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THE SICILIAN EXPEDITION WAS A POTEMKIN FLEET

The speeches of Nicias and Alcibiades in the debate leading up to the launching of the Sicilian expedition (Thuc. 6.9–14, 6.20–3, 6.16–18) contain a significant number of words, phrases, and themes that recur in Thucydides' later chapters reporting the launching of the expedition and its ultimate fate in Sicily. The verbal and thematic echoes often consist of words of sight and hearing; among the recurring themes are rivalry and competition, the contrast between public and private expenditures, and the desire for acquisition and financial profit.

The echoes are numerous and striking enough to suggest that Thucydides intended to establish strong links between the speeches and the narrative chapters. I propose to argue that Thucydides wished to expose the Sicilian armada as a hollow force. Its glittering façade concealed its essential weakness, in the same way that Potemkin's façades of prosperous-looking but non-existing farmhouses concealed the impoverished countryside from Catherine the Great during her tour in 1787.

THE SPEECH OF ALCIBIADES

The allegations that Nicias and Thucydides make against Alcibiades at the end of his first speech at the second assembly in Book 6 mainly have to do with the effect of his private life on the state: favouring the expedition from self-interest (*τὰ ἑαυτοῦ μόνον σκοπῶν*, 6.12.2), craving to be marvelled at by his fellow citizens because of his horse-breeding (*ἵνα θαυμασθῇ*, 6.12.2), being a spendthrift and therefore wanting to make money from high office and the expedition (*διὰ πολυτέλειαν ὠφεληθῇ τι*, 6.12.2 ~ *τὰ ἴδια ὠφελήσειν*, 6.15.2), seeking glamour and admiration at the risk of the state (*τῷ τῆς πόλεως κινδύνῳ ἰδίᾳ ἐλλαμπρύνεσθαι*, 6.12.2), ruining the state while spending his own property (*δημόσια ἀδικεῖν*, *ἴδια ἀναλοῦν*, 6.12.2), and being a slave to passions for which he cannot pay (6.15.3; cf. the contrast *ἰδίᾳ–δημοσίᾳ* also at 6.15.4).[1]

Alcibiades not only refutes these allegations, but manages to transform them into praiseworthy acts benefiting his country. With the charge of horse-breeding Nicias hands him an opening to his most effective defence. It allows him in one stroke to introduce into his speech the Olympic Games, the greatest athletic festival of the Greeks; the theme of competition, to which all Greeks were addicted; the festivities following an athletic victory, with which the Athenians were familiar; and the rewards from such a victory, which they regarded as most desirable. The picture that he presents of himself to the assembly is that of a competitor. He has entered more chariots at Olympia than any other private person, has won a victory and has been placed second and fourth, and has competed as a producer of plays. At the present time he is competing with Nicias for the command of the expedition.

Having appealed to the appetite for competitive spectacles in his audience, Alcibiades next expatiates upon the relationship of private and public service. If he has spent his fortune on race horses, and on making his *theoria* and his victory

[1] The frequent occurrence of the public–private contrast has also been noted by W. Kohl, *Die Redetrias vor der sizilischen Expedition* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1977), 101–3.

celebrations splendid (τῷ διαπρεπεῖ, 6.16.2), he has done so in the interests of the state. The same is true of his *choregiai* and of any of his other services to the state for which he makes himself shine (λαμπρύνομαι, 6.16.3 ~ ἐλλαμπρύνεσθαι, 6.12.2).[2] The benefit to the state from his activities, for which he is decried (ἐπιβοητός, 6.16.1), is the appearance of power. It is in fact an appearance of power greater than the state actually possesses, a claim which is heavily emphasized by the pleonastic comparative at 6.16.2: ὑπὲρ δύναμιν μείζω ἐνόμισαν (cf. δύναμις ὑπονοεῖται; ἰσχὺς φαίνεται, 6.16.3). His performance as a diplomat has also benefited the state. Although he is, again, decried for his private affairs, he has managed those of the state second to none (τὰ ἴδια ἐπιβοώμενος—τὰ δημόσια μεταχειρίζω, 6.16.6 ~ δημόσια ἀδικεῖν—ἴδια ἀναλοῦν, 6.12.2 ~ ἰδίᾳ—δημοσίᾳ, 6.15.4).

Finally, he addresses the charge of self-interest. A man who has spent his private fortune to help the state may also fairly expect rewards in return. These are honour for both himself and for his ancestors, and for himself celebrity (λαμπρότητι προέσχον, 6.16.5 ~ ἐλλαμπρύνεσθαι, 6.12.2) and a superior position in life, which, although resented by contemporaries, ensures posthumous fame.[3] All this is summed up by Alcibiades' maxim that there is nothing wrong in receiving a benefit from investing one's own money in the state, as long as this benefits the state as well (ἰδίοις τέλεσι—τὴν πόλιν ὠφελῇ, 6.16.3). Alcibiades does not say explicitly that the personal benefit includes making money, but since this is precisely the accusation that he is refuting, there is no doubt that he is referring to financial profit as well. That this is what he means is supported by the second part of his speech, where Alcibiades turns his doctrine of private investment for private and public profit against the Sicilians, so as to convince the assembly of their supposed radical particularism: no one in that mixed rabble bothers to equip himself with arms and armour (τὰ περὶ τὸ σῶμα ὅπλοις, 6.17.3). Instead of investing their money in the defence and economy of their country, the Sicilians hoard it and on the contrary try to get whatever they can out of the public treasury. An undertone of financial gain is also present in the passages of his speech in which he advocates the extension of Athens' empire (6.18.2, 6.18.4 αὐτοὶ καὶ οἱ σύμμαχοι ὠφελησόμεθα).

Alcibiades does his best to claim disinterested statesmanship, but he cannot hide the fact, acknowledged by Thucydides, that in his actions as a statesman he was guided to a considerable extent by his own interests.[4] The assemblymen, however, disregard his special pleading, for they are impressed by his words about financial gain. They interpret his remarks as a call to conquest and enrichment: most civilians and soldiers expect to make money immediately, and hope for permanent incomes in the future from their new possessions. Their greed is so great that no opponent of the expedition dares to vote no (6.24.3–4; ἄγαν ἐπιθυμίαν; cf. Alcibiades' ἐπιθυμία which has been mentioned at least four times: 6.13.1, 6.15.2–4).[5] The older members of the assembly hope for success or at least for a safe return of the force, the younger long to see new

[2] C. Macleod, 'Rhetoric and history', *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 71 also points out the echo.

[3] The theme of competition and rivalry is amplified by a large number of comparatives and superlatives or their equivalents in Nicias' and Thucydides' characterization of Alcibiades, and in Alcibiades' speech, which contain at least thirty-two such expressions. Cf. Kohl (n. 1), 102.

[4] Macleod (n. 2), 72.

[5] For the greed of the Athenians, see M. I. Finley, 'The fifth-century Athenian Empire, a balance-sheet', in P. Garnsey and C. Whittaker (edd.), *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1978), 103; id., *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (London, 1985), 77; D. Kagan, *The*

sights (6.24.3). The generation gap created by Nicias (6.13.1) and deprecated by Alcibiades (6.18.6) is closed, and all Athenians, unlike the Sicilians, are united for war.

THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE HARBOUR TO ALCIBIADES

The spectacle that Alcibiades had evoked with the mention of his Olympic *theoria* is replicated in the chapters describing the embarkation and departure of the armada. The crowds from the city gather in the harbour as do the multitudes at Olympia (6.30.2–3). They have come to watch a spectacle (ἐώρων, ὄψει, κατὰ θέαν, 6.31.1), and they see competition, both figurative and literal, on all sides. Competition is implied in the comparison of the armada with its predecessors, which it surpasses in costliness and looks (6.31.1–3), and with its intended adversaries to whom it is superior (6.31.6). There is competition between its various constituent members: the trierarchs compete with each other to have the best-looking and fastest-sailing ship (ταχυναυτεῖν, 6.31.3), and the soldiers compete with one another for the best equipment (πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἁμιλληθέν, 6.31.3). Following the Olympic victor's example, everyone at every duty station competes with everybody else (ἔριν γενέσθαι, 6.31.4). The spectacle ends with an actual athletic competition, the ship race to Aegina (ἅμιλλαν ἐποιοῦντο, 6.32.2). It is reminiscent of the regattas with triremes which were one of the events of the Isthmian games, which Athenian *theoriai* regularly attended.[6] Two spectacular racing events, one with chariots, the other with warships, frame the theme of competition introduced by Alcibiades' victory in the Olympic games.

