Prologue

OPENING SKIRMISHES

> Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.
>
> (George W. Bush)[1]

> How would Homer or Demosthenes had either been present have listened to this said by me? How would they have reacted to it? In truth, great is the struggle, if we posit such a law court and theatre for our private words, and to pretend that we are submitting public accounts of our writings to the scrutiny of such long-standing heroes as witnesses and judges.
>
> (Longinus, *On the Sublime* 14.2)[2]

At one point in his analysis of great writing, *On the Sublime*, Longinus ponders his own reception by turning to two of the greats, Homer and Demosthenes. By bringing together these particular authors, Longinus already reveals certain cultural assumptions which can read an epic poet and classical orator alongside each other.[3] Indeed, Longinus goes some way to inserting himself within that canon by citing Homer and

[1] *http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html*. The web-based encyclopaedia Wikipedia surveys the historical resonance of the phrase 'you're either with us, or against us' from Jesus to Dirty Harry: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You%27re_either_with_us%2C_or_against_us.*

[2] ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον, εἰ κἀκεῖνο τῇ διανοίᾳ προσυπογράφοιμεν, πῶς ἂν τόδε τι ὑπ' ἐμοῦ λεγόμενον παρὼν Ὅμηρος ἤκουσεν ἢ Δημοσθένης, ἢ πῶς ἂν ἔπι τούτῳ διετέθησαν· τῷ γὰρ ὄντι μέγα τὸ ἀγώνισμα, τοιοῦτον ὑποτίθεσθαι τῶν ἰδίων λόγων δικαστήριον καὶ θέατρον, καὶ ἐν τηλικούτοις ἥρωσι κριταῖς τε καὶ μάρτυσιν ὑπέχειν τῶν γραφομένων εὐθύνας πεπαῖχθαι.

[3] Too (1998), 214 relates these lines to '[Longinus'] belief that the sublime should transcend its current temporal context', for 'the classical lawcourt and theatre are patently anachronistic contexts in which to locate Homer'.

Demosthenes not as objects of his analysis but as themselves a critical audience of *his* own writings. In making this move, Longinus reconfigures these epic authors or 'heroes' (ἥρωες) as an audience drawn from the contemporary world of the law court and theatre (δικαστήριον καὶ θέατρον)—'judges and witnesses' (κριταὶ καί μάρτυρες). Thus reading is imagined as a public act, the reception of the writer's 'private words' (οἱ ἰδίοι λόγοι) a matter of 'public auditing' (εὐθύναι).[4] For a writer to hypothesize such a scenario would be a 'struggle'—a *public* contest (ἀγώνισμα).[5]

In setting up a public contest over his words, then, Longinus constructs a judging audience deeply embedded in the agonistic culture of a shared heritage, best represented by the civic institutions of the law court and theatre he mentions. Even though he is describing the act of reading, he nevertheless draws on an image derived from the public spaces of his cultural tradition. That is to say, in spite of the fact that, by this period, the author's world is thoroughly literary and bookish, it appears natural for the act of reception to be thought of in terms of public contest or agon.[6]

This book investigates representations of the agon in ancient Greek literature. The agonistic spirit of ancient Greek culture is well

[4] On rendering accounts in Athenian democratic procedure, see Vernant (1982), 51–2.

[5] The term ἀγώνισμα, first coined it seems by Herodotus to describe the product of striving for something (1.140), famously occurs at the end of Thucydides' methodological statement to denote 'a contest for the moment' (ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα), against which he defines his work, a possession for always (κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί, 1.22.4). See Chapter 4 below.

[6] Too (1998), 214–16 discusses the implications of the literary struggle being described here. She argues that this agon 'is a site which patently acknowledges the social and political significance of criticism as a process which seeks the benefit for the community as a whole by judging in favour of certain discourses against others' (p. 216). While the present study will put the stress on the agon reproducing the crisis of judgement, Too's reading of literary criticism and politics is suggestive of the power of the agon. The image of the agon—as a contest that writers enter into to become part of a canon—dominates the literary theory of Harold Bloom: see e.g. Bloom (1973) and (1982). His use of the agon, however, is avowedly aesthetic, not political.

documented,[7] from the rivalry between heroes[8] or poets[9] to the establishment of competitive festivals.[10] Less well appreciated, however, is the contest of words (agon) in literature—the scene of debate in which, with varying degrees of formalization, characters confront each other with opposing views. This book sets out to explore for the first time the agon in three generic traditions—epic, historiography and tragedy—and trace its changing representations over those genres and, by comparing two examples of each type, within them with the aim of understanding debate in terms of dissent from authority.

Dissent is an important phenomenon in modern political culture and the subject of much contemporary anxiety, being frequently cited both as a defining feature of Western liberal democracies in the current 'war on terror' rhetoric and as under threat precisely during such trying times.[11] More generally there is a current perception that formal democratic institutions are disconnected from people's everyday lives, while dissent continues to thrive in other arenas and media.[12] These current

[7] For contest (or 'agon') in Greek society, see Nietzche (1997); Gouldner (1965), 41–77; Cartledge (2002²); Goldhill (1999*a*), 2–3. Burckhardt (1998), 160–213 remains fundamental, though focused on elite culture; cf. Spariosu (1991), 1–55. Contrast Ehrenberg (1935), 63–96, who argues that the agon increases in importance as democracies emerged. Poliakoff (1987), 178f., n. 49 discusses previous scholarship. For the agon in Greek thought in general, see Weiler (1974); G. E. R. Lloyd (1987), 50–108, cf. (1996), (1996); Sandywell (2000), 110–19; and the discussion of Vernant (1982) below.

[8] On competitive versus cooperative values, see Adkins (1965; 1969); M. Scott (1980; 1981); Gagarin (1986); D. Cairns (1993*a*); Yamagata (1994); Schofield (1999), 3–30. See also Lévy (1995) with further bibliography (p. 177, n. 1). On verbal conflict, or 'flyting', see Parks (1986; 1990), and esp. R. P. Martin (1989). For a sociological analysis of competition in language more generally, see Ong (1981).

[9] For poetic competition, see Griffith (1990). For an analysis from the perspective of the performer, see now Collins (2004), who explores the practice of 'capping': the mode by which speakers or singers seek mastery over one other by coming up with a response that outdoes their rival.

[10] For the Greek games, see M. Finley and H. W. Plecket (1976); Scanlon (1984); Golden (1998). Osborne (1993) describes a process by which the collective interest in competition transforms the institution into a democratic framework.

[11] See e.g. S. J. Hartnett, *Democratic Dissent and the Cultural Fictions of Antebellum America* (Urbana, Ill., 2002); L. H. Lapham, *Gag Rule: On the Suppression of Dissent and Stifling of Democracy* (New York, 2004); R. L. Ivie, *Democracy and America's War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa, 2005). Cf. P. Scranton (ed.), *Beyond September 11: An Anthology of Dissent* (London, 2002).

[12] With the advent of new media for mass communication, such as the internet, many alternative venues for dissent aside from traditional arenas are forming, prompting both academics and politicians alike to speculate on the possible consequences for the way

political controversies over dissent—both its production and its limitations—offer a way into thinking about how debate is represented in ancient Greek literature. On the one hand, the ways in which examples of opposition in political rhetoric, such as 'you're either with us or against us', may work to silence dissent challenge a simplistic notion that dissent is generated through opposition alone.[13] To put that slightly differently, the establishment of contrary positions—or *dissoi logoi*[14]—within a narrative does not necessarily invite dialogue.[15] On the other hand, the observation that dissent occurs in a variety of different arenas invites reflection on the consequences of those different manifestations for assessing the dynamics and impact of dissent and, in particular, also draws attention to the importance of the institutional context for thinking about dissent.

