolds in ways that the majority of viewers—unlike the wise historian (1.1.1)—cannot foresee.

Although a type of easily identifiable, formally-declared conflict still dominates the Western imagination, Ancient Greek historians tend to present their wars with some of the confusion and complexity characteristic of the outbreak of World War I, or indeed many other wars, rather than with the moral and strategic clarity of the American Civil War or the Second World War. Herodotus (1.1ff.) and Thucydides (1.23.5), for example, treat the causes of their conflicts as anything but obvious when addressing their *aitiai* prominently at the openings of their works, where they proudly claim to have identified the causes. Both Herodotus and Thucydides also treat the outbreak of war as a lengthy process spanning generations. While modern scholars might trace the Persian Wars to strategic sources such as Persian overreach or the Ionian Revolt, the former traces their roots all the way back to the abduction of Io (1.1.2–4), laying out a history of resentment that emphasises the types of emotion and conflicting interpretations of events that tend to be downplayed in modern military history; underlying causes rather than proximate ones form a significant portion of Herodotus' understanding of war.<sup>27</sup> Thucydides too is enigmatic in his definition of the moment of outbreak. Although he is often taken to have a 'modern' outlook seen as central to the development of current theories in International Relations,<sup>28</sup> his remarks on the beginning of the war offer considerable challenges to modern IR theories. Thucydides describes the Peloponnesian War as 'forced' onto the Greeks in both outbreaks (1.23.6; 5.25.3), not a formulation that is likely to be seen in an analysis of a modern conflict. His fundamental definition of the state of war also appears to differ from ours. In Book 5, he seems to resort to special pleading to make his war as long as he wants it to be, while evidence from his contemporaries suggest at least two separate wars.<sup>29</sup> Xenophon likewise presents international relations as having a basis in culture, ethical principles such as reciprocal relationships, and emotions more than the naked power politics that are often attributed to Thucydides and have been regularly adopted into modern International Relations.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Immerwahr (1956) 267–8 on Herodotus and underlying causes.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Johnson Bagby (1994), Eckstein (2003), Tompkins and Lebow (2016).

<sup>29</sup> Aristophanes (*Lys.* 507, 513), Plato (*Men.* 239d–46a), Andocides (3.8, 30, 9, 31, 28–9) and Aeschines (2.175–6).

<sup>30</sup> See esp. Lendon (2006).

Experts in human security have criticised the neglect of the role of emotions in modern analyses of war, as our sanitised, technical interests have caused us to overlook one of the most central aspects of the experiences of killing, dying, or even simply deciding that a situation has become so intolerable that such actions are required.<sup>31</sup> A sense that the study of emotional aspects of war is somehow unserious has even shaped scholarly responses to Herodotus and, especially, Thucydides,<sup>32</sup> albeit with exceptions following renewed scholarly interest in emotions generally in the 2000s.<sup>33</sup> Again, ancient literature can provide a helpful corrective to modern biases in both explicitly historiographic contexts and elsewhere. Far from treating war and emotions as separate entities, traditional representations of Ares have him attended by personified Fear and Panic, Deimos and Phobos (Hom. *Il.* 4.438–9; 11.37; [Hes.] *Asp.* 195). Indeed, these figures are sometimes described as his children (Hes. *Th.* 934) or siblings (Hom. *Il.* 4.441). Athena’s aegis, too, features Phobos among other personified experiences of battle (Hom. *Il.* 5.739). Later authors such as Aeschylus also highlight the role of emotions, especially fear.<sup>34</sup> Thucydides too emphasises the role of a leader in guiding a city’s emotions so as not to lose control of a war (2.59.3). Although the historian himself is often thought to be ‘dispassionate’, he places emotions at the centre of his treatment of the Peloponnesian War in his statement that its hidden cause was in fact fear, which ‘forced’ Sparta into the conflict (1.23.6).

