

MAKING HISTORY MYTHICAL: THE GOLDEN AGE OF PEISISTRATUS*

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The myth of the golden age is well known.¹ In Hesiod, it refers to the time of Cronus's rule in the sky and the first appearance of humanity on the earth: the golden race—a privileged humanity with living conditions never to occur again (*Op.* 110–20). After this prelude at the dawn of Greek literature, the myth enjoyed a long tradition. Life in the time of Cronus, *epi Kronou bios*, became paradigmatic of existence unfolding under the sign of happiness, rooted in justice and peace. Plato evokes this primeval humanity in his political dialogues,² and Aristotle recalls it in the context of Peisistratus's tyranny in Athens (*Ath. Pol.* 16.7). In this long tradition, however, the myth underwent a process of politicization,³ and the living

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1 It should be remarked from the outset that the notion of a golden age is absent in the Greek tradition but arose in Roman literature, which elaborated the image of the golden age expressed by the formulas *tempus aureum* (Hor. *Epod.* 16) or *aurea saecula* (Verg. *Aen.* 6.791–93); see Baldry 1952.87–90. Greek tradition speaks either of the golden race or of the age of Cronus. Yet because, in Hesiod, the characteristic living conditions of the golden race are associated with a specific period of divine rule, that of Cronus, scholars of the Greek tradition also refer to the golden age as a label for a coterminous period of human happiness in myth.

2 The myth of the golden age receives attention in the *Statesman* (271c–72c) and the *Laws* (713b–e), and finds echoes in *Cratylus* (397d), *Symposium* (202e), and *Republic* (5.468e); see Stewart 1905.434–37, Guthrie 1957.71–72, Mattéi 1996.57–80, Kahn 2009.161–63.

3 For Detienne 1963.11–12, political claims are inherent in Hesiod's version as well, by virtue of the contrasts between the *chruson genos* and the actual iron race to which the poet belongs: nostalgia and a critique of the present are inevitable components of the *Works and*

conditions of the people of the golden age were attributed to Cronus's government rather than to the perfection of the golden race.⁴ Thus in Plato, the complex architecture of human races as found in Hesiod disappears and is subsumed into a dichotomous scheme that opposes rule rooted in justice to one stemming from injustice. As for the golden age, it becomes the visible sign of a government that develops under the direction of *dikē*.

Aristotle both continues and disrupts Plato's interpretation of the myth. For him, too, the golden age is transferred into an explicitly political frame of reference. Yet if the golden age is still the product of good government, it is not part of a remote past but qualifies the very history of archaic Athens. If in Plato, the golden age characterizes humanity under the rule of gods,⁵ in Aristotle, it becomes a label for the period of the tyranny. To recognize that this label gains legitimacy because the reign of Peisistratus unfolded under peace and tranquility is tautological and at the same time suspicious. Certainly, it contrasts with the anachronistic hostility that fifth-century Athenians projected back to the time of the tyranny and that resulted in a revision of the data about the period of the tyrants (Lavelle 1993). How was it that Peisistratus seemed to recreate the mythical past of humanity, considered forever lost? What were the renewed living conditions that enabled the application of the image of the golden age? Obviously, the tyranny did not provide a death that came through sleep, nor an everlasting banquet, nor again a generous earth producing fruit without the labor of human hands.

In this paper, I aim to answer these questions. Instead of considering the mythical image as a colorful appendix to the period of the tyranny, I take it as a vantage point from which to look at—and eventually understand—the tyrant's activities. Not only does this approach offer a compelling way to synthesize the heterogeneous measures of Peisistratus, but it also further defines our understanding of his agenda and ideological stance.

Days' account. But in Plato's version, the myth is inserted as a paradigm, whether negative or positive, in a discourse about the optimal ruler (Pl. *Plt.* 272b). On the ambiguity of the golden age, see Vidal-Naquet 1986.288.

4 In Hesiod, the living conditions of the golden race do not depend on Cronus's government but on the goodness inherent in the golden race. The poet creates a mere temporal parallelism: Cronus is reigning, *basileuein*, in the sky as the golden race lives on the earth (*Op.* 111).

5 In the *Statesman*, the golden age occurs during the period of the god's control over the universe, while in the *Laws*, it is restricted to the time when gods ruled over the earth (*Plt.* 271d, *Leg.* 713d).

P. J. Rhodes argues in his commentary to the *Constitution of Athens* that the association between historical regime and the myth originated at the time of Peisistratus's sons and reached Aristotle as an element of the oral tradition, *akoē*.⁶ Moving a step further, I suggest that Peisistratus himself may have adopted the image of the golden age as a model and, likewise, as a slogan that would identify his rule and the changes it introduced in sixth-century Athens. Given the paucity of sixth-century written sources and the lack of a direct statement attributing the analogy between the golden age and tyranny to Peisistratus, this is a difficult claim to make. Oral tradition is suspect and may well reflect the preoccupations of the present (Davies 1981, Vansina 1985, Thomas 1992), in this case Aristotle's time, rather than preserving accurately the past. Yet several considerations allow a reconstruction that makes the image of the golden age contemporary with the tyranny. The material culture of the time can supplement the paucity of written sources. With a variety of countryside and mythological subjects, the iconographic discourse of black-figure vases celebrates the prosperity of the earth and peace, while we hear from Pausanias that within the precinct of the Olympieion there was a temple dedicated to Cronus and Rhea (1.18.7).

Equally important to the argument of this paper is that the idea of a renewal of golden-age conditions in historical time was indeed available to Peisistratus and contemporary Athenians through Hesiod. For as we will soon see, in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod compensates for the disappearance of the mythical period with the prospect that even in the era of Zeus, by means of a just government, people may be blessed, living a life close to that of the mythical age. Peisistratus demonstrated knowledge of how to use myth and religion at crucial moments of his career, and historians have been receptive to that. The adoption of the image of the golden age, too, suits the tyrant's strategies to establish and maintain his leadership. Finally, Aristotle's own method, and bias, in dealing with his sources about the tyranny reinforce my argument that the image of the golden age was contemporary to Peisistratus.

In the pages that follow, I bring together all these elements. I first follow the politicization of the myth from Hesiod to Plato: its transferal from a purely mythical context to a factual and historical one. I then proceed to analyze the strategies that Peisistratus adopted as parts of a consistent whole. These strategies reveal the presence of a conscious political program

6 Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.7; see Rhodes 1981.217–18.

designed to bring social stability to the city and to lay a solid foundation for his power. At the core of this program stands the awareness that a balanced interplay between city, *astu*, and countryside, *chōra*, was a crucial step toward the elimination of stasis and the realization of justice.⁷ Peisistratus's politics of settlement,⁸ his differentiated, and yet equally favorable, approach to both the multitudes and to aristocratic families, his observance and promotion of legal mechanisms, and the urban transformation of the city joined to a new productivity of the fields formed the recipe for long-term political success and allowed the emergence of golden-age living conditions such as peace and prosperity. Ultimately, Peisistratus's measures contributed to giving Athens a "trans-factional" and national makeover, which fostered in the divided population a sense of identity and membership. A look at iconography identifies the presence of a visual discourse representing the embodiment of golden-age features in the life of archaic Athens. Finally, I conclude with a series of considerations of Peisistratus's awareness of the communicative power of myth and of the particular effects that an association with the mythical age brought to the representation of the tyranny.

THE GOLDEN AGE FROM THE FIELDS TO THE CITIES

Hesiod's myth of the races dooms humanity to a condition of loss. Through a succession of different races, it accounts for the present necessity not only of work, but also of pain, fatigue, and injustice. At the beginning, another race of men lived on the earth, the golden race. They were inherently just, happy, and at peace. At that time, Cronus was ruling over the sky, and the Titans, the generation of gods prior to Zeus, had their dwellings on Mount Olympus. The golden race was dear to the gods (*philoī makaressi theoisin*), people did not grow old, and they died an easy death, far from

7 Williams 1973.65 considers the "maneuverable relationship" of city and countryside to be a secret of Peisistratus's political success.

8 Aristotle alludes to Peisistratus's attention to the territory of Athens as he explains the tyrant's support of agriculture. "In doing so, he had two objects, to prevent them [*hoi aporoi*] from stopping in the city [*astu*] and make them stay scattered about the country [*chōra*] and to cause them to have a moderate competence and be engaged in their private affairs, so as not to desire nor to have time to attend to public business" (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.2–3; trans. Rackham). Of course, Aristotle's explanation for the tyrant's territorial policy might echo the philosopher's own anachronistic views (cf. his discussion of the best democracy in *Pol.* 6.1318b, where the demographic distribution on the territory of a city becomes a decisive factor for the good deployment of the political machine).

agony and disease. Days were spent in festivities (*thaliai*), without care and fatigue. This race of men lived in the fields (*erga*), were rich in sheep, and enjoyed the abundant products that the earth spontaneously brought forth (*aroura automatē*). Then the earth covered up the entire race, and, after death, the people of the golden race became benevolent spirits, guardians of mankind, watching over judgments and cruel deeds (*Op.* 109–26). The extinction of the golden race coincided with the demotion of Cronus and the advent of Zeus. In the time of Zeus, there is a succession of other human races: from the silver and the bronze, to that of heroes and, finally, the race of iron, to which Hesiod belongs. Each of them signals a dramatic departure from the living conditions of the golden race in terms of biology, diet, and activities.⁹ As for the last race, the iron one, it experiences a high concentration of evils from which not even sleep can provide escape. The age of Cronus, with humanity living in peace, prosperity, and closeness to the gods is forever gone. Thus Hesiod wishes not to have been born during the iron race, but either after or before. The iron race, too, will disappear, destroyed by Zeus on account of its overflowing injustice and consequent violation of any existing bonds (*Op.* 174–201).

For the iron race, however, there are avenues of escape. In the rest of the *Works and Days*, Hesiod alters the negative foreshadowing presented by the myth and provides antidotes for the inherent degeneration of his contemporaries: work and justice. By working his land, a man of the iron race respects justice and achieves a livelihood. Demeter will love him and his granaries will be full. Like the people of the golden race, he will be rather dear to the gods (*polu philteros athanatoisin*) and also to his fellow mortals (*Op.* 299–310, cf. 826–28; Fontenrose 1974.13–14). In the age of Zeus, which is the time of history, entire communities can transcend the limits of their race and approximate the condition of the people of the golden age. The administration of justice both in regard to strangers and fellow citizens has the power to lift the iron race up to golden-age standards (Hes. *Op.* 225–37; trans. Most):

9 If farming was not necessary for the golden race for which the earth produced its fruit spontaneously, the silver one did not seem to know any mode of sustenance, children lived with their mothers until 100 years old and died soon after. The bronze race, engaged in hubristic fights, did not even feed on bread. The heroes, despite being more just and superior to the preceding races, still died in evil wars and dreadful battles, thereby experiencing mortality in a way that was close to that of the people of the iron race. On the structure of the myth and the internal relations among races, see Vernant 1966.22–34, Fontenrose 1974.5–12, and, most recently, Mattéi 1996.59–63.

