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SIMONIDES ON PLATAEA: NARRATIVE ELEGY, MYTHODIC HISTORY

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 107 (1995) 217–229

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Fragments of a Simonidean elegy on the Battle of Plataea from *P. Oxy.* 59.3965, recently published by Peter Parsons and included in Martin West's second edition of *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* II (1992), are attracting a good deal of attention, and deservedly so.¹ Thanks to the

¹ Bibliography on the Plataea fragments known to me at the time of this writing:

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| West, M. L., 1992 | <i>Iambi et Elegi Graeci</i> vol.ii ² . Oxford. |
| West, M. L., 1993 | "Simonides Redivivus", <i>ZPE</i> 98.1-14. |
| Luppe, W., 1993 | "Zum neuesten Simonides", <i>ZPE</i> 99.1-9. |
| 1994 | "Die Korinther in der Schlacht von Plataiai bei Simonides nach Plutarch (Simon. fr. 15 und 16W ² ; P. Oxy. 3965 fr. 5)", <i>Arch. f. Papyrusf.</i> 40.21-24. |
| Lloyd-Jones, H., 1994 | "Notes on the New Simonides", <i>ZPE</i> 101.1-3. |
| Aloni, A., 1994 | "L'elegia di Simonide dedicata alla battaglia di Platea (Sim. fr. 10-18 W ²) e l'occasione della sua performance", <i>ZPE</i> 102.9-22. |
| Obbink, Dirk, 1994 | "The Addressees of Empedocles", in <i>MD</i> 31.51-98 (pp. 64-70). |
- In addition, "The New Simonides" was the subject of a panel organized by David Sider at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association in December 1994. Subsequently, Sider and I are editing a group of papers on the same topic for a special volume of *Arethusa*, scheduled to appear in 1996.
- The following works are also quoted in abbreviation:
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| Bowie, E. L., 1986 | "Early Greek Elegy, Symposium and Public Festival", <i>JHS</i> 106.13-35. |
| Bowra, C.M., 1944 | "Xenophanes, fr. 3", <i>CQ</i> 40 (1944) 119-126. |
| 1961 | <i>Greek Lyric Poetry</i> ² , Oxford. |
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| Flory, Stewart, 1990 | "The Meaning of τὸ μὴ μῦθῶδες (1.22.4) and the Usefulness of Thucydides' History", <i>CJ</i> 85, 193-208. |
| Fornara, C.W., 1983 | <i>The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome</i> , Berkeley. |
| Fowler, R. L., 1987 | <i>The Nature of Early Greek Lyric. Three Preliminary Studies</i> , Toronto. |
| Gentili, Bruno, 1988 [1985] | <i>Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece</i> , Baltimore. |
| Hornblower, Simon, 1991 | <i>A Commentary on Thucydides</i> I, Oxford. |
| Howie, G., 1984 | "Thukydides' Einstellung zur Vergangenheit: Zuhörerschaft und Wissenschaft in der Archäologie", <i>Klio</i> 66.502-532. |
| Huxley, G.L., 1969 | <i>Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis</i> , Cambridge, Mass. |
| Kennedy, George A., 1963 | <i>The Art of Persuasion in Greece</i> , Princeton. |
| Koenen, Ludwig, 1993 | "The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure", in <i>Images and Ideologies</i> , ed. by A.W. Bulloch, E.S. Gruen, A.A. Long, and A. Stewart, Berkeley, 25-115. |
| Loomis, William T., 1990 | "Pausanias, Byzantium and the Formation of the Delian League. A Chronological Note", <i>Historia</i> 39.487-492. |
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| Martin, Richard, 1989 | <i>The Language of Heroes. Speech and Performance in the Iliad</i> , Ithaca. |
| Meiggs, Russell and David Lewis, 1969 | <i>A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.</i> , Oxford. |
| Meuli, Karl, 1968 | <i>Der griechische Agon. Kampf und Kampfspiel im Totenbrauch. Totentanz. Totenklage und Totenlob</i> , ed. R. Merkelbach, Cologne. |
| Michelini, Ann N., 1994. | "Political Themes in Euripides' <i>Suppliants</i> ", <i>AJP</i> 115.219-252. |
| Molyneux, John H., 1992 | <i>Simonides. A Historical Study</i> , Wauconda, Ill. |
| Oliver, James H., 1933 | "Selected Greek Inscriptions", <i>Hesperia</i> 2.480-513. |
| Page, D. L. 1981 | <i>Further Greek Epigrams</i> , Cambridge. |
| Podlecki, Anthony J., 1984 | <i>The Early Greek Poets and Their Times</i> , Vancouver. |
| Pritchett, W. Kendrick, 1985 | <i>The Greek State at War</i> , IV, Berkeley and Los Angeles. |
| Raaflaub, Kurt, 1985 | <i>Die Entdeckung der Freiheit</i> , Munich. |
| Rehman, R., 1982 | "Aristotle as Lyric Poet: the Hermias Poem", <i>GRBS</i> 23.251-274. |
| Roller, Lynn E., 1981 | "Funeral Games for Historical Persons," <i>Stadion</i> 7.1-18. |

splendid work of Parsons and West, we now have substantial additions to the corpus of historical elegy in general, and in particular to Simonidean poems on the Persian War battles — a kind of literature for which we have had testimony but very little text. The new fragments raise important questions *inter alia* about the function of such poems and their intended performance context; they provide new insight, I suggest, on connections between poetry and history, especially on what Thucydides says about popular but unreliable accounts of the past.