The spectators also observe a fleet which, like Alcibiades, is a marvel to behold (θάμβει, λαμπρότητι, 6.31.6 ~ ἵνα θαυμασθῇ, 6.12.2; λαμπρότητι, 6.16.5). It is also very good-looking and each of its ships, like his Olympic *theoria*, stands out in beauty (εὐπρεπεστάτη, εὐπρεπεία, μάλιστα προέξει, 6.31.2–3 ~ τῷ διαπρεπεῖ, 6.16.2; λαμπρότητι προέσχον, 6.16.5). Because of its daring and splendour the fleet is cried about, famous, περιβοητός (6.31.6). The word echoes Alcibiades' ἐπιβοητός = notorious; but since ἐπιβοητός also has the meaning 'to call upon someone (including gods) for help',[7] both adjectives may be heard in a good sense, so that the echo of περιβοητός is closer than might appear at first sight. The double meaning of the word in Alcibiades' speech is almost certainly deliberate—Alcibiades can be called upon to help his country. An allusion to his service to the state in fact rounds out the visual aspect: just as his actions have given an impression of Athenian power to other Greeks, so also the Sicilian expedition is a show and portrayal of this power to the Hellenes (ἐπίδειξις δυνάμεως, 6.31.4; cf. ῥώμη, 6.31.1 ~ ὑπὲρ δύναμιν μείζω ὑπονοεῖται; ἰσχὺς φαίνεται, 6.16.2–3).[8]

Convinced by Alcibiades and following his example of private investment for private and public profit, the Athenians have invested heavily in the expedition, from which many of them expect to receive a financial return. The description of the fleet begins and ends with the theme of acquisition which acts as a frame: the Athenians have come to the Piraeus in the hope of gain (μετ' ἐλπίδος τὰ μὲν ὡς κτήσοιντο,

Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition (Ithaca, NY and London, 1981), 283; S. Hornblower, *Thucydides* (Baltimore, 1987), 173.

[6] Thuc. 8.10.1. For regattas with triremes at the Isthmian games, see B. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 154–5, 162.

[7] LSJ s.v. ἐπιβοάω.

[8] The contrasts 'Hellenes–Athenians' and 'foreign–native' are another link between Alcibiades' speech and the departure scene; 6.16.2, 6.16.3 ~ 6.30.1, 6.31.4.

6.30.2), and the fleet leaves port with the highest hopes for the future as compared with their present resources (ἐπὶ μεγίστῃ ἐλπίδι τῶν μελλόντων πρὸς τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, 6.31.6; cf. 6.24.3: the assemblymen are εὐέλπιδες . . . προσκτήσεσθαι δύναμιν ὅθεν ἀίδιον μισθοφορὰν ὑπάρξειν, and 6.15.2–3, said of Alcibiades, who hopes [ἐλπίζων] to make money because the satisfaction of his passions exceeds his ὑπάρχουσαν οὐσίαν).

The narrative from 6.31.1 to 6.31.5 retails the public and private expenditures for the expedition. The state has adopted Alcibiades' πολυτέλεια in organizing an armada that is πολυτελεστάτη (6.31.1). It has spent heavily for the ships, the *hyperesiai*, and the sailors' wages (μεγάλαις δαπάναις, 6.31.3), and has provided the generals with funds (6.31.5). The trierarchs supplement the wages from their own pocket; they also pay for the very expensive pennants and other fittings of their ships (πολυτέλεσι, 6.31.3), and take money along for future expenses (6.31.5). The hoplites, rejecting the bad example of the Sicilians, who according to Alcibiades are unwilling to arm themselves, are eager to procure the best arms and armour at their own expense (ὅπλων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα σκευῶν, 6.31.3 ~ τὰ περὶ τὸ σῶμα ὅπλοις, 6.17.3). Everybody, whether private person or military man, takes money along for travelling expenses in addition to the wage paid by the state. The cumulation of phrases expressing the contrast private versus public expense in the passage is remarkable: τῆς πόλεως ἀνάλωσιν δημοσίαν, τῶν στρατευομένων τὴν ἰδίαν, τῆς πόλεως ὅσα προετετελέκει, τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ὅσα καὶ τριήραρχος ἀνηλώκει καὶ ἔμελλεν ἀναλώσειν, ἄνευ τοῦ ἐκ τοῦ δημοσίου μισθοῦ (6.31.4–5). To judge from the emphasis placed on private expenditure it would seem that it was nearly as great as the public. The large amounts of money leaving Athens are evidence for the superabundance of Athenian wealth (6.31.4), symbolized by the gold and silver cups from which the warriors pour libations before leaving port (6.32.1). Almost incidentally we hear that soldiers, sailors, and merchants also take money along for the purpose of trading overseas (6.31.5). By the end of chapter 31 the military expedition has virtually become a commercial venture, and in fact more than that, for at 6.44.1 we see that many non-combatants, not only merchants looking for profit, but also masons, builders, millers, and so on, voluntarily accompanied the fleet in many cargo ships. The expedition, as another writer has observed, amounted to a large-scale effort to plant an Athenian colony in Sicily; it was, in effect, a 'city on the move'.[9]

THE SPEECHES OF NICIAS

Nicias' remarks on the matter of expenditure and the use of public and private money are the exact opposite of Alcibiades'. Knowing the avarice and penury of the Athenians (6.8.1, 6.19.2, 6.24.1), who will have to pay if they approve the projected campaign, Nicias in his first speech appeals to their parsimony by telling them that people who are careful with their own property (as Alcibiades is not) will also look out for the interests and property of the state (6.9.2). Nicias hopes, in other words, that his countrymen will vote down the expedition because it will cost them money. As a further inducement to the Athenians not to go to Sicily he recommends that the public funds accumulated after the plague and the peace of 421 be spent at home for their own benefit (6.12.1). The rest of his advice in this speech is negative; he counsels only what not to do. Unlike Alcibiades, he does not mention rewards of honour and

[9] H. C. Avery, 'Themes in Thucydides' account of the Sicilian expedition', *Hermes* 101 (1973), 8–11.

superior standing, and promises no personal enrichment. Refusing to speak against his conviction for self-serving reasons, he advises the assemblymen not to risk what they have (*τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, τοῖς ἑτοίμοις*, 6.9.3) for the sake of things unseen and lying in the future, and warns them against falling in fatal love with distant gain (*δυσέρωτας τῶν ἀπόντων*, 6.13.1). He caps this advice with the maxim 'greed achieves least, foresight most', a pointed reference to Alcibiades' *ἐπιθυμία* (6.13.1, 6.15.2–4).

In his second speech Nicias again raises the stakes by requesting a fleet whose component of infantry troops is not merely ordinary (*φαῦλος*, 6.21.2), but large enough to deal with the enemy cavalry. If this force is to be adequate for its task, which is to win the war at the first assault, it must consist of an adequate number of Athenian, as opposed to allied or mercenary, forces (*ἄξιον τῆς διανοίας, αὐτόθεν παρασκευῇ ἀξιόχρεῳ*, 6.21.1–2 ~ *ἀξιόχρεῳ δυνάμει*, 6.10.2),[10] and it must have large amounts of money (6.22). He ends his second speech with an assurance of safety and security which he makes depend on wise counsel, good luck, and, above all, a safe, that is to say a large, army (6.23.3, 6.24.1).