But they who give straight judgments to strangers and to the men of the land, and do not turn aside from what is just, their city [*polis*] blooms, and the people [*laoi*] in it flower. For them Peace [*Eirēnē*], the nurse of the young, is on the earth, and far-seeing Zeus never marks out painful war; nor does famine attend straight-judging men, nor calamity, but they share out in festivities [*thaliēis*] the fruit of the labors they care for. For these the earth bears the means of life in abundance, and on the mountains the oak tree bears acorns on its surface and bees in the center; their woolly sheep are weighed down by their fleeces; and their wives give birth to children who resemble their parents. They bloom with good things continuously. And they do not go onto ships, for the grain-giving field bears them crops.

In this passage, Hesiod does not refer explicitly to a golden age. Yet there is a remarkable coincidence between his description of the living conditions of the golden race in the age of Cronus and those that derive from a straight administration of justice in the era of Zeus.¹⁰ Those in charge of giving straight judgments are the kings, *basileis* (*Op.* 38–39). Under their just rule, the positive factors that defined the living condition of the golden race at the time of Cronus reappear: peace, abundance of crops and sheep. The earth produces much food (*polus bios*) and, on the mountains, oaks carry acorns and honey. The iron race, too, shares in festivities (*thaliai*) the fruit of the earth, with the difference that now the productivity of the fields derives from their work and is not spontaneous. When kings are just, war and stasis, which in the myth characterize the life of the iron race, are absent. So are genetic aberrations: sons resemble their fathers. In history, golden-age conditions can be renewed at any time: it is only a matter of governing with justice. Thus importantly for our understanding of the development and use of the myth, by invoking the presence of just kings, Hesiod makes cities the new environment for the revival of the good features that characterized the mythical period and thereby opens the way to the explicit politicization of the myth in Plato.

10 It is interesting that in the descriptions of the golden age and of the “just city,” the vocabulary tends to overlap (cf. line 115 with line 231, line 117 with 237, and line 119 with 231).

Plato adopts the myth of the golden age in two of his political dialogues, the *Statesman* and the *Laws*. He develops it with different emphasis and in terms closer to the version hinted at by Hesiod in his description of the emergence of a blessed life under just kings in the era of Zeus. In Plato, the exceptional biological features that in Hesiod blessed the people under the rule of Cronus have vanished. There are no allusions to a sweet death or to the absence of disease, and in both Platonic versions, the blessed life derives from the rule of the god or his appointed daemons rather than as a by-product of the perfection inherent to the *chruson genos*.¹¹ In the *Statesman*, divine government leads to many blessings for human beings: spontaneous production of the earth (Pl. *Plt.* 271d: *automata panta*, 271e: *bios automatos*, 272a: *automatē gē*), and the absence of war and stasis (Pl. 271e). As in the world of the golden race in Hesiod, so in this version of the myth, too, there are no cities. Men do not have wives or children, for they come to life from the earth.

On the other hand, in the golden age of the *Laws*, the blessed life happens in cities, *poleis*, over which Cronus had appointed daemons as kings and rulers.¹² An astute observer of human nature, Cronus knows that humans endowed with authority easily fall into hubris and injustice; they suffer from an intoxication of power. Superior and more divine than humans, the daemons take care of people, establishing with them a relationship based on natural superiority. A taxonomy of living beings founded on degrees of inherent excellence regulates the relationships among the different species and manages the allocation of power; by virtue of their superior *genos*, daemons are to human beings what shepherds are to animals (*Leg.* 4.713d; cf. *Plt.* 271d). By means of their rule, people enjoy peace, *eirēnē*, respect, *aidōs*, good order, *eunomia*, and abundant justice, *aphthonia dikēs* (*Leg.* 713e). But the daemons' good government has another side effect, one that highlights their subjects' happiness. That someone else is governing the people of the age of Cronus means not only just guidance, but also implies personal detachment from political responsibilities and commitments.

11 In the *Statesman*, as in the *Works and Days*, people are unfamiliar with cities. The Eleatic stranger elaborates even further on the myth in Hesiod: this humanity born from the earth, *gēgenes*, did not experience sexual intercourse or family membership; cf. Lane 1998.107.

12 Pl. *Leg.* 713d; Vidal-Naquet 1986.296 stresses the presence of a "political vocabulary" and "political institutions" in this version of the myth as opposed to the one found in the *Statesman*.

In Plato, the humanity of the golden age is completely apolitical.¹³ In the *Laws*, as in the *Statesman*, whether in the cities or in the fields, carefree existence stems from carefree dependence: uninvolved with government, people in the age of Cronus relied exclusively on the god's rule (Lane 1998.108). In the *Laws*, Plato attaches a paradigmatic value to the golden age, which explicitly comes to embody a pursuable model of government that any polis should refer to and try to recreate by approximation. The Athenian recognizes that some of the best constitutions of his time were a reflection, *mimēma*, of the government, *archē*, and administration, *oikēsis*, that characterized that primeval age.¹⁴

For Plato then, as for Hesiod, golden-age conditions could be renewed under the auspices of a scrupulous and philanthropic government directed toward the well-being of the polis' inhabitants. In the *Laws*, the myth becomes a revealing discourse on political *archē*, and, later on, reveals its logic. It turns upon the crucial question of how to reconcile power and justice, which, ideally joined, are seldom found together in history. Such a discourse not only indicates that the age of Cronus should be imitated, but also proposes a recipe for the *mimēsis*. Given the disastrous consequences that follow human rule in the city, the *archē* must rely on that trace of divinity that still inhabits human beings: the disposition of reason named law (Leg. 4.713e–14a). In this discourse about contemporary politics, *nomos* is the substitute for the daemons of the age of Cronus, and a city under the rule of laws becomes a copy of that mythical age and endowed with all its constitutive features.

Despite the dissimilarities, these different versions of the myth

13 By contrast, according to the same mythical logos, human government in the cities inevitably brings evils, *kaka*, and fatigue, *ponoi*, to the citizens, traits whose absence, according to Hesiod, is the determining feature of the age of Cronus (compare Hes. *Op.* 113–15 with Pl. *Leg.* 4.713e).

14 Pl. *Leg.* 4.713b; cf. *Plt.* 271d. In the two dialogues, the myth is adopted to serve different contexts that mark the development of Plato's political thought. To the hope in the *Statesman* for the rule of a wise statesman situated beyond the laws because of his moral excellence corresponds the disillusionment of the *Laws*. In this last dialogue, the law itself substitutes for the philosopher-king in creating the best possible government in the present world; Skemp 1952.55. On the different versions of the myth in Plato's work, see Lane 1998.116 and van Harten 2003.132–35. Unlike the *Laws*, which endorses the age of Cronus in a traditional way and strives to imitate it in actuality, in the *Statesman*, the reign of Cronus, inserted into a cosmic historical perspective, is radically detached from the actual world—a distance that not only manifests itself as disjunction, but which also subtracts from the myth any paradigmatic value.

share a common feature that is intrinsic to the image of the golden age and that will help us to understand its application to the time of Peisistratus's tyranny. The golden age does not exist in a vacuum, but in all cases it is presented in contrast with times and conditions that deny it. While in Hesiod, the golden age is the epoch for a primeval and blessed humanity and can be partially revived under the government of a just king, it stands against the iron age, whose people are inherently characterized by sufferings, struggles, and degeneration.¹⁵ The same contrast informs Plato's version, where the golden age stems from a "divine" government as opposed to a merely human one. The first type fosters justice and peace, the second stasis and hubris. Whether the contrast is epochal or consummated within the same epoch, whether the golden age embraces the fields, *erga*, or the cities, *poleis*, it is nevertheless an age of difference that stands apart from the evils of contemporary society.

PEISISTRATUS AND THE AGE OF CRONUS

In chapter 16 of the *Constitution of the Athenians*, Aristotle reports that the tyranny of Peisistratus was the age of Cronus, *ho epi Kronou bios* (*Ath. Pol.* 16.7; trans. Rackham):

And in all other matters too he gave the multitude no trouble during his rule, but always worked for peace and safeguarded tranquility; so that men were often to be heard saying that the tyranny of Peisistratus was the Golden Age of Cronus; for it came about later when his sons had succeeded him that the government became much harsher.

Plato, too, or whoever wrote the *Hipparchus*, knew about the golden age of Peisistratus (*Hipparch.* 229b; trans. Lamb):

I therefore should never dare . . . to disobey the great Hipparchus, after whose death the Athenians were for three

¹⁵ We find the same contrast in Hesiod's description of the golden-age conditions in the era of Zeus. For there, too, the effects of a just government are contrasted with those of an unjust one (cf. Hes. *Op.* 225–37 with 238–47).

years under the despotic rule of his brother Hippias, and you might have heard [*akousai*] anyone of the earlier period [*pantes palaioi*] say that it was only in these years that there was despotism in Athens, and that at all other times the Athenians lived very much as in the reign of Cronos [*hōsper epi Kronou basileuontos*].

As we can see from this passage, with a playful twist, Socrates even denies that the Athenians ever experienced a tyranny before the death of Hipparchus, thereby merging together the rule of Peisistratus with that of the first years of his sons.¹⁶ For back then, according to all the men of old, *pantes palaioi*, the Athenians were living as if Cronus was reigning. Here Socrates makes clear that the association between the time preceding Hipparchus's death and the rule of Cronus belonged to the oral tradition, that it was ancient and pervasive.

The question of the sources with which Aristotle worked is a complex and vexed one. Among the historical accounts of the tyranny, Aristotle's is the only one that reports the association with the golden age. His account diverges in many respects from the narratives of Herodotus and Thucydides,¹⁷ but despite the differences, it shares with them the favorable judgment of Peisistratus's political understanding and "level-headedness" (Chambers 1990.208). Very importantly, both Herodotus and Thucydides agree that Peisistratus did not change the Athenian constitution (Hdt. 1.59.6, Thuc. 6.54.6). Thus already for fifth-century sources and despite the crafting of an anti-tyrannical tradition (Lavelle 1993, McGlew 1993.150–55), this shared observation defies a negative interpretation of Peisistratus and is rather in tune with Aristotle's more developed account. For in Herodotus, one of the acts that by definition make a ruler autocratic is the change of *patrioi nomoi* (3.80.5). The sources are unanimous that Peisistratus did not do so.