1. Genre and Contents of the Plataea Elegy.

Before the Plataea elegy was published, a number of early Greek elegies dealing with local history were known, at least by name, including Mimnermus' elegy on the struggle of Smyrna against the Lydians (and perhaps on the city's foundation as well),² Semonides' *archaiologia* of the Samians, and Tyrtaeus on Sparta's war against Messenia. In addition, as Ewen Bowie notes in an influential article, Xenophanes' two thousand ἔπη on the foundations of Colophon and Elea may also have been elegiacs. Bowie emphasizes that some of these narrative elegies were quite long, and that at least in the case of Mimnermus, they dealt with the more distant as well as the recent past. He argues, on the basis of their length and their allegedly non-aristocratic subject matter, that such elegies were performed not at symposia but in competitions at public festivals.³ The genre may have continued into the mid-fifth century, for the *Suda* reports that Panyassis of Halicarnassus composed a poem of seven thousand "pentameters" on Kodros, Neleus, and the Ionian foundations.⁴

We have also long known of Simonidean elegies and lyrics, as well as epigrams, on the great battles of the Persian Wars.⁵ A life of Aeschylus mentions an ἐλεγείον on Marathon, which is usually assumed to be an epigram but may have been a longer elegiac narrative (see below). Of particular interest in light of the new Simonides fragments is an elegy on Artemisium, attested by Himerios, the *Suda*, and several scholia: a few scraps of this poem, possibly naming Zetes and Kalais (sons of Boreas, cf. Hdt. 7.189), may be preserved in *P.Oxy.* 59.

Strasburger, Hermann, 1958 "Thukydides und die politische Selbstdarstellung der Athener", *Hermes* 86.17-40, reprinted in H. Herter, ed. *Thukydides. Wege der Forschung*, vol. 98.498-530, Darmstadt 1968.

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Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von, 1913 *Sappho und Simonides*, Berlin.

² Bowie 1986.28 suggests that Mimnermos' *Smyrneis* dealt with the foundation of Smyrna, on the basis of a possible Callimachean witticism in the *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1.11-12) where Callimachus calls one of Mimnermus' two books "the tall lady." Since Smyrna was reputedly named after an Amazon, suggests Bowie, Callimachus' nickname for the *Smyrneis* may be alluding to its historical content.

³ On Xenophanes: Bowie 1986.31-32, following Bowra 1944.121. Cf. West 1974.7 (also cited by Bowie) on the use of ἔπη for elegiacs as well as hexameters. On the recent and more distant past: Bowie 1986.27-28. On competition in public festivals: Bowie 1986.33-34.

⁴ For discussion of the probable contents of the *Ionica* cf. Huxley 1969.186-187. Bowie 1986.33 suggests that 7000 lines may well have been too long for public performance in a competition, but "it may have been built of units each relating to a different city or group of cities."

⁵ These have been extensively analyzed, most recently in Molyneux 1992.147-210. In addition to the Simonidean poems, several Pindaric epinicians praise the deeds of Greeks fighting foreigners: cf. *Pyth.* 1.75-80 (Athenians at Salamis and Spartans at Plataea, as well as Hieron 'of Aetna' against the Carthaginians at Himera), *Isth.* 5.48-50 (the Aeginetans at Salamis).

3965 fr. 20 (Simonides 2-4W²). It is likely that Simonides composed a lyric poem on Artemisium as well: Priscian quotes a few phrases from Simonides' work ἐπ' Ἀρτεμίδῳ ναυμαχία (533PMG). We hear too of a poem, probably lyric, about Salamis.⁶ In addition, Simonides is credited with a lyric poem on Thermopylae, part of which is quoted by Diodorus Siculus (531PMG). Finally, Plutarch *De malig. Herod.* 42.872d quotes a passage from Simonides' ἐλεγεία that praises Corinthian bravery at the battle of Plataea; remarkably, the lines quoted correspond to a scrap of P.Oxy. 59.3965. Of course Simonides is credited with many apparent epitaphs and other epigrams that deal with the Persian War period; some of these may actually be short sympotic elegies rather than inscriptions.⁷

The fragmentary lines of the new Plataea elegy, more extensive than any previously known Simonidean elegy or any archaic narrative elegy, allow us to glimpse a kind of poem that had all but vanished: extended narrative elegy based on historical events. Although far from complete, the fragments are substantial; it will be useful to summarize them here.

Fr. 11, the longest and best preserved, is to all appearances part of the proemium. It begins by recounting the death of someone—probably Achilles, the addressee in this section—by Apollo's hand (lines 6-8). The just, god-aided destruction of Troy is recapitulated next (10-14), and the singer's acknowledgement of the man who, with the Muses' help, gave immortal κλέος to the Danaans (14-18). There follows a hymnic invocation of Achilles, including the familiar transitional formulation χαίρε...αὐτὰρ ἐγώ (19-20).⁸ The poet now summons his own Muse as ally (ἐπίκουρον, line 21), to help him commemorate the ἀρετή of more recent men whose κλέος (following West's plausible restoration) will be immortal (21-28): the Spartans, who departed from their city accompanied by the Dioskouroi and Menelaos as well as their general Pausanias. They marched with other Peloponnesians, Corinthians, and Megarians toward the "lovely plain" of Eleusis (29-40), where they were perhaps (*pace* West) joined by Athenians ("[descendants] of Pandion", 41).

Fr. 13 describes a battle on a plain, presumably at the Asopos River near Plataea, involving "Medes and Persians" on the one hand, "sons of Doros and Herakles" on the other. West suggests that fr. 14 preserves part of a speech by the Spartans' seer Teisamenos, foretelling that if the Greeks do not initiate fighting by the river, they will win the battle and the enemy will even be driven out of Asia. Frr. 15 and 16 consist of the verses quoted by Plutarch in *De malignitate Herodoti*, where the poet praises the Corinthians' bravery in the center of the battle line. Not much can be said about the rest of the poem, but the slight scraps of fr. 17 evidently preserve Demeter's name (line 1) and refer to the long duration of the battle (5). In West's new edition, fragments of 123 lines are assigned to the Plataea elegy, including the verses quoted by Plutarch and a few *frustula* from P.Oxy. 22.2327, a previously-pub

⁶ Cf. West 1993.2-3 on the *Suda's* confused notice of Simonidean poems on Salamis and Artemisium.

⁷ Page 1981.219 suggests that Simonides XIX(a), in praise of Demokritos of Naxos at the battle of Salamis, being "neither sepulchral nor dedicatory", may be a skolion rather than an epigram. On the Persian War epigrams cf. also Molyneux 1992.147-202 *passim*, esp. p. 196 on the Demokritos epigram, which Molyneux believes may be "a fragment of an elegy, not on Salamis, but on the role of the Naxians in the Persian Wars as a whole," and similarly pp. 199-200 on Simonides' praise of the Megarians (629PMG).

⁸ On the transitional language see most recently Aloni 1994.14 and Obbink 1994.67-68.

lished papyrus that evidently contained the same poem. West (1993.4) suggests that the whole poem, while not large enough to fill an entire roll, may have been much longer.