This study sets out to make three interlocking claims. They are: first, that debate is fundamental to the public forms of ancient Greek narrative, as exemplified by epic and tragedy, and to the writing of history as

politics is carried out. On the adaptation of democratic institutions, processes and cultures to digital interactivity, see J. G. Blumler and S. Coleman, *Realising Democracy Online: A Civic Commons in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, 2001); S. Coleman, 'Exploring New Media Effects on Representative Democracy,' *Journal of Legislative Studies*, (Jan. 2005); R. Butsch (ed.), *The Media and the Public Sphere* (Basingstoke, 2007).

[13] Claims to be fighting terrorism have been used to justify the suppression of legitimate opposition, as in Zimbabwe (Gary Younge, *Guardian*, 10 Dec. 2001) or Uzbekistan (editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Oct. 2004). See esp. E. S. Herman and G. O'Sullivan: *The 'Terrorism' Industry: The Experts and Institutions that Shape our View of Terror* (New York, 1989); J. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (London, 1999); R. Mahajan, *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (New York, 2002). See also N. Chomsky and E.S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, 1988), who explore concerns of contemporary governments over the potential for their citizens to act and think differently and question their obsession with manufacturing consent. Rehm (2003), 87–118 suggests that Athenian tragedy resists 'ideological truisms that cover up deeply intractable problems' (p. 118).

[14] The notion of arguing from opposing positions or with opposing speeches (*dissoi logoi*) is regarded as a characteristic of the activity of sophists in Athens, as testified by fragments of Protagoras (DK80A1, DK80A20), the treatise of the same name (DK90), and Aristophanes' satirical treatment in his *Clouds*. See Kerferd (1981), esp. 84–5, 131–2. See also Chapter 4, n. 96 below.

[15] The extent to which Platonic dialogue may be considered open or closed has been the subject of recent intense speculation: see e.g. the debate between Euben (1996) and Barber (1996). Much may depend on the particular dialogue: for a discussion of the dialogue form and its variances in Plato, see Rutherford (1995), esp. 7–16, 23–9.

demonstrated by Herodotus and Thucydides; second, that representations of debate may be best understood in terms of institutional dissent, by virtue of which authority is challenged and alternative views are not only tolerated, but also somehow incorporated, managed and utilized; third, that textual representations of debate do not exist independently from an institutional framework but, by working through strategies for managing dissent, serve to reproduce an agonistic mental horizon among its many audiences.[16]

SETTING THE BOUNDARIES TO DEBATE

> We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty . . . We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine and remember that we are not descended from fearful men. Not from men who feared to write, to associate, to speak and to defend the causes that were for the moment unpopular.
>
> Edward R. Murrow

> While the institutions of the democracy guaranteed free speech—that is, the right to address the Assembly—and therefore to try to persuade the majority, it was not imagined that this procured *unanimity*. So the democratic ideal was not one of total agreement, so much as one of the due management of disagreement.
>
> (Geoffrey Lloyd, (1996), 132–3)

Previous work on debate in ancient Greek literature has been limited in scope in at least two ways. First, studies have focused on debate in individual genres, authors or plays.[17] These approaches, limited in

[16] These three claims are explored in greater detail over the course of the rest of the Prologue below: the importance of debate is discussed in the section 'Setting the boundaries to debate'; the value of reading debate in its institutional context is set out in 'Laying down the ground-rules'; and the interrelationship between the institutional form of debate and its textual representations in the reproduction of dissent is articulated in 'Entering the agon to judge'.

[17] On debate or agon in Homer, see R. Martin (1951); M. Finley (2002); Momigliano (1973); Ruzé (1997); Hölkeskamp (1998); Hammer (2002); in Thucydides: Cogan (1981); Macleod (1983), 52–122; Ober (1998); in Aeschylus: Goldhill (1986), 33–56; in Euripides: Strohm (1957); Collard (2003); Downing (1990); M. Lloyd (1992); Croally (1994), 46, 120–62; in Aristophanes: Gelzer (1960). A notable exception to these single author/text studies remains Dûchemin (1968), whose concern

scope, have failed to grasp both the range of forms of debate and how it functions differently in varying cultural contexts or even within a particular genre.[18] Second, critics have tended to catalogue the different attributes of debates in abstraction from their textual context. The subsequent studies have resulted in little attention being accorded to how debate works, or *performs*, in a narrative at a particular point.[19]

An example of some of the difficulties that arise from taking a narrow approach to debate is most obvious when we consider Thucydides and Euripides, two authors whose debate scenes have frequently been criticized for lacking dramatic coherence, appearing artificial or failing to affect the outcome of events (let alone resolve the crisis).[20] Even less negative criticism tends to be double-edged. Thus Josiah Ober argues that Thucydides shows debates going wrong in order to justify his own presentation of the facts, an approach that fails, however, to appreciate how debates *work*

to read tragedy's formal debates as part of its 'natural inheritance from a long popular or pastoral tradition of dramatic poetry' wins the approval of Collard (2003), 64 (his quotation). As well as the historiographical genre that Dûchemin identifies, Collard (ibid. 65) adds 'the chief place of oral epic in time and influence in the Greek literary tradition'. It remains true, however, that both Dûchemin and Collard concentrate on the tragic agon, particularly as it is handled by Euripides. On the long and varied tradition of tragic stichomythia, see Collins (2004).

[18] Collard (2003), 65 issues a similar caveat against the 'instinctive temptation to isolate Euripides' formal debate from their dramatic setting', insisting instead on taxonomic flexibility: 'formal debates are too various and loose in structure, despite frequent responsion or symmetry between their various elements in position, length, or even content' (p. 66).

[19] For the theory of 'performativity'—the ability for words to effect situations—see J. L. Austin (1962); Searle (1969). For its application to literature, see Levinson (1983); Petrey (1990); and to the study of ancient Greek culture, see Goldhill and Osborne, eds. (1999). Performance theory, in particular the speech acts of outstanding individuals, also underpins Vincent Farenga's recent study of the development of citizenship in ancient Greece. See Farenga (2006), 4–33 for an introduction to and discussion of his methodology. Collard (2003) again is alert to the problem we face in this book: 'Even to define formal debates risks isolating them still further in criticism from their dramatic setting' (p. 68).