THE RESPONSE TO NICIAS IN THE ASSEMBLY AND IN THE HARBOUR

The assemblymen accept only what they want to hear from Nicias, which is the qualified promise of safety in Sicily. They accept it because it makes the expedition possible. The assemblymen ignore completely the conditions with which Nicias had hedged his assurance; their ears register only what they want to hear: great safety (*πολλὴ ἀσφάλεια ἔσται*, 6.24.2). The rest of Nicias' advice they reject with striking variations on Nicias' vivid phrase, in fatal love with what is out of reach (*δυσέρωτας τῶν ἀπόντων*), which is still ringing in their ears and echoing in their minds: the love of sailing out possessed all of them (*ἔρως ἐνέπεσε τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐκπλεῦσαι*, 6.24.3). While the older men hope for success or at least to save the armada, the younger have a longing for the sights and vistas of a distant land (*πόθῳ ὄψεως καὶ θεωρίας τῆς ἀπούσης*, 6.24.3). Nicias has warned them against *ἐπιθυμία*, but the assemblymen desire the voyage anyway (*τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν τοῦ πλοῦ*, 6.24.2). Their desire is so excessive (*ἄγαν ἐπιθυμία*, 6.24.2) that the opponents of the expedition, rejecting yet another of Nicias' admonitions, not to be ashamed of seeming to be cowards by voting against it (6.13.1), do exactly the opposite: they remain silent from fear of seeming cowards (6.24.4).

Although the Athenians and other Greeks in the harbour have in the main followed Alcibiades' call to spend and invest in the expedition, they have also followed some of Nicias' recommendations. The armada is a sufficiently equipped enterprise, and is the opposite of ordinary (*ἐπ' ἀξιόχρεων διάνοιαν*, 6.31.1 ~ *παρασκευῇ ἀξιόχρεῳ*, 6.21.2; *παρασκευῇ φαύλῃ*, 6.31.3 ~ *φαύλου στρατιᾶς*, 6.21.1).[11] As far as the spec-

[10] That *αὐτόθεν* means 'from Athens itself' (as opposed to 'from the allies' or elsewhere) is demonstrated by 6.25.2: *τοξοτῶν τῶν αὐτόθεν καὶ ἐκ Κρήτης*; 6.26.2: *ἐς τοὺς συμμάχους ἔπεμπον καὶ αὐτόθεν καταλόγους ἐποιοῦντο*, 6.22: *τὸν δὲ καὶ αὐτόθεν σῖτον* = 'actually from Attica itself', so Dover in *HCT* ad loc. Cf. 6.22: *χρήματα αὐτόθεν*, and the scholiast (Hude) on 6.21.2: *ἐκ τοῦ ἡμετέρου τόπου*.

[11] J. Classen and J. Steup (Berlin, 1963) ad loc. translate these words 'ein gewaltiges Unternehmen', 'an immense undertaking', a meaning which they apparently infer from the seemingly stupendous might of the expedition. *ἀξιόχρεως* basically means 'counterbalancing a need'; here it echoes Nicias' word and has its regular meaning 'adequate'.

tators are concerned, Nicias' demand at 6.21.1 for a large force of Athenians has also been met: the armada is sailing with the armed might of one Greek state, i.e. Athens; no allied troops or ships are mentioned at 6.31.3 (*μιᾶς πόλεως δυνάμεως*, 6.31.1). Again, Nicias' argument for taking along as much money as possible from Athens (6.22), which he makes against his true belief in order to abort the expedition, has been respected: many talents in all are being taken from Athens (6.31.5).

THUCYDIDES' MANNER OF REPORTING THE ATHENIANS' REACTION

A remarkable feature of the narrative reporting the fleet's departure is its visual aspect. The chapters represent a spectacle, as at Olympia, or a scene, as in the theatre, in which the civilians are the spectators and the military the actors. The spectacle is full of action and movement: the gathering of the crowd from the city in the harbour, the motions of the various competitors, the hustle and bustle of embarkation, the mixing of the wine followed by the pouring of libations, the ships putting to sea and beginning the race. Ignoring Nicias (*ἡσυχαζόντων ὑμῶν*, 6.10.2) and following Alcibiades (*εἰ ἡσυχάζοιεν πάντες, ὑπεριδόντες τὴν ἡσυχίαν*, 6.18.2, 6.18.4; cf. 6.24.4, *ἡσυχίαν ἦγεν*) the Athenians do not rest. The vividness of the spectacle is increased by the use of visual words such as beauty, brilliance, gold and silver, and of some emotionally charged, semi-poetic words (*ὀλοφυρμός, ἐκπονηθέν, θάμβος*).[12] Quite striking is the picture of the people who inspect each particular item and take courage at the sight of it (*τὸ πλῆθος ἑκάστων ὧν ἑώρων*, 6.31.1). The visual and the acoustic are combined in the religious ceremony at the end of the scene when the herald's trumpet silences the lamentations and other noises of the crowd, and the departing warriors, joined by the civilians, say their prayers and sing the paean (6.32.2).

The visual impressions are intensified by the elaborate formal structure of the whole. Relatively short and simple clauses (6.30.1, 6.31.1, 6.31.4) alternate with longer and more complex periods (6.30.2, 6.31.2) imparting an extraordinary rhythm and sonority to the narrative, the main body of which consists of two enormous periods of unparalleled weight and power. The first, beginning with *τὸ μὲν ναυτικόν* (6.31.3), forms a diminuendo expressed by participial clauses; the second, beginning with *εἰ γάρ τις ἐλογίσατο* (6.31.5), to the contrary is a crescendo consisting of a series of subordinate clauses compressed into a vast conditional period.[13]

The Athenians react to the speeches of the two demagogues in two different venues and by two different means of sense perception: hearing and sight. In the assembly they react to what they have just heard; in the Piraeus to what they see unfolding before their eyes. In both places their perceptions are coloured by the statements of the speakers that have made the strongest impression on their minds. Thucydides reports the assemblymen's negative response to Nicias with words describing their emotions and subjective thoughts: the Athenians desire, love, long, hope, and fear. In the harbour they see the sight mainly as refracted through the eyes of Alcibiades. It is Alcibiades who has moulded their thoughts to his own wishes in his speech, and it is the images that he has called up that float before their eyes. Here too, as in chapter

[12] The use of *θάμβος* is especially effective; used only here by Thucydides, it conveys in Homer the paralysis caused by amazement and surprise: *Il.* 4.79, *Od.* 3.372.

[13] O. Regenbogen, 'Drei Thukydidesinterpretationen', in H. Herter (ed.), *Thukydides* (Darmstadt, 1968), 10–17, with a full analysis of the formal structure of the periods in 6.31.

6.24, the subjective feelings, reflexes, and other mental processes of the Athenians find expression in clauses packed with a tension created by great swings in the mood of the people.[14] They hope, lament, consider, fear, are encouraged, disbelieve, compare, and are amazed. Their subjective assessment of the expedition's power is expressed grammatically: the crowd has come to see what in their minds is a sufficient and incredible enterprise, *ὡς ἐπ' ἀξιόχρεων καὶ ἄπιστον διάνοιαν (οὖσαν)* (6.31.2). With the *γάρ* in the following clause begins the explanation why the people believe the armada to be sufficient and incredible. The other long period explaining why the fleet is more a display of power and wealth than an invasion force, beginning with *εἰ γάρ τις ἐλογίσατο* (6.31.5), is also a subjective assessment, to judge from its conditional form and general vagueness. Perhaps more than elsewhere in his work, Thucydides in these chapters avails himself of the dramatist's technique of creating characters who express their thoughts in a dialogue, and a chorus which responds to the protagonists with thematic and verbal echoes from their speeches.