2. Conditions of Composition and Performance

Among the many questions raised by these fragments is that of the poem's performance context: for what situation and audience was it composed? West (1993.5) guesses that such elegies were designed for entertainment, presumably in a sympotic setting. The "historical" subject matter of itself surely does not preclude this possibility (cf. Attic skolia on recent events, e.g. 907 *PMG* on the ill-fated Alkmeonid fortification of Mt. Leipsydrion against Hippias, and the famous skolia in praise of the tyrannicides), and elegy is a favorite sympotic genre, to be sure. Another possibility, and one that so far has attracted more adherents, is that the elegy was performed at a public festival commemorating the Greeks who died at Plataea.

Certainly the genre is appropriate for such an occasion. Elegies celebrating military ὄρετή are widespread in the archaic Greek world, including the poems of Callinus at Ephesus, Mimnermus at Colophon, and especially Tyrtaeus at Sparta.⁹ Further, a panhellenic narrative genre would be suitable for a panhellenic audience, and indeed in its extant fragments the Plataea elegy mentions not only Spartans, but also other Peloponnesians, Corinthians, Megarians, and Athenians (fr. 11.29-41, fr. 15). The panhellenic—or more precisely, polyhellenic — nature of the poem, and possibly its length as well, would suggest not a symposium but a more public scenario for its first performance, namely a festival attended by Greeks from the allied poleis.

Other Simonidean poems too are presumed to have been sung at festivals. Wilamowitz, for example, suggests that the ode on Artemisium (533 *PMG*) was performed at the foundation of Boreas' shrine on the Ilissus.¹⁰ Simonides' famous poem celebrating those who died at Thermopylae (531 *PMG*) is usually assumed to have been commissioned by Sparta, perhaps for the dedication of a *κηκόε* of the Three Hundred in their home city.¹¹ In contrast to the Plataea elegy, however, both these poems are lyrics. Metrical difference may well correspond to a difference in the poems' functions and the contexts of their first performance, so it would not necessarily follow that Simonidean elegies on Persian War battles were first performed at a festival, even if these two lyric poems were.¹²

⁹ West 1974.10 notes that the use of Ionic elegiac forms in the Spartan elegies of Tyrtaeus shows that the language of elegy was already established when those poems were formulated.

¹⁰ Wilamowitz 1913.206-208, cited and discussed in Molyneux 1992.159-161. Molyneux raises an objection (not an insurmountable one, in my opinion) to this view, based on the likelihood that Simonides situated the rape of Oreithyia by Boreas not at the Ilissos (where later sources place it) but at Brilessos, a mountain in Attica: if this is so, reasons Molyneux, it seems unlikely that the poem would have been performed precisely for the dedication of the shrine on the Ilissos. Molyneux concludes (p. 161): "One might still wish to suppose that the poem was addressed specifically to Boreas in gratitude for his help at Artemisium, but that the occasion was different from, and perhaps earlier than, the actual foundation-ceremony of the shrine on the Ilissus." Bowra 1961.343-344, also discussed by Molyneux (pp.161-162), thinks the ode was performed at the Panathenaia.

¹¹ Molyneux 1992.186-187, however, raises the possibility that this song may instead have been commissioned by the Amphictyons, to be performed at the battlesite in honor of "all those who died in the last stand, Spartans and Thespians alike, or perhaps all those who died at Thermopylae, including the dead (from many states) of the earlier engagements in the pass."

¹² *De malig.Herod.* 42 (on Simonides and the Corinthians) suggests that at least to Plutarch, there was a great difference in content between a lyric poem for local performance "at home" and a narrative elegy, which Plutarch implies is without local bias and hence more credible. See further below.

Still, not only its panhellenic orientation but also internal evidence support the idea that the Plataea elegy was composed for a public celebration. The proemium (following *IEG* II², supplemented in line 24 by West's conjecture ὕ[ατερον αὖ]) concludes with the following self-conscious lines (19-28):

20 [ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲ]ν νῦν χαίρει, θεῶσ' ἐρικύ[δεος υἱὲ]
 κούρης εἰν[αλίου Νηρέος · αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ
 [κικλήτικω] σ' ἐπίκουρον ἐμοί, π[ολυώνυμ]ε Μοῦσα,
 [εἴ πέρ γ' ἀν]θρώπων εὐχομένω[ν μέλαια ·
 [ἔντυνο]ν καὶ τόνδ[ε μελ]ίφρονα κ[όσμον ἀο]ιδῆς
 24 [ἡμετ]έρης, ἵνα τις [μνή]χεται ὕ[ατερον αὖ]
 [ἀνδρῶ]ν, οἳ Σπάρτ[η] δούλιον ἦ[μ]αρ
 [!] ἀμυν[]\$[]ω[
 [οὐδ' ἀρε]τῆς ἐλάθ[οντο]ν οὐρανομ[ήκ]ησ,
 28 [καὶ κλέος ἀ]νθρώπων [ἔσσει]ται ἀθάνατο(ν).

The poet turns from Achilles' death and the praise of the poet who had made famous the "young-dying race of the heroes" (18 ἡμ[ι]θέων ὠκύμορον γενεή[ν]) to his own task of immortalizing the men fighting the battle of Plataea by using the transitional formula which performers of hymns had used to turn from one hymn to the next.¹³ This fact is suggestive, but of course does not prove that Simonides places his poem in the context of real performance and contest. However, we may consider that the poet's intention to bestow deathless renown in response to ἀρετή is typical of encomia, but not of obviously sympotic songs in any meter. The elegies of Tyrtaeus, for example, performed according to Philochorus (*FGH* 328 F 216) in informal contests at Spartan communal meals, include verses on the κλέος and immortality of warriors (Tyrtaeus 9.31-32 Gentili-Prato). But unlike the Plataea elegy, Tyrtaeus 9 celebrates Spartan military virtue in general, describing the kind of man who receives κλέος, rather than memorializing any individual(s) specifically. Perhaps closer to the Plataea elegy in this respect is a skolion quoted in Athenaeus, attributed to Aristotle nearly a century and a half after the Simonidean poem.¹⁴ This short encomium, which Aristotle is supposed to have sung every day ἐν τοῖς συσσιτίοις, anticipates the immortality in song of the tyrant Hermias of Atarneus, Aristotle's pupil and step-father-in-law, who was executed by an agent of Artaxerxes III in 341 BCE: τοίγαρ αἰοιδίμος ἔργοις | ἀθάνατόν τέ μιν ἀυξήσουσι Μοῦσαι (842.17-18 *PMG*).¹⁵ But, even apart from the significant time difference between the two poems, the statement that Hermias is "subject of song for his deeds, and the Muses will make him deathless" is quite different from Simonides' self-conscious emulation of the κλέος be-

