

Public Discourses and Public-Image Making in Periclean Athens

by  
Ben Petersen

A THESIS

Submitted to

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In partial fulfillment of  
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Presented May 18, 2016  
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Ben Petersen for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in History presented on May 18, 2016. Title: Public Discourses and Public Image-Making in Periclean Athens .

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Kevin Osterloh

When one looks back on fifth-century Athens, one political figure stands out: Pericles. He is famous for many things but mostly the idealized version of him that one reads about in Thucydides. However, what most people do not know is that there was a counter-narrative to this well known account—the comic poets. This project has centered on the portrayals and depictions of Pericles in fifth-century Athens by both the comic poets and Thucydides as well as the complicated aspects of those interpretations. The chief claim of this project is that the image of Pericles, as found in the comic poets and Thucydides, is the product of political discourses taking place in fifth century Athens that were navigating the social, political, and religious implications of a new radical democracy and a growing Athenian imperialism. Pericles was neither all that Thucydides idealized him to be or the philandering tyrant that the comic poets cast him. Rather, the historian should liberate Pericles from the constraints of the ideal and lift him from the depths of parody in order to understand him in context of his own time.

Key Words: Encomium, rhetoric, quellenkritik, objectivism, pragmatism,

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Ben Petersen, Author

Special thanks to my advisors Dr. Kevin Osterloh, Dr. Gary Ferngren and Dr. Rena Lauer

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Chapter 1: The Ideal Image of Pericles</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Imperfect Image of Pericles</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 3: A More Complex Portrait of the comic poets</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Chapter 4: A More Complex Portrait of Thucydides</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	
<b>Appendix A: Timeline of Important Dates</b>	
<b>Bibliography</b>	



One of the first mentions of Pericles recorded in ancient literature comes from the so-called “father of history” himself, Herodotus. In book 6 of the *Histories*, Herodotus writes that Pericles’ mother, Agariste, “dreamt” at some point during her pregnancy that “she gave birth to a lion, and a few days later became the mother of Pericles” (*Histories* 6.133). It was certainly no accident that Herodotus includes in his account that Agariste dreamt of giving birth to a lion; in ancient culture, it was very common for people to go back and “re-discover” the mythic origins of great men.<sup>1</sup> However, Herodotus was not writing after Pericles died. Rather, Herodotus was a contemporary of Pericles, though he was not an Athenian. Was Herodotus praising Pericles for being like a “lion” or using the image as a critique, making a subtle allusion to his being a tyrant? As Vincent Azoulay notes, it would seem that Herodotus was making a subtle allusion to the Peisistratids, tyrants who ruled Athens in the sixth century BCE. Indeed, Herodotus had compared one of the Peisistratids, Hipparchus, to a “lion” as well.<sup>2</sup> Already, in the earliest references to Pericles, we see that there are two potential ways to read his character: either as a strong leader, or as a tyrant.

Between 600 and 450 BC, something quite remarkable was beginning to take shape in Athens. In this period, the city-state moved from the rule of tyrants to a radical democracy and Pericles was a major player in this change. During the time that Pericles was a politician in Athens, Athenians enjoyed freedom of speech, which they used in a variety of different mediums. For example, there was robust debate and jostling in the Assembly (the place where the Athenians met to deliberate over policy) and there were

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<sup>1</sup> Both Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar had mythic or religious origins. For example, before Alexander was born, Olympias dreamt that a thunderbolt struck her womb (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 1).

<sup>2</sup> Azoulay, Vincent. *Pericles of Athens*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 139.

plays in which political leaders were attacked in comical ways through well-known platforms. Part of being an Athenian politician meant that other Athenian citizens could criticize you in the Assembly and through these plays. Pericles was one of these politicians being that he was a *strategos* (elected magistrate). In terms of deeds, one should note that Pericles was an exceptional politician for the way in which he used oratory and other methods to accomplish various policies. However, this paper is not devoted to examining Pericles' political actions but rather aims to analyze how he was viewed by those who sought to idealize him, such as Thucydides, or, conversely, vilify him, such as the comic poets, known to us mostly through Plutarch. The primary contention of this thesis is to argue that these sources, both Thucydides and the comic poets, each had their own interpretive biases that shaped the way they viewed Pericles and that the historian should view these two sources as being in conversation with each other on both Pericles' public and private images. In order to establish this argument, this paper will first address the ideal image of Pericles that Thucydides presents. Second, it will examine the counter-narrative to Thucydides' ideal image as another interpretation that the comic poets present. Third, it will complicate the comic poets' counter-narrative by showing that the comic poets themselves were part of a wide variety of political factions with varying political motives. Fourth, this paper will reinterpret the last two speeches of Pericles as a response by Thucydides to the claims of the comic poets.

## **Chapter 1:**

## The Ideal Images of Pericles

### *Thucydides' Encomium*

When one reads the *Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, many political figures come on the scenes that appear to have had a great deal of influence on the course of events. There is one political figure in Thucydides' narrative, however, which seems to overshadow all others in Athens: Pericles. Thucydides calls him "the most powerful man of his generation" and repeats this description later when he says that Pericles was "the foremost Athenian of that time, and the most powerful-as both speaker and man of action" (Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.127; 1.139). It is not too difficult to believe Thucydides on this point; Pericles was powerful, indeed enough to convince Athenians to go to war with Sparta, prevent meetings in the Assembly (Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 33; Thucydides 2.22), and to skirt laws which he himself introduced (e.g. the Periclean citizenship laws).<sup>3</sup>

According to Thucydides, Pericles plays the role of the "seemingly" ideal political leader of Athens who's "conspicuous imperviousness to bribes gave him free rein to bridle the majority" (Thucydides 2.65), in direct contrast to several other Athenian political leaders.<sup>4</sup> With such high praise from Thucydides, one might be tempted to think that Pericles' legacy contains no real faults. Indeed, some scholars, such as A.W. Gomme, contend that Thucydides was solely praising Pericles in 2.65, even when considering his less-than-perfect moments of leadership. In this section, however, I will offer an analysis of his ideal version of Pericles by looking at two facets of Thucydides'

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<sup>3</sup> Plutarch *Life of Pericles*, 37

<sup>4</sup> Themistocles took bribes, for example (Plutarch, *Themistocles* 25).

depiction: firstly, Pericles' rhetorical power and, secondly, Pericles' rhetorical ability in context with other Athenian leaders.

While Thucydides praises Pericles' military prowess, he focuses a great deal on Pericles' rhetorical power:—his ability to control the *demos* (people) through speech in the *ecclesia* (the Assembly). The *ecclesia* was the popular assembly that passed law and legislations in the Athenian democracy. When Thucydides refers to the *demos*, he seems to be referring to the citizens of Athens that met in the Assembly. Of course, this is a broad and sweeping reference, which does not show the diversity of political opinions in the Athenian democracy, but it is a helpful dialectical tool. In the three instances where Thucydides has Pericles giving speeches, he is the sole speaker. This contrasts with most other public speeches throughout Thucydides' narrative, which usually include two speakers debating a particular course of action such as the Cleon and Diodotus in 3.37-48 and Nicias and Alcibiades in 6.9-23. Thucydides' decision to cast the rhetorical spotlight on Pericles alone in these cases has the effect of casting Pericles' arguments as so convincing that there was no need for the vigorous debates that usually characterized Athenian democracy. Indeed, as Thucydides himself states, "In its rhetoric, Athens was becoming a democracy; in practice it was the domain of its foremost man" (Thucydides 2.65). In other words, when it came to Pericles, Athens was ruled by a tyrant (or a "first citizen"), even though it claimed to be a democracy.

Here Thucydides notes a paradox: while the people ideally ruled Athens, one man could hold sway over the others. In Athens, there were no trial lawyers: each man had to be able to defend himself in court. As a result, oratory was highly important in Athenian political life. Moreover, any citizen could address the *ecclesia*, or the citizen body, when

it met. If a citizen had rhetorical skill, he could potentially use that ability to manipulate the *ecclesia* for political purposes. In fact, Thucydides often depicts the decision-making process of the Assembly by showing two speeches by speakers that present opposing arguments. This did not reflect the back-and-forth nature of debate that probably existed in the Assembly in Athens but if one did have natural oratorical ability, there was a clear advantage. So naturally, the “foremost man” dominated the people because of his ability to sway the masses through speech and argument—that was the interactive hallmark of Athens’ deliberative democracy.

As Thucydides makes clear, Pericles was one such man. In Book 1, Pericles gives a highly persuasive speech, convincing the Athenians to go to war with Sparta (Thucydides 1.140-145). In Book 2 chapter 22, Thucydides tells us that Pericles kept the city calm when the Spartans marched into Attic territory. According to Thucydides, Pericles also was able correctly to diagnose the morale of the people and bring just the right words to influence their feelings. After losing heart when the Peloponnesians attacked for a second time, the Athenians became frightened and “put tremendous pressure on Pericles” to go out and make peace with the Spartans (Thucydides 2.59). Pericles, in response, did not give into their demands but sought to “soften their angry feelings, and to make them less afraid” (Thucydides 2.59). In another famous instance, Pericles gives his last speech in order to “deflect the Athenians anger from himself” for bringing the war on them (Thucydides 2.65). Throughout his narrative, Thucydides seeks to show that the people could not stay a steady course without a “foremost man” to keep them on course with his rhetorical prowess. They are eager to find a quick way out of their pain brought on by the war and suffering but Pericles was able to calm their angry

sentiments by using his rhetorical ability, showing that his leadership was what the state needed.<sup>5</sup>

Pericles' persuasive ability is all the more remarkable when one puts it into the Athenian democratic context. According to Thucydides, the leaders of the Athenian democracy were not supposed to be tyrants or kings who ruled with no accountability. On the contrary, the people had the power to ostracize any leader whom they disliked or who failed to meet their standards.<sup>6</sup> The primary fear of the people was another leader in the mold of Pisistratus, the ultimate tyrant from the Athenian perspective. Therefore, any leader of Athens likely felt the weight of the high expectations set by the *demos*. Pericles' response to the people, as mentioned in 2.59, seems to demonstrate how calm and levelheaded he was even in the face of a potential ostracism. He never panicked or sought to capitulate to the demands of the people in spite of the fact that they could ostracize him, as they had Themistocles (see Thucydides 1.135, Plutarch *Themistocles* 22). He knew their naturally unstable collective psychological state, or *psyche*, and sought to control it. As Thucydides asserts, "He could contradict them and even make them angry, because his prestige gave him power. Indeed, whenever he saw that they were rashly about to do something flagrantly premature, he would give a speech and whip them into a panic; but when they were irrationally frightened, he would restore their confidence" (Thucydides 2.65). He countered-balanced the fast-changing sentiments of the people

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<sup>5</sup> In the dynamic between Pericles and Athens itself, according to Thucydides, it would appear as though speech and actions are becoming, over time, more harmonious as Pericles claimed (or Thucydides) claims: "that words and deeds are so perfectly balanced... for these (Athenians)" (Thucydides 2.42).

<sup>6</sup> Plutarch *Life of Themistocles*, 22: "So at last the Athenians banished him. They made use of the ostracism to humble his great reputation and his authority, as indeed was their habit with any man whose power they regarded as oppressive, or who had risen to an eminence which they considered out of keeping with the equality of a democracy. They did not regard ostracism as a punishment, but rather as a means of appeasing and blunting that spirit of envy, which delights in bringing down the mighty and finds an outlet for its own rancor in this penalty of disenfranchisement."

with the appropriate sentiment in order to restore them to a state of calmness, ready to make good policy decisions. He maintained philosophical control over his own emotions and was able to exercise the same control over the people.<sup>7</sup>

Thucydides details exactly what gave Pericles this ability. Pericles, as Thucydides explains, “was not always trying to acquire power improperly, by saying anything to please the people” (Thucydides 2.65). Most other leaders in Athenian democracy were trying to gain power by means of mere crowd-pleasing speeches, such as the one Diodotus gives in Book 3. Thucydides seems to point to this problem when he says that Athens’ “later leaders, all on an equal footing with one another, yet each striving to be pre-eminent, began to surrender even policy-making to the whims of the people” (Thucydides 2.65). Throughout Books 3-8, various Athenian leaders attempt to guide Athens using demagoguery, such as Cleon, Diodotus, Nicias, and Alcibiades. All of these leaders, for one reason or another fail to lead the masses with the same kind of emotionally controlled, prescient force (2.65) that Pericles displays. But a man like Pericles saw that this kind of power would be short-lived because any man who said whatever the people wanted to hear would ultimately be cast aside by a fickle populace (as happened to Alcibiades). Pericles, in contrast, gained power properly by means of his impeccable character. By not being under the sway of populist sentiment, he could correctly steer the ship of state.<sup>8</sup> In essence, the strength of Pericles, according to Thucydides, lies in his character. He seemed to be concerned with the interests of the

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<sup>7</sup> Based on these remarks from Thucydides, it would seem as though Thucydides actually preferred an Athens ruled by a “foremost man.” After all, he was a member of the noble class, being a *strategos* himself. See Book 8

<sup>8</sup> Plato’s *Republic*, Book VI 487-488

whole state rather than his own individual interests and was therefore immune to personal threats.