The subjective, impressionistic quality of the departure scene explains some very odd features in it. There is first the strange comparison of the expedition of 430 under the command of Pericles and Hagnon with the Sicilian (6.31.2–3). More numbers are given for the former than for the latter: 100 ships, 4,000 hoplites, 300 knights, and many allied troops. For the Sicilian armada the exact numbers are just two, both significantly pertaining to the fleet: 100 Athenian ships and a daily wage of one drachma for the sailors, numbers that a great many people were likely to know from their past service in the navy. No hoplites, knights, and allies are mentioned for the armada, so that the comparison of the two expeditions is incomplete and therefore quite vague. The reason for the vagueness apparently is Nicias' insistence on a purely Athenian force (*μιᾶς πόλεως*, 6.31.1); this is now predominant in the minds of the onlookers who also remembered the size and composition of the large expedition under Pericles.[15] In any case, to the crowd the two forces appear to be equal. Nor does the crowd know the amount of money leaving Athens. They surmise that it is great from what they see, i.e. the large sums lavished on decorating the fleet, and from what they have heard, i.e. Alcibiades' call for private investment, and Nicias' demand for much money. Judging from impressions, rather than from substance, the onlookers do not bother to ask themselves or anyone else just how much money the fleet has been given, nor do they wonder what exactly makes for a 'sufficient' military force. Finally there is the very curious statement, put as a contrast to the expedition of 430, that the armada is 'ornamented and elaborately fitted out in both its naval and infantry contingents'. But the expedition of 430 also was made up of ships and infantry, and since Sicily is an island, it should hardly be necessary to point out the presence of ships. In all of this Thucydides seems to be delving into the psychology of the masses: with Nicias' demand for extraordinarily powerful sea and land forces ringing in their ears, the Athenians seem to imagine, somewhat naïvely, that this beauteous but conventional force composed of land and sea contingents is somehow the extraordinary double expedition by land and sea that Nicias had warned was necessary.

The reality behind the impressionism, however, is that, carried away by the optimistic promises of personal gain from a master rhetorician and an Olympic victor to boot, the Athenians have become the willing dupes of Alcibiades.

[14] Ibid., 12.

[15] Perhaps because Alcibiades had alluded to his policy; so Dover (n. 10), 254–5.

ALCIBIADES' SELF-EVALUATION AND THE ARMADA

The discussion above shows that the departure chapters (6.30–2) contain more verbal echoes from Alcibiades' speech than they do from Nicias'. The themes that Alcibiades strikes in his speech also predominate. With the frequency of the correspondences here Thucydides is evidently driving home the point, albeit obliquely, that the Sicilian expedition was conceived, organized, equipped, and sent on its way mainly in the spirit and image of Alcibiades, its chief advocate and the victor in the debate. It was Alcibiades' view of the Sicilians, not Nicias', that prevailed in the assembly.[16] This judgement may be extended to apply to the armada as well: it represented the perceptions, aims, values, and ambitions of Alcibiades.

There is yet another link between Alcibiades' speech, specifically the first part of it (6.16), and the armada: the prominence of visual and aural words and expressions. Alcibiades represents himself as others perceive him, just as Thucydides represents the armada as the spectators see it. What Alcibiades tells the assembly are the impressions that others have formed of him and of his actions. The kind of honour that he seeks for himself and for his ancestors by definition exists in the eyes of the world. For him his worth is the worth that others see in him; the word that he uses is δόξα, 'the opinion which others have of one'.[17] If he is 'cried about', it is others who do the crying. Likewise, the glamour of his person and of his *theoria* are what others observe, in the same way that they observe the sporting events.[18] He tells the assembly what other people think of those who stand out by virtue of their pre-eminent position in life, meaning himself: fellow citizens envy them, their contemporaries find them obnoxious, their equals find them still more so. However, posterity boasts about them, and regards them as benefactors and as kinsmen, even if no such kinship exists. With this last phrase Alcibiades may be elevating himself to the rank of a hero, from whom later men will claim a descent that does not exist,[19] but his remark also reminds the reader that he spends money that he does not have (6.12.2, 6.15.3), and that he creates an appearance of power that does not exist (6.16.2): non-existing money is spent to create non-existing power.

In sum, Alcibiades gives the assembly his own subjective assessment of how others perceive him and his deeds; he gives them an interpretation of an interpretation. His discourse deals mainly with externals, with appearances rather than substance. As Macleod observes, Alcibiades uses words that denote impressions as opposed to facts: 'he expects results from the mere fact that Nicias is "evidently

[16] Dover (n. 10), 296. Cf. Hornblower (n. 5), 66–77, who adds that Nicias also prevails in a way, because the Athenians voted to send a much larger force than they had envisaged. But it is worth pointing out that Nicias argues only for a large and adequate force, using no comparatives. In the absence of concrete numbers and comparisons it is impossible to say how large a force the Athenians envisaged; the 100 ships and 5,000 hoplites that Nicias proposed (6.25.3) evidently did not strike them as very large, for they approved them immediately (6.26.1).

[17] LSJ s.v. δόξα III.

[18] The utility to the state of victories in chariot races seems to have been a topic of discussion in the fourth century. The wealthy defendant in Lysias 19.63–4 pleads that his father's victories have brought honour to the state (not to his father or his other forebears, in contrast to Alcibiades). In the view of Xenophon (again in contrast to Alcibiades) the state is not honoured if one single person breeds and enters in the races more teams than the rest of the Hellenes; it is honoured if very many citizens of one state can do so, for this testifies to the state's prosperity (*Hiero* 11.5). According to Plutarch, Agesilaos persuaded his sister to enter a chariot race at Olympia, because he wanted to demonstrate that this sort of thing was no sign of excellence, but only of having money and being able to squander it (*Moralia* 212b).

[19] Cf. Dover (n. 10), 248.

successful" and that Athens "will be seen" to sail against Sicily'. Alcibiades 'deals above all in semblances, and his attempt to show that they are something more only rams home this judgement'.[20]

THE QUALITY OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

A representation of the reflections, reactions, and emotions of a people facing a fateful moment in their history comes under the legitimate purview of the historian. Thucydides does something similar in his narrative of the last battle at Syracuse (see below). But there are some strong hints that he wants to say something else, namely to cast doubt on the quality of the Sicilian expedition.

To take some of the more obvious hints first, it inspires no great confidence in the enterprise when the phrase gold and silver cups, the *ἐκπώματα χρυσᾶ καὶ ἀργυρᾶ*, from which the troops pour libations before the fleet sails (6.32.1), is used again of the gold and silver cups, *ἐκπώματα χρυσᾶ καὶ ἀργυρᾶ*, with which Egesta led the Athenians to expect money that did not exist (6.46.3). Next there are the double meanings. To the observers, the enterprise is surpassing belief, *ἄπιστος* (6.31.1). But the word also means 'unreliable, not to be trusted'. The expedition is said to be famous, *περιβόητος*, because of its daring, *τόλμης* (6.31.6). But the former word may also mean 'notorious, scandalous', while the latter can mean 'recklessness'.[21] The best-looking force, *εὐπρεπεστάτη* (6.31.1), may also be 'the most specious'; this is actually the more common meaning of the word in Thucydides.[22] *ἐξουσία* (6.31.4), which seems to refer to Athens' abundance of wealth, is joined with *ὕβρις* in some other passages, where it means 'licence', or 'arrogance'.[23] With these meanings the expedition becomes an unreliable enterprise that is notorious for its recklessness and arrogant in its aim, and a fleet whose appearance of beauty is deceptive. There is in any case, as any number of historical examples can show, no logical connection between the handsome appearance of a military formation and its fighting power and battle efficiency, any more than there is between the brilliance of Alcibiades' deeds and the power of Athens.[24] His boast, moreover, that his doings make Athenian power appear greater than it actually is, is a dangerous and often fatal proposition. The intelligent and prudent doctrine, set out by the successful field commander Brasidas, holds the exact opposite: an enemy becomes dangerous only if he is stronger than he appears to be (4.126.4).

Yet the strength of the armada, like the arguments of Alcibiades, is mostly semblance, a façade. To the multitude of Greeks at the piers the departing fleet is more a show and demonstration of power and resources than an expedition sailing against an enemy, an impression they have formed from its cost. Nevertheless they believe that the

[20] Macleod (n. 2), 73, who quotes the 'tell-tale words' *δοκεῖ, δόξομεν, ὑπονοεῖται, ἐνόμισαν*.