¹³ χαίρει in connection with formulaic αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σείο καὶ ἄλλης μνήχομ' αἰοιδῆς, and cf. especially the use of the formula in the hymn to Helios (31.17-19), χαίρει ἄναξ ... | ἐκ σείο δ' ἀρξάμενος κλήσω μερόπων γένος ἀνδρῶν | ἡμιθέων ὧν ἔργα θεοὶ θνητοῖσιν ἔδοξεν. See P.J. Parsons in his edition; L. Koenen has argued that Callimachus will later use this transitional formula in his book edition between the *Aitia* and the *Iambi* (1993, esp. 91 with n. 156). As G.O. Hutchinson (in the notes of the first edition, p. 31) has recognized, Theokritos, too, alluded to the preceding lines of Simonides' poem (16.34-46, esp. 45f.; see also Lloyd-Jones 1994.2). In an forthcoming article in *Arethusa*, D. Obbink will discuss the transition in the new Simonides poem in greater detail. (n. 1, above).

¹⁴ Democritus argues that this poem is not a paean but a skolion: Athenaeus 15.696a-697b.

¹⁵ Cf. Renehan 1982 for detailed discussion of this poem.

stowed on the heroes of Troy by *their* poet. In the Plataea elegy, as the lines just quoted attest, the poet's role is much more active.

Its polyhellenic focus as well as its explicitly heroizing intent then suggest that the Plataea elegy was composed not for the relatively private occasion of a symposium, but for a public commemoration of the battle's participants, attended by Greeks from many cities. Still, although Bowie assumes that long archaic narrative elegies were composed for only one performance (at a festival), I agree with Aloni's opinion that first performance at a festival would by no means preclude sympotic reperformance of the elegy, or portions of it, probably involving some degree of recomposition.¹⁶ Indeed, relevant selections from such an elegy would seem especially suitable for symposia in those cities whose brave deeds at Plataea it celebrates. But we are still left with the question, what event could have provided the occasion for its first performance?

Parsons suggests the possibility that the elegy was sung at the Eleutheria festival at Plataea; Michael Haslam too, in his review of *IEG II*², finds "[t]he inaugural Eleutheria makes a tempting guess."¹⁷ Neither Parsons nor Haslam pursues the question or considers the problem that we have no fifth-century evidence for the Eleutheria (cf. the exemplary discussion of Étienne and Piérart 1975). Aloni discusses the question at length; without excluding the Eleutheria as part of the same general celebrations, he suggests that the elegy was composed for the consecration of the panhellenic altar of Zeus Eleutherios at Plataea.¹⁸ Performance at this occasion, Aloni argues, accords with the panhellenic spirit of the elegy. Celebration of the Plataean heroes at a festival in honor of Zeus Eleutherios, however, would run counter to Karl Meuli's (perhaps too rigid) insistence, in his pioneering study of funeral games, that the two cults were kept quite separate at Plataea.¹⁹ Moreover, the elegy as we have it pays little attention to Zeus (named only at 11.30 and probably to be supplied at 14.7f.).

¹⁶ Aloni 1994.12-13. Bowie 1986.35, reasons that if in contrast to archaic historical elegies, sympotic elegies were frequently reperfomed, this helps to explain why we have more fragments of the latter. But the fact that we hear about the longer elegies in Hellenistic and later testimonia indicates that they were less ephemeral than Bowie maintains. Note that Bowie himself thinks it likely that Callimachus was familiar with the name and contents of Mimnermus' *Smyrneis* (above, n. 2). At any rate, the publication of *P.Oxy.* 59.3965 now proves that Simonidean elegies on Artemisium and Plataea were preserved long enough to be included in an Alexandrian edition.

¹⁷ Parsons 1992.6: "The occasion can only be guessed at: a public commission (for the Eleutheria?) is one possibility." Parsons also suggests another possibility: "in Sparta, where we know Achilles was worshipped, and had a temple outside of town." Haslam 1993.135.

¹⁸ Aloni 1994.16-19. Raaflaub 1985.126-127 argues that the Eleutheria games were established at Plataea only in the latter part of the fourth century, when the later "Persian War" pursued by Philip and Alexander encouraged a resurgence of interest in the earlier battles. But even if the Eleutherian games, so-called, are a fourth-century "back formation", Thucydides' history indicates (as Raaflaub notes) that Pausanias offered sacrifice to Zeus Eleutherios in the Plataean agora soon after the battle (2.71.2). Moreover, there was at least an annual tomb cult carried out by Plataeans in the fifth century (3.57). The existence of such a cult would not preclude the possibility that games were also celebrated in the fifth century — at least until the destruction of Plataea — perhaps to be re-established with greater prominence at a later period.

¹⁹ Meuli 1968.62-63. Meuli follows Plutarch's dates (*Arist.* 19.7, 21.2) in maintaining that the Eleutheria was held quadrennially in the month of Boedromion, and the yearly cult of the Plataean dead on 16 Maimakterion. Meuli believes the games were celebrated (only) in honor of Zeus Eleutherios and were quite separate from the cult of the Plataean dead; such a strict distinction of course would make it less likely that an elegy praising those heroes was composed for the dedication of Zeus' altar. Meuli's distinction however may be too narrowly drawn: encomia for athletic victories provide a parallel to the praising of god, hero, and mortal

Strictly for the purposes of my argument here, any Plataean festival will do as a locus for the first performance of the elegy — the funeral celebration itself, the altar dedication (if that was separate from the funeral), or games by any name. The scenario I consider most likely is first performance at the great funeral celebration — which I suppose must have been a formal reburial in the famous tombs constructed at the battlesite (cf. Hdt. 9.85, Diod. 11.33.1), in the manner of the Athenian *patrios nomos* — followed perhaps by annual reperformance in connection with the tomb cult carried on by the Plataeans (Thuc.3.58.4).