The independence of the phenomenon can also be seen in its frequent personifications—often taking the form of *Polemos* or *Stasis* rather than Ares—in which it often acts in defiance of human desires or attempts at control. While modern wars are often presented in the public sphere as predictable, scientific, and precise, at least before they have been launched, the ancient figures behave independently, and maliciously. Solon’s figure of *Stasis* leaping over house walls to chase men down in their homes (fr. 4.28 *IEG*<sup>2</sup>) captures its capacity to dissolve even the most intimate personal bonds, including when this action is against the will of those whose relationships are being overturned. The embodiment is rarely positive: *Stasis* screams (Aes. *Eum.* 978–80), for example, while *Polemos* is imagined as a wild drunkard preemptively disinvited from an imaginary dinner party (Ar. *Ach.* 979–82). As in this second instance, war often seems bent on hunting, harvesting, and consumption; in a fragment of Sophocles, War itself is said to enjoy hunting young men (Soph. *TGrF* fr. 554), while in Aristophanes he chef-like prepares the Greek cities to be eaten as delicacies (*Pax* 236–89). Ares, similarly, reaps (Aes. *Supp.* 637–8) and shears men (*ibid.* 665–6). Even in a rare positive

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Hutchinson and Bleiker (2008).

<sup>32</sup> Marincola (2003) 186–7.

<sup>33</sup> For one study of emotions and war (primarily in the *Iliad*), see Konstan (2003).

<sup>34</sup> See e.g. de Romilly (1958) *passim*, Kantzios (2004).

context, war devours its dead, as those who die in war are said by Thucydides' Pericles to have offered their lives as a contribution to an *ἔρanos* (2.43.1), a term for a feast to which all participants contributed.

Even as it consumes, war teaches, and one of the features that Greek texts often associate with war is both its didactic potential, as it pushes participants toward new technologies and strategies, and its own resulting development and refinement. Variations on the term *deinos*, a word meaning 'terrible' but also with connotations of invention and discovery (e.g. Soph. *Ant.* 334), frequently modify war and its consequences in ancient text. Personified *Polemos* is *deinos* (Ar. *Pax* 240), for example, and war remains so even when it is not being cast in a negative light (Pind. *Pyth.* 2.64). War also inspires some prime examples of the word *deina*, things both terrible and new. The children of *Polemos* are *δεινοί* (Hes. *Th.* 935), and war produces *deina* (e.g., Isoc. 4.168 *δεινὰ γιγνόμενα διὰ τὸν πόλεμον*).

Explicit discussions of the nature of war also refer to the 'lessons' it delivers. Warfare, Thucydides' Corinthians repeatedly state, depends on innovation (1.71.3, 122.1), and the war in fact seems to force a type of development. Thucydides' editorialising following the violence at Corcyra uses a word associated with progress for the development of *stasis* (3.82.1 *προυχώρησε*) and describes human behaviour during the fighting as a type of malignant inventiveness (3.82.3 *τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ καινοῦσθαι τὰς διανοίας τῶν τ' ἐπιχειρήσεων περιτεχνήσει*). Indeed, he personifies war itself, *πόλεμος*, as a *βίαιος διδάσκαλος* (3.82.2), at once a teacher of violence and a violent teacher. His characters, meanwhile, point to the innovative nature of the Sicilians in particular in developing the technology of war (7.56.3 *τοῦ ναυτικοῦ μέγα μέρος προκόψαντες*).<sup>35</sup> Pindar, too, seems to allude to the intellectually stimulating aspects of conflict when he calls *stasis* *θρασυμήδεα καὶ δεινάν* (*Nem.* 9.13), and Aeschines associates a type of bitter education with war (3.148 *πόλεμος ... ἀείμνηστον παιδείαν αὐτοὺς ἐπαίδευσε*). This aspect of conflict has remained constant: especially in the modern development of cyber war, one can see the validity of ancient statements about the tendency of war to drive innovation, and its capacity for constant mutation. In some chapters of this volume, war's own ability to 'educate' can be seen in strategic innovation and developing political machinations, while others focus on its 'teachings' that appear in the work of historians using it as a philosophical lens through which to explore new ideas and arrive at deeper truths about the universe.

Even as war 'educates' humanity in new tactics and methods of violence across the millennia, it retains many of the same fundamental aims and strategic goals. One standard element that has adopted a new form in the modern era is the tendency of narratives about conflict to themselves become objects of struggle or even weapons with which to bludgeon opponents. The

<sup>35</sup> Dodds (1973) 1–2.

new arenas in which the narratives of war are disputed are part of a general broadening of the field in which war is fought: in the twenty-first century, as ‘war blurs and expands, the fog of war expands as well’.<sup>36</sup> A large part of the ‘fog’ that seeps out beyond the battlefield today is due to the migration of conflict narratives, or disputes about the historiography of war, into the online world. While attacks in the cyber-realm often have practical aims, such as infiltrating the banking industry, many web-based ‘attacks’ specifically target a society’s ability to produce historically accurate narratives: historiography itself is a regular, intentional target of modern warfare. As a central facet of cyber war, appealing but inaccurate tales are propagated to weaken a nation and damage its capacity for productive and rational discourse.