[21] Cf. LSJ s.v. *ἄπιστος, περιβόητος τόλμα*.

[22] Thuc. 1.37.4, 1.39.2, 3.38.4, 3.82.2, 3.82.8, 4.86.6, 6.8.4, 8.66.1.

[23] For the meaning of *ἐξουσία* see Classen and Steup (n. 11) ad loc. who follow the scholiast; Thuc. 1.38.6, 3.45.5; LSJ s.v. I.2.

[24] See, for example, R. K. Massie, *Dreadnought* (New York, 1992), 395–400 on the magnificent appearance of the ships in the Victorian Royal Navy. In the years before the turn of the century captains were preoccupied with the spick-and-span smartness of their ships, with burnishing of guns and gleaming hinges. There was a cult of paint and brightwork; a commander's ship was to be as beautiful as his person. Ammunition was painted blue, gold, and white and then could not be got into the barrel. Handsome appearance was everything, gunnery and its practice were ignored. As a result, in the bombardment of Alexandria in 1881 the English ships fired 3,000 rounds at the Egyptian forts, but made only ten hits.

expedition is equally famous for its amazing daring and splendid appearance as for its superiority over the Sicilians (6.31.6).[25] But this belief has already been undermined in the very same chapter. The Sicilian expedition may have been the costliest and most splendid to sail out of 'a single Greek city', but in size, the point that really matters, the force sailing from this single city was not even as large as that of 430, as the comparison in 6.31.2–3 shows. It certainly consisted of both ships and infantry, but so did the expedition of 430 which sailed on a shorter campaign with nearer objectives. The state may have gone to great expense in paying a wage of one drachma to the sailors, but this was apparently the going rate, and certainly was no more than the money given by Egesta.[26] The ships were provided at the expense of the state, but the state always provided the hulls and their gear.[27] On this occasion, moreover, the trierarchs received empty ships from the state (i.e. ships without crews), the only instance of this in Thucydides.[28] While the hoplites were selected from superior muster rolls, the 700 marines were thetes (6.43). But in other circumstances of great urgency hoplites from the catalogue could be compelled to serve as marines (8.24.2). The appearance here is picked fighters, the reality a sizeable number of an inferior type of hoplite on board the ships.[29]

In the debate in the assembly a kind of bidding contest takes place in which Alcibiades underbids Nicias. It is Nicias who asks for a strong domestic force of ships and of hoplites from Athens itself, αὐτόθεν (6.21.2, 6.22, 6.23.1, 6.25.2), and it is he who names numbers. Alcibiades, on the other hand, never mentions numbers. Instead he appeals to the cupidity and rapacity of the Athenians with his idea of investment for profit, and portrays the Sicilians and the Peloponnesians as paper tigers by deliberately underestimating the strength of the former and minimizing the threat from the latter (6.17.8). The various assertions in his speech have been described as exaggerated or not entirely trustworthy,[30] but the outright misrepresentations and contradictions among them are so many and so blatant that they amount to fraudulence in the aggregate. Some have been overlooked, as for instance his contradictory claims about the Sicilian hoplites; he says in virtually the same breath that no Sicilian bothers to provide himself with hoplite equipment and that the Sicilians do not have as many

[25] Cf. Hornblower (n. 5), 148: 'the splendour and arrogance of Athenian resources at the beginning of Book 6 is brought out by vague superlatives rather than the precise enumeration of detail, which is Thucydides' more normal method'.

[26] Thuc. 6.8.1; Dover (n. 10), 28, 293.

[27] Jordan (n. 6), 41–6.

[28] When the need arose, the Athenians could resort to conscription to provide naval crews; Thucydides has several instances of wholesale conscription, Jordan (n. 6), 225–6. V. Gabrielsen, *Financing the Athenian Fleet* (Baltimore, 1994), 106–8 underestimates the frequency of conscription even though he lists a host of passages in a footnote (p. 248).

[29] Dover (n. 10), 310 concludes from Thuc. 8.24.2 that the marines were normally thetes. But in that case Thucydides need not have specified that the marines on this occasion were thetes. There is other evidence in Thucydides and elsewhere showing that the marines were normally hoplites, e.g. Thuc. 3.95.2 ~ 3.98.4. Cf. Jordan (n. 6), 195–200.

[30] For example by Kohl (n. 1), 102; Classen and Steup (n. 11), 48; H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge, 1968), 221; Kagan (n. 5), 182. Dover (n. 10) recognizes Alcibiades' untruths for what they are, e.g. his calling Argos and Mantineia 'the most powerful Peloponnesian states' (248), his claim to successful diplomacy (249), his descriptions of the Spartans as discouraged after the battle of Mantineia, of the Sicilians as a 'disorganized rabble' (250), and of Athens and Sparta as enemies in the Persian wars (252–3), but minimizes some others; see the next note. Hornblower (n. 5), 57, 63, is more to the point; he speaks of Alcibiades' 'tinsel phrases', his 'egoism and misleading optimism, and the speciousness and florid expression of his speech'.

hoplites as they boast of (6.17.3, 17.5). This means that they had some, and some is not none.[31] Two of Alcibiades' misleading assertions lead him into another egregious self-contradiction. If, as he says, the Peloponnesians were discouraged (6.16.6) and never so hopeless (6.17.8), and the Sicilians a disorganized mob (6.17.3–5), they could hardly join forces in an attack on Athens. Yet this is precisely the prospect that he paints to the assembly in order to frighten the Athenians into launching a pre-emptive attack against Sicily (6.18.1–3).[32] The Sicilians may or may not have been a mixed rabble; but his assertion that they are incapable of common action against an external aggressor (6.17.3) is belied by the Congress of Gela, which in effect ejected an Athenian army from Sicily in 424; the same assembly listening to Alcibiades in 415 afterwards punished the generals commanding it (4.65). The essential fraudulence of his speech, in which he also calls the temporary truce a period of peace (6.18.4), seems to suggest that the entire *raisonnement* of the Sicilian expedition was based on spurious facts, distortions of reality, deception, and self-deception. The echoes from Alcibiades' speech (*ὑπὲρ δύναμιν μείζω τὴν πόλιν ἐνόμισαν, δύναμις ὑπονοεῖται, ἰσχὺς φαίνεται*, 6.16.2–3) in the description of the armada seem to be saying that its apparent strength was also deceptive (*ἐπίδειξιν μᾶλλον εἰκασθῆναι τῆς δυνάμεως*, 6.31.4). That this appears to be precisely what Thucydides wants the reader to conclude is shown by his true opinion, expressed elsewhere, that one cannot judge power from appearances.[33] Alcibiades' shrewd use of the carrot, i.e. self-aggrandizement, and the stick, i.e. fear of falling into enemy hands, thus succeeds in persuading a credulous and easily swayed people to allow the expedition to proceed to its destruction.

A combination of their credulity and greed[34] had led the Athenians to believe the assurances that Egesta would finance the expedition, and to ignore Nicias' warning not to trust such promises. The question of money was then also pre-empted by Alcibiades' doctrine of investment for profit. As a result, there was no give and take in the debate about the exact amounts necessary to fund the expedition, apart from Nicias' insistence that it must sail with as much money as possible (6.22). Despite the large amounts of money said to be leaving Athens, the reality was that the armada was seriously underfunded. When they arrived in Sicily the generals found themselves short of money; only thirty talents were available at Egesta (6.46). Thucydides is quite clear that each of the different plans of action proposed by Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lamachus (6.47–49), aimed at finding resources for maintaining the force: to extract money from Egesta for the whole army, or at least to collect the sixty talents Egesta had promised; to make allies of the Sicilians, who would then help with troops and provisions, and to capture enough Syracusan property with which to feed the army. These proposals leave no doubt that lack of money was the main problem facing the commanders.[35] After the recall of Alcibiades, Nicias and Lamachus continued to deal with this problem; they sailed to Egesta in search of the money there and were forced to waste time and effort in transporting and selling the enslaved Hyccarans for whom

[31] Alcibiades also says that the Greek states raised adequate number of hoplites only during the Peloponnesian war, and then with difficulty (6.17.5). For Dover (n. 10), 252 this is no more than a rhetorical device, but the remark is so outrageously false that E. Schwartz, *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides* (Hildesheim, 1960), 334–5 proposed drastic changes in the text.