Thucydides' encomium seems to place Pericles in an almost mythological realm in which other leaders from Greece and beyond do not seem to compare. Certainly, from Thucydides, we get a sense of Pericles' great rhetorical power in comparison with other Athenian leaders. After reading Books 1 and 2, the reader should think that if Pericles had lived, Athens really would have won this war against Sparta.<sup>9</sup> If nothing else, these moments show how well Athens functioned with a strong leader.

#### *A.W. Gomme*

The idealized Pericles that Thucydides propagated has been so persuasive that, for a long time, members of the historical profession in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries promoted it and, until recently, held sway in academia. To be sure, scholars have debated Pericles' legacy, tending to either diminish or idealize him and his accomplishments.<sup>10</sup> Some thought he was an "unscrupulous demagogue" until the nineteenth century when

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<sup>9</sup> Thucydides 2.65: "The biggest mistake, the Sicilian expedition, was not so much an error of judgement about those whom they were attacking, as the failure of those who ordered the expedition to make the right additional decisions to support their men abroad. Instead, in their personal machinations for the leadership of the people, they blunted the edge of the fighting force and introduced civil strife by quarreling among themselves. After the disaster in Sicily, involving the loss of the subsequent reinforcements and of most of the navy, and with the city by now in turmoil, the Athenians nevertheless held out for three years against not only their original enemies but also against the Sicilians who were now allied with them; against their own allies, most of whom had rebelled; and later against the King's son, Cyrus, who gave the Peloponnesians money for a navy. Furthermore, they did not surrender until they had succumbed to their private quarrels and destroyed themselves. That is how much reason Pericles had for predicting that Athens would easily defeat the unaided Peloponnesians in the war."

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 14: "The Periclean myth is a recent re-creation. Up until the end of the eighteenth century, Pericles was for the most part judged with disdain, if not arrogantly ignored. Blinded by Roman and Spartan models, the men of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment regarded the *strategos* as an unscrupulous demagogue who headed a degenerate regime. It was not until the nineteenth century-and, in particular, Thucydides' return to favor-coupled with the advent of parliamentary regimes in Europe-that, progressively, a new Pericles emerged in the writings of historians, where he was now presented as an enlightened bourgeois. Prepared by Rollin and Voltaire and completed by George Grote and Victor Duruy, this slow metamorphosis engendered the figure of an idealized Pericles who, still today, is enthroned in school textbooks on a par with Louis XIV."



Athens was re-examined by the new class of professional, objectivist, historians.<sup>11</sup> These two ideological tendencies among academics result from how they grapple with the primary source of Thucydides and the primary sources that Plutarch presents.

A.W. Gomme (d. 1959), for example, largely rejected attacks on Pericles by the fifth-century comic poets and playwrights. He did so by accepting Thucydides' point of view because he perceived Thucydides to be viewing the comic poets and dramatists' details as "trivial."<sup>12</sup> Gomme asserts that the anecdotes presented by the fifth-century comics and playwrights are untrustworthy and argues that Thucydides believes this as well when he compares Thucydides to Herodotus. He writes,

It is in this more than in anything else that he shows his determination not to write like Herodotos, not to allow himself to be beguiled and to beguile others by what is simply attractive. His superb silence on the anecdotes and gossip and the scandals about Perikles at the beginning of the war is the principal case in point.<sup>13</sup>

According to Gomme, it was the "great political events" that Thucydides was interested in reporting on, not the foolish attacks of Pericles' political enemies.<sup>14</sup> Gomme also states, "attacks were made on Pericles, though they left his supremacy undisturbed."<sup>15</sup> Now, it is true that the Athenians, in general, did not question Pericles' political supremacy. Except for one brief moment in which the people asked Pericles to step down (Thuc. 2.65), Pericles remained on top of the political order of Athens for most of his adult life. However, do these attacks get at historical truth in any way? Even Gomme found it noteworthy that, "it matters not whether the anecdotes told by Plutarch are true,

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<sup>11</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 27.

provided they were told at the time and believed by many.”<sup>16</sup> Gomme does not totally diminish their value, but he does significantly undermine their credibility as historical sources compared to Thucydides.

Gomme then goes on to state that he himself believed that Thucydides was aware of these attacks and that he did not think much of them. “It proves not only that he regarded the stories themselves as too puerile to need refuting, but that he did not believe either that Perikles was guided in his policy by personal motives, or that his political position was shaken by the outbreak of the war.”<sup>17</sup> Gomme seems to know Thucydides’ motives. He claims that Thucydides was not responding to the comic poets in writing his depictions of Pericles and he viewed Pericles as an almost purely political man. To add to this, Gomme mentions “the Olympian silence of Thucydides,” which was god-like enough to keep these popular and thus irrelevant opinions out of his history.<sup>18</sup> This kind of statement makes Thucydides seem like a Greek god who, although he lived through the midst of these events, was untouched by them as if he had no stake in Pericles’ legacy and was just reporting the facts as he saw them.

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<sup>16</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Gomme, *Thucydides*, 27.

## Chapter 2: The Imperfect Image of Pericles

Although Gomme—and indeed Thucydides—seemed to discredit the so-called gossip and rumors of the poets and dramatists, they are worth investigating in order to understand the criticism that the comic poets levied against Pericles. In the political climate of fifth-century Athens, political criticism was commonplace. One form in which political attacks asserted themselves was through comedy. As is true of many other cultures, art reflects life and life reflects art. Athens was no different. The ancient critics titled the comedy produced during the fifth century B.C. “Old Comedy”. Among other things, it addressed matters of “immediate social or political relevance” as well as “personal attacks on contemporary figures.”<sup>19</sup> Old Comedy seems to have targeted leaders who supported democratic changes like Pericles and, for the most part, left alone leaders from the conservative party like Cimon and Thucydides, son of Melesias.<sup>20</sup> The public life of the *polis* was on display in these comedies. The best-known example of an Old Comedy playwright, Aristophanes, made social issues the central theme of many of his plays.<sup>21</sup> These comic poets captured many of the fundamental beliefs that permeated

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<sup>19</sup> Konstan, *Greek Comedy and Ideology*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> W. Robert Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971.), 169n58: “Some politicians escaped quite lightly. If, for example, we look at the treatment of the three men the *AthPol* praises in 28.5, Theramenes, Nicias, and Thucydides son of Melesias, we find that comedy is relatively mild in its treatment of them.”

<sup>21</sup> Konstan. *Greek Comedy and Ideology*. 4: “Aristophanes’ comedies more overtly address contemporary social issues. Three plays are devoted to the ongoing war, others to problems of wealth and poverty, Athenian litigiousness, the dangers represented by new and corrosive philosophical doctrines or by popular leaders whom he regarded as demagogues, the function of public poetry (specifically tragedy), and the role of women in the state, to name but a few of the topics congenial to him.”

the political atmosphere in Athens and providing scholars with vital bits of detail about how Pericles' rhetoric influenced Athenian citizens.<sup>22</sup>

In dealing with comic poets and politicians from fifth-century Athens, I have extracted fragments of plays, which Plutarch uses in his *Life of Pericles*, as well as fragments found elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Plutarch was a biographer living during the Roman Empire sometime around 45 to 120 AD, spending a great deal of his life writing biographical accounts of “great” men from the ancient world, both Greek and Roman.<sup>24</sup> He had access to a great deal of information taken from primary sources, which are often no longer extant, such as the writings of comic poets like Cratinus, Ion, and Hermippus, which he used in several of his Greek *Lives* including *Cimon*, *Pericles*, *Nicias*, and *Alcibiades*. Plutarch's quotations from these authors are the only surviving remnants of their works.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, these fragments point to a portrait of Pericles who is more ambitious in his designs for power than what Thucydides seems to allow. Comic poets and politicians used many different types of attacks against Pericles. However, here I will address only two inter-connected types of critiques levied over the course of Pericles' long career, from 470 to 429 BCE: the ways in which they attacked his public image by asserting that his rhetoric was tyrannical and the way in which they attacked his sexual honor. The

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<sup>22</sup> Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*. 170: “Old Comedy must have mass appeal....Old Comedy was a truly popular art form, one that appealed to the Athenian citizenry....their works have a broad appeal and their criticisms are normally made from popular viewpoints.”

<sup>23</sup> Some scholars believe that Plutarch based much of his *Life of Pericles* on an earlier extant account written by Ephorus (341-340 BC). See Fowler, Harold N. “The Origin of the Statements Contained in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*, Chapter XIII,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*. Vol. 12, Goodwin Volume (1901), p 211-220. Gomme, *Thucydides*, 45: “Ephoros may have been a better writer than at present appears, and the loss of his work is to be regretted. It had considerable influence on later writers....Plutarch read him and often quotes him”

<sup>24</sup> Hornblower, Simon, and Antony Spawforth. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.), 546.

<sup>25</sup> In general, this paper focuses on the fragments found in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* and not on Plutarch's work itself because, although Plutarch provides us with significant information about Greek figures from the fifth-century, his point of view is more removed from the political-cultural climate in Athens at that time.

comic poets attacked Pericles' rhetoric with a specific purpose in mind: to make him appear to be a tyrant, thereby discrediting him with the Athenian populace, and subsequently making political gains for the "conservative" or oligarchical party. They comment on his style of governance in the following ways: by comparing him to Zeus and Agamemnon, by attacking his arrogant style of address, by depicting him as deceitful, and finally, by alleging that Pericles hides behind his rhetoric and is essentially a coward. As far as attacks made on Pericles' sexual honor, they attacked him for sleeping with other men's wives and sleeping with his lover Aspasia of Miletus, who was an influential courtesan in Athens at the time.

*Counter Narrative 1: Pericles the Tyrannical/cowardly Strategos*

According to Thucydides, Pericles seems to be the *rhetor par excellence*. However, the comic poets and politicians attacked the same rhetorical powers that Thucydides praises.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Plutarch makes note of this phenomenon: "The comic poets of the time, who were constantly letting fly at him either in earnest or in fun, declare that the title (the Olympian) originated mainly from his manner of speaking. They refer to him as thundering and lightening when he addressed his audience and as wielding a terrible thunderbolt in his tongue" (*Pericles* 8). In calling him "the Olympian," the comic poets

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<sup>26</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*. 73: Not all comic poets criticized Pericles. One of the most famous comic poets, Eupolis says:

In eloquence no man could equal him—  
When Pericles arose and took the floor,  
By ten good feet our common orators  
As by an expert runner were outstripped.  
Not only voluble, but with persuasion  
Sitting upon his lips. He bound a spell,  
And had this power alone of orators,  
To prick men's hearts and leave behind the sting.

compared Pericles to Zeus, the father of the gods. In many of the critiques of Pericles, the comic poets place Pericles alongside the king of the gods and although this may seem complimentary, it surely does not have a favorable connotation.<sup>27</sup> Cratinus (519-422 BC), one of the most famous comic playwrights of Old Comedy (alongside Eupolis and Aristophanes), satirizes Pericles in this way, writing in his play *The Tutors*, “Old Cronos mated with the goddess of party-strife, and their offspring was the biggest tyrant of all: now the gods call him ‘The Head-Compellor’” (Plutarch *Life of Pericles* 3).<sup>28</sup> In order to understand this quotation, one should know that in Homer’s *Iliad*, Homer referred to Zeus as the cloud-compeller: “Zeus who marshals the thunderclouds” (Homer *Iliad* 8.541).<sup>29</sup> Here, we see that one of the chief characteristics of the attacks leveled at Pericles’ style of governance was the Pericles-Zeus comparison, which the comic poets intended to arouse suspicion amongst the people that Pericles had become too powerful.