Aristotle's additional information indicates that he also drew from other sources, probably from one or more *Atthides*, works of local historians of Attica of the fourth century B.C., and also from partisan political

16 The sources are unanimous in assigning a harsh government to Hippias in contrast to the rule of Peisistratus. See Hdt. 5.55, Thuc. 6.59.2, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.7, 19.1, schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 502d.

17 For a full list of Aristotle's deviances from Herodotus and Thucydides, see Pesely 1995.49–52.

writings produced late in the fifth and early fourth centuries.¹⁸ In Aristotle's version of the tyranny, Gérard Mathieu detects conflicting ideological traditions with anachronisms and a prominent "oligarchic" stream, hostile to democracy (1915.39–51). Most recently, George Pesely proposes (1995.65) the *Hellenika Oxyrhynchia*, also from the fourth century, as the source from which Aristotle drew his exclusive information about the tyranny. The appeal to fourth-century written texts, whether one or many, however, ignores Aristotle's eclecticism in using different genres of testimony, while it also undermines the historical validity of his description of the tyranny, since this type of text would naturally craft new evidence and project it back to the archaic period with obvious anachronisms.

In the *Constitution of the Athenians*, Aristotle uses genres of evidence that range from older or contemporary written sources and archives to elements of the oral tradition such as anecdotes and traditional sayings.¹⁹ This is particularly true of chapter 16, which, because of the eclecticism of the sources, Giorgio Camassa defines as "a sort of *specimen* of the historical-antiquarian method of Aristotle" (1993.164). In this chapter, Aristotle indulges in a long excursus on Peisistratus's measures and conduct, ending up with a more positive, but also much more detailed, portrait of Peisistratus than in Herodotus and Thucydides. Given that each piece of information should be carefully scrutinized and validated, the data offered here about the tyranny should not be dismissed a priori. In collecting them, Aristotle was guided by a profound interest that he reveals in the same chapter 16 of the *Constitution of the Athenians* and in his *Politics*. How was it possible that the tyrant Peisistratus was in power for such a long time? And again, how could he come back twice after having been exiled (*Ath. Pol.* 16.9)? This was a historical puzzle for Aristotle, who states that tyranny, together with oligarchy, is of shorter duration, *oligochroniōtera*, than all other governments, and yet Peisistratus's was the third longest tyranny in the Greek world (*Pol.* 1315b30–31). To last a long time, a tyrant must either act in a traditional way by adopting repressive measures or

18 For a compendium of different views, see Rhodes 1981.15–30 and, more recently, Camassa 1993, Chambers 1993, and Pesely 1995.

19 On the oral tradition as a channel of information for Aristotle, see von Fritz and Kapp 1950.13–20 and Camassa 1993.164. Rhodes 1981.217–18 invokes the oral tradition in the specific instance of the identification of the tyranny of Peisistratus with the golden age. At any rate, the use of local lore and proverbs is commonly a part of Aristotle's historical method; see Huxley 1974.

present himself in the role of a king (*Pol.* 1313a34–b11). In light of the broad range of information that Aristotle collected, Peisistratus clearly took this second path.²⁰

Whereas other sources, such as Herodotus and Thucydides, fail to explain the duration of the tyranny, the oral tradition preserved some precious elements that would clarify the question and that did not find a place in the more democratic histories of the fifth century. The metaphor of the golden age, but also the anecdote of the farmer on Mount Hymettus or Peisistratus's trial by the Areopagus, all in chapter 16 of the *Constitution of the Athenians*, belong to such a channel of information. On Mount Hymettus, Peisistratus gave proof of mildness, a genuine interest in people's condition, and, ultimately, a sense of justice. He went there during one of the many visits he paid to the Attic countryside to inspect it and settle disputes among the farmers. When with great surprise, he saw a farmer digging rocks, he had his servant ask what type of crop the farm grew. The farmer replied: "All the aches and pains that there are, and of these aches and pains Peisistratus has to get the tithe" (*Ath. Pol.* 16.6; trans. Rackham). Thus the farmer stressed his fatigue from working such arid soil and, at the same time, alluded to the unfairness of the tax that Peisistratus introduced on its products. Pleased by the "freedom of speech and industry" of the farmer, Peisistratus made his farm tax free. Neglected by Herodotus and Thucydides, this episode of Peisistratus's life seems to have appealed to Aristotle as emblematic of the tyrant's conduct and, in turn, of the good reception he enjoyed among the Athenians.

Along the same lines, the metaphor of the golden age should not be interpreted as merely Aristotle's rhetorical trope to account for the tyranny.²¹ Rather, it derived from the oral tradition about the tyrants²² and stood like a powerful icon that, attached to the tyranny in archaic times, was then transmitted down to the fourth century. The attribution of a golden age to the tyranny well illustrated the new living conditions that had developed in

20 Andrewes 1974.108–09 suggests that when, in the fifth book of the *Politics*, Aristotle draws the profile of the non-traditional tyrant, he had precisely Peisistratus in mind.

21 Most recently, Angiolillo 1997.5 attributes the analogy with the golden age to the judgment of Aristotle. But Cassola 1973.82 considers the myth to be an allusion to the financial support given by Peisistratus to agricultural activity, placing it in a scheme of empirical politics.

22 Several times Thucydides refers to the oral tradition, *akoē*, concerning the tyranny as a channel of information (Thuc. 1.20.1, 6.53.3, 6.55.1; cf. Frost 1985.68).

Athens under Peisistratus's policies and explained also his long-lasting rule. As with the prospect of a blessed life under just kings in Hesiod, and later the golden age in Plato's *Laws*, the myth of Peisistratus's golden age was also political. For it showed the effects of a just government on the polis: peace, work, diffused prosperity, festivities, lack of famine and calamity (*Op.* 225–37; quoted above p. 26).

Peisistratus inaugurated a long period of peace and apparently eradicated any reason for stasis to arise, thereby marking an age of difference.²³ The ancient sources are eloquently silent. They implicitly admit that the advent of Peisistratus did coincide with a period of social stability: if the time before and after Solon is punctuated by social conflict,²⁴ no analogous upheaval accompanies the period of the tyranny. For even though Peisistratus had to leave Athens twice because of shifting alliances, the fact that he was able to return shows that the conflicts among factions were not radical but rather emendable.²⁵ Aristotle, in other ways so averse to tyrannical power,²⁶ states it clearly: “He [Peisistratus] gave the multitude no troubles during his rule, but always worked for peace [*eirēnē*] and safeguarded tranquility [*hēsuchia*]” (*Ath. Pol.* 16.7)—features that Hesiod and Plato respectively ascribed to the people of the age of Cronus. Peisistratus's portrait corresponds to Plato's depiction of the pre-Olympic god: the tyrant was popular, *dēmotikos*, and benevolent, *philanthrōpos*. The latter attribution in the *Laws* belongs par excellence to the divine ruler: it is because of his *philanthropia* that Cronus granted a just government to the cities. The figures of the two rulers also overlapped in terms of their benevolence towards their subjects.²⁷

23 On Peisistratus's ability to reconcile the opposing parties, see Andrewes 1974.108–11 and Lévêque and Vidal-Naquet 1976.39.

24 Once Solon left the political scene for a trip to Egypt, crisis arose again. Athenians were dissatisfied, “some having as their incentive and excuse the cancellation of debts (for it had resulted in their having become poor), others discontented with the constitution because a great change had taken place, and some because of their mutual rivalry” reports Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 13.3; trans. Rackham). Twice after Solon's departure, the archonship remained vacant because of stasis. Eventually a certain Damasias held the archonship for two years and two months until he was driven out by force. Obviously, the presence of stasis encouraged unconstitutional moves (*Ath. Pol.* 13.1–2).

25 On the shifting alliances among parties, see Hdt. 1.59–61, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 14.5.

26 Not only is tyranny a perversion of kingship (Arist. *Pol.* 3.1279b5–6), it is also the worst form of constitutional government (1293b28–30).

27 Compare Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.8 with Pl. *Leg.* 4.713d.

The tyrant's work for peace rested on the deployment of justice, *dikē*, at multiple levels: justice characterized his personal relations, informed his changes in the legal system, and emerged from a balanced attention given to religious affairs. In solving the problem of justice, the lack of which according to the ancient sources was endemic in the stasis preceding Peisistratus's rise,²⁸ the tyrant was both conservative and innovative. His agenda adhered to a traditional line. In fact, as in the recreation of the age of Cronus proposed by the Athenian in the *Laws*, Peisistratus's rule unfolded under the observance of pre-existing laws.²⁹ Not only Aristotle, but also Herodotus and Thucydides—we saw—admit that Peisistratus did not act as a tyrant, but was respectful of the laws and the previous constitution, a trait shared by other archaic tyrannies, as John Salmon recently highlighted (1997.63–65). According to Herodotus, he did not confound the *timai* ("civic honors"), nor did he change the *thesmia* ("laws"),³⁰ his government was moderate and well ordered.³¹

The actualization of justice also informed the tyrant's conduct on a more personal level. His relation to the elite and the people gained him political support: to the first he showed hospitality, *homiliai*, to the second he offered his help, *boētheia*.³² In other words, by adopting different

28 According to traditional views, social conflict was at the core of the problem of justice. As Arends 1985.29 points out, in the traditional opinion emerging from the *Republic* (470b4–9), justice, being closely related to *stasis*, pertains to the domain of the polis.

29 "He was willing to follow the laws in all matters without giving himself any advantage" writes Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 16.8; cf. Plut. *Sol.* 31.1). In this way, Athens was under the rule of law rather than that of the individual.

30 Hdt. 1.59; cf. Thuc. 6.55.5–6, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.2. Scholars have pointed out that Herodotus provides an overall unfavorable account of the tyranny (i.e., Lavelle 1993.62), yet in describing the first period of the tyranny, he clearly remarks on the constitutional and lawful attitudes of Peisistratus (1.59). In many respects, Peisistratus followed Solon's political guidelines. The legislator's politics was informed by the ideal of *mesotēs*; he tried to solve social conflict without endorsing any particular faction. He did not take away *timē* from the *dēmos* nor did he add to it. At the same time, he did not damage those who had power and wealth (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 11.2–12.1). According to Aristotle's testimony, Peisistratus did likewise. On Peisistratus's continuation of Solon's constitution, see Chambers 1990.208. The lack of partisanship enabled the tyrant to expand his initial circle of supporters and include the aristocrats; cf. Holladay 1977.44–50.

31 The only exception to the observance of the laws was that Peisistratus placed in the role of magistrates people from his circle (Thuc. 6.55.6).