[32] Cf. Dover (n. 10), 254: Alcibiades' generalization 'one defends oneself against a superior enemy by attacking him first' is 'not conspicuously true in Greek history'. This is yet another self-contradiction of Alcibiades: having labelled the Spartans as discouraged and hopeless and the Sicilians as disorganized and without hoplites he now says that they are stronger than Athens.

[33] For example, Thuc. 1.10. [34] Cf. above n. 5. [35] Cf. Westlake (n. 30), 175–6.

they received 120 talents (6.62.4). This sum clearly was not enough, and more money had to be found in Sicily and requested from Athens (6.71.2, 6.74.2).

The private money, which those who had followed Alcibiades' example had taken along to invest in trade, not only was of no help, but actually contributed to the disintegration of the force. The foreigners who had been recruited into the navy at high pay and had hoped to make money in Sicily promptly deserted when the enemy unexpectedly offered opposition by sea and on land. Other sailors bought up the untrained Hyccaran slaves, no doubt with the money brought from home, and put them on board the ships as replacements of themselves with the connivance of their captains, whom they bribed to permit the substitution, probably with the same money. In this way they ruined the battle efficiency of the ships (7.13.2). Nicias gives his government a full and detailed report of the disintegration of the fleet: deteriorating ships, casualties among the sailors, the desertion of the slaves, and above all the desertion of the fleet's largest component, the men from the subject island-states who had been forced to serve, and who went home as soon as they could (7.13.2, 7.57.4). Later, after the final defeat in Syracuse harbour, it is the sailors who mutiny and refuse to go back on board the ships (7.72.4).

While we thus see the navy fall apart, there is no similar report of a break-up of the army. The hoplites retain their discipline and continue to fight to the bitter end. This is true even of the mercenaries, who neither surrender nor desert. Thucydides gives only a small hint that in the army too all may not have been right. In the first battle outside Syracuse some of the foreigners fought hard so that they might see their own countries again; others fought to save their lives above all, and in the hope of more lenient Athenian treatment of their home lands in the future (6.69.3). While these were good motives for persevering, they do not suggest a particularly high morale or great enthusiasm for the cause of Athens. Still, when the foreigners were called upon to surrender in the final throes of defeat, only a few of them did so (7.82.1). The only outright desertion from the ranks of the army that we hear of was that of the slave attendants of the hoplites, the counterparts of the deserting slave rowers in the fleet (7.75.5, 7.13.2). It is remarkable that the many reversals and hardships should have had such a deleterious effect only on the sailors and not on the land troops, including the mercenaries among them. But the historian leaves no doubt about the paradoxical and tragic reversal in the fortunes of the favourite military service of the Athenian democracy; ruler of the sea for more than fifty years, in Sicily its strength proved to be its critical weakness.

When he asked for large numbers of Athenian hoplites, which he did repeatedly, Nicias could not possibly predict the loyalty of the foreigners.[36] He was aware that,

[36] Thuc. 6.21.1, 6.22, 6.23.1. Despite the very difficult parenthesis at 23.1, *πλήν γε πρὸς τὸ μάχιμον αὐτῶν, τὸ ὁπλιτικόν*, which Steup in Classen and Steup (n. 11) has emended completely and in my view correctly, it is quite clear that Nicias has in mind very many Athenian hoplites. Cf. Dover (n. 10), 259: 'a force raised at Athens, not merely a match for the enemy, but actually superior', and 260: 'Nikias' most conspicuous fear is that the Athenians will not send enough hoplites'. Cf. also Dover's comment in *Thucydides Book VI* (Oxford, 1965), 35: 'The Athenians have thought of the proposed force as a "match" for the enemy; Nikias reminds them that it is not a match in the arm that will be needed for the decisive fighting.' The clearest interpretation of the passage is that in Classen and Steup ad loc.: Nicias has been warning the Athenians in chapter 22 that Athens itself must supply most of what the expedition needs: the most troops, the most provisions, and the most money; the *αὐτοί* points to a silent contrast, 'for you must not count on others'. Kohl (n. 1), 159–66 surveys the numerous interpretations and emendations of the passage.

unlike foreigners and mercenaries, the hoplites of Athens could be relied upon to fight, whether they were paid or not (7.48.5), and he may reasonably have expected the soldiers from the subject states and the mercenaries not to show the same loyalty as his countrymen in a campaign whose sole objective was Athenian self-aggrandizement. Although he wanted to forestall the expedition with his request for a large army of hoplites (6.19.2, 6.24.1), Nicias evidently also believed that such a force would provide him with the security that he sought.

Whatever his motives, Nicias failed to achieve either of his aims. The Athenians did not abandon their design, and he did not get the number of soldiers that he wanted. Nicias has been severely criticized by modern historians[37] for insisting on an extraordinarily large force, but he had very good reasons for it. When he made his case in the assembly, Nicias was speaking from great experience as the commander of invasion forces in amphibious campaigns. In these operations he commanded fleets numbering between sixty and eighty ships and land troops between 2,000 and 4,300 men. The attacks that he led were against islands insignificant compared with Sicily (Melos, Cythera), and against comparatively small territories a mere stone's throw away from Athens (the east coast of the Corinthia, the region around Oropos), or at most one-third of the way to Sicily (Mende and Scione).[38] When we take account of the size and distance of Sicily, the total inadequacy of the Sicilian expedition leaps to the eye, whether we reckon with the 5,100 hoplites assembled at Corcyra, or include the auxiliaries and the cavalry there, for a total of 6,430. In the matter of hoplites Nicias can be faulted for requesting only 5,000 of them in the assembly; his experience should have told him that many more were needed, although it must be said in fairness to him that this request was a minimum, and that he made it unwillingly, off the top of his head, and without prior consultation with his fellow generals (6.25.2). In any case, as regards the soldiers, Alcibiades' views also prevailed. If the Sicilians had few, if any, hoplites, there was no need to send a particularly large Athenian army to the island. As with the matter of money, there was no discussion about hard and fast numbers of hoplites in the assembly; as a result the Athenian fighting men mobilized for Sicily were fewer than those in the expedition of 430.

The armada's strength could have been increased by timely and sufficient reinforcements from Athens. These, however, were not forthcoming. Despite Nicias' urgent requests for money and cavalry (6.71.2, 6.74.2, 7.7.3), and his situation reports to Athens (7.8.1, 7.11.1), during the year between the fleet's departure and Nicias' letter, Athens sent to Sicily 250 knights without their horses, 30 mounted archers and 300 talents of silver, enough for only three months' wages of the crews in the 100 Athenian ships (6.94.4). This sum was a mere trifle compared to the sums needed to pay the Athenian crews for the rest of the year, the crews of the allied ships, and the infantry troops, many of whom were mercenaries, to say nothing about the wages for the supply corps personnel who had been hired for pay (6.22), and the price of the horses bought in Sicily (6.93.4, 6.94.1, 6.96.1). The startling insufficiency of the sum becomes even more obvious when we compare it with the 2,000 talents that Athens spent on the siege of Potideia, and the more than 1,276 talents on that of Samos. By the summer of 413 Syracuse itself had spent 2,000 talents on its defence and had incurred

[37] For example by Westlake (n. 30), 221; Kagan (n. 5), 190–1; Dover (n. 10), 256, 461; Hornblower (n. 5), 66–7.