[20] Dûchemin (1968), 124–35; Rusten (1989), 10; M. Lloyd (1992), esp. 1–18. Heath (1987*a*), 133 observes that, even when defending Euripides' agon against the charge of being 'dramatically inorganic', Conacher (2003), 101 [= (1981), 25] reproduces that criticism. In fact, Heath's analysis shows well how scholars commit themselves to making judgements that reflect their own concerns when they read the agon. Answering the charge of 'theatrical frigidity' are Goldhill (1986), 225; Heath (1987*a*), 130–2; Croally (1994), 135; Allan (2000), 118–48.

within Thucydides' narrative;[21] on the other hand, Neil Croally reads the agon's lack of resolution sympathetically in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, but his conclusion that 'the *agon* itself is questioned as an institution which can properly produce a victor' is still based on the assumption that debate *should* lead to resolution and provide a definitive outcome of the kind one that would expect from a law-court model.[22]

The value of the present study lies in its dual approach to debate. First, it traces the changing representations between genres and, by comparing two examples of each type of narrative, within them. Debates are most recognizable in Thucydides and Euripides by virtue of their formality: two speeches of more or less equal length formally are set down in antithesis to each other. Athenian tragedy in general stages opposing voices, and even in Aeschylus, an author whose plays do not so evidently or formally represent a set-piece agon, speeches frequently occur in opposition to each other.[23] The greater prominence or self-conscious application of debate in Euripides should prompt us to investigate the different effect that he is trying to achieve.[24] Furthermore, while being less of a feature in his narrative than in Thucydides, competing public speeches delivered in a formal setting before an audience also occur in Herodotus, particularly among the Persians and more so as the narrative progresses. Indeed, we can trace the idea of a contest of words back to epic itself, when Achilles and Agamemnon square up to each other in the assembly (*agora*) at the beginning of the *Iliad*'s exploration of strife. Taking the long view, then, will allow us to better account for the variations in the representation of debate and thematization of dissent across different genres and authors. The second benefit of the present study lies in the close attention it pays to the ways

[21] Ober (1998), 52–121. See Ch. 4 below.

[22] Croally (1994), 160. On persuasion—its failures and triumphs—in Athens, see Buxton (1982) esp. 1–18. For the law-court model of the agon see Act III, introduction below.

[23] Putting aside the more general point that tragic plays stage a contest of voices, there are many occasions even in Aeschylus when speeches occur in some kind of more formal opposition to each other. See e.g. the long central scene of the *Seven Against Thebes* that juxtaposes the Scout's speeches with Eteocles' responses (Aesch. *Sept.* 375–676), or Clytemnestra's series of confrontations with the men who come on stage, notably her husband (Aesch. *Ag.* 810–974).

[24] Euripidean characters often draw attention to the rhetorical structure of their speeches: see M. Lloyd (1992), 19–36; Scodel (2000).

in which debates are embedded within their narratives. In the case studies presented below the concern is not just to define and describe the form of each individual debate; the *context* of each scene and the *interplay* between the debate and its surrounding narrative will also be explored. In this way it is hoped to demonstrate the importance of debate in ancient Greek literature, not only by accounting for the scene of debate in isolation, but also by explaining its role in each narrative.

The problem of defining the topic of debate may be illustrated if we consider for one moment the terminology involved in signalling it. By the time of Athenian tragedy a formal debate may be identified as an 'agon'—contest—of words: this is the marker that is used in both the plays of Sophocles and Euripides under examination here, and the reason why this book's title reads 'entering the agon'.[25] Even in tragedy, however, the term agon does not achieve ubiquitous usage, even if a formal debate occurs in a play; it will be important to consider on what occasions, and for what reason, an agon is called an agon or not.[26] On the other hand, in Homeric epic even the primary meaning of 'agon' as denoting contest is disputed:[27] since it applies to a variety of different contexts, from a 'divine assembly'[28] and 'place by the ships'[29] to the funeral games in honour of Patroclus,[30] scholars tend to define the Homeric meaning of 'agon' as: '*any* gathering, and *hence* an assembly of spectators at a contest, or the place of contest, and then the contest

[25] For the phrase 'an agon of words' (e.g. *ἀγών λόγων* or *ἄμιλλα λόγων*) in tragedy, see Eur. *Andr.* 234; *Her.* 1255; *Heracl.* 116; *Hipp.* 971; *Med.* 546; *Phoen.* 588, 930; *Supp.* 426–8; fr. 21; fr. 189; Soph. *El.* 1492; cf. Pl. *Prt.* 335a4. See M. Lloyd (1992); Mastronade (2002), 262. But a contest of words often remains implicit in the reference to an impending agon: see e.g. Soph. *Aj.* 1163 and Eur. *Hec.* 229, discussed in Chs. 5 and 6 below respectively. Thucydides' Cleon explicitly labels assembly-debate as agon, and suggests that this is a typical Athenian feature (Thuc. 3.37): see Ch. 4, sec. 3 below.

[26] To a certain extent all tragedy, by virtue of setting voices in some kind of formal opposition to one another, may be considered agonistic. Certainly, the formal opposition of speakers belongs to the very structure of a tragic play, whether or not an agon is formally marked. See Act III below.

[27] See the definition by Cunliffe (1963), 6: (1) An assembly: (a) 'the assemblage of the gods supposed to meet together to receive their worshippers.' (b) 'An assembly brought together to view contests.' (2) 'A place for contests.' (3) 'In reference to the Greek ships drawn up on the beach.' Cf. Entry I under agon in *LSJ* 18.

[28] *Il.* 7.298; 18.376. Cf. Kirk (1990).

[29] *Il.* 15.428; 16.239, 500; 19.42; 20.33. Dûchemin (1968), 11–12.

[30] *Il.* 23.258, 273, 448, 451, 495, 507, 531, 617, 654, 685, 696, 710, 799, 847, 886; 24.1.

itself.'[31] This study, then, will have to go beyond merely the study of the word agon, if we want to gain an insight into ancient Greek conceptions of debate.[32] For example, my analysis of debate in Homeric epic will be based on occurrences of the term agora—the 'place of assembly' or 'assembly' itself. Having identified the contexts in which an assembly takes place, I will examine the ideas related to its setting up and performance in order to erect a framework for thinking about the process of debate.

One approach to penetrating the idea of debate in ancient Greek society and to getting 'away from the assumptions that the Greek way of doing things was the natural or inevitable way of doing them' has been suggested by Geoffrey Lloyd.[33] Reflecting on ancient Chinese approaches to science, Lloyd describes how alternative views do not lead to competition because the groups engaged in research belong to a royal court: being patronized by a ruling authority, these scholars work within and for the promotion of that authority, fitting their work into the tradition in a way that builds on it.[34] In contrast, 'on the Greek side,' Lloyd

[31] N. J. Richardson (1993), my italics. Cf. Kirk (1985; 1990); Janko (1992). Attempts have also been made to trace an etymological connection between the two terms, with varying degrees of confidence. Chantraine (1968), 9 calls it 'a simple hypothesis'. Rix (1998), 246 fails to find a cognate for *ἀγείρω*, which could support its identification with *ἄγω* and an *ag-* root. Note, however, Pokorny (1994), 382, who reconstructs a root **ger*, connected to both *ἀγείρω* and the Latin *grex, gregis*: 'herd'. I thank Olga Tribulato for a helpful discussion about these conjectures.

[32] A brief analysis of the term agon in the *Iliad*, however, may yield reward. Ellsworth (1974) argues that the phrase 'the agon of the ships' occurs only during that time when Achilles' absence from battle is felt and the Achaean ships are under threat; that is, when there is a 'contest' over them. When Achilles returns to the battle, he removes the threat from the ships and, consequently, transforms the phrase to 'the assembly of the ships'. See Ch. 1, sec. 4 below. The idea that 'agon' consistently means 'contest' is the central point of his 1971 Berkeley Ph.D thesis. Contrast Poliakoff (1987), 181, n. 78: 'The most one can say is that Homer has begun to show the later semantic concept of *agon* [that is, as a form of competition not simply a place] but this is not provable.' For agon as 'including the space reserved for spectators': Autenrieth (1984), 7.

[33] G. E. R. Lloyd (1996), quotation from p. 18.