32 Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.9; cf. Ael. *VH* 9.25. On the nature of the help, ancient and modern sources diverge. This passage needs to be read in conjunction with the earlier claim that Peisistratus advanced loans of money to the poor (*proedaneizein chrēmata*, 16.2). See Migeotte 1980.221, Chambers 1984.71, Millet 1989.23 n. 1, and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993.29.

registers of interaction he showed a great sensitivity to the needs of the specific groups he was dealing with, groups whose consent was necessary to his leadership. On the one hand, Peisistratus recognized the aristocrats as equals and conferred on them hereditary offices in various state cults.³³ During the tyranny, the Alcmeonid Cleisthenes held the archonship,³⁴ and at a certain point in his career, Peisistratus even married the daughter of another Alcmeonid, Megacles, thereby trying to establish solid relations with an aristocratic family previously inimical (Hdt. 1.60–61). On the other hand, he acted as a patron of poor peasants.³⁵ With his differentiated attention directed to these different groups, Peisistratus seemed to endorse that ideal of the middle, *to meson*, that Solon celebrated.³⁶ Unlike the men that the Athenian of the *Laws* presents as the easy prey of *hubris* and injustice when endowed with power, *autocratores*, the tyrant's submission to the laws testified to a divine nature. His commitment to operate within the law emerges from a stunning episode reported by Aristotle: once summoned by the Areopagus to be tried on a case of murder, without eluding the charge, Peisistratus appeared in person to make his defense.³⁷

But respect for the constitution and fair interpersonal relations, both in tune with Solon's conduct, were not enough to restore peace and tranquility in Athens. At the core of Peisistratus's agenda lay a lucid awareness of the physiognomy of Athens as polarized between city, *astu*, and countryside, *erga*. With an innovative approach, the tyrant tried to bridge, or at least to balance, these two poles,³⁸ a program further pursued by his

33 Shapiro 1989.3. For the involvement of the Eteobutadai—to which Lycurgus, the leader of the men of the plain, belonged—in the religious offices of Athena Polias and Poseidon Erechtheus, and the Kerukes and Lukomedai in the Eleusinian and related cults, see Shapiro 1989.12–14, 71–74, 101.

34 IG I/3 10311, Meritt 1939.59–65; cf. Rhodes 1981.220.

35 Millett 1989.22–23. As the author recognizes, the effect of Peisistratus's help of the peasants was to reduce their dependence “on local, wealthy landowners, and transfer their allegiance to the tyrant, thereby centralizing patronage and buttressing the tyranny.”

36 It is true that Peisistratus rose to power as the leader of the “men beyond the hills,” *huperakrioi*, but once tyrant, allusions to partisanship disappear from the ancient sources, and he is portrayed as equally benevolent towards all the populations of Athens.

37 *Ath. Pol.* 16.8; cf. *Plut. Sol.* 31.2. In fact, as McGlew 1993.52–86 points out, early Greek tyranny aimed at establishing justice, which provided despotic rule a basis for legitimacy. The bodyguard whom Peisistratus obtained with the assembly's consent was a tool to re-establish justice and take revenge against the rival aristocrats who injured the tyrant.

38 Osborne 1985 stresses the composite nature of Athens in the classical period: the urban settlement of the *astu* with its monuments and the large territory of Attica divided into *dēmoi*; while Snodgrass 1977.18 points out that already for the fifth century, archeological evidence testifies to a thorough occupation of the territory of Attica.

son Hipparchus.³⁹ The ancient sources agree that Athens' population was not compact but divided into discrete, if not conflicting, groups. Herodotus and Aristotle mention the three parties that gave rise to stasis prior to the emergence of the tyrant: the men of the coast, *paraloi*, those of the plain, *pediakoi*, and "those beyond the hills," *huperakrioi* or *diakrioi*.⁴⁰ Each group was under the leadership of an aristocrat: respectively, Megacles from the Alcmeonids, Lycurgus from the Boutadai (later named Eteobutadai), and Peisistratus himself, who also belonged to a eupatrid family.⁴¹ Aristotle adds that the members of each faction took a name from the region in which they farmed (*Ath. Pol.* 13.5). At any rate, for both Herodotus and Aristotle, the three groups gravitated around distinct areas, highlighting fractures in Athenian society that aristocrats exacerbated for their own purposes.⁴²

Analogously, Peisistratus's vicissitudes illuminate a division that runs parallel to the one represented by the stasis prior to his emergence: that between "those from the city," *astu*, and "those from the countryside,"

39 Pl. *Hipparch.* 228b–d. According to Socrates' testimony, Hipparchus gave proof of great wisdom by introducing the recitation of the Homeric poems during the Panathenaia, and by inviting into Athens poets such as Anacreon of Teos and Simonides of Ceos. These operations lay at the core of a pedagogical program whose "policy of diffusion" is revelatory of the layers into which Athens was structured. Once Hipparchus had educated the people of the city, *astu*, he proceeded next to cultivate the inhabitants of the countryside, *agroï*, by setting up figures of Hermes inscribed with wise poems along the roads in the city and every district town, *dēmoi*. Basically, roads were measured from the Altar of the Twelve Gods that was located in the agora; see Angiolillo 1997.82.

40 Hdt. 1.59, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 13.4; cf. Plut. *Sol.* 29. For the third party, Herodotus and Aristotle provide different labels: the first names them *huperakrioi* (the men beyond the hills), the second *diakrioi* (the men of the hills). Rhodes 1981.185–86 considers Herodotus's label the correct one, and takes the region of these men as the area beyond the hills that encircle the plain of Attica, a wider area than the Diacria, which was a hilly region northeast of Athens. As for the localization of the other two parties, according to Rhodes, the *paraloi* occupied "the coastal strip from Phalerum to Sunion," the *pediakoi* the plain of Athens.

41 These families were centered in the areas of the parties that they led: the Alcmeonidai most probably possessed land in the territory between Phalerum and Sounion, and, in the fifth century, they are found in three demes lying between the city of Athens and the coast (Agryle, Alopece, and Xypete). The Boutadai belonged to the homonymous city deme west of the agora. The family home of Peisistratus was Brauron, a region on the east coast that later received the deme name Philadai; see Rhodes 1981.186–87.

42 Williams 1973.7–41 interprets the history of the sixth century as a game for power played out between aristocratic families: the so-called "established nobility" and the "emerging nobility." The first were urban and encompassed the Lukomedai and Eteobutadai, the second were rural and embraced the Alcmeonidai, Philadai, and the very Peisistratidai. If the indirect tradition is right (Pl. *Ti.* 20, *Chrm.* 155a, 157e), Solon himself belonged to a rural non-establishment family.

dēmoi—a distinction that for Aristotle has already faded away.⁴³ Several episodes testify to this division. It suffices here to mention Peisistratus's second attempt to gain control over Athens. According to Herodotus, the tyrant convened his supporters on the plain of Marathon where, in addition to some partisans from the city, *hoi ek asteos*, flocked, *proserrein*, the people from the *dēmoi*. Those who inhabited the city, *astu*, are presented as the enemies of the tyrant. Peisistratus then marched against them. They, in turn, left the city and met him in front of the temple of Athena at Pallene. Surprised by a sudden attack, the Athenians dispersed without real combat, and Peisistratus was able to conquer the city. He then took hostages from the Athenian families who remained there and had not left at once and gave them to Lygdamis of Naxos (Hdt. 1.62–63).

Smoothing the tensions within Athens' population was Peisistratus's secret for an enlightened politics: it meant creating an image of Athens that would transcend particular groups, but that would allow them to identify themselves easily with it.⁴⁴ Under the tyrants, the city achieved an urban "articulation"⁴⁵ and saw the establishment of local cults,⁴⁶ thereby using a "religious language" that would also appeal to the inhabitants of different

43 Nevertheless, Aristotle seems to acknowledge the importance of territorial politics in Peisistratus's measures.

44 On this point, see Salmon 1997.66–67, who discusses the initiatives of Peisistratus and Polycrates' *erga* and maintains that the tyrants were effective in creating an identity for their cities. Raaflaub 1996.1081 advances the hypothesis that Athenians' sense of membership in and loyalty to the polis was strengthened during the tyranny. More recently, see Frost 2005.

45 Starr 1986.70–83. Urban planning under Peisistratus focused on the Acropolis, agora, and area of the Ilissos as focal zones of Athens and aimed at defining the public open space of the city (i.e., the agora), designing it with both religious and civic buildings—an alteration that also betrays a new political consciousness; Shapiro 1989.5–8.85, Angiolillo 1997.9–27.211–13. The urban articulation of the city also included the provision of water with the construction of the magnificent Enneacronous and other fountain houses, and, at the time of Hipparchus, the opening of a system of roads that connected the city to the countryside (Pl. *Hipparch.* 229a; Angiolillo 1997.17–19.82–83, Camp 2001.30–35).

46 Shapiro 1989.50.65–67 discusses the evidence for the introduction of the cults of Apollo, Artemis, and the Eleusinian goddess from local districts into the city. The cult of Apollo, who in the sixth century received several places of worship, should be considered in relation to "international" sites: Delphi and Delos. The first was under the influence of the Alcmeonidai, a family politically hostile to Peisistratus, the second a center of Ionian worship. For Dionysus, the author argues that the tyrants sponsored cults already existing rather than introducing new ones (86). This phenomenon of religious revival can be politically motivated: the desire to control the local sites, the tyrant's promotion of an endearing self-image, and the establishment of Athens' leading position.

districts in the countryside. At the same time, some cults, like that of Athena on the Acropolis and of Dionysus,⁴⁷ both predating the tyranny, were expanded into national cults (Shapiro 1989.48–49).

Under Peisistratus, Athens became a cultural center. One could argue that the remake of the Panathenaia, the creation of the Greater Dionysia, the introduction of rhapsodic and musical competitions, and the edition of the Homeric poems, which took place at the time of the tyranny (Shapiro 1989.48–49), aimed at making the city a center of amusement and education, but also of commonly shared ideals. At the same time, the tyrant's initiatives on Delos betray the intention of conferring upon Athens the appearance of the leader among the Ionian communities.⁴⁸

While the city was taking shape as an urban, religious, and cultural center, fostering a sense of identity among the entire population, Peisistratus also targeted the needs and expectations of specific groups. As we have seen, the aristocrats were given privileges and the poor received help. In particular, Peisistratus's vision of Athens included a politics of employment and settlement, of which the Athenian hostages transferred to Naxos perhaps represent an extreme case. In this instance, Peisistratus gained the loyalty of the aristocratic families that had remained in the city. More generally, Peisistratus aimed at keeping part of the poor population occupied, whether through the revitalization of agriculture or through the settlement of colonies. Plutarch reports that in the age of Solon (*Sol.* 22, 1; trans. Perrin):

Observing that the city [*astu*] was getting full of people who were constantly streaming into Attica from all quarters for greater security of living [*adeia*] and that most of the country [*chōra*] was unfruitful [*agennēs*] and worthless [*phaulos*] . . . he [Solon] turned the attention of the citizens to the art of manufacture, and enacted a law that

47 In expanding the cult of Dionysus, it has been argued that the tyrants aimed at targeting farmers and poorer people, who first worshipped him; i.e., Simon 1969.271. At the same time, if Dionysus (together with Demeter), as Shapiro 1989.87 argues, was recognized as a bringer of a life staple, then his flourishing under the tyranny well symbolizes the transformation of living conditions that was taking place.