[38] Melos: Thuc. 3.91.1; Cythera: Thuc. 4.53.1, 4.54.1; Corinthia: Thuc. 4.42.1; Oropos: Thuc. 3.91.3; Mende and Skione: Thuc. 4.129.2.

a huge debt in addition.[39] In view of all this it is not surprising that Nicias had to tell the Athenians as diplomatically as he could that they were not supporting the expedition (7.14.3). This is also the judgement of Thucydides who says that the Athenians failed to vote the necessary additional support for their forces overseas and so blunted the edge of their fighting power (2.65.11).[40] Even when the Athenians, after hearing Nicias' letter, bestirred themselves to help their depleted army and fleet (7.7.1, 7.11.3, 7.13, 7.12.4, 7.14.2), the immediate reinforcement that they sent was a mere ten ships and twenty talents (7.16.2).[41] The second armada did bring some money, and after the defeat at Epipolae Nicias could say that he had much more money than Syracuse. As, however, he did not name the sum, it is impossible to know how much money the Athenians actually had at this time (7.48.5–6).

THE ACCOUNT OF THE FINAL ATHENIAN DEFEAT

The verbal correspondences between Alcibiades' speech in the summer of 415 and the story of the armada's fate in Sicily continue in Book 7. Virtually the entire thematic structure, dramatic setting, and rhetorical expressions present in his speech and in the description of the launching are replicated in the accounts of the seafight in Syracuse harbour and of the final destruction of the expeditionary force.

The narratives of the launching of the fleet and of its destruction begin in a similar manner, with the manning of the ships (6.30.1, 7.65.1, 7.69.1). The accidental geographical fact of two harbours having a similar circular shape permits Thucydides to reproduce Alcibiades' original *mise-en-scène*, a spectacle as at Olympia with a large crowd of onlookers. Here the hoplites of both sides line the shore of the harbour to watch the contest, in this case a naval battle. As at the games in Olympia and at the departure from the Piraeus, the emphasis is on the visual: ὁ ὄχλος κατὰ θέαν ἦκεν (6.31.2) ~ δι' ὀλίγου γὰρ οὔσης τῆς θέας (7.71.3); τὸ πλῆθος ἑκάστων ὧν ἑώρων, τῇ ὄψει ἀνεθάρσουν (6.31.1) ~ οὐκ ἐς τὸ αὐτὸ σκοπούντων, εἰ τίνες ἴδοιεν, ἀνεθάρσησαν (7.71.3) ~ ἀνώμαλον τὴν ὄψιν ἠναγκάζοντο ἔχειν (7.71.2); cf. also ἀπὸ τῶν δρωμένων τῆς ὄψεως, syntactically very close to ἑκάστων ὧν ἑώρων, and βλέψαντες, ἀπιδόντες (7.71.3).

The theme of competition, originally introduced by Alcibiades with the recital of his Olympic prizes, which reappears in the departure scene (6.31.3) in tripartite form, is resumed here in the same form. In 6.31.3 the three groups of contestants are the trierarchs, hoplites, and military men in general; in 7.70.3 they are the sailors, helmsmen, and marines. The language in both passages is similar and occasionally

[39] Potidaea: Thuc. 2.70.2; Samos: R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1969), no. 55. Syracuse: Thuc. 7.48.5–6, 7.49.1; cf. Avery (n. 9), 38; Gabrielsen (n. 28), 115.

[40] A. W. Gomme, *HCT*, 195–6 and *JHS* 78 (1943), 72 wrote that this statement 'is not borne out by Thucydides' own narrative in Books VI and VII', because 'the original expedition was splendidly adequate to its object', and because 'on each occasion that Nikias asked for them, supplies and reinforcements were sent, and in good measure'. But the first expedition, while splendid, was not adequate, as its numbers and failure show, while, as pointed out above, the support from Athens was minimal until the second expedition arrived.

[41] εἴκοσι is the reading of the all manuscripts except one (H) which adds the words καὶ ἑκατόν. Valla, apparently following H, also has 120 talents. Editors print the reading of H, evidently because, like Dover (n. 10) ad loc., they think that 'probability is in favour' of 120. This may also have been the view of the scribe who first added καὶ ἑκατόν. Diodorus, 13.8.7, apparently also thought twenty talents too little, and so increased the sum to 140. For a brief history of the efforts to justify 120, see Classen and Steup (n. 11) ad loc.

nearly identical: at 6.31.3 the trierarchs are vying with each other to have ships outstanding in beauty and speed: ἐς μακρότατα προθυμηθέντος ἑνὸς ἑκάστου ὅπως εὐπρεπείᾳ ἡ ναῦς προέξει καὶ τῷ ταχυναυτεῖν. This is echoed in 7.70.3 by πολλὴ ἑκατέροις προθυμία ἀπὸ τῶν ναυτῶν ἐς τὸ ἐπιπλεῖν ἐγίγνετο, there was great eagerness on the part of the sailors to sail to the attack. In the departure scene the hoplites compete to have the best equipment, τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα σκευῶν μεγάλη σπουδὴ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀμιλληθέν (6.31.3); cf. 7.70.3: πολλὴ ἀντιτέχνησις τῶν κυβερνητῶν καὶ ἀγωνισμὸς πρὸς ἀλλήλους (ἐγίγνετο), the helmsmen employed many countermeasures of the nautical art, and there was great competition among them. At 6.31.4 the military men in general engage in great rivalry, wherever each one of them was stationed, ξυνέβη πρὸς σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἔριν γενέσθαι, ᾧ τις ἕκαστος προσετάχθη. This is answered in 7.70.3: οἱ ἐπιβάται ἐθεράπευον . . . μὴ λείπεσθαι τὰ ἀπὸ καταστρώματος τῆς ἄλλης τέχνης, πᾶς τις ἐν ᾧ προσέτακτο αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἠπείγετο πρῶτος φαίνεσθαι, the marines were seeing to it that the fighting from the decks was no less skilful than that of the sailors; every single one of them, wherever he was stationed, strove to be the best. A similar spirit of rivalry is shown also by the boatswains (πρὸς τὴν αὐτίκα φιλονικίαν, 7.70.7); the theme of contest and competition is further reinforced by the use of ἀγών, meaning critical moment of decision and mental struggle at 7.69.2 and 7.71.1, but also retaining its meaning of athletic contest. Clearer still is the echo of athletic competition conveyed by the expression τὸ ἀκρίτως ξυνεχὲς τῆς ἀμίλλης (7.71.3), the long-lasting indecision of the contest. Here ἄμιλλα harks back to the ἄμιλλα with ships to Aegina (6.32.2), and ultimately to Alcibiades' ἅμιλλαι at Olympia (6.16.2).

The acoustic element that Thucydides deftly insinuates into the chapters on the launching with their large crowds, whom the herald orders to silence (6.30–32.2), finds full and loud expression in his report of the battle. Ships crash together, there are exhortations in the form of questions and appeals to combatants by name. The roar of battle is so great that orders cannot be heard. There is shouting, wailing, cries of victory and cries of defeat. The wailing especially (ὀλοφυρμός), announced like an operatic leitmotif in the description of the launching (6.30.2), is expanded and developed fully at the end of the drama with an accumulation of words of hearing: ὀλοφυρμῷ μετὰ βοῆς (7.71.3), ὀλοφυρμὸς, βοή (7.71.4), οἰμωγή, στόνος (7.71.6). The prayers offered to the gods at the outset (εὐχὰς τὰς νομιζομένας, 6.32.2) now have become an appeal to the gods for salvation (ἀνάκλησιν θεῶν, 7.71.3).