[34] The ruler as a part of the system was not threatened: though the individual ruler could be ousted, the idea or reality of having a ruler itself was not questioned: G. E. R. Lloyd (1996), 207. It is open to question, however, whether it really was the case that competition did not exist in ancient Chinese society, or whether as Western critics we fail to see it operating: on the distorting lens of 'orientalism', see Said (1978). Interestingly, the extent of China's difference in terms of political structure has been recently raised by M. Leonard, *What Does China Think?* (London, 2008), which explores China's

suggests, 'not only were political ideals disputed, but the prime target of persuasion was less often the ruler. It could be the general public, or your own colleagues, rivals or potential adherents . . . [C]ompetitiveness was built into the institutional set-up within which they operated.'[35] According to Lloyd, not only was there no individual authority figure presiding over the classical Greek polis, but no embedded superstructure existed to support one:[36] authority was something that was won or lost, upheld or extended, in a continual struggle.[37] Extending this idea to the political field, Lloyd writes: 'the democratic ideal was not one of total agreement, so much as one of the due management of disagreement.' Whether oligarchy or democracy, politics was not so much about achieving unanimity as about regulating or even asserting the right to dissent from authority.

This book proposes that the dynamic between authority and dissent provides a useful matrix for thinking about textual representations of debate: hence the subtitle 'dissent and authority in Homer, historiography and tragedy'. It has been argued, for example, that authority is most successful when it is not noticed: when threatened, it comes under

experiences of democratic debate and participation within, and as part of, an embedded communist framework.

[35] G. E. R. Lloyd (1996), 45.

[36] For the absence of a centralized monarchy with attendant priestly caste in Greece, see Ehrenberg (1935); G. E. R. Lloyd (1979), 226–67; Vernant (1982), 38–68; Detienne (1996), 89–106. The classical Greek polis that fits the bill is, of course, Athens. Lloyd seems to take for granted that a similar notion of institutional competition could apply, though in varying degrees, to other Greek poleis. In fact, the extent to which and the manner in which debate 'works' in oligarchies such as those of Sparta, Corinth or Thebes warrants further investigation, especially since there is a tendency—a problem with which this book too struggles—for modern scholars to equate debate with democratic procedure, as if democracy (especially Western liberal democracies) had a special claim on notions and practices of freedom. See, however, Raaflaub (2004*a*), 225–47; (2004*b*), who compares and contrasts aristocratic with democratic views on free speech. Herodotus and Thucydides too are important witnesses for complicating this ideal: see Act II below.

[37] Golden (1998), 28–33 argues that the evidence is lacking for signs of such a competitive spirit elsewhere in the ancient world. Contrast Bernal (1987–91), who, in resisting the notion that the Greeks were some how superior, claims that they are no more competitive than other cultures. But we do not have to deny their competitiveness to dispute the claim that it is superior, precisely because it is *their* claim. Here Lloyd's less judgmental approach, which attempts to understand competition and the ways in which it is represented, offers a more fruitful line of enquiry.

scrutiny.[38] This study will show that one such occasion is *in debate*. It proposes that representations of debate pose a whole range of questions, from who has authority and how does one gain or hold on to authority, to who can (or cannot) dissent, where, how, with what consequences, and so on.

Dissent has been the subject of an important recent monograph on literature in democratic Athens. Working from the premise that in Athens political authority was 'at least *potentially* discontinuous with economic power', Josiah Ober analyses a range of Athenian authors, including Thucydides, as forming a 'critical community' of Athenian democratic practice.[39] Although most of Ober's reviewers have criticized him for in effect creating a 'community of critics'[40] according to a model of an educated intelligentsia Ober himself acknowledges,[41] a problem also arises in his use of the term dissent itself. While conceding that dissent 'was rightly recognized at the time as an important and distinctive attribute of popular rule', Ober understands dissent in terms of an opposition to the dominant ideology of 'democratic knowledge',[42] as if dissent equated to elite *criticism* of democracy.[43]

[38] The notion of authority as 'an aspect of discourse' (Lincoln (1994), 2) derives from the work of Foucault (1980) and Bourdieu (1991).

[39] Ober (1998), 39, 45. Cf. Ober (1993, 1994).

[40] 'To maintain his thesis that the critics formed a unified community', Ober is obliged to misrepresent specific criticisms of laws and procedures as a more general attack on 'democratic knowledge': Harris (2000), 509. Cf. J. Roberts (2000), 482; Rhodes (2000), 182. More problematically, Ober groups authors of widely differing works together, from a comic poet performing in public for the public at public expense (Aristophanes) to an elitist critic of politics constructing a written philosophical programme (Plato).

[41] Ober (1998), 5 notes in passing that he took the term dissent from the title of an American journal, which had sought to offer a fresh left-wing critique of politics in America after Stalinism had tainted the previous Marxist credo. Ober later makes the comparison even more explicit when, in labelling the Athenian critics of democracy a 'virtual community', he notes: 'a modern analogy might be sought in the contributors to a journal of political opinion' (46, n. 63).

[42] Ibid. 39.

[43] Thus the title of his book notably slides from 'political *dissent*' to '*critics* of popular rule'. Here the quotation from Ed Murrow is useful. Whereas Ober reads dissent in terms of elite critics of the dominant government—as in political *dissidents*—Murrow emphasizes the importance of dissent per se for democracy. It is this 'popular' sense of dissent with which this book works. Murrow is a particularly interesting and important figure to counterbalance Ober's claims about dissent, given his prominence as a (popular) news-broadcasting personality during the specific period Ober himself uses: Cold War US politics.

One problem may relate to the difficulty of defining dissent. Though 'authority' may be translated by the Greek words ἀρχή or κράτος, the term dissent finds no exact equivalent. This is in part due to the range of associations which the English 'dissent' triggers. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition for the verb 'to dissent' reads (in sum):

1. *intr.* To withhold assent or consent from a proposal, etc.; not to assent; to disagree with or object to an action.
2. To think differently, disagree, differ *from, in* (an opinion), *from, with* (a person).
3. To be at dissension or variance; to quarrel.
4. To differ in sense, meaning, or purport; also, in more general sense, to differ in nature, form, or other respect. *Obs.*

The fundamental idea in 'dissenting' is, therefore, *difference* or *opposition*: when the term 'dissent' is used in this book, it is meant to evoke a sense of disagreement, variance and/or opposition. In the case studies under examination differences come to light by various kinds of formal opposition, rather than by specific terminology describing the act of replying or disagreeing. Since tragedy is a dramatic art form, speeches lack introductory tags that denote the tenor of their content anyway;[44] but explicit evaluation tends to be absent from Homeric speech introductions as well. So, for example, even in the exchange between Agamemnon and Achilles at the beginning of the *Iliad*, the narrator uses for the most part neutral descriptors such as 'he answered the other', or 'answering him, the other replied':[45] yet, when the assembly dissolves, the narrator glosses their exchange as 'fighting with opposing words' (ἀντιβίοισι μαχεσσαμένω ἐπέεσσιν, *Il.* 1.304).[46] Besides,

[44] The Chorus may provide on occasions some indication of the relationship between speeches; primarily, however, the structure of tragedies themselves brings out opposition.

[45] τὸν δ' ἠμείβετ', *Il.* 1.121 (Achilles), 172 (Agamemnon), 292 (Achilles); τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη, *Il.* 1.130, 285 (Agamemnon). At the same time, the narrator generates a sense of an escalating quarrel with admirable economy: in his second reply to Agamemnon Achilles 'looks under his eyebrows' (τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν, *Il.* 1.148—see Ch. 2 n. 121 below); in his third he reaches for his sword (*Il.* 1.187–94); in his fourth he speaks with '*harmful* words' (ἀταρτηροῖς ἐπέεσσιν, *Il.* 1.223–4); his last reply interrupts Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.292—see Ch. 1, n. 153 below).