48 Peisistratus sponsored a purification of the island of Delos and had all the graves within sight of the temple of Apollo removed (*Hdt.* 1.64, *Thuc.* 3.104.1); on the political purpose of this and other activities on Delos, see Shapiro 1989.48–49.

no son who had not been taught a trade should be compelled to support his father.⁴⁹

This scenario depicts a problematic distribution of the population, with an extraordinary demographic density in the city due to the barren *chōra*. This precise situation may not have existed in archaic Athens. Yet the extensive cultivation of the land under Peisistratus's leadership,⁵⁰ together with his tacit support of Miltiades' colonization in Thracian Chersonnesus,⁵¹ do indicate that an unemployed population had been an agent of conflict at the time of his rise.⁵² The tyrant conducted a prudent employment campaign. As mentioned, he lent money to encourage *ergasia* in the fields (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.2), while the urban planning that shaped the city with magnificent buildings such as the temple of Zeus or the marvelous Enneacronous (which

49 Plutarch weaves a comparison with Lycurgus, who came to face a different situation than that of Solon. In Lacedaemon, too, the country had been invaded by a multitude of helots, whom it was better to keep occupied. But the "immigrants" were kept down in the large *chōra* "by continuous hardship and toils," while the art of war was reserved for the citizens in the city (*Sol.* 22.2).

50 With Peisistratus, the land became thoroughly cultivated, *exergazomenē chōra* (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.4), as farming was extended to previously uncultivated land; cf. Hammond 1961.86, Cassola 1964.67. Dio Chrysostomus mentions that, under Peisistratus, the poor were scattered in settlements all over Attica (7.107–08). Hignett 1952.114–15 thinks that the new land that had become available to poor farmers was that confiscated from Peisistratus's exiled opponents. At any rate, the situation at the time of the tyranny contrasts with the picture provided by Plutarch for the Solonian period: "The land [*chōra*] could give but a mere subsistence to those who tilled it, and was incapable of supporting an unoccupied [*argos*] and leisured [*scholastikos*] multitude [*ochlos*]" (*Sol.* 22.3). For this reason, explains the biographer, the legislator "conferred dignity to all trades and ordered the council of the Areopagus to examine into every man's means of livelihood, and chastise those who had no occupation." Furthermore, the *chōra* suffered from a lack of water: there were neither rivers nor lakes nor springs. Solon encouraged and implemented the search for water with his legislation (*Sol.* 23.5; trans. Perrin). The creation of new wells would obviously have made settlements in the countryside more stable.

51 Peisistratus himself was involved in colonization, as Aristotle mentions a settlement called Rhacelus that the tyrant founded at the time of his second exile (*Ath. Pol.* 15.2; cf. Hdt. 1.64.1).

52 Herodotus reports that Miltiades left Athens because he disliked Peisistratus's rule (6.34–41, 103–04), but as Andrewes 1974.105 points out, the colonists led by the oecist could not have left Athens without the tyrant's consent. On the character of Miltiades' colonization, see Stahl 1987.111–13. Cf. Plato's *Laws* (4.708b), where the Athenian identifies among various stimuli to colonization "lack of room," *stenochōria*, or similar pressing needs, *pathēmata*, and stasis.

Aristotle considered a device to divert Athenians' attention from politics, *Pol.* 5.1313b20–24), had, in fact, the immediate result of offering jobs to unemployed citizens, granting to them the possibility of sustenance in the city. The law on idleness, *argia*, attributed by Theophrastus to Peisistratus, had a similar intention: to render the fields cultivated and the city quieter and more peaceful—a sign that the distress of the city was attributed to unemployed, poor citizens (Plut. *Sol.* 31.2).⁵³

Changes to the legal system also betray a profound belief that the territory of Athens was polarized between city and countryside, and reveal an attempt to coordinate their relationship.⁵⁴ The tyrant established the Local Justices, *kata dēmous dikastai*, so that justice was not administered in the city as before, but locally, in the different districts of Athens by judges journeying there for that purpose. Peisistratus himself was taking part in such legal activity when he went to Hymettus and—as we have seen—met the free-spoken farmer who, complaining about taxes, received proof of the tyrant's benevolence.⁵⁵ Aristotle justifies the creation of the Local Justices as enabling farmers to avoid neglecting their fields to come to the city (*Ath. Pol.* 16.5–6). One might well look at it through the picture provided by Hesiod a century earlier in Boeotia: there justice was administered in the city, the locus of power, where corrupt judges resided and gave unjust sentences (*Op.* 220–21; Detienne 1963.17–21). The displacement of justice administration from city to countryside would promote a more efficient and neutral judicial system, thereby presenting Peisistratus as an advocate of justice like the just *basileis* of Hesiod.⁵⁶

But there is another, complementary reason for the institution of Local Justices besides the focus on the cultivation of the land assumed by Aristotle: it shows once again the attempt to confine the farmers to the

53 Plutarch seems more inclined to ascribe the law to Solon. At any rate, the confusion in the attribution reveals that Peisistratus, even if he did not initiate the law, supported its observance; cf. Pleket 1968.40.

54 The composite nature of a city is a pivotal factor that structures the territory of the new colony in the *Laws* (760e, 745b). On its political relevance, see Bertrand 1992.52–56.

55 Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.5–6. Later Aristotle adds some details regarding Peisistratus's legal innovations within a corpus of democratic reforms: "In the archonships of Lysicrates [in 453 B.C.], the thirty judges called the Local Justices [*kata dēmous*] were instituted again" (26.3; trans. Rackham).

56 Looking at it from another angle, the institution of the Local Justices weakened the control of the big landowner families over the "satellite" population; cf. Ober 1989.66—a loss of power that apparently did increase the social stability of Athens given the fact that, as noticed before, we do not hear of social conflicts during the tyranny.

chōra so as to impede any interference in city life. It reveals an effort to root people in the territory of Attica. Comparison with analogous institutions elsewhere might elucidate this point. Elis in the Peloponnesus represents an interesting case. Polybius records that in the third century its *chōra* was densely inhabited and full of farm stock, while some Eleans were so fond of country life that for two or three generations they did not show their faces to the law court, *alia*, and this—continues the historian—because those who occupy themselves with politics show the greatest concern for their fellow citizens in the country, *chōra*, and see that justice is done to them on the spot and that they are plentifully furnished with all the necessities for life (4.73.5–9). Polybius does not explicitly mention Local Justices, but it is apparent that an institution similar to the one in the time of Peisistratus was at work. As in the Attic countryside, so here in Elis, justice was administered locally. Moreover, the historian derives the peculiar behavior of the Eleans from their attachment to the land. Thus it is plausible to attribute to Peisistratus's measure the intent of reinforcing the farmers' connections with the territory they only recently inhabited and cultivated.⁵⁷

A NEW ICONOGRAPHY

Scholars have remarked on the extreme iconographic versatility that characterizes the period of the tyranny. Attic pottery saw a wider diffusion, and the iconographic repertoire was expanded to encompass mythical scenes with gods and heroes and generic everyday life scenes that represent activities taking place in city and countryside. An extensive treatment of the iconographic repertoire is beyond the scope of this paper, and it has already been done (Angiolillo 1997.111–51; cf. Hurwit 1991.43–55). Yet in this discussion of the application of the image of the golden age to the period of the tyranny, it is worthwhile attempting to identify and read specific iconographic subjects in line with the new living conditions that the tyranny inaugurated. Are there distinctive scenes from both mythology and everyday life that might allude to the golden age of the tyranny? And if so, what are they?

57 The sources are too scanty to allow a definitive answer. Yet one can argue that the intention to bind people to the land stemmed from the awareness of the precarious situation of the small farmer who had just recently occupied the territory with a new self-referential, autonomous role. The period of obligation to the big landowners through the controversial *hektēmoroi* seems to have come to an end with Solon's reforms.

In fact, it seems that both mythological and contemporary subjects might represent the tyranny as an age of difference. For, on the one side, artists devoted great attention to specific divinities connected with the fertility of the earth. On the other, a new visual genre appears with the representation of country scenes such as plowing and harvesting. The association of the tyranny with the life at the time of Cronus did not trigger representations of this god, who stood more as a genealogical figure than a divine agent. In fact, as a usurper who is himself usurped, Cronus was not the ideal choice for a tyrant seeking popular support.⁵⁸ The god marked a reference to a pre-historic time forever gone, and in the subsequent politicization of the myth, endorsed qualities and virtues that enabled the city's good life but which were disconnected from particular episodes in which the god could have been active. Yet the time of the tyranny sees a flourishing of the iconography around Dionysus and, to a lesser degree, around Demeter. Providers of the staples of life and agents of renewal, Dionysus and Demeter could evoke the positive transformation that occurred under Peisistratus, the new ease of living that derived from the enhanced productivity of the fields and the overall neutralization of stasis.