This growth in the role of perverted historical narrative, and thus of argument in war, represents both continuity with the past and a remarkable expansion of one of war’s timeless elements. This phenomenon has ancient roots; this volume argues, for example, that the Sicilian tyrants actively construct war narratives to serve sophisticated political purposes. In doing so, they wrestle with their opponents not only over possession of resources and terrain, but also for control of the story of the war being fought, a fight that continues after military hostilities conclude. In this aggressive use of storytelling, in which narrators employ their tales to set themselves up as heroes for their people, Greek combatants prefigure modern ones. Today there is an even greater appreciation of the power and potential danger of the historiography of war, a topic also treated comparatively in this volume. Bodies such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia actively attempt to thwart the creation of precisely the type of ‘war hero’ narratives that the Sicilian tyrants were forging, especially if the ‘heroes’ in question are in fact war criminals. Put another way, modern entities charged with protecting justice consider the containment of false narratives about a war, or the misuse of historiography, a key part of their agenda, and they therefore fight the development of incorrect or mendacious historiographic tradition just as they do violent war crimes.

While the preservation of history, and specifically the history of war, is usually considered the particular responsibility of formal historiography, writings about the past can also take other forms. As Nathan Arrington has argued, for example, Athens’ monuments served as a meditation on the city’s history, and especially on military history and civic identity.<sup>37</sup> Elements of public discourse such as Funeral Orations likewise seek to establish a shared nexus of memory and preserve a carefully selected recollection of the dead and the state they championed.<sup>38</sup> Thucydides’ version of Pericles’ Funeral

<sup>36</sup> Brooks (2016) 267.

<sup>37</sup> Arrington (2015), *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Loraux (1981), Shear (2013).

Oration explicitly encourages its audience to reshape their memories, disregarding earlier imperfections in the lives of the fallen and considering only their glorious end (2.42.2–3). He even uses a term he elsewhere employs to describe the erasure of a historical inscription, ἀφανίζω (2.42.3 ἀφανίσαντες; cf. 6.54.7), to describe the process by which former misdeeds are rendered invisible by a glorious death. Such history-shaping monuments, documents, and oratory can be highly consequential, moulding society's self-perception in the public arena and extending a significant influence even over more professionally researched and written historiography. Such efforts can be essentially subconscious or more deliberate. For example, according to Herodotus (9.85.3), some cities attempted to reconstruct the past by erecting sham monuments at Plataea, even though they had not participated in the battle, and in other situations, as well, the very bodies of the dead became the site of a struggle over historical narrative.<sup>39</sup> No longer limited to public songs, monuments, or rumour, today even more aggressive types of disinformation have emerged as a method of directly striking public discourse. On the other hand, efforts to suppress malicious or false narratives have developed through the court system, which has with some success challenged and contained this type of storytelling.

War is arguably the most intense and challenging of human experiences on intellectual, emotional, social, and moral levels. The historian's task of distilling a sensible, accurate narrative from this phenomenon, as well as its causes and effects, is enormously difficult, a fact that military histories, and especially modern ones employing a bird's-eye perspective, can obscure. Ancient Greek authors, with their greater personal exposure to war, tend to see and discuss these complicating factors to a greater extent. Much like the traditional representation of the Olympian lover of strife and violence, Ares—hated by his own family (Hom. *Il.* 5. 890), attended by Fear and Panic (Hes. *Th.* 934)—, war in their texts is often uncontrollable, unpredictable, and ferocious. Rather than a sanitised chess-like engagement on the human plane, they often represent it as an all-encompassing catastrophe that shakes and reveals the nature of the universe itself. As ancient authors knew, war's legacy, both in the intellectual ferment and in the forced reshaping of society it causes, can also reveal important truths. Just as war is an inescapable expression of human nature, capturing, controlling, and learning from conflict through narrative is an eternal human endeavour. It is this complex relationship between conflict, its disruptions, and the narratives that they produce that this volume takes as its subject.

<sup>39</sup> Low (2006).

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