[46] This description, however, matches the narrator's earlier advertisement of his theme: when first Agamemnon and Achilles 'stood apart in strife' (διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε, *Il.* 1.6). Richard Martin (1989), 67–77 has a good discussion of agonistic speaking in the *Iliad*. He comments: 'at times the dispute language might be called *neikos* or 'cutting

dissent as an idea finds expression in many forms, ranging from non-participation (the *Iliad*'s Achilles), silence (Sophocles' Ajax) or mediation (Sophocles' Odysseus), to frank speaking (Sophocles' Teucer, Euripides' Polymestor), potential insurrection (the *Odyssey*'s suitors) and even violent reprisal (Euripides' Hecuba).[47] As we shall see, the general notion of dissent or disagreement may be gainfully employed to think about a wide variety of situations, such as the scenes of Homer's heroes vying with words, or the historians scripting the decision-making process undertaken by various groups, or the tragic protagonist's refusal to accept their circumstances lying down. The unifying strand running throughout these examples is the formal context in which a contest of words may be said to take place: the scene of assembly in epic and historiography, and the agon in tragedy.

Starting from a series of questions—Who does debate? How? Where? With what effect?—this book aims to show that literary representations of debate may be best understood in relation to certain recognizable parameters that indicate a special—or institutional—space: the assembly. As a formal gathering, part of what is at stake in debate is how people relate to each other within an arena that is set up according to an

words', at other times it may be introduced, as I contend, simply as *muthos*, and again, it might be unmarked completely, when the poet allows the dramatic setting of the speeches itself to cue the audience to the genre involved' (p. 68). Martin, however, follows Nagy (1979), 222–42 in viewing this kind of speech generically, specifically in contrast to what Martin calls 'political' discourse (p. 68). It is one premise of this book that such an exclusive focus misrepresents the evidence by introducing an anachronistic dichotomy between politics and poetics.

[47] An important related topic here is the idea of freedom of speech. This has been a burgeoning area of interest in recent years, as evidenced by the edited volume on 'free speech' by Sluiter and Rosen (2004). In that volume see esp. D. Carter (2004) for questions of definition; Balot (2004) for the centrality of free speech to democratic identity, particularly its relation to the institutions and practices of democracy; J. Roisman (2004) for the power struggle between the speakers and the audience, 'who, by law and self-perception, held the supreme power in the state' (p. 276); and Raaflaub (2004*b*), who compares democratic and aristocratic notions of free speech. See also Raaflaub (2004*a*), 221–5 for a discussion of the terminology of free speech: *eleutheros legein, isēgoria,* and *parrhēsia*. In order to move away from modern notions of rights, Saxonhouse (2006) prefers the definition of *parrhēsia* as 'frank speech': '*Parrhēsia* as free speech or speaking all is not a "right" in our terms; rather it captures both the egalitarianism of the regime that rejected the hierarchy implicit in the treatment of Thersites and the expectation that speech reveals the truth as one sees it, that speech opens and uncovers' (p. 87). This study will make use of the notion of 'frank speech' or 'speaking back' for the analysis of tragedy in Act III below.

ideal of putting ideas 'into the open'. This book, then, understands debate in terms of an institution that accommodates dissent: a place where authority is challenged, resisted and explored; where the possibility of different responses gains communal sanction; and where the ideal is not one of total agreement so much as the due management of disagreement.

LAYING DOWN THE GROUND-RULES

> Human social activities . . . are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves *as* actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible.
>
> (Anthony Giddens, (1984), 2)

> For an entire tradition, to put things *es meson* is to set them 'in common' . . . . The significance of the center emerges clearly from the institutional forms operating both in the allocation of prizes and in the distribution of booty: the center means both 'that which is held in common' and 'that which is public'.
>
> (Marcel Detienne, (1996), 95)

The institutionalized context for dissent in ancient Greek culture argued for by Lloyd has led us to posit that representations of debate in literature are best understood in relation to the institutions of assembly or agon[48] Modern approaches to institutions have been greatly influenced by Michel Foucault's conception of power 'as the multiplicity of force relations

[48] The study of politics in ancient Greece has tended to take two approaches: either the institutional, which analyses the constitutional framework of a city (e.g. Hansen (1989; 1991; 2006)), or else the ideological, which examines the assumptions, opinions and principles common to the majority (e.g. Ober (1989), esp. 3–52; Ober and Hedrick (1996) (eds.)) on the basis that an 'analysis of the "parliamentary" *mechanics* alone' (M. Finley (1983), 56, his italics) is insufficient to understand politics. See J. Davies (2003), esp. 325–6, for a critique of ideological/political approaches that do not take into consideration the institutions on the ground. This book attempts to combine both approaches in a study of how institutions are lived in and acted out through literary representations. Vlassopoulos (2007*b*) takes a different approach by gathering evidence of Athenian political life outside institututional settings in so-called 'free spaces'. For a recent critique of modern approaches to the Greek *polis*, see Vlassopoulos (2007*a*).

immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization' and 'as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them'.[49] By regarding power as being immanent within social structures rather than 'as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state',[50] Foucault challenges the top-down notion of institutions that regards them as imposed from above by a governing entity. Expanding on Foucault's work, Antony Giddens[51] argues that 'we should not conceive of the structures of domination built into social institutions as in some way grinding out "docile bodies" who behave like the automata suggested by objectivist social science'. From this perspective, structure is to be regarded not as external to individuals but as fundamentally part of people's everyday lives, which each person lives and experiences, works through and enacts.[52] Thus Giddens' approach stresses the activity of people working within social structures to reproduce them (whether consciously or not)—a process he labels 'structuration'. He writes: 'Analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction.'[53] Giddens here is talking about social and political institutions, which, he argues, people perpetuate in their everyday lives.[54] Nevertheless, what he has to say about real-life institutions can be helpful for thinking about their literary manifestations. As an audience or a reader, we experience the text as a series of structures. This is not, however, to conceive of interpretation as, to

[49] Foucault (1979), 92.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Giddens (1984), 16.

[52] Ibid. 25; cf. 16–18. Working in the tradition of modern liberalism, Farenga (2006) puts a similar onus on the activity of the individual, in terms of the relationship of citizenship and selfhood (pp. 10–12) and the intersubjectivity of the self in deliberative democracies (pp. 12–14).

[53] Giddens (1984), 25.