At least two iconographic phenomena are of particular interest, both taking place around 540 B.C. Satyrs start playing a new role as wine-makers, an activity that lends to them a civilizing function and makes the countryside the crucial environment for civilization. In an amphora by the Amasis painter now in Würzburg, side A presents five satyrs all occupied in various stages of winemaking. At the far right, a standing satyr is harvesting the grapes; at the center, two others are unloading and pressing grapes; at the far left, another satyr is adding water to the wine contained in a *pithos* so as to make it ready for consumption. The fifth satyr in the center is playing the *aulos*, drawing attention to the festive atmosphere of the harvest. Cornelia Isler-Kerényi remarks that the three receptacles handled by the satyrs—the ritual *kantharos*, pitcher, and *pithos*—all allude to the future use of wine. By representing common tools, this scene bridges the distance that separates the mythical workers from those of the archaic

58 There is no evidence for representations of Cronus in Athens at the time of the tyranny. Ancient sources, however, attribute to Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum, the dedication of a silver krater in the temple of Athena Lindia in Rhodes before 550 B.C. The krater represented Cronus receiving his children from the hands of Rhea and swallowing them (*FGrH* 532F1 27). It is precisely this episode that the rare representations of Cronus in the fifth century privilege (*LMC* s.v. Kronos).

period and depicts the practice of winemaking in a realistic way. Other elements add to the veracity of the activity represented. The pressed juice of the grapes flows from a spout into the mouth of a *pithos* whose upper part is above the ground. Finally, two poles support the vines' branches, heavy under the weight of abundant grapes, and clearly indicate that the wine's production is occurring in a vineyard. The reverse of the amphora presents a *thiasos*. Dionysus, crowned with ivy leaves, is holding a *kantharos* into which a satyr is pouring wine from a wineskin. The company is dancing while a satyr plays the *aulos*. The two scenes are obviously related in that one presents the production of wine and the other the consumption with the accompanying euphoria and revelry (Figures 1a–b).⁵⁹

Apart from the winemaking satyrs, in 540 B.C. another “new myth” related to the sphere of Demeter emerges: that of the hero Triptolemus introducing the gift of corn to humanity.⁶⁰ Absent from the *Hymn to Demeter*, this myth was subsequently created at the time of Peisistratus's tyranny and was arguably imported from Argos, the fatherland of Peisistratus's wife Timonassa.⁶¹ A peculiar iconographic example combines Demeter's protégé and Dionysus in a visual discourse that stresses the interrelatedness of their respective contributions to human life, namely wine and corn. For instance, on an amphora by the Affector Painter, on side A, Ikarios receives Dionysus, while side B figures a long procession of men holding branches, *oinochoai*, garlands, and a ram approaching a priestess who stands by an altar.⁶² The processional scene should be interpreted within an Eleusinian context, as the offerings might well be devoted to Demeter (Shapiro 1989.96). The amphora Compiègne by the Priam Painter presents an analogous combination. On one side, there is Ikarios sitting on a winged chariot and holding

59 See also von Bothmer 1985.113–15 fig. 1, Isler-Kerényi 2004.67–70, and Steiner 2007.119. Isler-Kerényi relates the implicit re-evaluation of the countryside in Amasis' paintings to Peisistratus's political program. To this discussion of an iconography alluding to the golden age of the tyranny, the new role of winemaking is quite relevant, especially if considered in relation to the disappearance after 570 B.C. of “violent satyrs.”

60 On the establishment of this iconographic trend and its transformations, see Dugas 1950.7–31 and Raubitschek 1982.109–17. The earliest representations of Triptolemus are attributed to the Swing painter and dated ca. 540–20 B.C. For a rich catalogue of vase paintings representing Triptolemus at the time of the tyranny, see Schwarz 1997.78–109.

61 Raubitschek 1982.111. The authors explicitly connect this iconography with the policies of Peisistratus and his sons “who fostered the cultivation of grain and of the vine and who promoted the cults of Dionysus and Demeter” (110).

62 München 1441 (ABV 243.44).



Figures 1a–b. Würzburg 265 = *Addenda* 43 (151.22), b-f amphora by the Amasis Painter. Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg (Photo: K. Ohrlein).



a *kantharos* and a stalk of grapes and leaves; on the other, Triptolemus is also on a chariot with a bunch of ears of corn (Figures 2a–b).⁶³

Finally, another interesting figure who enters the repertoire of the vase painter in Athens around 600 B.C. and disappears before the end of the sixth century is Aristaeus. Although there are only a few representations, nevertheless the iconography of Aristaeus at the time of Peisistratus deserves some attention. He is represented with wings, holding a satchel or a small pot and pick, and is thereby definitively connected to agricultural activity (see *LIMC* s.v. Aristaïos). So he appears on a neck-amphora by the Affecter painter of about 540 B.C. (Figure 3).⁶⁴ The myth of Aristaeus was known in the archaic period through Hesiod's *Ehoiai* and then preserved by Pindar (frag. 215 Merkelbach-West; P. P. 9.59–65). At Aristaeus's birth, Hermes took the baby from his mother Cyrene and brought him to the Horai and Gaia to be nourished. By anointing Aristaeus's lips with nectar and ambrosia, they made him immortal. According to a scholiast of Pindar, Aristaeus discovered honey and invented the art of making oil (schol. P. P. 9.112–15), while Aristotle later called him *geōrgikotatos*, ("the most skilled in farming").⁶⁵ Because of the lack of contemporary literary sources, it is difficult to assess with certainty the attribution of specific activities such as oil making and honey to Aristaeus in the archaic period. But in any case, his representation with pick and satchel, and the care he received from the Horai and Gaia in Hesiod's version of the myth, certainly evoke human industry in the fields as well as the cooperative and nourishing role of the earth. Furthermore, it is tempting to connect the interest in Aristaeus, whose myth appears to have a Boeotian origin, to the active role played by the Thebans in the fortunes of Peisistratus. For Herodotus tells us that the Thebans especially, among many other Greek communities, contributed economically to his final return to Athens (Hdt. 1.61.3).

The appearance of scenes representing people at work in pottery workshops⁶⁶ or the countryside,⁶⁷ and the emergence of a distinct interest

63 Cf. Angiolillo 1997.147. Also the representation of Ikarios evokes the connection with Peisistratus's interest in the deme of Ikaria and the sanctuary to Dionysus erected during his reign; see Camp 2001.36.

64 Cf. Mommsen 1975.97, Taf. 62.

65 Arist. *Mir.* 838b. Aristaeus was then considered to have taught the art of making cheese, beehives, and oil to mankind (Diodorus Siculus 4.81–82). Cf. Papaspyridi-Karousou 1946–48.

66 Scenes representing potters in their workshops started in 540 B.C. and became very popular in the first half of the following century; Angiolillo 1997.105.

67 Hurwit 1991.49, Angiolillo 1997.112–13.



Figures 2a–b. Compiègne 975 = *ABV* 331.13, b-f amphora by the Affecter Painter. Compiègne (France) Musée Antoine Vivenel (Photo Chr. Schryve).

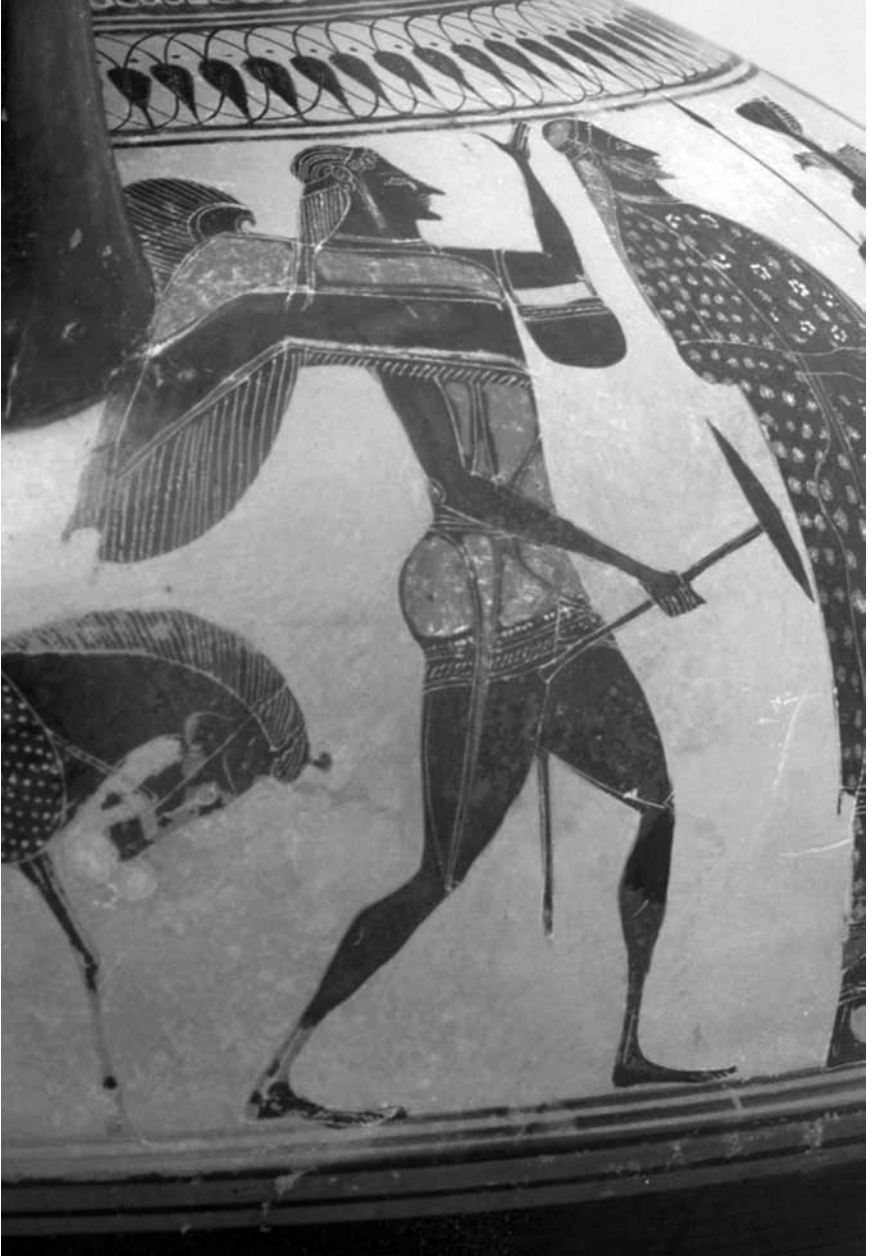


Figure 3. Kassel 679 = Beazley *Para* 111.25bis, b-f neck-amphora by the Affecter Painter. Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel.

in elements of the natural landscape plausibly allude to the new conditions of life at the time of the tyranny. Country scenes represent a striking phenomenon of the period and are particularly interesting for their iconography: field activities such as plowing or sowing. In a cup of about 530 B.C., now at the Louvre Museum, side A depicts men and youths plowing and sowing, oxen, and a mule, while side B shows other youths, another man plowing, and then some large containers, probably *pithoi*, on a cart drawn by mules. The two sides of this cup seem to join together the two sequences that precede and follow the harvest in the agricultural cycle. We may well think that the *pithoi* contain the produce that has just been collected (Figures 4a–b).⁶⁸

Conversely, there is a large repertoire that captures precisely the moment in which the earth offers its ripe fruit and people are collecting it, thereby alluding to a time of abundance and prosperity. And so we see women collecting grapes, standing in orchards and under trees.⁶⁹ Men are represented harvesting grapes and olives.⁷⁰ For the harvest of olives, often it is the very moment in which they shake the trunk and olives fall that is depicted. An amphora from Vulci attributed to the atelier of Antimenes offers a fresh glance at such a moment. On side A, a team of youths is working at different tasks. One is sitting in the olive tree in an attempt to reach out to the farthest branches; two other youths are standing on the ground and beating the tree, while another is ready to collect the falling fruit.⁷¹ Side B of the same amphora figures the centaur Pholos and Herakles shaking hands, while on the right, Hermes sits stretching a hand towards the couple and holding with the other the caduceus. From a tree are hanging birds and hares, while a deer stands between the centaur and the hero (Figures 5a–b).⁷² This scene is an example of ritualized friendship: the centaur Pholos, alone among his peers, accepted Heracles as his *xenos* and protected him from the

68 Cf. Denoyelle 1994.71.30 (A and B), Simon 1969.108 fig. 102 [B].

69 There are many examples of this type. See, for instance, a *skuphos* now in Geneva representing women at fruit trees and baskets between palmettes (ABV 566.621) or a *lekuthos* now in Baltimore where women in an orchard are shaking the tree (ABV 554.401).