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<sup>27</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 108, 117: This comparison to Zeus was common in Attic comedies. By comparing Pericles to Zeus, Cratinus made him seem overly prideful. Zeus seems to have had a reputation for only heeding his own desires (ironically, especially the sexual ones, i.e., all the better comparison to Pericles). See also Konstan, *Greek Comedy and Ideology*, 82: By invoking the Zeus comparison, Cratinus also implied that Pericles rule would not have beneficial effects economically for the people.

<sup>28</sup> See John M. Raines, “Comedy and the Comic Poets in the Greek Epigram,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* Vol. 77 (1946), 87: “Christodorus of Thebes (AD 532) mentions among the statues in the gymnasium of Zeuxippus at Byzantium that of ‘gifted Cratinus, who once sharpened the biting shafts of his iambics against the Athenian political leaders, devourers of the people.’” Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 118: “Such a comparison turned the *strategos* into an unscrupulous usurper, prepared to do anything in order to hang on to power. Cratinus repeated that same accusation, making it more pointed, in his play titled *The Spirits of Wealth*, which was performed in 430-429, at the time when Pericles was under attack from all quarters for his handling of the war: ‘Here is Zeus, chasing Cronos from the kingship and binding the rebellious Titans in unbreakable bonds.’ Through this analogy, the comic poet covertly evoked the ostracism of Cimon, in 462/1: confronting Zeus/Pericles, Cimon was identified with Cronos, a benevolent sovereign, ousted by his son. As it happened, the parallel was flattering to Pericles’ fallen rival, for ever since Hesiod, the reign of Cronos had evoked the golden age when ‘the grain-giving field bore crops of its own accord, much and unstinting, and they themselves, willing, mild-mannered, shared out the fruits of their labours, together with many good things.’ With this analogy, the comic poet recalled the proverbial generosity of Cimon, which Plutarch carefully assesses: “[Cimon] turned his home into a place of public resort for his fellow citizens, while on his country estates he allowed even foreigners to take the pick of the ripe fruit and to enjoy the best of whatever was in season. And so, in a sense, he restored to human experience the fabled conditions of the golden age of Cronos, when men owned everything in common.”

<sup>29</sup> Fagles trans.

In Greek mythology, Zeus controlled the weather and used lightning.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the comic poets seem to be depicting Pericles, as “Head-Compellor,” as one who controlled minds through oratory.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, if the comic poets compared Pericles to Zeus, then the comic poets also would have likened themselves to the gods in this analogy because they were the ones who were satirizing him as the ‘Head-Compellor.’ Additionally, Cratinus was not just referring to Pericles in this fragment; he referred to Cimon as well. As Cimon came prior to Pericles on the political scene and as the comic poets viewed him favorably, it is clear that Cratinus was also likening Cronos to Cimon. In Greek mythology, Cronos was the father of Zeus, who caused there to be a time of prosperity and well-being on earth.<sup>32</sup> However, Cronos’s benevolent rule did not last as he gave birth to Zeus, who ultimately deposed him.<sup>33</sup> This Zeus-Pericles to Cimon-Cronus analogy seems to point to a criticism of Pericles: under his rule, Athens had departed from the “good old days” of Cimon-Cronus.

It would also seem as though Cratinus is saying that Pericles came to power through party-strife that weakened Cimon’s power, which certainly would not have been a favorable comparison for Pericles! In his play, *The Spirits of Wealth*, which dates somewhere in between 430-429 BC, Cratinus also says, “Here is Zeus, chasing Cronos from the kingship and binding the rebellious Titans in unbreakable bonds.”<sup>34</sup> Again, in this play, Pericles was clearly analogous to Zeus while Cimon was analogous to Cronos, whom the Athenians ostracized in 461. The Titans in this play may refer to the other

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<sup>30</sup> Ironically, Zeus also had many amorous liaisons just as the comic poets accused Pericles of having. Perhaps this is another layer of meaning in this rich symbolism.

<sup>31</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 200: Bowra takes a different interpretation, “The joke, such as it is, in ‘Head-gatherer’ is based on the traditional notion of Zeus as ‘Cloud-gatherer.’ It vaguely suggests Pericles’ comic head but much more his ruthless treatment of enemies whose heads he makes roll like any head-hunter.”

<sup>32</sup> Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Azoulay. *Pericles of Athens*. 118.

politicians in Athens or the other city-states in the Delian League. These comic attacks show the comic poets' ability to make political critiques by placing them into well-known gods and characters from Greek mythology.

The comic poets also used the Zeus-Pericles identification to criticize Pericles for being too friendly with foreigners. For example, Cratinus again refers to this comparison in his *Nemesis*, in which he speaks, "Zeus, the protector of foreigners and heads" (*Pericles* 3). This probably refers to Pericles' relationship with prominent foreigners such as Aspasia of Miletus, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, and Archidamus, King of Sparta, who Pericles (or so Thucydides said) claimed as a friend (Thucy. 2.13). In his position as *strategos*, Pericles was responsible for keeping a quasi-official relationship with leaders from other cities and making sure that he offered them *xenia* or hospitality. In 431 BC, just as the Peloponnesian War had broken out, Pericles seemed to have been conscious of the fact that his foreign connections could potentially hurt him, so he had to give the people proper disclosure that this friendship would in no way damage Athenian interests.

One should note that for a modern reader, the connections seem much more difficult to make, but to the ancient reader, these connotations could not have been more obvious in terms of reference. The fifth-century B.C. Athenian citizen would have understood that 'Cronos' referred to Cimon and 'Zeus' referred to Pericles because of the long tradition in comedy of using the gods as metaphors for current leaders. They would also have quickly caught on to the attack about Pericles being the "protector of foreigners" as a slight on his relationships. When looked at from this perspective, the political scene at Athens appears heated to our eyes.



Ion of Chios (480-420 BC) too wrote tragedies and plays during the height of Pericles' power, which parodied Pericles.<sup>35</sup> He simultaneously praises Cimon, saying, according to Plutarch, "Pericles had a rather disdainful and arrogant manner of address, and that his pride had in it a good deal of superciliousness and contempt for others. By contrast, he praises the ease, good humour, and polished manner which Cimon showed in his dealings with the world" (*Pericles* 5). It seems, according to Ion, that Pericles thought himself above the people. According to other references given by Plutarch, Pericles expressed his superiority by refusing to engage in back-and-forth arguments with the citizens when he appeared in public (*Pericles* 5). Rather he would attempt to stay out of the political fray by keeping his appearances limited only to those political gatherings that he deemed important (*Pericles* 5). Ion also claims that Pericles became arrogant because of his victory over the Samians and even goes so far as to say that Pericles compared himself favorably to Agamemnon. Ion claimed that Pericles' reasoning for this was that, "it had taken Agamemnon ten years to capture a barbarian city, whereas he within nine months had made himself master of the most important and powerful city in Ionia" (*Pericles* 28). Pericles, at least according to Ion, elevated himself to heroic status of Homeric proportions and made himself appear as a supreme leader of the Greeks at the same time. In Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon was the supreme leader of the Achaean forces and infamously took Briseis from Achilles, displaying his autocratic power over the other Achaeans (*Iliad* 1.160-170). Importantly, the first description of Agamemnon in *The Iliad* is as a "lord of men," a distinctly undemocratic description (*Iliad* 1.8). Read through this lens, the Pericles-Agamemnon association seems to have been a claim to power and greatness by Pericles but the comic poets co-opted this comparison to demonstrate his

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<sup>35</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 10.

over-weening pride, in line with the similar Zeus-Pericles comparison that Cratinus makes. Ion's remarks essentially make Pericles appear merely supercilious, not as a democratic leader willing to engage with the people, just as Cratinus did by making the Zeus comparison.

In another case of a political opponent satirizing Pericles' style of governance, Thucydides, son of Melesias, told King Archidamus of Sparta, "Whenever I throw him at wrestling, he beats me by arguing that he was never down, and he can even make the spectators believe it" (*Pericles* 8).<sup>36</sup> Assuming Thucydides did not mean this literally, though perhaps Thucydides endeavored to show Pericles as physically weak, the metaphor presents Pericles as a cunning, forceful deceiver. He has the power to make people believe what he wants through clever rhetoric and, furthermore, he actually convinces them that what they see did not happen! Consequently, Pericles, if allowed, would manipulate the populace at will with his oratory and become the supreme leader of Athens.

We may also see here a subtle attack on Pericles by making him out to be a Sophist. Vincent Azoulay argues that this attack by Thucydides son of Melesias was indeed a reference to Pericles being like a sophist.<sup>37</sup> He claims that it was common to attack Sophists for their disproportionately strong rhetorical teaching emphasis.<sup>38</sup> Among Athenians, the sophists had a reputation for their eloquence and for looking down on physical strength. Thucydides of Melesias' vilification of Pericles as a twister of words,

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<sup>36</sup> Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*, 17: Thucydides' father, Melesias, was actually a prominent wrestling master according to Pindar. Therefore, it is likely that Thucydides at least knew the sport of wrestling very well, if he had not been a very good wrestler himself. Of course, Thucydides is using wrestling as a metaphor to refer to Pericles' oratory.

<sup>37</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 21.

someone who can distort any truth or sequence of events to suit his own interests, may remind us of Aristophanes remarks on the Sophists in *Clouds* 1013-1020, as Azoulay points out:

But if you take up  
what's in fashion nowadays, you'll have,  
for starters, feeble shoulders, a pale skin,  
a narrow chest, huge tongue, a tiny bum,  
and a large skill in framing long decrees  
And that man there will have you believing  
what's bad is good and what's good is bad.<sup>39</sup>

Like Thucydides son of Melesias on Pericles, Aristophanes criticizes the Sophists for being physically weak and able to deceive the audience to think whatever they wanted. This version of Pericles is the opposite of the ideal Athenian whom Thucydides represents in Pericles' Funeral Oration, and for whom, "words and deeds are so perfectly balanced" (Thuc. 2.42).

Finally, this section will examine the last critique of Pericles' style of governance, made both by Hermippus and by Cratinus, that Pericles used rhetoric excessively instead of taking bold action. Cratinus paints Pericles in this way with regards to the long walls that Pericles had built when he says, "Pericles had built this wall long ago, /If words could do it; in fact, not one inch has been added to it." (*Pericles* 13). Cratinus is referring to the wall stretching from Athens to the Piraeus, which Pericles had built to ensure the continued safety of the area in between Athens and its port. Athens built this wall sometime between 447 and 438 BC.<sup>40</sup> In order to get anything done in Athens, Pericles had to go before the Assembly and present a comprehensive plan. According to Cratinus, Pericles presenting many speeches had actually not gotten anything done. It is almost as

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<sup>39</sup> Aristophanes Trans. by Ian Johnston, *Clouds*, (Arlington: Richer Resources Publications, 2008), 1013-1020.

<sup>40</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 7.

if Pericles' thought that each word equaled a brick and that by speaking more words he would have built the wall referred to by Cratinus. This quote further reveals the tension between words and actions in terms of Pericles' own image. Cratinus implies that Pericles' made too many speeches and could not get anything done by them.

Hermippus comments on Pericles in a similar way, but goes even further in his attack of Pericles than does Cratinus, because he explicitly says that Pericles' excessive use of rhetoric shows cowardice. Hermippus wrote his poem, *Moirai*, in 430 BC, after the Peloponnesian war broke out in 431 BC and perhaps after the plague had broken out in Athens.<sup>41</sup> Hermippus, about whom we know very little, attacks Pericles twice in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*. The second time was in a poem:

Come now, King of the Satyrs, stop waging the war  
With your speeches, and try a real weapon!  
Though I do not believe, under all your fine talk  
You have even the guts of a Teles.  
For if somebody gets out a whetstone and tries  
Just to sharpen so much as a pen-knife,  
You start grinding your teeth and fly into a rage  
As if Cleon had come up and stung you (*Pericles* 33).