[54] Also relevant is Bourdieu (1990), whose work derives more from the field of anthropology than political science. He writes: 'contrary to simplistic uses of the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure, the social mechanisms that ensure the production of a compliant *habitus* are . . . an integral part of the conditions of the reproduction of the social order and of the productive apparatus itself' (pp. 129–30). For the theory and practice of putting together Giddens and Bourdieu, see esp. Cohen (1991), 14–34.

paraphrase Giddens, 'in some way grinding out docile bodies'; nor is it, however, to regard reading as somehow 'free play'. Rather, this is to recognize an essential duality within the interpretative process: each text is composed of structures that position the reader or audience in particular ways, and yet that come into being precisely because they are realized by that reader or audience.[55] With the case of those texts which represent debate—the subject of this book—the reader or audience experiences the process of going through competing arguments, which has the effect of shaping responses to the events: debate becomes internalized. In turn, however, by that very process of internalizing competing arguments, the audience or reader *realizes* the institution of debate within the text.[56]

In the light of Giddens' theory of structuration, then, the proposition that debate may be best understood in relation to the institutional form of debate, such as the agon and agora,[57] may be fleshed out by two additional points. First, by virtue of their structure the scenes of institutional debate involve the reader or audience in a process of negotiating between dissent and authority. Second, by becoming involved in that process the audience/reader reproduces those representations of debate and, therefore, realizes them as institutional arenas. We might say that responses to debate are part of an interpretative process that simulta-

[55] The interdependence of both text and reader/audience has given rise to the theory of dialogism, associated with the Russian formalist theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. He writes: 'Every literary work faces outward away from itself, towards the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself' (Bakhtin (1981), 257). In this respect, Bakhtin is responding to the unidirectional model of communication expounded by Jakobson (2000). See also Holquist (1981), 63, who calls the outwardness of the text 'relational'; Morson (1981); Todorov (1984), 54–6; Holquist (1990), 40–66. The other aspect of 'dialogism' or 'heteroglossia'—the representation of competing voices within the text itself—is discussed below. For a good discussion of the duality of the critic's task, in resisting domination by the text while recognizing that one cannot be liberated absolutely from the conventions of language: McGann (1993).

[56] Raaflaub (2004*b*), 227–33 makes the important observation that, while democratic institutions are important for notions of freedom, primary identification with freedom seems to be in relation to democracy as a comprehensive way of life, a politeia. This study also puts the emphasis on process and experience—a way of conducting oneself—but in relation to embedded structures (within the text) and, in particular, representations of debate.

[57] As we saw above, Homeric scholars understand the term 'agora' as not simply indicating the place of an assembly but marking that *an assembly is going on*—the assembly as an institution.

neously is a performance of those institutions *as they are represented in the text*.[58]

So far I have been setting out how to approach representations of debate in ancient Greek literature, and I have suggested that thinking of them as institutions that work through possibilities for dissent allows us to make sense of their varying manifestations. The focus on the exploration and valorization of dissent within a text reproduces something of the openness that Marcel Detienne has seen as characteristic of the series of contests or agones that Achilles sets up in honour of Patroclus in *Iliad* 23, when Achilles 'held the people and sat them down in a wide space' (*αὐτοῦ λαὸν ἔρυκε καὶ ἵζανεν εὐρὺν ἀγῶνα*, *Il.* 23.258).[59] So, for example, having won the first contest (the chariot race), Diomedes 'stands in the middle of the agon' (*στῆ δὲ μέσῳ ἐν ἀγῶνι*, *Il.* 23.507) to collect the prize, on which basis Detienne argues that 'the centre means both 'that which is held in common' and 'that which is public'.[60] That is to say, Achilles' act of placing goods 'into the middle' of the agon has symbolic value: it signifies that the goods are no longer any one person's property but are common to all and, as such, may be competed for and acquired. The idea of the agon as the place in which all-comers may enter to compete for the goods placed 'in the middle' has a clear application for this study; indeed, Jean-Pierre Vernant has expressly extended the concept of the centre, or *meson*, to thinking about debate. He writes:

> The *agora*, which represented this [new] spatial arrangement on the ground, formed the center of a common public space. All those who entered it were by that fact defined as equals, *isoi*. By their presence in that political space they entered into relations of perfect reciprocity with one another . . . The social

[58] At best a supplement of or substitute for 'real life' debate, these representations nevertheless offer important insights into the construction of narrative and a reader's/spectator's place within it. For the dual notion of the supplement as supplying something that is missing or supplying something additional, see Derrida (2000²), 99.

[59] Cf. *Il.* 23.273, 448, 451, 495, 507, 531, 617, 654, 685, 696, 710, 799, 847, 886; 24.1. It seems that, by killing Hector, Achilles has definitively warded off 'contest' over the Achaean ships (see n. 32 above); instead, in a move that mirrors his establishment of the assembly Achilles institutionalizes the agon within the Achaean community. For Hammer (1997*b*) 21 the funeral games introduces a new kind of political relationship. See Ch. 1, conclusion.

[60] Detienne (1996), 95.

space was a centered space—common, public, egalitarian, and symmetrical—but also secularized, intended for confrontation, debate, and argument.[61]

In the case of an assembly, we can think of obvious practical reasons for standing in a circle, in that it gives everyone the opportunity to hear what is said. But it has symbolic value as well: everyone stands equidistant from the centre, from what is said, discussed and ratified; arguments set 'into the middle' become symbolically the common property of all, to be taken up or taken over as each person deems fit.[62] Yet, the notion of the *meson* as discussed by Vernant and Detienne represents an ideal of openness; paradoxically, for the concept of openness to have any meaning it must necessarily be accompanied by limitations and exclusions: only by having certain circumstances, material or groups for whom or for which disclosure does not or cannot apply can openness itself be defined.[63]

Not only that: as we shall see, proclaiming openness is never an innocent gesture. Precisely because of the ideal of openness, places of debate become highly charged and important to control. Setting up an assembly or agon, then, is an act that is not simply descriptive

[61] Vernant (1982), 125, 126. For an analysis of the agora as a place external to a city's institutional framework see Vlassopoulos (2007*b*). He shows that the Athenian agora—in this case, solely the marketplace—not only 'brought together public life, social life, work and exchange' (p. 40); it also blurred boundaries between citizen and non-citizen in its activation of a 'free space'.

[62] As Vernant (1983), 185 puts it: 'in that they have access to this circular space centred on the *agora*, the citizens enter a political system governed by equilibrium, symmetry, and reciprocity.' According to Vernant, this contrasts with eastern kingdoms, where 'political space took the form of a pyramid dominated by a king, with a hierarchy of powers, prerogatives, and functions stretching down from top to bottom' (p. 190). Cf. Vernant (1982), 45–8; Steiner (1994), 191–2. Loraux (2002), 98–104 makes compelling reading: though she rather fetishes consensus, her focus is on post-Peloponnesian War Athens, when there must have been a particular concern to control dissent.

[63] A completely different example that exposes the claim to openness is a version of Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount', in which a great throng of people are depicted hanging on every word of his parable that the meek shall inherit the earth—a message that mirrors the spatial inclusiveness of the circular performance context. But, then, as the camera pans back, and back and back, and Jesus' words fade out to a mere murmur, eventually a point is reached on the outer edge of the circle where the sermon is no longer audible at all, and Jesus' message gets misheard as 'blessed are the cheese-makers . . . '. While of course, not holy scripture but the unholy script of *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, this example aptly demonstrates an important limitation to the ideology of openness: even when a message of inclusiveness is being broadcast, one eventually meets the margins, and those margins are all the more powerful for the inclusiveness of the message. In short, there is already a fiction of openness in the phrase *es meson*.

but *prescriptive*: it makes a difference what kind of debate is established, when, where it takes place, and who does it. In fact, where, or rather, *how* the boundaries may be drawn is one of the critical problems that will be encountered.[64] And it is because the form of debate is by no means self-evident or given, but demands that boundaries be drawn and redrawn each time it is entered, that previous attempts at describing debate have proven insufficient: while debate, notably the agon, has been commonly studied as fixed in form, precisely what we don't get is a form that sustains or remains consistent over different manifestations. Where a debate is drawn up, for what reasons, and with what consequences when it is dissolved, all make a difference: its form is *always* a matter of trial, contest and negotiation. There is no ground zero for setting up a debate;[65] words are always heard or read in a context.[66]

Such an understanding of debate assumes particular significance if one thinks of it as *the* place where an author cedes his stage to the characters in his drama or narrative: how the author *frames* these other voices in debate has implications for how we respond to the work as a whole.[67] Two frames to debate come to mind. On the one hand, there is the narrative context in which a debate takes place, which means investigating how a debate is set up vis-à-vis the events by the agents in the narrative or drama. On the other hand, there is the external commentary on debate that a narrator may offer: in this case the task will be to consider how debate is narrated by the poet, written up by the historian or staged by the dramatist.