70 To scenes of the harvest of olives and grapes, we should add those representing the collection of honey; cf. Angiolillo 1997.112 n. 22; see, for instance, the amphorae Basel Züst 364 of the Swing painter (ABV 309.45) and London B 177.

71 On the different techniques for harvesting olives and the preference for beating the tree with immediate collection and winnowing, see Amouretti 1986.73.

72 ABV 273.116; cf. Burow 1989 pl. 55 A, B; Herman 1987.52.



Figures 4a–b. Paris F77 = *CVA*.9.III He.pl. 82.4.6–10, b-f kylix. Musée du Louvre (Photo H. Lewandoski). Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, N.Y.

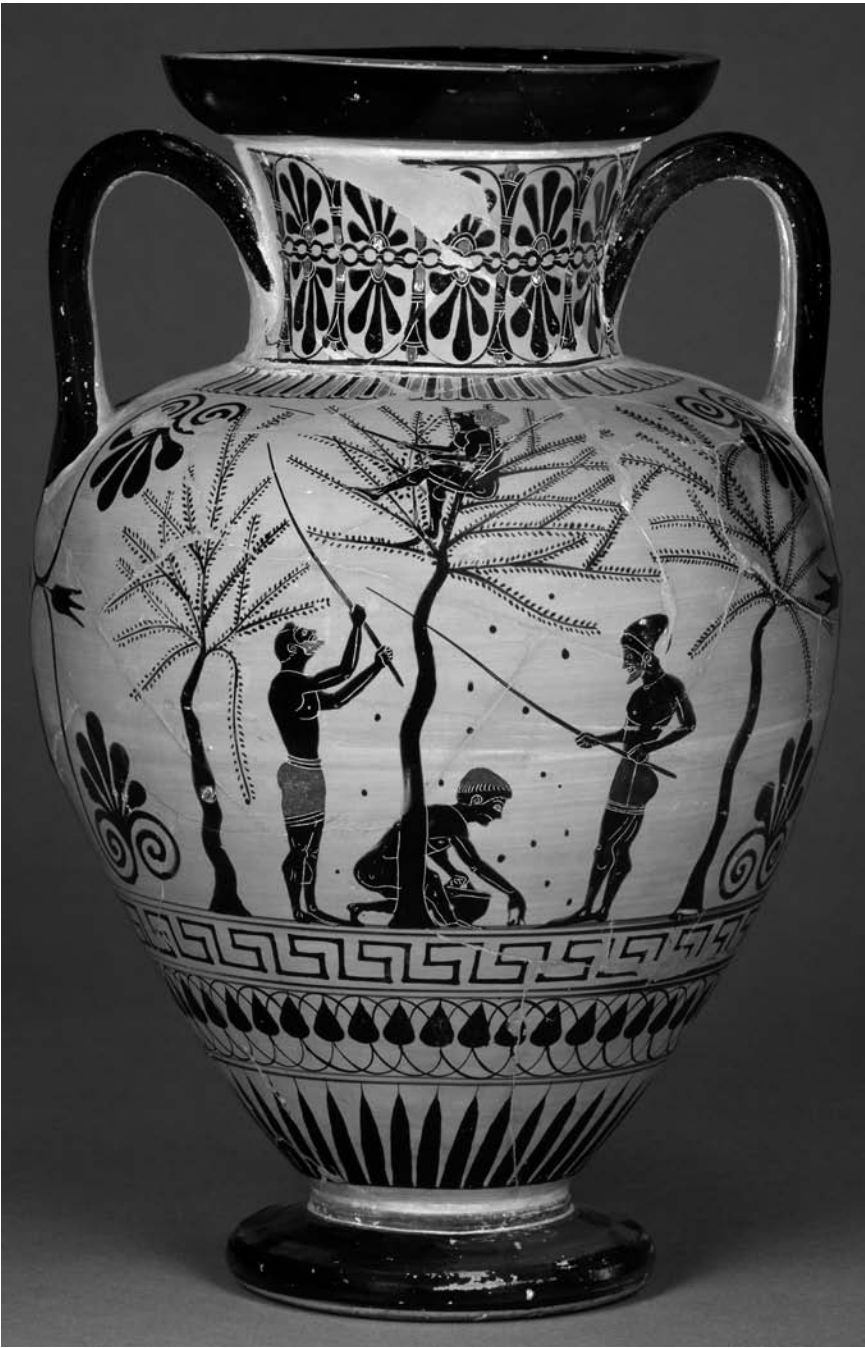
other centaurs (Apollod. 2.5.4). The shaking of hands, *dexiōsis*, symbolizes their partnership and, as Gabriel Herman remarks (1987.52), is the most graphic of the ritual forms of interaction that turn hostility into friendship, the others being gifts and the solemn declaration. That Herakles has taken off his lion skin and hung it over his club stresses their peaceful intentions. It would be tempting to read this scene of ritualized friendship within the framework of Peisistratus's career. For the tyrant cultivated relations of *xenia* with numerous people. Herman stresses the unusual variety of his support at the time of his definitive return in Athens. He was able to come back with the help of Thebans, knights of Eretria, and Lygdamis of Naxos.⁷³ Whether or not this echo of the tyrant's relations is present on this vase, the message is clear. In combining a scene of countryside abundance and one representing amicable relations, the painter stresses their interdependence. The earth is prosperous and people work if peace reigns.

Finally, it is possible to connect the scenes representing the harvest of olives with the information provided by Dio Chrysostomus that the Athenians planted olive trees throughout Attica by order of Peisistratus (25.3). The harvest of olives suggests not only a period of abundance but also the probable availability of seasonal occupations once the land had become extensively cultivated. In the next century, Aristophanes will mention a particular category of seasonal workers, the olive-gatherers, *elaiologoi*, who are said always to be ready to follow those who give them a salary (*Vesp.* 712).

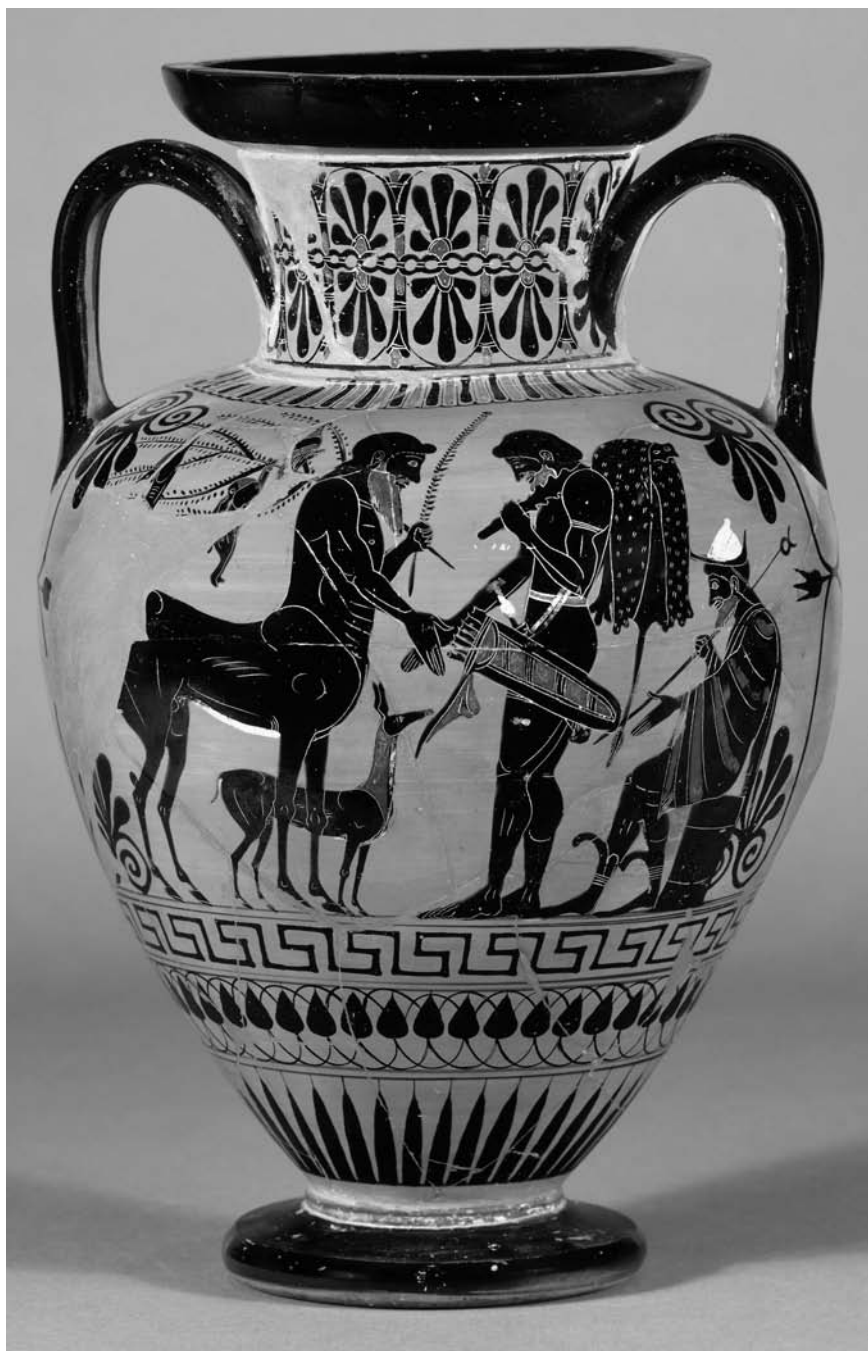
PICTURING A MYTHICAL HISTORY

At the end of this analysis, a suspicion hovers over Aristotle's record of the oral tradition. Did the tyrant make the image of the golden age a magnet for popular support within the wider program of propaganda that he broadcast to gain and maintain his power? His first return to Athens occurred under the sign of deceitfulness: Peisistratus was brought back after the exile by an *eidōlon* of Athena. According to a plan to deceive the Athenians and allow Peisistratus's return, an imposing woman dressed up

73 Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.2–3, Herman 1987.91. Boardman (1972, 1975, 1989) discusses in depth the great popularity of Herakles and his iconography, a phenomenon that characterizes the sixth century and that the author interprets as an intentional use of myth to reflect the fortunes of Athens and its leaders. Contra Cook 1987.167–69.