As in chapter 6.31, Thucydides reports the subjective thoughts and emotions of the spectators watching the combat from shore: they feel mental anguish, experience an unparalleled fear, are encouraged or dejected. At the sight of a near victory or near defeat, their anxiety and suspense become so very great that they reveal these emotions with the movement of their bodies (7.71.1–3). The admiration which Nicias had said that Alcibiades craves (ἵνα θαυμασθῇ, 6.12.2), and the astonishment at the daring of the armada (τόλμης θάμβει, 6.31.6), here become a sudden shock at the sight of a terrible defeat, a shock as great as any experienced before (ἔκπληξις, 7.69.2, 7.60.6, 7.71.7), and similar to the shock that the Athenians administered to the Spartans at Pylos and Sphakteria: the Athenian disaster in Sicily has become the mirror image of their success at Pylos.[42] Short of a miracle the Athenians at this juncture are in a hopeless situation, καὶ τότε τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἀνέλπιστον ἦν τὸ κατὰ γῆν σωθήσεσθαι (7.71.7). The tragic irony present in this reversal of roles from victors in the bay at

[42] C. Macleod, 'Thucydides and tragedy', *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 142–3.

Pylos to losers in the harbour of Syracuse is striking; the wording of the passage also recalls the language of Alcibiades' confident assertion to the assembly, *καὶ νῦν οὔτε ἀνέλπιστοί πω μᾶλλον Πελοποννήσιοι ἐς ἡμᾶς ἐγένοντο ἐς τὴν γῆν ἡμῶν ἐσβάλλειν* (6.17.8), another subtle and half-hidden but deliberate signpost connecting Alcibiades with the débâcle in Sicily. Hopeful at the outset for conquest, riches, profit, and wages (*ἐλπίζων Σικελίαν λήψεσθαι, χρήμασι ὠφελήσειν, εὐέλπιδες*, 6.15.2; *ἀργύριον οἴσειν καὶ προσκτήσεσθαι δύναμιν ὅθεν μισθοφορὰν ὕπαρξειν*, 6.24.3; *ἐπὶ μεγίστῃ ἐλπίδι τῶν παρόντων πρὸς τὰ ὑπάρχοντα*, 6.31.6), the Athenians now see all these hopes come crashing down (*ἀνέλπιστοι, ἀντὶ μεγάλης ἐλπίδος*, 7.75.2).[43]

There is yet another strange reversal of roles. In his address to the trierarchs before the battle Nicias uses the denominative of the very word (*ἐλλαμπρύνεσθαι*) with which he first attacked Alcibiades, and which Alcibiades in justifying himself had, so to speak, made his own. Nicias asks the captains not to betray any shining reputation that they may have, and not to obliterate the glorious deeds of their ancestors, *ἀξιῶν τό τε καθ' ἑαυτὸν ᾧ ὑπῆρχε λαμπρότητός τι μὴ προδιδόναι τινὰ καὶ τὰς πατρικὰς ἀρετὰς ὧν ἐπιφανεῖς ἦσαν οἱ πρόγονοι μὴ ἀφανίζειν, πατρίδι δὲ* (7.69.2). Compare with these expressions Alcibiades' at 6.16.3, *καὶ ὅσα λαμπρύνομαι*, and 6.16.5, *ὅσοι ἔν τινος λαμπρότητι προέσχον*, and *ὧν πέρι ἐπιβόητός εἰμι τοῖς μὲν προγόνοις μου δόξαν φέρει, τῇ δὲ πατρίδι* (6.16.1). It almost looks as if in the desperation of the moment Nicias is appealing to the same brilliance of his captains that he had censured in Alcibiades two years before—another piece of tragic irony. The balance of the sentence, which on the surface is a laudation of Athenian democracy, also acquires an Alcibiadean flavour on closer scrutiny. Nicias reminds the trierarchs that Athens, the freest state of all, affords all its citizens unrestrained freedom in the conduct of their daily life. The language and the thought seem not too different from Thucydides' words about on Alcibiades. Compare 7.69.2: *ἀνεπιτάκτου πᾶσιν ἐς τὴν δίαιταν ἐξουσίας* with 6.15.4: *τὸ μέγεθος τῆς κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα παρανομίας ἐς τὴν δίαιταν καὶ τῆς διανοίας ὧν καθ' ἕν ἕκαστον ἐν ὅτῳ γίγνοιτο ἔπρασσεν*. The notion of lawlessness at every step in the daily life of a man pursuing his private interest is not too far away from the notion of a daily life that is subject to no control whatsoever.

The *λαμπρότης* of Alcibiades runs through the chapters of the Sicilian expedition like a red thread connecting each of the crucial moments in its history. It is present twice in his speech to the assembly, it proclaims the grandeur of the departing fleet, and Nicias repeats it at the battle in Syracuse harbour. At the end of that battle, after much fighting, the Syracusans make their last assault against the Athenian ships *λαμπρῶς* (7.71.5). Just before the final catastrophe on land the word is still ringing in the minds of the Athenians when they are about to march away after the defeat at sea. Those who can still walk remember the radiance and boasting with which they had first sailed from Athens and contrast it with their miserable end: *ἀπὸ οἵας λαμπρότητος καὶ αὐχήματος τοῦ πρώτου* (7.75.6), while those being left behind cry out to friends and relatives (*ἐπιβοώμενοι*, 7.75.4).[44] Compare with this Alcibiades' *ἐπιβόητός εἰμι, ἐπιβοώμενος* (6.16.1, 6.16.6) and his boast, *οἶδα ὅσοι λαμπρότητι προέσχον καταλιπόντας, ἧς ἂν ὦσι πατρίδος, ταύτῃ αὔχησιν ὡς οὐ περὶ ἁμαρτόντων, ἀλλὰ καλὰ πραξάντων* (6.16.5). The wealth, daring, splendour, and high hopes that had been the pride of the original expedition have now become an

[43] Hope and hopelessness also form a considerable theme connecting all the chapters on the Sicilian expedition; Avery (n. 9), 1–5 building on F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London, 1907), works out the connection; cf. also Macleod (n. 42), 150.

[44] Cf. Avery (n. 9), 5.

empty boast. As Gylippus says, the Athenians wanted to be superior (προύχειν), but, contrary to their hopes, their boasts have come to nothing, παρὰ ἐλπίδα τοῦ αὐχήματος σφαλλόμενοι (7.66.3). Of the six occurrences of λαμπρότης in Thucydides, four refer to Alcibiades and the Sicilian expedition; (ἐλ)λαμπρύνεσθαι is used twice and only of Alcibiades. The use of αὔχημα and αὔχησις is rarer still. The only other occurrence besides the three just cited is Pericles' definition of it: boasting is what lucky but stupid people do (2.62.4).[45]

CONCLUSION

Although it came very close to success, the invading force did not prove strong enough to overpower the enemy at the first assault, as Nicias had rightly argued that it should be able to do (6.23.2).[46] The Sicilian expedition is an early example of a bad mistake not unknown to later history: throwing armed forces into battle piecemeal and so allowing the victory to slip away.[47] The overwhelming power of the first and second expeditions combined into one attacking force probably would have achieved the conquest of Sicily. Separately, as it turned out, they were insufficient. Thucydides was aware of the insufficiency of the original expedition, which he exposes with specific and systematic parallels between the debate in the assembly and the narratives of the launching and the destruction of the whole force. The historian's words suggest that he puts much of the blame for the Sicilian war on Alcibiades. But Thucydides' purpose is greater than merely apportioning blame. Beneath his factual reporting lies the awful truth of the tragic futility of human effort. An entire 'city on the move', caught in a merciless conflict allowing no escape, ends its voyage in total ruin.

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[45] λαμπρότης: Thuc. 2.64.5 (speech of Pericles); 4.62.2 (speech of Hermocrates); 6.16.5, 6.31.6, 7.69.2, 7.75.6 (Sicilian expedition). ἐλλαμπρύνομαι: 6.12.2; λαμπρύνομαι: 6.16.3 (Alcibiades).

[46] The narrative of the fighting contains several indications that the expedition was not strong enough: Thuc. 6.86.3, 6.100.1–2, 7.4.4, 7.7.4, 7.11.3.

[47] To cite an example from recent history, in the Battle of Midway the Japanese divided their huge battle fleet several ways and threw away their chance of victory: S. E. Morison, *The Two-ocean War* (Boston, 1963), 150–63.