[64] This is another way of recognizing the problem of representation even as one tries to establish a model or, at least, a pattern. See Spariosu (1984) and, in particular, the essays by Rapp (1984), 142–3 and Black (1984), 184–8.

[65] On the impossibility of reading degree zero: Barthes (1967).

[66] This is another essential insight of 'dialogism' as articulated by Bakhtin (1981), especially: 'discourse is a social phenomenon' (p. 259); any utterance 'finds the object at which it was directed already overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value' (p. 276); 'Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others' (p. 294). Cf. Morson (1981), 6, who writes: 'Meaning—in the sense of dictionary meaning—means nothing; it only has the potential for meaning.'

[67] Goldhill (1994), 59–60: the frame is not a borderline but the source of difference that undermines the inside–outside polarity. Felman's 1985 study of Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* is exemplary in this respect. Extrapolating from the prologue frame, in which the character-narrator warns us that 'the story *won't* tell', Felman argues that the text 'comprehends the critic' and 'through its reading, orchestrates the critical disagreement as the performance and the "speech *act*" of its own disharmony' (p. 161). Cf. Booth (1961), 311–16, 364–71.

Here the notion of 'heteroglossia'—the theory inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of the modern novel's plurality of voices—will be an important tool: its emphasis on the creative tension between the narrative frame and the alien voices incorporated within it is potentially disruptive of the authorial word.[68] More generally we will be faced with the problem of making sense of the contest of voices, as either setting up rival positions in which a space opens up in-between, thereby allowing 'dialogue' to take place between the text and its reader,[69] or else constructing an opposition in which one position is clearly favoured over another.

The nexus between dissent and authority, and the tension between ideals of openness and its fiction; the shifting forms, parameters and locations of debate; and the importance of framing debate by both its internal agents and external author, all provide the methodological framework that underpins this book.

INTRODUCING THE RIVAL COMPETITORS

> In the Millennium Declaration, all States resolved to intensify their efforts 'to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects' . . . This reflected the view, long held by the majority, that a change in the Council's composition is needed to make it more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of the geopolitical realities of today, and thereby more legitimate in the eyes of the world.
>
> (Kofi Annan, *Report on UN reform*)[70]

> The only emulator successfully to challenge the *Iliad*'s supremacy as a model of how narrative should be done was the *Odyssey*,

[68] Bakhtin (1981), 259–422. He writes: 'Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel . . . is *another's speech in another's language*' (p. 324). Cf. Emerson (1997). This is the form of dialogism most familiar to classicists, in particular those working on Herodotus: see Act II below.

[69] Holquist (1990), 38 speaks of a 'dialogic' triad between the utterance, the reply, and the relationship between the two. Goldhill (1999*a*) 3 emphasizes the display element of democratic performance, which 'triangulates competition through an audience'. For the significance of contest as being derived from *con-testari*, an implied 'third-stander' in an agonistic confrontation, see Ong (1981), 45–6 (quotation from p. 45).

[70] Kofi Annan, 'In Larger Freedom,' para. 168 (21 Mar. 2005). *http://www.globalpolicy.org/reform/initiatives/annan/2005/followupreport.pdf*.

> apparently a generation or so later. Yet despite its higher technical ambitions and accomplishment, even this did not knock the *Iliad* off its paradigmatic perch. What it did instead was to bequeath to later narrative systems a *dual* template: a pair of fundamentally distinct narrative key signatures, one minor one major, between which all subsequent Western classical narrative would be required to choose or compromise.
>
> (Lowe (2000), 103)

The material gathered here derives from three genres on the principle that a study of debate is best served by an investigation that crosses generic boundaries and incorporates different textual and cultural contexts. Each of the three genres has been chosen due to the prominence of scenes of debate within it; but other factors are at play too, since each genre also presents the opportunity of looking at debate from radically different and distinctive points of view. Epic is chosen because of its place as the 'super genre' where everything begins:[71] the prominence of verbal conflict in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* has long attracted the interest of scholars, whereas signs of an institutional framework underpinning Homeric society have only recently gained scholarly attention.[72] At the other end of the scale, tragedy's central place in the institutional fabric of Athenian society affords the opportunity to explore the importance of debate in a particular polis, and to test whether tragedy engages more directly with issues that may be considered democratic rather than merely political.[73] On the other hand, the third genre, historiography, finds its way into this study on the basis of the vastly different genesis of its narrative. In tragedy actors verbally confront each other on stage with varying degrees of formality without intervention on the part of the dramatist; it is also the case that narratorial comment on the setting up of debates is minimal in Homeric epic, where the narrator

[71] J. Foley (2005), 209 talks about epic as the 'omnibus genre' in an 'ecosystem of living, interactive oral genres'. Whether or not epic poetry truly does pre-date all other ancient Greek literature is not the concern of this study, though there is enough evidence from ancient Greek poetry to suggest inter-poetic rivalry with epic: see e.g. Irwin (2005); Barker and Christensen (2006). It is enough to acknowledge that Homeric epic at any rate presents itself as a foundational narrative: Graziosi and Haubold (2005). Cf. Ford (1992).

[72] See Ch. 1, conclusion.

[73] See Act III.

(for the most part) avoids intrusive personal comment. In both Herodotus and Thucydides debates play an important role in the experience and conduct of their respective wars, but, given the fact that their narratives derive from their own personal enquiry and study,[74] the way they frame debate becomes a critical issue: when representing debate their authority is at risk in a way that is not true of the Homeric poet or Athenian tragedian.[75]

The data collected here are presented according to two types of organizational principle. First, the book is divided into different Acts, which correspond to the different genre under investigation. Act I investigates scenes of debate in Homeric epic. It demonstrates that debate takes place within carefully codified parameters, marked by formulaic language, and indicating the presence of an institution, the assembly. In this way the Homeric epics act as foundational narratives that explore the importance of dissent within the community. Act II takes up the story by turning to the creators of history-writing, Herodotus and Thucydides, and enquires how these two authors overcome the problem of writing in a culture that is dominated by the public, spoken word. It will show that one way in which they negotiate that problem and displace it onto their readers is through their representation of public debate: in the ways that they write up debate, the historians make reading (history) useful for thinking politically. Lastly, Act III examines tragedy, in which scenes of debate become formalized and embedded in the very structure of the genre itself in the form of the agon. Unlike historiography, tragedy lacks a narratorial figure, removing explicit guidance for audience interpretation; whereas epic focuses on the actions of individual heroes, tragedy explores reactions to the hero. Both points lead to the proposal that tragedy puts the audience's judgement under the spotlight. Thus tragic debates often fail to lead to resolution precisely because the agon is as much about reproducing the crisis of interpretation among the audience as about displaying the contest between characters, all of which suggests a significant interrelationship between tragic dissent and the new cultural conditions of democracy.

[74] And, in Thucydides' case at least, personal experience of assembly debate.

[75] On problems of authority for an ancient historian, see Marincola (1997), and Act II below.