There seem to be two levels of meaning in this attack by Hermippus—the cowardly and sexual nature of Pericles. If we focus here on the question of cowardice, this allegation shows Hermippus attacking Pericles for hiding behind speeches and fine talk to battle with his enemies rather than dealing with them through direct combat, which points to his cowardice. This is why Hermippus says that Pericles does not even have the guts of a

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<sup>41</sup> Gregory W. Dobrov, "Comedy and the Satyr-Chorus," *The Classical World*, 100 (2007), 251-265: Some have speculated that this attack occurred after the first invasion into Attica by the Peloponnesians. If this were the case, Hermippus would be reflecting an angry populace frustrated with Pericles for making them stay in the walls while the Peloponnesians burned their property. For more information on this, see Thucydides 2.19-21 and Gomme, *Thucydides Book 2*, 75: Gomme seems to think that Hermippus produced this in the spring of 430.

“Teles”: a “Teles” was a coward who would run at the sight of conflict.<sup>42</sup> Pericles was so insecure that a mere “pen-knife” was enough to upset him. Perhaps this refers to the fact that there were many comic poets lampooning him at this time through the power of their pens. This directly undermines the image of a Pericles who has the ability to do his duties as a *strategos* and lead his soldiers into the battle.<sup>43</sup>

From Thucydides’ perspective, Pericles was a strong, steadfast leader, not swayed by the changing mood of the populace. As Thucydides writes, “He was not led by it [the majority], he led it” (Thucy. 2.65). Thucydides’ Pericles was able to guide Athens without letting his own resolve sway because of the fickle citizenry. In juxtaposition with this perspective, Hermippus shows us a different perspective that makes Pericles seem cowardly because he cannot handle strong political critique. Certainly, we do not get the image of a strong Pericles who can guide the ship of the state with philosophical control as in Thucydides’ depiction. By looking at the way in which Hermippus criticized Pericles’ style of governance, we begin to open wide a much broader view of what the political scene at Athens was like in the fifth century.

### *Counter-Narrative 2- Pericles: The Oikos and the State*

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<sup>42</sup> John Maxwell Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*, (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 299.

<sup>43</sup> This attack by Hermippus is probably part of what Thucydides refers to when he says, “The city was in total ferment and remembering none of his earlier advice, people were enraged with Pericles, branding him a coward because he was a general who would not lead them out to fight and making him the cause of all their suffering” (Thucydides 2.21). Scholars assert that this attack stemmed from a historical situation that Thucydides mentions in which Pericles withheld his men when the Peloponnesians were burning the Athenians fields at the beginning of the war in 431 BC (Thuc. 2.21). We know from Thucydides that one of the key features of Pericles’ strategy to win the war was that Athens would treat itself like an island—it would sacrifice its land holdings for sea superiority (Thuc 1.43) The problem was that many citizens of Athens had land holdings outside the walls and they would have reacted strongly against Pericles’ policy of bringing everyone inside the walls and allowing the Spartans to burn their fields.

Not only did the comic poets attack Pericles for his style of governance in the public sphere, but they also attacked his violation of the private sphere of the *oikos*, the home. First, they alleged that he violated other men's homes by sleeping with other men's wives, and second, they attacked his relationship with his lover Aspasia. To investigate these claims of his private misconduct, let us first return to the depiction of Pericles as the "King of the Satyrs" by the comic poets. As Timothy E. Duff writes, "The chief features of satyrs, or silenoi (the two names are often used interchangeably), were their love of wine and violent sexual lust."<sup>44</sup> Attacking an opponent's sexual honor was common in Athens. Pericles was no exception to this rule, and thus by calling him the very king of the satyrs, poets claimed Pericles as licentious, lusty, and violent.

This was not the only such claim: Stesimbrotus of Thasos, a frequent detractor of Pericles, "dared to give currency to the....charge that Pericles seduced his son's wife" (*Pericles* 13).<sup>45</sup> He was so sexually delinquent, the comics claim, that he would even have sex with the wife of his son, disregarding the sanctity of his own son's marriage and committing quasi-incestuous adultery. Moreover, rumor had it that Pheidias, the famous Athenian sculptor, "arranged intrigues for Pericles with free-born Athenian women, when they came on the pretext of looking at the works of art" (*Pericles* 13). In stressing the "Free-born" and "Athenian" identity of these women, this rumor suggested that Pericles would sleep with wives of other Athenians or the daughters of other men of good standing. Hermippus also attacked Pericles in this way; he smeared Aspasia, Pericles' own lover, for "procuring free-born Athenian women for Pericles" (*Pericles* 32). Not

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<sup>44</sup> Timothy E. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 167.

<sup>45</sup> Stesimbrotus was a sophist who lived between 470 and 420 BC from the Island of Thasos, which Athens controlled.

only does Pheidias procure “free-born” Athenian women for Pericles but Aspasia did as well! The allegation that Pericles was sleeping with freeborn Athenian women seems to be getting at the idea that Pericles was violating the authority that other men had over their own wives and daughters. This would have been in keeping with the Zeus-Pericles comparison as Zeus also, as the tyrant of Olympus, slept with other men’s wives.<sup>46</sup>

The attacks made on Pericles’ sexually rapacious behavior went much further than this. The comic poets even went so far as to say that Pericles betrayed his close friends and confidantes by having sex with their wives, acting more like an eastern-style king:

The comic poets took up this story and showered Pericles with all the innuendoes they could invent, coupling his name with the wife of Menippus, a man who was his friend and had served as his second in command in the army. Even Pylampus’s fondness for keeping birds was dragged in, and because he was a friend of Pericles, he was accused of using his peacocks as presents for the women who granted Pericles their favours (*Pericles* 13).

To say that Pericles had sex with Menippus’s wife was a serious accusation in Athens. According to Athenian law, if someone caught a man sleeping with another man’s wife his life was forfeit to the offended party.<sup>47</sup> If this attack on Pericles’ private life captured even some of what “really happened”, Pericles must have been willing to take great risks in order to fulfill his sexual desires; including risking his own life and the relationship he had with his second-in-command Menippus. Suddenly, the Pericles that we know from Thucydides seems much more impulsive and lusty as opposed to the calm, incorruptible Pericles of Thucydides.

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), 20: Zeus had relations with Semele, daughter of King Cadmus, as well as other daughters and wives of Greeks.

<sup>47</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 100.

According to Azoulay, the second charge that Pericles' friend Pnylampus gave his "peacocks as presents" to Pericles' sexual partners, in fact, evoked the image of Persia in the minds of the Athenian listeners because peacocks were symbols of luxury in Persia and were bred there.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, by subtly connecting Pericles to the famous totalitarian Persian royalty in his sexual life, the comic poets make Pericles seem more like an autocratic Persian king, not a leader of democratic Athens. As the Zeus-Pericles reference showed, to call Pericles Zeus reinforced this idea that Pericles was some sort of autocratic ruler who did what he wanted and took what he wanted, including other men's wives. In this reference to the gifts that Pnylampus gave, the comic poets now imply Pericles to be, not only like Zeus, but also like a tyrant in the mold of the kings of Persia for the way he "paid" for these freeborn Athenian women. As it appears to me, the gift giving on the part of Pnylampus further accentuates the allegation that Pericles was flagrantly violating the authority of other men by sleeping with their daughters by showing Pericles reveling in the exotic. Peacocks were exotic animals and giving them to these Athenian women would have been adding insult to injury.

Another way Pericles' critics made him seem sexually immoral was to refer to his lover Aspasia. Thucydides never makes mention of Aspasia, but from what we know about her from Plutarch, she was Milesian by birth and she had considerable influence on Athenian politics (*Pericles* 24). Obviously, it seems difficult to know how much of Plutarch's description of Aspasia is true because he wrote so long after she lived, but at least we can gather that many in the Athenian political sphere were suspicious of her. Cratinus, the detractor discussed earlier, says, "To find our Zeus a Hera, the goddess of Vice /Produced that shameless bitch Aspasia" (*Pericles* 24). Earlier we saw that Cratinus

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<sup>48</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 100.



said that “Cronos” and the goddess of “party-strife” mated and produced Zeus. In this poem, Cratinus equated Pericles’ passion for Aspasia with a vice of some kind produced by the goddess of vice. Azoulay refers to the Hera-Aspasia symbolism in the story of Paris whom Hera offered Tyranny but chose the beauty of Aphrodite instead.<sup>49</sup> The Zeus-Hera comparison with Pericles-Aspasia again pointed to Pericles being a tyrannical ruler whose vice was power embodied in the form of Aspasia.<sup>50</sup>

The comic poets also claimed that Pericles had an illegitimate child with Aspasia. Eupolis, in *The Demes*, says, “Pericles is introduced asking, “Is my son alive? Myronides: Yes, he would have been a citizen long before /But for the shame of his mother, who is a whore” (*Pericles* 24). In 451/0 BC, Pericles “proposed a law that only those who could claim Athenian parentage on both sides should be counted as Athenian citizens” (*Pericles* 37). It is likely that Eupolis composed this play sometime after Pericles’ death and it seems to say, as Plutarch did as well, that Pericles’ son did indeed become a citizen but that what held back the process was Aspasia. Aspasia herself was not Athenian, having been born in Miletus; therefore, the son that Pericles and Aspasia had was not eligible to become a citizen. This play seems to be saying that the fact that Aspasia was a prostitute cast doubt on the deliberations of the Athenians decision on whether to accept Pericles’ son as a citizen. Her use of sex in order to affect power seems to have caused the shame here. Summarily, this is an indirect way of commenting on Pericles because he is the one who was sleeping with the whore, i.e., Aspasia.

The comic poets also implied that Pericles’ love for Aspasia was the reason for the Megarian decree that caused so much distrust between Athenians and Spartans.

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<sup>49</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 244no49.

<sup>50</sup> Sex and power are unavoidably intertwined in these symbols.

Aristophanes, a playwright whom we know better than all the others, says in the *Acharnians*:

Some young Athenians in a drunken frolic  
Kidnapped Simaetha, the courtesan, from Megara.  
The Megarians were furious, primed themselves with garlic  
Just like their fighting-cocks, then came and stole  
Two of Aspasia's girls to get their own back. (*Pericles*  
30).

In this fictional scenario, some lusty young Athenian males kidnap a Megarian courtesan and the Megarians strike back at none other than Pericles' mistress through kidnapping two of Aspasia's "girls," intimating that she ran a brothel. Therefore, in this scenario, Pericles upheld the Megarian decree to get revenge. The Megarian decree expressed an official prohibition by the Athenians that the Megarians would not be able to participate in trade in Athenian markets and harbors (*Pericles* 29). This seems to play with the way in which some Athenians perceived the Megarian decree—making it not a political issue but a personal one on the part of Pericles. What caused Pericles to make this decree supposedly was not the national interest, but his love for Aspasia. Thus, a foreign woman was affecting Athenian policy! Furthermore, they also claimed that Aspasia was behind Pericles' expedition against Samos, which was fighting Aspasia's home city of Miletus (*Pericles* 25). Pericles, in this image, allowed his own self-interested emotions to get in his way of making clear-headed judgements for the good of Athenian democracy. This would have been in direct contradiction to the image that Pericles would have wanted to portray of himself as an emotionally controlled prescient leader unaffected by anyone but the wisest of men.

Now to put these attacks in perspective, it is unclear, judging from the historical records to what extent Pericles' relationship with Aspasia affected his policy. The extant

fragments from the comic poets give us indications that he was at least having sexual relations with her, for example his son with Aspasia, but not many other details. What is clear is that the comic poets and politicians were willing to go to any length to push Pericles off his lofty perch atop Athens political scene including satirizing his personal life. One should note that these kinds of attacks were common in Athenian political life, but that does not mean that they were not true in Pericles' case. It could very well be that the Athenian comic poets grounded their satirizations of Pericles in the truth. These allegations concerning Pericles' sexual honor, in reality, subtly reinforced the tyrannical undertones that we find prevalent in the attacks on Pericles' rhetoric. As Duff notes, sexual excess related to tyrannical tendencies in the minds of fifth-century Greeks and so the attacks on Pericles are not the first of their kind, nor were they the last.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Duff, *Plutarch's Lives*, 236: Plutarch alleges that Alcibiades had the same vice (*Alcibiades* 23).