Whatever the occasion of its performance, however, the question arises of what generated the elegy's composition. Before the publication of the new Simonides, Bowie had argued that narrative elegies dealing with historical events most likely were performed in contests at public festivals (1986.33-35). However plausible the suggestion, Bowie provides no direct evidence for it; he states that the scale and subject of these poems were suitable for public competition, and that "competition was a central feature" of many festivals. In contrast to the earlier elegies discussed by Bowie, however, there is some evidence for competition among elegies celebrating the battles of Greeks against Persians. An anonymous *Vita Aeschyli* (TGF III 33s) reports a tradition that Aeschylus left Athens for Syracuse "because he was defeated by Simonides in the [competition for] the elegiac on those who died at Marathon" (ἐν τῷ εἰς τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι τεθνηκότας ἐλεγείῳ ἥσκηθεὶς Σιμωνίδῃ). Usually this competition is assumed to involve epigrams submitted by the two famous poets,²⁰ but I know of no evidence for a competition involving epigrams. The term ἐλεγείον, often 'elegiac couplet', can also mean a longer narrative elegy (cf. Dion. Hal. 1.49.2), however, and we do know of contests in which elegies—as well as other kinds of poems, of course — were performed (cf. Paus. 10.7.4 for the ἔλεγχοι of Echembrotos).²¹ It is not implausible that the two famous poets (and perhaps others) competed with narrative elegies in honor of the Marathon dead, perhaps at the Marathonian festival known as the Herakleia. According to Vanderpool, an archaic inscribed stele found at Marathon shows that the Herakleia were expanded soon after the great battle, with games that became Pan-Attic and even larger in scale: from Pindar we learn of athletes from Opous, Aegina, and Corinth who competed there.²² Such a contest would have provided ample precedent for the celebrations at Plataea a decade later.

Aloni, on the other hand, believes the Plataea elegy was more likely generated by a commission than a contest.²³ As with Bowie's hypothesis that archaic narrative elegies were composed for contests, Aloni's opinion here seems to depend largely on a sense that a com-

human beings at the same occasion; cf. esp. Pindar, *Ol.* 2.2. On the whole subject of the burial of war dead see the evidence and discussion in Pritchett 1985.94-259.

²⁰ Oliver 1933.480-494; contra Podlecki 1984.185-187. Podlecki also discusses a scholiast's problematic attribution of a line quoted by Gregory of Nazianzus to the "epigram [sic] written by Simonides for the Athenians who fell at Marathon." See also Molyneux 1992.148-153.

²¹ Cf. West 1974.3-4 on ἐλεγείον, and Gentili 1988.159 for evidence of poetic competitions. Fowler 1987.87-88 suggests that ἐλεγεία may originally have been formal laments performed in musical contests. Steven Lonsdale, who is working on a general study of musical ἀγῶνες, has kindly discussed the subject with me.

²² Vanderpool 1942.335-336, citing Pindar *Ol.* 9.89-90 with schol., 13.110, and *Pyth.* 8.79.

²³ Aloni 1994.18-21. Haslam 1993.135 also tends to favor the idea that the Plataea elegy was commissioned, but without guessing who was responsible for it.

mission would be normal procedure in the contemporary culture.²⁴ Most obvious is the parallel with epinician poems commissioned for individuals — although these are lyrics, not elegies. Perhaps more relevant are the testimonia that Simonides was commissioned to compose (elegiac) epigrams for Persian War heroes of various cities (Hdt. 7.228.3-4, XVI *FGE*). Also significant in this regard is the tradition of his venality (esp. Aristoph. *Peace* 697-699 with schol.). But equally strong on the other side is the evidence that Simonides participated in a great many poetic contests, although again the ones we hear of are not elegiac but choral lyric performances (XXVII, XXVIII *FGE*). Another issue is relevant here: for centuries, grand-scale Greek funeral celebrations involved contests,²⁵ sometimes including musical competitions. Musical competitions have no role in the Iliadic account of Patroclus' funeral games, but Hesiod claims to have won a tripod with his hymn performed at the funeral games of Archidamas (*Works and Days* 654-659). Moreover, classical Athenian funeral celebrations for the war dead included musical as well as hippic and gymnastic contests.²⁶ Although the evidence is not conclusive, it seems plausible that the Plataea elegy could have been performed in competition. The poet's validating use of Homer and summoning of the Muse as ἐπίκουρος (11.15-21) would function well in such a context.²⁷

Aloni further suggests that the Plataea elegy was commissioned specifically by Pausanias or by Sparta. In support of this position, he cites the tradition that Pausanias requested Simonides to compose an epigram declaring himself responsible for the Greek victory over the barbarians, an elegiac couplet inscribed on the serpent column supporting the golden tripod dedicated at Delphi — until Pausanias' fellow-Spartans replaced the offensive verses with the names of the cities that took part in the battle.²⁸ Aloni further notes the prominent role attributed to Sparta in the elegy: it is the Spartans, together with their general Pausanias, with whom the poet begins his description of latter-day mortals worthy of κλέος (fr. 11.29ff.); elsewhere, "sons of Doros and Herakles" are mentioned in opposition to "Medes and Persians" (fr. 13). From the latter passage Aloni concludes (1994.20-21) that the elegy gives special prominence at Plataea to the Spartans and their fellow Dorians — as if they stood for the entire Greek force here, with the Medes and Persians representing the entire enemy force. This passage, however, may be part of a catalogue describing the specific disposition of troops along the battle line, rather than the general confrontation of both armies (cf. Hdt. 9.31 and 46-48, where after several shifts of position the Lacedaemonians end up stationed opposite the Persians and Medes). This hypothesis finds support in Luppe's new reading of fr. 15 and 16, the verses quoted by Plutarch. Quite independently of any considerations about Spartan prominence, Luppe suggests that Simonides is here describing the Corinthians' position in the

²⁴ Aloni 1994.19: "[L'elegia] doveva comunque avere una committenza; ciò rientra nei caratteri di fondo della comunicazione poetica nella Grecia arcaica e classica, soprattutto nel caso di pubbliche performances, e dell'attività di un poeta professionista." Yet this ignores poetic contests, including dithyrambic and tragic.