Figures 5a–b = *ABV* 273.116, b-f amphora attributed to the Antimenes Painter.
Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum.



as Athena with full armor led Peisistratus, sitting in the chariot besides her, from the deme of Paeania to the city, *astu*, of Athens (Hdt. 1.60, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 14.4, 15.4). This episode is quite interesting: Athena, the goddess of the city, wants to restore the tyrant to his previous position; she recognizes and seals Peisistratus's claims to govern the city.⁷⁴ Certainly the story shows an attempt to persuade through ideology: a divinity sanctions the autocrat's rule that is not, therefore, hubristic but in harmony with the gods. At the same time, Peisistratus's ideology was based on a mythological discourse that he shared with the population. He did not simply impose it. As W. R. Connor argues in discussing the episode of Phia, we should not think that Peisistratus succeeded because of the Athenians' naivety. Rather, the "ceremonial appearance" of the tyrant at that time "served as an expression of popular consent—two-way communication—not, as so often assumed, mere manipulation."⁷⁵

Other episodes show, or at least suggest, that Peisistratus was aware of the communicative power of myth and that he intended to use it. For instance, that the battle between Peisistratus and the Athenians of the city after his second exile took place in the proximity of the temple of Athena Pallenis was probably not accidental. For G. M. Williams, the choice of the place testifies to the tyrant's intention to show that he enjoyed the goddess's favor.⁷⁶ Along the same lines, Aristotle relates the ruse that Peisistratus adopted to disarm the Athenians after the battle at Pallenis. He mustered an assembly of Athenians by the temple of Theseus and, as he was speaking, lowered his voice in order to make them move up the Acropolis and leave behind their weapons that were then promptly collected by Peisistra-

74 In this regard, it is quite interesting to follow Herodotus's account of how the tyrant's circle successfully presented Peisistratus to the Athenians as a protégé of Athena. Her arrival, to make the plan successful, was preceded by heralds. "When they came into the town they made proclamation as they were charged, bidding the Athenians 'to give a hearty welcome to Peisistratus, whom Athena herself honored beyond all men and was bringing back to her old citadel.' So the heralds went about [*diaphoitein*] and spoke thus; immediately [*autika*] it was reported in the demes that Athena was bringing Peisistratus back, and the townsfolk, persuaded [*peithesthai*] that the woman was indeed the goddess, worshipped this human creature and welcomed Peisistratus" (Hdt. 1.60; trans. Godley). As Sinos 1993.74 remarks, the visual display was not enough to convey Peisistratus's message.

75 Connor 1987.44. Sinos 1993 identifies a chariot procession, a woman in disguise, and the messengers announcing the procession as constitutive elements of the performance and discusses them in the context of traditional iconography.

76 Williams 1973.65, Hdt. 1.64.1; cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.3.

tus's men and locked up in some buildings close to the temple (*Ath. Pol.* 15.3). Scholars have doubted the authenticity of this episode, arguing that it reduplicates Hippias's later disarmament of the Athenians, while Pausanias records a Theseion only for the time of Cimon.⁷⁷ To these observations, one could add that Aristotle's version of the ruse of Peisistratus may betray Aristotle's bias in portraying him as one of the two types of tyrant discussed in the *Politics*:⁷⁸ Peisistratus is a cunning tyrant who obtains absolute power by means other than violence. Yet the choice of holding an assembly by a temple of Theseus, if it already existed, after a battle that involved divided groups of Athenians, seems also strategically planned to dissolve tensions among the population and restore social cohesion. Theseus was the founder of the synoecism of Attica, and Peisistratus may have celebrated him in order to please the Athenians.⁷⁹ According to the Megarian Hereas, Peisistratus expunged from the poems of Hesiod a verse on Theseus's terrible passion for Aigle, while at the same time, he added Theseus among the glorious heroes in the *nekuia* of Homer.⁸⁰

On the basis of these considerations, as with the Phia episode, it may be that Peisistratus began to use golden-age imagery as a means of finding a channel of communication with the Athenians, inscribing his rule in a mythical tradition that was universally known and recognized, and gaining the favor of the subject population. Hesiod had suggested that a golden age could come to pass in historical time, and Peisistratus may have presented his reign as the realization of this possibility. The association with the golden age indicated that, under Peisistratus, people were blessed by the gods as was the golden race of Cronus. Athenian prosperity was a sign

77 Thuc. 6.58.1–2, Paus. 1.17.2–6. See Rhodes 1981.210–11, Angiolillo 1997.73–74, Valdés Guía 2002.157–69.

78 Herodotus offers an alternative version of Peisistratus's cunning in neutralizing the Athenians who had just been defeated at Pallenis (1.63: *boulē sophōtatē*).

79 Although, according to Boardman 1972, Theseus emerges as a hero of democratic Athens, it should be remarked that his combat with the Minotaur (often in the presence of Athena) was already a very popular scene in the iconography of the time of Peisistratus. Cf. *LIMC* s.v. Theseus 940–41, Sourvinou-Inwood 1971.97–99, Ganz 1993.266–67.

80 Plut. *Thes.* 1–2, *Od.* 11.631. For the expunction, see *FGrHist* 486F1 = [Hes.] frag. 298. From this source, which dates back to the fourth century, some scholars argue for a Peisistratean edition of Hesiod, in addition to that of Homer. See West's commentary on the *Theogony* 1966.50 and n. 1 for the bibliography. Evelyn-White 1924.149, explains that Peisistratus's interest in Hesiod was as an instrument to promote his domestic policy based on civil peace, justice, and implementation of agriculture.

of divine favor; it resulted from the god's acceptance and rewarding of a leadership respectful of *dikē*. Peisistratus's introduction of a tax on the produce of the land, the *dekatē*, confirms the newly achieved increased yields in the countryside (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.4; cf. Thuc. 6.54.5).

Plato's *Republic* echoes the ideological trend that, in the archaic period, lay behind the equation of tyranny and the age of Cronus. In the debate about justice, Adimantus voices a position that reminds one of Peisistratus's career, although the abstract nature of his considerations makes it impossible to argue that he was thinking specifically about the Athenian tyrant. Adimantus supports the traditional system of values and appeals to the education imparted by the fathers and all other figures of authority. At the core of their lessons—as he admits—is not an ideal of justice, detached from people's lives and admired in perfect isolation, but the good reputation that derives from its application. Justice is not good per se, but good because of the advantages it provides to the person who seems to possess it. In other words, its value is relational, not absolute. A reputation for justice brings with it high position, a good marriage, and productive land during one's life, not to mention an afterlife in the company of the heroes on the Islands of the Blessed. At this point in the dialogue, we are still in the world of *doxa* that Socrates' revelations will soon dismantle. In discussing popular pedagogy, Adimantus cites the ancient knowledge of Hesiod and Homer. For both poets, rulers who adhere to *dikē* enable the emergence of conditions analogous to those of the golden age (Pl. *Resp.* 362e–63c; cf. Hes. *Op.* 227–31).

The attention to religion from architecture to ritual that characterizes the time of Peisistratus—the construction of the temples of Apollo Patroos, Meter, and Dionysus in the agora, the increasing magnificence of the great Panathenaia in connection with the erection of a major temple to Athena and other structures on the Acropolis,⁸¹ the creation of the Greater Dionysia, and the purification of the island of Delos (Hdt. 1.64, Thuc. 3.104.1, Paus. 1.14.1)—is consistent with Peisistratus's ideological program. Cronus himself figured in Peisistratus's religious landscaping, although it is not possible to assess the degree of the tyrant's involvement with his cult.

81 Shapiro 1989.5–8.20–21, Angiolillo 1997.33–70. Removing control over the Acropolis from the inhabitants of the city, Peisistratus makes it the religious focus of an enlarged community; cf. de Polignac 1995.18.

Pausanias mentions a temple devoted to Cronus and Rhea within the precinct of the Olympieion, the grand temple Peisistratus or his sons dedicated to Zeus Olympios but never completed during the tyranny.⁸² The temple to Cronus and Rhea stood by a sanctuary of Ge Olympia and a statue of Zeus, and Pausanias qualifies all these monuments as *archaia*.⁸³

Hesiod's classification of humanity into an irreversible succession of races, each endowed with its own specificity, offered a potential paradigm with which to interpret history,⁸⁴ one that restricted the power of chance and proposed a predictable definition. There was not an absolute iron race untouched by comparison with a golden race, but the one recalled the other. The ideal *bios*, absent in the present, was projected into the past, and its realization could not be other than a restoration. Faithful to the tradition, the iron race in its actuality represented the antinomic condition that followed a previous mythical golden age whose re-emergence from the shadows of time was doomed to be frail and temporary.

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82 Arist. *Pol.* 1313b21, Travlos 1971.402–03, Camp 2001.36. Travlos mentions a temple to Cronus and Rhea that is outside the precinct of the Olympieion and that dates to a much later time: the second century A.D. (Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F 97). The fact that the month Hekatombaion, in which the Athenians celebrated the festival to Cronus, was previously called Kronion indicates the antiquity of the Kronia (*Etym. M.* s.v. Hekatombaion, Plut. *Thes.* 12.2). Wilamowitz 1929.36 thought that it was precisely Peisistratus who brought the cult of Cronus to Athens from Olympia. Pausanias 5.7.6 reports that, in Olympia, there was a temple to Cronus that, according to local traditions, was built by the golden race. In addition, the geographer mentions a sacrifice that priests called Basilai were performing for Cronus on Mount Cronios in Elis (6.20.1). Peisistratus's connection with the Kronia, however, is dismissed by Deubner 1956.155.

83 Paus. 1.18.7. Again, the combination in the same area of Cronus and Rhea and Zeus and Ge seems suggestive of an ideological plan that, by means of religious associations, ties the earth, and one could add, its fertility, to the renewal of peace as, in this case, father and son cease from hostility and Cronus is reintegrated into the order of Zeus.

84 For both Aristides' and Cimon's conduct there sprung up an analogy with Cronus's *bios*. Aristides elicited it thanks to his purity and justice in fixing the contribution that Athenian allies should pay, Cimon for his liberality (Plut. *Arist.* 24, *Cim.* 10). The latter opened the fences that surrounded his fields so that the population could enjoy the fruit, restoring in this way the fabled communion, *koinōnia*, of the mythical period.

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