### Chapter 3:

#### A More Complex Portrait of the Comic Poets

When one reads Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, it would appear as though Pericles' image was set in stone as the most able leader of Athens in the fifth-century. However, when one examines the image of Pericles set forth by the comic poets, this reputation appears hotly contested during Pericles' lifetime and shortly thereafter. Simply put, Pericles seemed to have a circle of people (i.e., Aspasia, Anaxagoras) influencing him in his private life and shaping some of the political actions he took (e.g. the Megarian Decree). Part of what these attacks on Pericles show is that the comic poets were integral parts of Athenian Democracy. They served to reflect many of the cultural ideas of Athens and reveal rich debates going on about Pericles' reputation and legacy showing the political interests of Athenians. However, Pericles was not the only one attacked. In fact, the discourse surrounding Pericles was just one of many political discourses surrounding multiple politicians who included Cimon, Cleon, and Thucydides son of Melesias. Truth be told, the image of every politician was disputed during this time and no political figure, no matter how respected, was left untouched. In short, these sources give us a chance to hear other voices in the Athenian democracy that Thucydides left out of his narrative.

In any historical research, it is necessary, not only to look at what the primary sources say but also to examine what motivations lie behind their perspective as well as the context in which they wrote. When one applies this kind of *quellenkritik* to the comic poets and politicians, one finds that these ancient authors also had personal motivations

for attacking Pericles, which materialized in their writings. Specifically, there seem to have been at least three different motivations for why the comic poets attacked Pericles, which are important to understand the political discourse going on in fifth-century Athens. First, when some of the comic poets attacked Pericles (e.g., [Cratinus and Ion]), they seemed to be reflecting the sentiments of the aristocratic faction in Athens—that is to say the party which Cimon led down until 461 BC. The second possible reason for which they attacked Pericles was that they seemed to be reflecting the anger of the populace at Pericles—for example, the anger expressed after Pericles ordered the people inside the walls of Athens in 431 BC. Third, there seems to have been a long tradition in Athens of comic poetry used as a critique of power and thus comic poets and playwrights attacked politicians from both sides. Some of the comic poets and politicians who attacked Pericles had connections to Cimon and his political party and, therefore, had political motivations behind their attacks. In other cases, the comic poets attacked politicians on both sides. In all three cases, comic poets deliberately attacked men of wealth and power in Athens, not the populace.<sup>52</sup>

To understand why the comic poets are so important to our understanding of Pericles, we need to know that these ancient playwrights held an important position in the political life of the Athenian democracy by keeping a check on power, bringing leaders down to earth, and continuing political discourse and image-making through dramatic means. Through this section, I will argue that the comic poets were a diverse set of

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<sup>52</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 197. As Bowra notes, proof of this can be found in Xenophon's *Athenian Constitution* 2.18: "That they themselves may not be ill spoken of, they do not allow anyone to make fun or speak evil of the people; for they well know that he who is made fun of is generally not of the people or the populace, but either rich or noble or powerful. But some few of the poor and the vulgar are made fun of, but not even these except for being busy-bodies and trying to get more than the people; so they are not annoyed when these are made fun of."

individuals influenced in their critiques of Pericles by their own political allegiances, the mood of the populace, their desire to speak truth to power and their own political ideology. In addition, when possible, this section will also identify political discourses surrounding certain politicians who contended with Pericles on domestic and foreign policy.

*Comic Poets and Politicians who attacked Pericles out of allegiance to Cimon*

In fifth-century Athens, before the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC), there was clearly a power struggle between the aristocratic/conservative party and the democratic/progressive party. To be clear, political parties in fifth-century Athens did not divide across neat lines as some modern scholars have fashioned them to be. There were often a mix of alliances, which frequently changed, that overlapped between various factions and groups.<sup>53</sup> Out of the comic poets and politicians that this chapter has covered, there seem to be four in particular who supported Cimon or owed allegiance to his party: Cratinus, Thucydides son of Melesias, Stesimbrotus of Thasos, and Ion of Chios.

There seems to have been a particular belief in the running of the government and the separation between public/private interests that these poets and politicians who supported Cimon endorsed. To be more specific, as members of the upper class, certain comic poets and politicians seemed to have believed that social welfare should be the responsibility of private citizens and not the responsibility of the state. In Plutarch's *Cimon*, Cimon supposedly allowed strangers to pick fruit from his orchards, provided meals at his house for the poor, and gave money to those in need, acting as one individual

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<sup>53</sup> Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*, 6.

giving benefactions (Plutarch, *Cimon* 10). Cimon, as a private citizen and not as one who was directly working on behalf of the state, supported these “strangers”. By acting in this way, Cimon demonstrated a completely different form of social welfare/charity from the pay for public services that Pericles and Ephialtes seemed to be advocating, which came in the form of public festivals and fees for jury service (Plutarch, *Pericles* 9). So the praise of Cimon’s benefactions towards the poor reflected some of the comic poet’s and politicians’ belief that issues of socio-political equity ought to be in the hands of private, elite interests rather than those of the state which reveals why some of them were eager to attack Pericles.

One witness of Cimon’s benefactions who seemed to have supported this point of view or witnessed them himself was Cratinus. Cratinus lived from 484 to 419 BC, so he likely saw much of both Cimon and Pericles’ policies throughout his career.<sup>54</sup> Cratinus, like many of the other comic poets, probably came from an upper-class family that gave him the resources to devote his time to the literary arts, meaning that he may have been more pre-disposed to favor Cimon’s party than Pericles.<sup>55</sup> Cratinus’s plays certainly seem to have reflected the opposition party’s (the conservatives) criticisms of Pericles, implicitly and explicitly.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Cratinus lampoons Pericles in several of his plays including *Nemesis* (455 BC), *The Women of Thrace* (443 BC), *Wealths* (431 BC), *The*

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<sup>54</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 198.

<sup>55</sup> Burn, *The Pelican History of Greece*, 257: “Much of what the comedians said was simply fun, delivered on those privileged feast-days when obscenity and exaggeration were in order; but it is hard to believe that there is no venom in some of it. The comedians, like other literary men, were almost to a man conservative, upper class people, who enjoyed despising the masses; and Pericles was to them something of a traitor to his class. Perhaps late in the thirties, Aspasia was attacked in earnest with a prosecution for ‘impiety’; what the formal ground for it was we do not know; possibly she had given some of a school of geisha-girls, which she is said to have kept, the names of the muses. The real motive, as in the case of Pheidias, was political; and since in an Athenian trial, relevance was no object, all manner of other slanders were brought in, including the suggestion that Aspasia was a ‘security risk’; she was a foreigner, and she influenced policy; some said she had caused the Samian War by persuading her lover to back Miletos.”

<sup>56</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 199: “The *Nemesis* indicates some pro-Spartan tendencies, which might suit Cratinus as a friend of Cimon and would show him to be an opponent of Pericles.”

*Plutoi* (430 BC), *Dionysalexandros* (430 BC), *Chirons* and probably many other plays of which we have no knowledge.<sup>57</sup> From the surviving fragments, one can see that Cratinus seemed to favor Cimon. In one fragment of the play entitled *Archilochi* he showed his political bias towards Cimon clearly: “Cimon the godlike, most generous to strangers, /In every way the noblest of the Greeks.”<sup>58</sup> This fragment praises Cimon for xenophilia (the love of strangers) and elevates him to an almost divine status amongst the Greeks. Simply put, this fragment seems to be dealing with Cimon’s domestic policy. One can surmise that when Cratinus refers to the “strangers” here, he is likely referring to the metics, who were foreigners who came to Athens to work and conduct business. When Cratinus is praising Cimon for his xenophilia, he is praising him for his stance towards the metics, which is also a complement to Cimon about how he conducts domestic policy. Such high praise of an Athenian politician is rarely found anywhere in the corpus of the comic poets and shows how Cratinus viewed Cimon and his stance on benefactions. It is likely that Cratinus wrote this after Cimon died in 450 BC, judging from the eulogistic qualities of this poem. It would seem as if Cratinus was looking back to some previous golden age in the past, lamenting the present state of affairs in which Pericles had instituted democratic reforms that profoundly changed Athenian society. In any case, it is clear that Cratinus looked to Cimon as an example of a great Athenian leader, which brings clarification to his attacks on Pericles.

Another one of the detractors of Pericles who seemed linked to Cimon was Thucydides son of Melesias. Thucydides son of Melesias was born around 500 BC and the little that we know of him comes almost entirely from Plutarch, as Thucydides the

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<sup>57</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 199, 200. Vincent, Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 44, 103, 237n35, 246n43.

<sup>58</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 39: Cratinus, fragment 1.



Historian does not mention him at all in his narrative. Part of the reason for Thucydides' political support of Cimon seems to have come from marital ties, as Thucydides married Cimon's sister.<sup>59</sup> In Athens, political ties often came from marriage alliances as was common in many ancient societies. As Connor puts it, "The effect of such a tie was to bind the two households closely together."<sup>60</sup> Clearly, Cimon and Thucydides had close connections through a marriage alliance, which either cemented an already existing political connection or created one.

As we know from Plutarch, Thucydides became the leader of the aristocratic party after Cimon's ostracism in 461 BC and was opposed to the radical democratic reforms instituted by Pericles and Ephialtes.<sup>61</sup> After Cimon's death, he continued Cimon's political legacy as his successor. Between 461 and 443 BC, Thucydides and Pericles struggled with each other for control of Athens; each had different visions for what he thought Athenian domestic and foreign policy should be.<sup>62</sup> The conservative side seemed to advocate a more benevolent policy towards Athens' allies, treating them more as allies than subjects, and the democratic side seemed to believe that Athens should take advantage of the Delian League. One example of this clash in foreign policies occurred when Thucydides, as Plutarch recorded, opposed Pericles' decision to use funds from the Delian League treasury to finance his building projects in Athens in 447-445 BC (Plutarch, *Pericles* 14).<sup>63</sup> The Delian League began in 477 BC after Greece had successfully resisted the Persian invasion. The entire purpose of this league was to be

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<sup>59</sup> Evelyn Abbott, *Pericles and the Golden Age of Athens* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1891), 134

<sup>60</sup> Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*. 96n18: According to Satyrus, as quoted in Diogenes Laertius 2.12, it was Thucydides son of Melesias who indicted Pericles' mentor Anaxagoras. If not for any other reason, this would have caused animosity between the two politicians.

<sup>63</sup> Burn, *The Pelican History of Greece*, 229.

prepared for another potential war with Persia. Correspondingly, Pericles' use of such funds from this league for the beautification of Athens would have gone directly against this purpose. The other city-states in this league did not intend these funds for the beautification of Athens, but rather for the common defense of the Delian League. This greatly upset some of Athens' allies and Thucydides opposed the use of funds in this way because of how it would affect Athens' relationship with their allies.<sup>64</sup> However, in the end, Pericles defeated Thucydides and was able to stave off the political criticism for his building projects. In 443 BC, Pericles was clearly able to vanquish Thucydides son of Melesias politically because the Athenians ostracized him from Athens in 443 BC.<sup>65</sup> So there was a clear motivation for Thucydides son of Melesias to criticize Pericles stemming from his position of carrying on Cimon's political legacy and his position regarding how to treat Athens' allies—a position which had implications for both foreign and domestic policy.

Stesimbrotus of Thasos, the first metic (a foreigner living and working in Athens) that this chapter will examine, also seems to have criticized Pericles out of allegiance to Cimon. As for when he lived, Plutarch said that Stesimbrotus was a “near contemporary” of Cimon's which would put the beginning of his career in the first half of the fifth-century (*Cimon* 4). As a reminder, Stesimbrotus was particularly critical of Pericles, even going so far as to accuse him of sleeping with his son's wife (*Pericles* 13). In terms of a vocation, Stesimbrotus was likely a sophist and seems to have come to Athens in

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<sup>64</sup> Grant, A. J. *Greece in the Age of Pericles*. (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1973), 190.