²⁵ This is the theme of Meuli's pathbreaking study, *Der griechische Agon* (Meuli 1968). Cf. also Roller 1981.

²⁶ Cf. Pritchett 1985.106-112 for testimonia and discussion.

²⁷ I owe this observation to Alessandro Barchiesi. For full discussion of the Plataea poet's relation to Homer and Muse, cf. Eva Stehle's forthcoming study in *Arethusa* (n. 1, above).

²⁸ For the story (not the attribution to Simonides) cf. Thucydides 1.132.2-3. For the inscription cf. Meiggs and Lewis 1969.57-60 (#27); Meiggs and Lewis (p. 60) doubt that Pausanias' couplet was ever inscribed on the monument.

battle line: stationed against "[a company] in the middle," rather than fighting "in the midst [of the battle at large]," as the line is usually understood.²⁹

In any case, Plutarch himself argues that the elegy was not biased in favor of one city: "For these things he has narrated (ἱστόρηκεν), not teaching a chorus in Corinth nor making an ode (ὕμνα) for the city, but rather writing those deeds in an elegy" (*De malig. Herod.* 42 p. 872d). Plutarch's point here is obviously that an elegy, as opposed to a choral song performed for local consumption, is designed for a broad audience and hence presents an objective account. This opinion from a source who evidently knew the whole poem speaks against a Spartan bias in the elegy as well. One wonders just what Plutarch knew, or believed, about the audience and context for which such an elegy was composed.

Finally, if the Plataea elegy were commissioned, the agents need not have been the Spartans or Pausanias. In an analogous example, Molyneux suggests (1992.186-187) that Simonides' lyric on the Thermopylae dead might have been commissioned by the Amphiclyons rather than the Spartans, for performance at the burial site. If such a scenario is conceivable for Thermopylae, it is far more plausible that the Plataea elegy with its mention of many cities was commissioned by a group of poleis, or by the Plataeans. Therefore, without questioning Sparta's relative prominence in the elegy (or the battle), I find the case for a Spartan commission, or for any commission rather than a contest, less conclusive than Aloni does.

Whatever the exact occasion of its first performance, the Plataea elegy must be dated within a few years of the battle. The encomium of Pausanias (fr. 11.33-34) would probably not have been included in a celebratory poem composed after the Spartan regent was discredited for his self-serving policies. Pausanias' fall from grace began with his first recall from the Hellespont and acquittal in 477 (Thuc. 1.94-95), escalated through several suspected intrigues with the Persians, and led to his fatal starvation in the temple of Athena Khalkioikos about ten years later (Thuc. 1.129-134).³⁰ In addition, as Aloni argues (1994.16-18, 21), the panhellenic sentiment evident in the elegy did not last for many years after the battle, as the uneasy collaboration between Sparta and Athens began rapidly to dissolve.

Even though its collaborative spirit and heroic commemoration of Pausanias would have been outdated in the political climate prevailing a decade after the battle, the Plataea elegy clearly outlived its first performance. No doubt it was reperformed, in whole or in part, in symposia. Further, the elegy may have been sung at the Plataeans' annual cult of the tombs, which is well attested in the fifth century (Thuc. 3.57), or at the quadrennial games, whenever they began to be held. Excerpts may even have been adapted for inscription on stone, possibly for those Simonidean inscriptions that Pausanias the periegete read on the tombs of the Athenians and Spartans at Plataea (9.2.5).³¹ However it was transmitted, the fact that we have fragments of the Plataea elegy in two copies of an Alexandrian edition proves beyond doubt that the poem was deemed suitable for preservation.

²⁹ Luppe 1994.21-24. The question of who opposes whom in battle line plays an important part as well in Herodotus' account of the battle of Plataea.

³⁰ On the date of the first recall of Pausanias, cf. Loomis 1990.

³¹ Pace Aloni 1994.17, there is little reason to believe that the couplets preserved in the Palatine Anthology (A.P. 7.253 and 251 = VIII and IX *FGE*) are the ones Pausanias saw at Plataea.

3. Agonistic and Mythodic History

The publication of the new Simonides thus draws our attention more vividly to poetic "histories" and the influence they may have had on popular knowledge of the events described.³² Other events and historical figures of the late sixth/early fifth centuries were remembered in songs still known, at least in Athens, generations later. The inaccurate belief that Hipparchos was tyrant when he was assassinated, for example, notoriously criticized by Thucydides more than once (1.20.2, 6.54-59), is perpetuated in several skolia (I *FGE*, 893, 895, 896 *PMG*). Old Comedy provides an illuminating example of poetic "history", when Aristophanes' hero Strepsiades describes how he asked his son to sing a Simonidean lyric on "the Ram, how he was fleeced" — evidently a song about Krios of Aegina, a famous contemporary of Kleomenes (*Clouds* 1355-1358, cf. 507 *PMG*; Hdt. 6.50.3 preserves another play on Krios' name).

Herodotus not infrequently uses hexametric oracles and elegiac epigrams as evidence for past events in the same period. It is likely that narrative elegies influenced his account as well, at least indirectly through their influence on the memories of his oral sources.³³ The use of poetry as a basis for historiography continues in later centuries; both Plutarch and Diodorus, as we have seen, quote Simonidean poems as sources for early fifth-century history.

The potential influence of "historical" poems on popular ideas about the past, together with the likelihood that such poems were publicly performed in a commemorative festival, shed light on a famous passage in Thucydides. In discussing the style and purpose of his history (1.22.4), Thucydides says that he does not aim to please. His work is not an ἀγώνισμα 'contest piece' for an audience's temporary pleasure.³⁴ It may even seem ἀτερπέτερον 'rather unpleasant' because it lacks τὸ μῦθῳδεον — a rare term understood here to mean an entertaining (or, as Stewart Flory has recently suggested, militaristic and chauvinistic) quality in narrative, as opposed to sober reporting of the events.³⁵ Ever since a scholiast's comment that here Thucydides αἰνίττεται τὰ Μηδικὰ Ἡροδότου, Thucydides' programmatic statement has been considered a criticism directed especially against his earlier contemporary Herodotus. This interpretation is supported by the fact that in at least one passage Thucydides pointedly corrects statements that appear in Herodotus, even though he never mentions him by name.³⁶

³² Cf. Thomas 1989.235, discussing the influence of the epitaphios and other official traditions of the past on the memory of even recent events: "Herodotus and Thucydides collected information mostly from oral tradition and personal reminiscences, highly simplified general traditions and detailed individual memories... The span of official tradition extended widely from legendary times to the present. But it contained huge gaps. There was nothing of the vast stretch of time between the legends and the battle of Marathon." This fact may be due, I suggest, partly to the poems that preserved memories of the battles of the Persian Wars.

³³ I will consider the question of Herodotus' relation to Simonidean poetic sources in a forthcoming study in *Arethusa* (n. 1, above).

³⁴ For ἀγώνισμα cf. also 3.82.7. On this passage in general cf. Fornara 1983.120 (with notes), and Loraux 1986.288-298.

³⁵ Cf. Hornblower 1991.60-62. Flory 1990.193-208, argues that with τὸ μῦθῳδεον Thucydides is rejecting sentimental patriotic stories because they would make his history less useful than unbiased reporting about the grim realities of war. Good internal evidence supports this argument. Among the accounts Thucydides is rejecting, however, Flory concentrates on Herodotus and on "patriotic oratory" to the exclusion of poetry.

³⁶ Cf. Hornblower 1991.57-58, *ad* 1.20.3, where Thucydides is correcting Herodotus 6.57.5 (the view that Spartan kings had two votes), and 9.53.2 (on the existence of a Lacedaemonian Pitana λόχος).

Thucydides' criticism, however, is not restricted to Herodotus and other early historians or chroniclers. As has long been recognized and is recently stressed by Nicole Loraux, orators are included as well.³⁷ Thucydides contrasts his aim and methods with the encomiastic oral traditions of Athenian history, uncritically repeated especially in the funeral orations.³⁸ But along with these producers of prose, chroniclers and orators alike, Thucydides also criticizes poets as responsible for inaccurate accounts. This fact has not gone unremarked, but has received much less attention than his implied criticism of Herodotus or the epitaphic orators.

Thucydides' attitude toward both poets and logographers is expressed most explicitly in 1.21.1. He maintains that his summary of τὰ παλαιά— extending from earliest times through the Persian Wars³⁹ and their aftermath — is more accurate than that of either poets (who are generally κοσμοῦντες)⁴⁰ or logographers, who compose their accounts more "for attracting an audience" (ἐπὶ τὸ προαγωγότερον τῆ ἀκροάσει) than for the truth.⁴¹ Their reports generally cannot be tested, and with the passage of time most of them, however untrustworthy, have "won out toward the mythodic" (ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνευικηκότα). In this passage, compressed and difficult as it is, I think Thucydides is saying that untrustworthy, unprovable poetic and logographic accounts of the past have beaten out competing versions. Repeated over time, these accounts have reached the goal of becoming "mythodic", that is, not just entertaining but also resonant, satisfying, memorable, authoritative. Their appeal, which modern readers often dismiss as "fanciful", comes largely from fulfilling audience expectations about how such stories should be told.⁴²

Now the contents of the Plataea elegy allow us to see more clearly the kind of traditions whose historical validity Thucydides criticizes. There can be little doubt that songs like this, oriented toward the glory of those being commemorated, form part of the background against which the historian wishes to distinguish himself. This hypothesis is corroborated by three kinds of internal evidence: Thucydides' critical (not always negative) discussion of the testimony of poets in the course of his work; his emphasis on the pleasing aural quality of the in

³⁷ On (fourth-century) orators as *logographoi*, cf. Kennedy 1963.57 and *passim*. With his remarks about τὸ μυθῶδες, according to Loraux 1986.288, Thucydides is attacking not just the epitaphioi but "all forms of oral expression—eloquence or poetry." For Thucydides on the Athenians' representation of their own history cf. Strasburger 1958.

³⁸ In an interesting parallel, noted by Meuli 1968.104-105, Cicero, *Brutus* 16 and Livy 8.40 both complain about the bad influence of funerary *laudationes* on Roman historiography.

³⁹ Flory 1990.200 and *passim* goes too far, however, in restricting Thucydides' comments here to traditions about the Persian Wars.

⁴⁰ Note κόσμον in Simonides 11.23, partly restored by West.

⁴¹ Thucydides is here using a contemporary topos that invokes the usefulness of accuracy and truthfulness over crowd-pleasing style and contents. A few salient examples include the Theban herald in Eur. *Suppliants* 412-416, who criticizes political speakers pleasing a mob; somewhat later, Plato's Socrates attacks poetry sung to the lyre, dithyramb, and tragedy for providing pleasure rather than instruction and improvement (*Gorgias* 501-502). Plato's famous exclusion of poets in the *Republic* can be seen as a culmination of the argument.

⁴² On "mythos" as authoritative speech, cf. Martin 1989, esp. ch. 1. For a similar explanation of ἐκνικῶ, but ignoring poets, cf. Flory 1990.200-201, who remarks that "no commentator has ever explained and most translators suppress" Thucydides' "metaphor... of a story winning a competition." See now Hornblower 1991.56, citing Flory. I am grateful to Dirk Obbink and Ineke Sluiter for discussing this passage with me.

ferior accounts; and his use of the word ἀγώνισμα to refer to crowd-pleasing versions of past events.

I begin with the last point. When Thucydides declares that his work is not an ἀγώνισμα, he is not of course referring exclusively to poetic accounts of the past. His Kleon describes orators as ἀγωνισταί, 'contestants', for public favor (3.37.4), and calls their sophistic speeches ἄθλα ἐκ τοιῶνδε ἀγώνων (3.38.3).⁴³ But a poem performed in a public festival could also be called an ἀγών or ἀγώνισμα, even if an overt contest with other poets were not involved. In *Odyssey* 8.259, for example, ἀγῶνες is used of Demodokos' performance (with boy dancers) of the song of Ares and Aphrodite.⁴⁴ Thucydides' scornful disclaimer can thus apply to poetic as well as prose "prize performances."