<sup>65</sup> Azoulay. *Pericles of Athens*, 237n35. Connor. *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens*. 5-9: Connor shows that political factions in Athens did not divide into two neat factions, as perhaps we think of today with our own party system. According to Connor, the party alliances were much more complex and rapidly shifting than what we might think. Again, the records concerning many of these things are simply not extant, making it very difficult for historians to understand political conflict in fifth-century Athens.

order to make a living teaching the young men of the city.<sup>66</sup> He also seems to have been something of a biographer, composing biographies of Themistocles, Thucydides son of Melesias, and Pericles.<sup>67</sup> Cimon actually subdued Thasos, Stesimbrotus' home city, sometime around 465-463 BC when it tried to break free of Athenian hegemony.<sup>68</sup> It is unclear how much this affected Stesimbrotus because, strangely enough, Stesimbrotus appeared to have praised Cimon for his mannerisms which "gave an impression of great nobility and candour and that the spirit of the man seemed altogether more Peloponnesian than Athenian" (*Cimon* 4). The last line in this quotation seems to point to a general Lacadaemonophilia amongst the upper class. Many conservative members of the upper class seemed to have a love for Spartan ways and their rigorous system of education. So when Stesimbrotus praises Cimon for seeming more "Peloponnesian than Athenian," he is invoking a sentiment held amongst his listeners that to be Peloponnesian (Spartan) was to be noble.<sup>69</sup> Again, when one takes a closer look at Stesimbrotus, it becomes clear where his allegiances lie and why he attacked Pericles. Judging from his attack of Pericles and his praise of Cimon, it would seem as though Stesimbrotus was more sympathetic to Cimon than to Pericles.<sup>70</sup>

Ion of Chios is another prominent critic of Pericles who came from outside of Athens, and was a metic. Ion began to produce plays c 452/448 BC, around the same time that Pericles introduced his famous citizenship laws.<sup>71</sup> Ion, like many of the other comic poets discussed in this section, criticized Pericles for his mannerisms: "Pericles had a

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<sup>66</sup> Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 36.

<sup>67</sup> Grant, *Greece in the Age of Pericles*, 318.

<sup>68</sup> Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, 36.

<sup>69</sup> Connor, *Thucydides*, 242.

<sup>70</sup> Gomme, *Commentary on Thucydides*, 36: Gomme asserts that Stesimbrotus attacked Cimon as well but it is difficult to find evidence to support this view other than that Cimon subdued Thasos in 465 BC.

<sup>71</sup> David A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 349.

rather disdainful and arrogant manner of address, and his pride had in it a good deal of superciliousness and contempt for others” (*Pericles* 5). Ion accused Pericles of overweening pride, in this instance, as if he was constantly looking down on the people because he was better than they were. To understand better why Ion criticizes Pericles, one should know that Chios, his home city, an ally of Athens, was oligarchical and that Ion himself probably came from the nobility.<sup>72</sup> This would have contrasted sharply with some of the policies that Pericles’ instituted or supported, such as pay for juries. Not only does Ion probably have oligarchical preferences based on his home city, but he also seemed to have a love of Cimon from his childhood. Plutarch paraphrased Ion himself saying that when he was a boy, he had met Cimon personally in Athens and seems to have been very impressed with his accomplishments (*Cimon* 9). Presumably, this is why he compared Pericles and Cimon, saying: “By contrast, he praises the ease, good humour, and polished manner which Cimon showed in his dealings with the world” (*Pericles* 5). Ion even went so far as to praise Cimon’s physical appearance (*Cimon* 5). From Ion’s background and apparent love for Cimon, it is not difficult to deduce that he may have opposed Pericles from both a political standpoint and a personal one. Accordingly, it is quite likely that the aristocratic or conservative party sponsored Ion’s tragedies and encouraged him to insert attacks on Pericles into his plays.

*Critique of specific Periclean policies using personal attacks*

Whatever one’s scholarly point of view, the comic poets seem to have used the popular sentiments of their day and age to dramatic effect. Hermippus seems to have written between the mid-430s to the early 410s BC, which would place him at the tail end of

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<sup>72</sup> Azoulay, *Pericles of Athens*, 9-10, 228.

Pericles' career and after it.<sup>73</sup> There were two instances in Plutarch's *Pericles* mentioning Hermippus. In the first instance, Hermippus prosecutes Aspasia for impiety and facilitating liaisons for Pericles with freeborn Athenian women (*Pericles* 32). Some scholars have postulated that perhaps the charge of impiety came from Aspasia's naming her prostitutes after the names of the muses.<sup>74</sup> As for the second charge, there does not appear to be any other primary source evidence that Aspasia did indeed facilitate liaisons for Pericles. What we can say is that both charges were likely politically motivated. To set the stage, there appears to have been an actual trial that took place in which Hermippus tried Aspasia before the *ecclesia*. In this way, Hermippus was attacking Pericles indirectly by prosecuting Aspasia thereby smearing Pericles' reputation. It is fascinating that Hermippus appears to have been both a comic poet and a lawyer at the same time. This speaks to the kind of democracy that Athens had in which every citizen, in theory, was able to bring lawsuits against others as well as defend themselves in court.

In the second instance of Hermippus appearing in *Pericles*, Plutarch includes an extant fragment in which Hermippus attacks Pericles for being "king of the satyrs" and "waging the war" with speeches (*Pericles* 33). In this case, Hermippus did not refer to Pericles directly but Athenians would have understood what Hermippus meant by referencing Pericles as the "king of the satyrs." In both these cases, it seems as though Hermippus was reflecting popular sentiment rather than the voice of one political party or another. These attacks likely occurred sometime around 430 BC so it is also quite likely that this trial and attack by Hermippus was a by-product of the pent-up anger of the people at Pericles for making them come inside the city walls during the first

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<sup>73</sup> Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy*, 276.

<sup>74</sup> Burn. *The Pelican History of Greece*, 257.

Peloponnesian attack in 431 BC.<sup>75</sup> Hermippus saw this anger of the people and capitalized on the political opportunity that it offered by prosecuting Pericles' lover Aspasia. As the depiction of Pericles as "king of the satyrs" was made in the context of a play that served as a medium for political attacks, the sexual attack itself would appear to have been one way in which Hermippus could attack Pericles by using old platforms endowed with new meaning. As Thucydides said, "The city was in total ferment and, remembering none of his earlier advice, people were enraged with Pericles, branding him a coward because he was a general who would not lead them out to fight and making him the cause of all their suffering" (Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 2.21). One thing seems to be certain from Thucydides' account: the people blamed Pericles for the Peloponnesians ravaging their property and the political atmosphere was "charged" with opportunities to attack Pericles, of which Hermippus certainly took advantage.

### *Equal Opportunity Critics*

To be clear, the comic poets did not hold strictly to one political faction or another, but rather anyone in politics was fair game for satirization, depending on the mood of the people.<sup>76</sup> When the comic poets and politicians attacked Pericles, they accused him of a

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<sup>75</sup> Katherine Lever, *The Art of Greek Comedy*. (London: Methuen, 1956), 72: Lever agrees on this dating and lists this date as the time when these attacks by Hermippus occurred. She also attributes it to popular sentiment: "How can we explain this abuse of a man acknowledged by both contemporaries and Athenians to be the greatest citizen of Athens? The answer need not be sought in party politics or personal dislike; it can be found simply in the popular voice. Those very people who deposed Pericles had elevated him, and the comic poets merely expressed the sentiments freely aired in the streets."

<sup>76</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 197: "Comedy was not a drawing room affair, but a mixture of farce, satire, ribaldry, obscenity, fantastic imagination and abundant poetry. Anything and anybody were food for it. It could say what it liked; its first aim was to provoke laughter. Comic poets were not going to leave Pericles alone, but there is no need to think that they served any special interest. They needed well-to-do patrons to pay for putting on a play."

tyrannical style of governing and sexual vice. Conversely, when the democratic leaders wanted to attack Cimon, they brought up his personal life. As Plutarch records:

So it was that when Cimon came home and, in his disgust at the humiliation of the once revered Areopagus, tried to restore its judicial powers and revive the aristocratic regime of Cleisthenes, the democratic leaders combined to denounce him and tried to stir up the people against him by bringing up all the old scandals about his sister and accusing him of pro-Spartan sympathies (Plutarch *Cimon*, 15).

The “democratic leaders” who attacked Cimon were likely Pericles and Ephialtes, who had combined to transfer the judicial power from the Areopagus to the people in 461 BC (*Pericles* 9). Just as leaders from Cimon’s party sought to stir up the people by bringing up scandals from Pericles’ life, so too did Pericles and Ephialtes use personal attacks against Cimon. It is also clear, from Plutarch, that Cimon’s political opponents used fodder from his personal life. Therefore, Pericles was not the only one in Athens whose life the comic poets put under the microscope, so to speak.

One of the best examples of equal-opportunity critics from fifth-century Athens is Eupolis. Although he did take aim at Pericles’ relationship with Aspasia, Eupolis did not always attack Pericles. For example, in one fragment, Eupolis even praised Pericles’ rhetorical prowess saying, “In eloquence no man could equal him.”<sup>77</sup> Based on this and other fragments, Eupolis appears to have been an equal-opportunity attacker of politicians. Further evidence of the fact that Eupolis attacked both sides can be seen in his attack on Cimon, when he wrote: “He was not such a scoundrel as they go, / Only too lazy and too fond of drinking, / And often he would spend the night in Sparta/ And leave Elpinice to sleep alone” (*Cimon* 15). As was usual with the poets of Old Comedy, they attacked the lifestyle of the politicians whenever they seemed to propose something

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<sup>77</sup> Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 73.

controversial. Here, Eupolis casts Cimon as lazy, too fond of drinking, Pro-Spartan, and, by implication, sleeping with his sister, Elpinice or, in this case, ignoring her.<sup>78</sup> Plutarch says that what prompted this attack from Eupolis against Cimon was that Cimon attempted to restore the judicial powers of the Areopagus and “revive the aristocratic regime of Cleisthenes” (*Cimon* 15). In other words, Eupolis was not attacking Cimon’s personal life just for comedy’s sake but because he had real political goals. He seemed to have been both suspicious of Pericles’ foreign policy and Cimon’s domestic one. Eupolis was likely against anything that might cause Athens’ to revert to her former conservative state and he was against Aspasia influencing Pericles. In short, Eupolis seems to be our best example of a comic poet who spoke truth to power on both sides of the political spectrum.

With the attack on Pericles for having a relationship with Aspasia and the attack on Cimon for being undemocratic, one could conjecture that the audience to whom Eupolis was appealing was very resistant to any undoing of the democratic reforms instituted earlier in the century, as well as suspicious of any outsiders like Aspasia. One should also take into account that the comic poets wrote many of these plays during the Peloponnesian War with Sparta, so they would have been well aware of the burdens that war was putting on the people. Ian Storey, who has collected and analyzed many of the fragments from old comic poets, theorizes that Eupolis began to write plays in 429 BC and likely died in 411 BC in a naval battle.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Eupolis was writing directly after the time in which Pericles was in power (Pericles died in 429 BC). Hence, Eupolis, in many

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<sup>78</sup> As Plutarch records in *Pericles* 10, “Some writers maintain, however, that Pericles did not propose the decree for Cimon’s recall until a secret agreement had been reached between them with the help of Elpinice, Cimon’s sister.”

<sup>79</sup> Ian C. Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy. Diopieithes to Pherecrates*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 26.



ways, was looking back on both the regimes of Cimon and Pericles and commenting on them through his plays. Taken together, it would seem as though Eupolis was channeling a nativist stream of the Athenian populace, which was resistant to outside influences and active after Pericles died.

*Critique of Periclean Rhetoric as part of Anti-Rhetoric platform*

One of the discourses surrounding Pericles that some of the comic poets and politicians were involved in was whether Pericles' speeches and rhetorical prowess was beneficial to the Athenian democracy. In the comic poets' attacks on Pericles, they often attacked his use of rhetoric as either tyrannical or cowardly. For example, Hermippus mocks Pericles, saying, "Come now, King of the satyrs, stop waging the war/ With your speeches, and try a real weapon!" (*Pericles* 33). As addressed earlier, the "King of the Satyrs" reference here is a lewd sexual reference but Athenians also knew that the Satyrs had a cowardly nature.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, Pericles, as the "King of the Satyrs" was the most cowardly of them all and the main thrust of this attack is that Pericles is cowardly because he was making too many speeches and needed to wage the war against Sparta with a real weapon, like a sword. Cratinus also made a similar attack when he said, "Pericles had built this wall long ago, /If words could do it; in fact, not one inch has been added to it" (*Pericles* 13). Likely, Cratinus was criticizing Pericles before the wall was finished and essentially saying that if Pericles' speeches actually amounted to bricks in the wall, he would have built the wall long ago. In fact, as Cratinus fashions it, Pericles' speeches are excessive and not needed. These are two examples of comic poets who seemed to be a part of an

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<sup>80</sup> Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy. Diopieithes to Pherecrates*, 301.

anti-rhetoric faction in Athens who criticized rhetorical discourse itself for being harmful to Athenian democracy.

Perhaps these two comic parts were part of the same anti-rhetoric faction as Cleon. As Aristophanes, Thucydides, and Plutarch put it, Cleon was anti-rhetoric and ambitious (Thuc. 3.37-40, 4.3-41). This is especially clear in Aristophanes' *The Knights* (424 BC) in which Cleon threatens: "I'll shout down every orator and put the wind up Nicias!" (*Nicias* 4). It is likely, then, that when Hermippus says that Pericles was angry with Cleon, it was because when Pericles spoke in public, Cleon tried to shout him down. If there is anything that we can say that both the comic poets and Thucydides agree on, it is that Pericles was a gifted rhetorician, capable of using persuasive oratory in a deliberative democracy. Cleon, as Thucydides cast him, seemed to be opposed to rhetoric as in a speech fashioned by Thucydides. This is clear from both the comic poets and Thucydides, but it seems as though Cleon bitterly opposed Pericles because he used skillful rhetoric to persuade his audience.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Cleon was famous for his anti-rhetoric position, which Thucydides includes in Cleon's speech in Book 3. Here is what he says: "Thus ordinary people run their cities far better than intelligent ones, for these want to seem wiser than the laws and to outdo whatever nonsense is spoken in public assemblies, as though they couldn't possibly be talking about anything more important. Intelligent people are the downfall of cities because of this sort of thing. Ordinary people do not believe in their own intelligence, and they regard themselves as less learned than the laws. They are less able to dissect arguments than those who speak well." (Thuc. 3.37).

## Chapter 4:

### A More Complex Portrait of Thucydides

In the scholarly discussion of Thucydides, several scholars from the twentieth century have characterized Thucydides as the greatest of all historians—one who really could be trusted in matters of fact.<sup>82</sup> As addressed in the beginning of this study, with respect to this viewpoint and its impact on the historian's view of Pericles, A.W. Gomme has displayed a tendency towards viewing Thucydides as the historian *par excellence*, unaffected by the trivial stories of the comic poets regarding Pericles while only looking for those things that are important to his narrative. For example, Gomme, in his commentary, claims that Thucydides' silence on the comic poets was "Olympian" and "superb," as if their opinions and thoughts had no effect on him.<sup>83</sup> Gomme seems to be fashioning a Thucydides who was an objectivist, viewing the comic poet's stories as too "puerile to need refuting."<sup>84</sup>

If one is to bring Thucydides out of the objectivist realm that some scholars seem to have placed him in, one way to begin is by analyzing his work on Pericles as one perspective in a discourse—not the final word. Rather than labeling Thucydides' silence "Olympian," as Gomme would, the primary contention of this section is that historians will be able to better understand Thucydides as one participant in a broad spectrum of viewpoints on Pericles in fifth-century Athens—the comic poets on the side which sought to attack him and Thucydides on the side of those who idealized him. Indeed, the goal of

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<sup>82</sup> In addition to Gomme there were others as well who took this idealized viewpoint of Thucydides such as Grant, *Greece in the Age of Pericles*, 324, Bowra, *Periclean Athens*, 5-7, and Lever, Katherine. *The Art of Greek Comedy*. (London: Methuen, 1956).

<sup>83</sup> Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, 27.

this section is to show, through various excerpts from Pericles' last two speeches, that Thucydides was responding to the comic poets' allegations in specific discourses: the claim by some comic poets that Pericles used words and speeches in a cowardly/tyrannical fashion and the claim that he was immoral in his private life. This section attempts to show that Thucydides was involved in that discourse and subsequently, that historians should read his description of Pericles as a refutation of the comic poet's allegations thus there is no "Olympian" silence.

While Gomme calls Thucydides' "superb" silence, one could also argue that it is a deliberate silence because Thucydides takes a very narrow interpretation of Pericles. The lack of other perspectives, such as that of the comic poets, leads one to question how objective Thucydides really was. Certainly, Thucydides had a narrative scheme that he was following (Thucydides 1.21) and it would seem as though he was trying to get at the cold hard "facts"—i.e., when he says, "one will find that my conclusions, derived as they are from the best available evidence, are accurate enough" (Thuc. 1.21). However, it does not follow that Thucydides did not have an agenda in describing Pericles' legacy. Thucydides himself was an Athenian general, like Pericles, and a member of the upper class. This surely would have affected the way that he viewed Pericles.

Thucydides clearly is of the opinion that both words and deeds are important to a thriving Athenian democracy as opposed to the comic poets who seemed to be a part of an anti-rhetoric faction which allegedly viewed rhetoric as a hindrance to democracy, but ironically used rhetoric to make this claim. It is in this way, that I would argue that Thucydides rebuts the comic poets: persuasive rhetoric was necessary to Athenian politics and led Athens to her high place in the Greek world. By reconstructing various

excerpts from Thucydides on Pericles, one will be better able to understand Thucydides as a part of a political conversation in fifth-century Athens instead of the idealized Thucydides that some historians have presented. The goal of this section is to bring Thucydides closer to the comic poets in terms of their importance as sources for Pericles, placing him alongside the comic poets as two strands by which we can better understand fifth-century Athens and Pericles. This type of *quellenkritik* is important not only to understand who Thucydides was but also to see him as more than the unbiased, detached historian that the scholars noted above have fashioned him.

In programmatic statements in Book 1, Thucydides makes clear that he has ruthlessly omitted any source from his history that he deemed inaccurate. Thucydides seemed to have been of the opinion that the comic poets were prone to obfuscating the truth. He makes this sentiment more clear when he makes the claim that the comic poets “embellish” and “exaggerate” the facts (Thuc. 1.21).<sup>85</sup> Clearly, Thucydides had a strong authorial bias against including the comic poets’ viewpoints and their status as reliable historical sources. The conceit of Thucydides is that he claimed to record events “clearly, as they were,” as if he himself had no bias or viewpoint that affected his own writing of history (Thuc. 1.21). If we were to take Thucydides’ self-description at face value, as Gomme seems to have done, we might believe that the comic poets had no effect on Thucydides’ writing. However, when one compares the attacks of the comic poets to the last two speeches of Pericles, one gets a different idea entirely.

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<sup>85</sup> Another hint as to what Thucydides thought of the comic poets can be seen in the funeral oration, in which he says, “We need no more, not a Homer to sing our praises nor any other poet to please us with verses whose plots and fictions are hobbled by the truth.” (Thuc. 2.41). Perhaps, from this quotation, Thucydides was referring to the comic poets and believed that they were not accurate in their depictions of events or public figures.

*Thucydides rebuttal against attacks made on Pericles' public persona*

When one examines the speeches of Pericles in Book 2, it is important to note, firstly, that Thucydides is the one who is designing and shaping this speech. As he says in 1.22:

As to the speeches of the participants, either when they were about to enter the war or after they were already in it, it has been difficult for me and for those who reported to me to remember exactly what was said. I have, therefore, written what I thought the speakers needed to say given the situations they were in, while keeping as close as possible to the gist of what was actually said. (Thuc. 1.22).

In many ways, the speeches offer an opportunity for Thucydides to present political ideas and show how they evolve over a series of speeches. This offers one an opportunity, then, to get a glimpse into what Thucydides' own interpretation was on one of the most important political figures in fifth-century Athens.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, as one analyzes the last two speeches of Pericles, it will be helpful to keep Thucydides in mind as the fashioner and shaper of these speeches.

The Funeral Oration in Book 2 is one of the most famous parts of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*. This is the second speech of Pericles in Book 2 and it has gained a considerable amount of acclaim over the course of Western History. When one takes into consideration the intended audience, context, and social setting of this speech, it appears in a new light. As Thucydides tells us, Pericles gave the funeral oration to honor the first men who had died in the Peloponnesian War and "a man who has been chosen by the city for his outstanding reputation and exceptional wisdom delivers a fitting eulogy over the dead" (Thuc. 2.34). The oration that Pericles gives works within a genre of funeral speeches that dates back to the 460s BC and many scholars have called this speech

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<sup>86</sup> For more on the historicity of the speeches see G. W. Bowersock, "The Personality of Thucydides," *The Antioch Review* 25 (1965): 143-146. John Marincola. *Greek Historians*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 77-85.

“epideictic” because it works in a praise-blame structure.<sup>87</sup> Athens is praised for its democratic virtues and men are called upon to be “like lovers to her” (Thuc. 2.43).

Even before the speech begins, Thucydides gives the reader a subtle hint that this speech will bolster Pericles’ reputation as an austere and able public official. Although Thucydides may have heard this speech himself and there are likely many elements within the speech that Pericles could have said, this is a speech that Thucydides is constructing, in part, to shape the reader’s opinions of Pericles. In addition, Thucydides wrote these speeches in full knowledge of what the comic poets had said previously about Pericles.<sup>88</sup> That makes these speeches all the more important for looking at how they offer a contrast to and rebuttal of the claims of the comic poets about Pericles.

First, Thucydides fashions an image of Pericles in this speech as one who gives speeches, not out of self-interested political pursuit, but out of civic duty. After recognizing the tradition of the Athenian funeral oration, Pericles all but shows a reluctance to give a speech in the first place: “As for me, it would have seemed enough to show our respect for brave men who fell in action *with* action...and not to risk letting the reputation for courage of so many depend on whether one man speaks well or poorly” (Thuc. 2.35). Pericles/Thucydides recognizes that speeches have their limitations and that sometimes it is better to show honor “with actions.” Pericles acknowledges, “It is hard to say the right thing when people barely agree as to the truth of it. The sympathetic, knowledgeable listener might perhaps think that what is said falls short of what he knows

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<sup>87</sup> Stadter, *The Speeches in Thucydides; a Collection of Original Studies with a Bibliography*, 26.

<sup>88</sup> Connor, *Thucydides*, 233: “Certainly he knew that his treatment of almost every major figure, Pericles, Cleon, Demosthenes, Nicias, Alcibiades, would in his own day be controversial and would cut against conventional wisdom and judgements.” I bring this up to further substantiate my claim that Thucydides had full knowledge of the attacks of the comic poets even though he does not make it explicit in the Funeral Oration.

and wants to hear” (Thuc. 2.35). In the best-case scenario, even when one is saying the right thing and there are “sympathetic” listeners in the audience, what you say might not be enough to satisfy them. In the worst-case scenario, “Those who do not know the facts might, from envy, think some things exaggerated if they sound like more than they themselves can do” (Thuc. 2.35). Accordingly, if one has listeners in the audience who are ignorant of the facts, they will probably dislike the speech because the speaker praises the dead too much. However, with informed listeners, the audience will believe that the speaker praises those whom they used to know as brave men too little. This is an impossible situation for the speaker. According to Thucydides, it appears that human nature is the problem, making it is impossible to say the right thing. Pericles continues by saying that “praise of others is bearable only insofar as each man thinks he is capable of doing what he hears praised. They therefore begrudge and disbelieve in men who surpass their own abilities” (Thuc. 2.35). According to Pericles, this Funeral Oration is fraught with difficulty because people do not like hearing about men who are better than they are—another bad mark for human nature. When we take these words with Thucydides’ encomiastic remarks in 2.65, it would seem as though that there is a double meaning to these words. On the one hand, they refer to those who were actually hearing any funeral oration but on the other hand, it would seem as though Thucydides is also classifying the comic poets’ remarks about Pericles as envy. They begrudged Pericles because he surpassed the abilities of their patrons. Thus, Pericles did not achieve his rank by some kind of trick, but by his own merits, as Thucydides saw it.