Second, Thucydides refers emphatically to the importance of *sound* in the pleasing but inaccurate accounts he is criticizing: his own account, he realizes, may seem ἐκ μὲν ἀκρόατιν ... ἀτερπέτερον (1.22.4), for it is not intended as an ἀγώνισμα ἐκ τὸ παραχρημα ἀκούειν (1.22.4).⁴⁵ Pleasing the ear is important for rhetoricians and for prose narrators who perform their accounts orally,⁴⁶ but poetry has an even stronger and prior claim on delighting an audience (cf. e.g. Hesiod *Theog.* 96-103 for the singer's effects). When Thucydides advises his readership (or audience) that his narrative, with its lack of τὸ μυθῶδες, may seem ἀτερπέτερον, he is using poetry's own view of the pleasure it imparts.

I disagree then with Flory's statement (1990.198-199): "We should thus utterly separate Thucydides' notion of pleasure from the tradition of pleasure in anecdotes that goes back in Greek literature to the scene in Eumaeus' hut in the *Odyssey*." Flory argues against an aesthetic interpretation of Thucydides' remarks (an interpretation found, as Flory himself notes, in Dionysius, *De comp.* 22 [Roberts]) and concentrates instead on his criticism of content, maintaining that "the only kind of dangerous pleasure of which Thucydides takes account, using τέρψις, ἡδύς, and related language, is pleasure in the rhetoric of speeches that prove politically or militarily damaging."⁴⁷ But there is no need to explain away the dimension of aural pleasure that is so explicit in Thucydides; patriotic speeches and encomiastic poems fail, from the historian's point of view, insofar as they aim for *both* aesthetic and chauvinistic pleasure, rather than accuracy. The Plataea elegy provides a fine example of this kind of narrative.

⁴³ The passages in Thuc. 3.38 and 3.82 are cited also by Hornblower 1991.59-60. Cf. also Loraux 1986. 298, n. 137, on Lysias 2.2 and Plato 235d6. It is important to note, however, that the Athenian epitaphios itself was probably not developed until the 460's, years after Simonides' elegies on the Persian War battles (cf. Loraux 56-68 and *passim* for thorough discussion). Thus encomiastic poems may well have influenced the version of the past reflected in the epitaphia.

⁴⁴ Epitaphic orators, of course, likewise did not overtly compete with each other: Thuc. 2.34.6 ἀνήρ ἡρημένος ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως. But a funeral speech can be called ἀγών, e.g. Lysias 2.2.

⁴⁵ Cf. also 1.21.1 (discussed in following note) and 1.20.1, τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν προγεγενημένων, for the orality of the traditions Thucydides is criticizing. I agree with Hornblower 1991.59-60 *ad* 1.22.4, that this "apology" does not exclude the possibility that Thucydides recited his work, even though he emphasizes its permanent usefulness rather than audience appeal.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1.21.1, where specifically the *logographoi* are chastised for composing their works ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῆ ἀκροάσει ἢ ἀληθέτερον, as well as 3.38.7 ἀκοῆς ἡδονῆ.

⁴⁷ Flory 1990.198; on p. 196, Flory cites but dismisses the Dionysius passage.

Finally, Thucydides shows himself well aware of poets as sources of historical information. As already noted, Thucydides contrasts his own reconstruction of recent history with the accounts of ποιηταί (1.21.1). Although he never mentions the prose writer Herodotus by name, and Hellanicus only once (1.97), several times he explicitly attributes material to poets. He cites Homer for evidence that the name 'Hellene' was not always used of all Greeks (1.3.2-3),⁴⁸ as well as on several facets of the Trojan War (1.9-10). Elsewhere he uses a phrase attested by "many of the poets" to argue for the location of Tereus' Thracian home (2.29.3).

In general, however, Thucydides' attitude toward poetic (and oratorical) "historiography" is a negative one. Not only does he warn about exaggeration, embellishment, and inaccuracy in accounts designed to please the ear, but even the idea of κλέος itself seems under attack when his Pericles declares that Athens "does not need the praise of a Homer or anyone who might delight (τέρψει) for the present with his words" but fail in regard to the truth (2.41.4).⁴⁹ All this can be seen as part of a debate in later fifth-century Athens between the traditional authority of poetry and the more recent claims of prose-writers. As Ann Michelini puts it, "In the second half of the fifth century, non-poetic discourses began to encroach upon poetry's claim to be the voice of Hellenic culture."⁵⁰

The heroizing, encomiastic element we see in the Plataea elegy helps explain Thucydides' reactions to "mythodic" history. The recovered fragments suggest how the song culture, to use John Herington's happy term, might interact—or interfere—with the developing genre of prose historiography. Remarkably, we have an explicit statement of purpose in both cases.⁵¹ An encomium composed to assure undying fame for the heroes of Plataea (the elegist's stated goal, cf. fr. 11.23-28) may have helped shape the memory of the battle — and this would be true for the other great Persian War battles as well, since Salamis, Artemisium, Thermopylae, and perhaps Marathon were all subjects of Simonidean poems. The very idea was disconcerting to Thucydides, whose overt purpose has turned from bestowing κλέος to conveying ἀκρίβεια.⁵²

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⁴⁸ Cf. Hornblower 1991.17 for useful comments.

⁴⁹ Note that this proud disclaimer suggests the possibility that someone could compose Homeric-style praise for fifth-century contemporaries — which was the very aim of the Plataea elegy!

⁵⁰ Cf. Michelini 1994.219, arguing that the *Suppliants*, "by importing a triumphant and jingoistic theme from funeral orations [i.e. the theme of Theseus and the Seven], presents some challenges to the generic constitution of tragedy." This debate succeeds and transcends poetic critiques (cf. esp. Pindar, *Nem.*7) of competing poetic accounts, which Howie 1984 compares to Thucydides' criticism of mythic and poetic accounts. Cf. also note 37 above.

⁵¹ Simonides fr. 11.20-25, Thuc. 1.22. Hornblower 1991.59 notes that it is "hard to parallel" Thucydides' methodological explicitness (here, with regard to his speeches: 1.22) even in later writers.

⁵² This article has profited from discussion with many friends and colleagues, including A. Barchiesi, G. Nagy, D. Obbink, A. Powell, K. Raafaub, I. Rutherford, D. Sider, E. Stehle, and M. Toher. I thank them warmly for their help.