Secondly, the funeral oration also seems to be an indirect rebuttal against the claim by some of the comic poets and politicians that rhetoric was somehow hurting



Athens. Pericles makes this point as well in the funeral oration where he famously says, “We are also the only ones who either make governmental decisions or at least frame the issues correctly, because we do not think that action is hampered by public discourse, but by failure to learn enough in advance, through discourse, about what action we need to take” (Thuc. 2.40). What Pericles is referring to was the rich debate that marked the Assembly of Athens at this time. In the Assembly, any male citizen could get up and give a speech on anything he wanted. If there was a problem confronting Athens, the people debated and discussed it in the Assembly. This was the straw that stirred the drink, so to speak; a truly deliberative democracy in which an informed citizen body ideally participated fully. Pericles/Thucydides is saying that it is necessary to have this debate and dialogue in the Assembly in order to learn enough in advance about what action to take. Discourse is necessary to their strategy to win the war. Because public debate and argumentation marked the Athenian democracy, they were able to make good policy decisions. In fact, he goes even further in saying that if governments are “hampered,” it is by their “failure to learn enough in advance.” It is not that they learn too much before making a decision, but too little! Therefore, it is through vigorous debate in the *ecclesia* that Athens can successfully navigate the difficulties around her. In essence, Thucydides, through Pericles, is setting up a counter-claim to the comic poets who claim or assert that Pericles hampers public discourse because he gives too many speeches. On the contrary, Pericles was doing just the right thing by vigorously debating in the *ecclesia*. It was those who were seeking to stifle the dialogue, like Cleon, who were hurting Athens not Pericles.

That Athens needed a leader like Pericles was strongly argued by Thucydides in the last speech of Pericles. It is almost as if Thucydides is answering the comic poets through Pericles when Pericles says in the second speech in 2.60, "When you get angry at me, it is at the sort of man who, as well as any other, knows what must be done and how to put it into words" (Thuc. 2.60). Instead of being a coward who talks too much, Pericles was someone who balanced words and deeds perfectly. In other words, Pericles uses words to communicate the unavoidable actions Athens must take. If there were no speeches, no one would know what to do. Clearly, Thucydides is rebutting the comic poets' argument that Pericles spoke too much and argues that Pericles' oratory was necessary in order to get things done.

*Thucydides' response on Pericles' private persona*

Lastly, although Thucydides does not make any direct reference to Pericles' private life, there do seem to be subtle hints that he was responding to the attacks by the comic poets that Pericles was indiscrete in his private life by the way in which he speaks about public and private interests. For example, in 2.37 of the Funeral Oration he says, "We practice a politics that does not emulate the customs of our neighbors. On the contrary, we are the models, not the imitators, of others. Because we are governed for the many and not for the few, we go by the name of democracy." The "customs of our neighbors" probably refers to the practice of many Greeks of having an oligarchy to rule the city-state or a council of elders, as did Sparta. Essentially, what Pericles is saying is that because Athens was a democracy, they were the polis *par excellence* and far more advanced than their neighbors were politically. The neighbors of Athens ought to emulate Athens' form

of self-government. Presumably, when Pericles speaks of Athens' neighbors, he means to draw our attention particularly to Sparta, as he will go on to refer to Sparta directly in 2.39, which practiced a form of oligarchy rather than democracy. In 2.39, Pericles/Thucydides compares Athens to Sparta in their military training, attitude towards foreigners, and response towards hardships; essentially proclaiming the greatness of Athens over Sparta.

In the context of these remarks, he further says, "We are generous towards one another in our public affairs; and though we keep a watchful eye on each other as we go about our daily business, we don't get angry at our neighbor if he does as he pleases, and we don't give him dirty looks, which are painful though they do not kill" (Thuc. 2.37). This excerpt seems to mean that Athenians ought to provide one another a certain level of privacy. If taken this way, perhaps one might say that Athenians ought to mind their own business when it comes to private affairs. What one does in the privacy of one's own home is that man's affair and his alone. As a response to the attacks on Pericles, it would seem as though Thucydides is neither confirming nor denying the idea that Pericles had affairs with other men's wives or daughters. Further, he seems to be implying that the Athenians ought to give Pericles a long leash in this case because of what he was producing for Athens. Think of Pericles' last speech where he says, "When you get angry at me, it is at the sort of man who, as well as any other, knows what must be done and how to put it into words, a man who is both patriotic and uninterested in money" (Thuc. 2.60). Pericles, in Thucydides' words, claims that he loved his country and did not take bribes. However, he does not mention anything about his private life. What is important

to Thucydides is that Pericles was good for Athens and perhaps the Athenians ought to overlook what he did in his private life.

When one reads these excerpts from the Funeral Oration, it seems hard to accept that Athenians were this “generous” when looking at the harsh scrutiny that they put their leaders under. Consider the way the Athenians ostracized Cimon and Themistocles when they gained too much power; they exiled two men who had won impressive military victories for Athens based on faults in their personal lives (Plutarch *Themistocles* 22. *Cimon* 17). Moreover, surely, one could not do whatever one pleased in one’s personal life without repercussions, especially if it affected one’s neighbor adversely.<sup>89</sup> To be an Athenian citizen meant to compete every day with your fellow citizens. If one wanted the position of *strategos* for example, one had to learn how to survive in a society in which there were constant attacks on every aspect of one’s life in the political arena, including one’s private life. One’s political opponents would use every angle in order to gain an advantage. Nevertheless, the historian ought to remember that the Funeral Oration is an ideal that Thucydides is projecting, not the state of affairs, as they actually existed in fifth-century Athens. Thucydides wants his readers to think that Athens was like this but, in fact; Athens did not meet up to his ideals in many respects.

However, Thucydides says, “Pericles gave notice to the Athenian assembly that Archidamus was a friend of his, but that the friendship had not been to the detriment of Athens” (Thuc. 2.13). He goes on to prove this by offering up his property to the Athenians should Archidamus leave it untouched (Thuc. 2.13). This reveals the debate in the fifth-century B.C. between Thucydides on the one hand, who praised Pericles for the

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<sup>89</sup> Dihle and Krojzl. *A History of Greek Literature*, 204: For example, in the case of *in flagrante delicto* with another man’s wife, according to Attic law, “a husband was permitted to go unpunished for killing an adulterer.”

way he handled his relationship with Archidamus, and the comic poets who criticized Pericles for his relationships with foreigners. One should note that the comic poets used this as a way of implying that these friendships influenced Pericles but Thucydides suggests Pericles cast these relationships aside for the good of the people.

As one can see by doing a close reading of Pericles' last two speeches, it becomes clear that Thucydides created a discourse on both Pericles' public and private persona. It seems likely from analyzing certain parts of these speeches that Thucydides was rebutting the comic poet's claims that Pericles was cowardly in his use of rhetoric and immoral in his private life. Therefore, Gomme's claim that the comic poets were too "puerile to need refuting" simply seems inaccurate because Thucydides seems to have shaped the speeches to do exactly that—refute the comic poets.<sup>90</sup> Whenever one does historical research, it becomes apparent that sources do not come out of a vacuum. They are usually in conversation with and speak to the prior sources that first weighed in on whatever subject they concern.

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<sup>90</sup> Gomme, *Commentary on Thucydides Vol 1*: 27.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it would seem appropriate to reflect on two lessons learned from our examining Pericles' public image as a part of fifth-century Athenian public discourse and how, perhaps, studying Pericles helps put present-day concerns into perspective. The first take-away from this project is that when one does historical research on transformational political figures, like Pericles, one will, in many cases, encounter both an idealized picture and a satirical picture of that figure, making the reality of that character much more complicated. By their nature as partial accounts, the very lenses (i.e., primary sources) which the historian uses to view a historical figure limits his or hers understanding. That is to say, the "real" Pericles will always be obscured by the fact that he was depicted by sources that sought either to idealize or vilify him for their own political or cultural ends. They had interpretive biases. In order to get a better understanding of who Pericles was one would have to meet him in person in his own day and even that would present its own difficulties. Likely, Pericles had both imperfect and admirable traits in his character. Even in Thucydides' encomium of Pericles, Pericles seems to fall short of the ideal political leader that many assume he was because he was not able to predict, for example, the disasters that would befall Athens (e.g. the plague). Moreover, in the account of the comic poets, Pericles still gets credit for having outstanding rhetorical skills.

This more-complicated understanding of both sets of lenses makes for a more balanced Pericles, a Pericles that is, simultaneously, not over-inflated with greatness and not totally sullied by his vices. This ought to cause us to reflect on our own political

leaders and their public image. Vilifying or beatifying political leaders has been a weakness of democracies since Athens. In order to learn any lesson from fifth-century Athens, we ought to seek to make that which is strange, familiar and that which is familiar, strange. We should control our own biases and seek to understand the biases of those with whom we disagree. This should lead to a better understanding of the character of political leaders and guard against simplistic understandings of sources.

Secondly, when studying Pericles, the historian should also remember that, although one is inevitably influenced by the political discourse that shape the time in which one writes making one's own interpretive lenses susceptible to presentist concerns, it is important to guard against imposing direct comparisons between Pericles and the present day. For example, one history written recently compared Pericles' Funeral Oration to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and other historians have assimilated the Peloponnesian War to the Vietnam War as if the two were the same wars fought in different times.<sup>91</sup>

While it can be useful at times to draw comparisons between the present and the past as a way of trying to understand past events in terms that we can comprehend, we must never try to impose simplistic explanations onto the causes of past events as if they were exactly interchangeable with the events of the day. The historian should put the events of Pericles' day and Pericles himself into proper context without which we will never fully understand the subtleties of the discourses that were going on around Pericles. Pericles lived in a unique situation: a city-state that was just emerging as a radical democracy with vast economic and military resources. Each Athenian male citizen of

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<sup>91</sup> Charles Hirschfeld, and Donald S. Gochberg. *Classics of Western Thought*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), 174.

legal age, theoretically, participated in the Assembly and had a stake in Athens' future. This unprecedented situation allowed Pericles to be unusually powerful in his own time due to his strong rhetorical prowess. He understood what it took to move the ship of state and how to handle himself politically in that context. However, the historian cannot take Pericles out of that context and expect him automatically to be a great political leader in another context. On the contrary, each time and place in history has a unique set of concerns. Pericles was a uniquely talented Athenian leader. Only by researching Pericles in light of his own context and doing the hard work necessary to understand the particular conversations affecting Athens over time will there be any fruit to be had in understanding Pericles. Context is, and always will be, the key to our understanding of Pericles.



**Appendix A: Timeline of Important Dates**

- 493 Pericles is born**
- 478 Foundation of Delian league**
- 472 Pericles pays for Aeschylus's production of the *Persians***
- 471 Themistocles ostracized**
- 461 Cimon ostracized**
- 460 Athenian breach with Sparta**
- 457 Archonships opened to small holders. Pay for juries**
- 454 Athenian tribute lists begin**
- 451 Periclean Citizenship laws**
  - 5 year truce with Sparta**
- 450 Cimon dies in Egypt**
- 449 Peace made with Persia**
- 448 No tribute collected**
  - Pericles has the Parthenon started**
- 447 Tribute resumes**
  - Athens loses 'land empire'**
- 446/445 Beginning of thirty years peace with Sparta**
- 443 Conservative leader Thucydides ostracized**
- 442 Pericles director of festival**
- 441-39 Revolt of Samos**
- 437 Athens founds Amphipolis**
  - Pericles in Black Sea**
- 431: Peloponnesian War begins**
- 430-427: Plague**
- 429 Pericles dies**

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