While this rather schematic outline may suggest an evolutionary path towards the greater valorization and institutionalization of dissent, evidence mustered within those genres can also be used to flag up anxieties about debate and the benefits of allowing dissent—from this perspective contest takes place not only *between* different genres but also *within* the same genre. To put it simply: Chapter 1 presents an *Iliad* that institutionalizes dissent within the heroic community, while Chapter 2 offers an *Odyssey* that radically challenges and undermines that positive outcome of contest. Chapter 3 picks up this thread by analysing Herodotus' open narrative texture as an Odyssean strategy to gain authority for his enquiry, while Chapter 4 reads Thucydides as taking an Achilles-like stand in dissenting from his contemporaries' way of political decision-making, whether Athenian, Spartan or Sicilian, and so on. Chapter 5 puts on stage a version of Sophocles' *Ajax* that sees its hero as a second Achilles and the play as a performance of dissent from authority figures, while Chapter 6 dresses Hecuba up as an Odysseus-like figure in Euripides' provocative challenge to the Athenian ideals of open debate. As can be seen from this summary account, one consequence of thinking about debate in terms of dissent and authority will be to suggest that the Homeric epics offer alternative, contesting narrative paradigms, which are taken up, negotiated and challenged by later authors in a variety of ways. This book contends that the *Iliad*, Thucydides and Sophocles' *Ajax* all privilege an understanding of dissent in which characters, or the author, take a stand in the arena of debate to challenge the dominant figures, ideals or discourses of their time. On the other hand, the *Odyssey*, Herodotus and Euripides' *Hecuba* expose that ideal of open contest and fruitful dissent as a fiction. The opposition I will trace undoubtedly has many reasons (as well as many manifestations), but this study flags up one of particular importance: that is, the problem of negotiating dissent from the perspective of, or when dealing with, *other* groups, whether by that we mean the *Odyssey*'s suitors, Herodotus' Persians or Euripides' female barbarian ex-queen, Hecuba.

The complex ideological issues raised by the subject of debate are particularly noticeable in Herodotus, who, while showing the importance of dissent for the survival of Greece, looks into, represents and articulates the fault-lines of the Greek resistance to the Persian invasion

through a series of fractious assemblies.[76] The problem of negotiating dissent in international institutions still confronts Western-style nation-state democracies today, particularly in the 'democratization' of international bodies such as the United Nations.[77] As Kofi Annan has said, reform of the institution of the United Nations is something on which just about all of its members agree: it needs to be more 'democratic' in order to be 'more broadly representative of the international community' and 'thereby more legitimate'. The problem, however, is how to carry out those reforms in practice: how, in other words, 'its working methods' can be made 'more efficient and transparent'. Just how much dissent is allowed, when and by whom? And who decides? For the importance of such questions one need only point to the crisis in the UN during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, the fall-out from which is still being felt in the international community as this book goes to press. A study of the way debate is represented in ancient Greek literature has the potential to prompt new ways of thinking about the role of debate in contemporary culture and of reinvigorating those institutions involved in its production.

ENTERING THE AGON TO JUDGE

> It is in the nature of the agon neither to render its participants mute nor to attain the conquering finality of *telos*. The agonistic paradigm allows texts, author, historical events, and cultural voices to engage in a creative and regenerative contest.
>
> (Janet Lungstrum and Elizabeth Sauer (1997), 25)

> Indeed, politics, too, had the form of an *agon*: an oratorical contest, a battle of arguments whose theater was the agora, the public square, which had been the meeting place before it was a marketplace. Those who contended with words, who opposed speech with speech, became in this hierarchical society a class of

[76] For the circumstances of and problems within Greek inter-poleis relations: Purnell (1978); Giovannini (2007).

[77] A recent book published under the auspices of the UN tackles precisely this issue: T. G. Weiss and S. Daws (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook on the UN* (Oxford, 2007). See esp. the chapters by W. A. Knight, 'Democracy and Good Governance', pp. 620–33 (on democratization in the outside world), and E. C. Luck, 'Principal Organs—Prospects for Reform', pp. 653–74 (about the internal reform of the UN).

> equals . . . What this urban framework in fact defined was a mental space; it opened up a new spiritual horizon.
>
> (Jean-Pierre Vernant (1982), 47–8)

One subsidiary effect of this study will be to draw attention to the importance of context on the act of interpretation. In their introduction to an edited volume of literary essays on the theme of 'agonistics', Elizabeth Sauer and Janet Lungstrum argue that the agon, as a concept, is dynamic and dialogic. Their description of the agon as avoiding definitive resolution and putting the onus on a response suggests something more than the weighing of arguments that one might expect from antilogy; they emphasize rather the range of actors involved—'texts, author, historical events, and cultural voices'—and the processes by which authority is displaced and dispersed through the text as these competing voices jostle for attention and endorsement. This creates, in the words of one of their contributors, a 'logic of dispossession' in the reader;[78] that is to say, the reader is dispossessed of knowledge or, rather, dispossessed of the security of knowing.[79]

This description of agonistics resonates strongly with the analysis of debate in terms of dissent as outlined above. Yet the concept of 'agonistics' as outlined here and applied throughout that edited volume appears to be a tool for the modern scholar to interpret texts from any period of time or culture without regard to context.[80] Similar criticism may be levelled at reader-response theories. For all their utility in analysing reading as 'an event' and in considering the reader's *experience* of a text,[81] they also all too readily examine the text detached from its

[78] Trey (1997), 332.

[79] In his analysis of the interpretive act Goldhill (1993), 151 describes how 'there is an inevitable gap between the author's voice and the voice of authority. This gap opens a space—*un écart*—in which writing as an author takes place.' He goes on to stress that posing the question 'What is an author?' leads to the question 'What is reading?' (p. 152).

[80] The term 'agonistics' is also used by Graff (1997), who sees the policy of embracing diversity and conflict as the way forward for a discipline like ours: 'Unfortunately, it does not occur to us that we have been looking for common ground in the wrong place—that is, our conflicts and differences constitute whatever common ground we have or have had' (p. 393).

[81] See e.g. Iser (1978), 127.

cultural context.[82] Indeed, Edward Said has criticized reader-led theories precisely for *not* being historically grounded in the literature that they purport to analyse: instead they lead to an essentially private, internalized event, which, according to Said, can promote a self-confirming authority within academic institutions.[83] This caveat is particularly meaningful for those of us who analyse texts that were both publicly performed and publicly received, such as Homeric epic and Athenian tragedy.

A brief example of a recent controversy among classicists may help to highlight what is at stake in terms of the strategies of interpretation one may adopt. Richard Seaford has complained that the emphasis of tragic criticism on ambiguity is 'in danger of becoming a disabling cliché, in which irreducible ambivalence . . . becomes the final destination of analysis'.[84] Seaford's concern articulates the intellectual bankruptcy of the kind of decontextualized reading that frustrates Said: according to this view, contemporary studies on tragedy, regardless of context and structure, reduce all possible interpretations of tragedy to one of ambiguity—the prevailing trend within the academy at the present time. On the other hand, one of Seaford's targets, Simon Goldhill, has responded by asserting that 'reading for closure or reading for ambiguity is always already a politicized positioning, an engagement',[85] by which he means that each critic is inevitably involved 'in the *agon* of producing, controlling, debating political meaning'.[86] The example he cites makes that point starkly: 'I am as unswayed by a claim of ambiguity when it is applied to the anti-Semitic writing of Paul de Man, as I am dismayed by the certainty with which the Bible is read to justify the violent re-possession of land. The issue is not simply "is it ambiguous or not?", "open or

[82] Fish (1980), 14, when speaking of the 'interpretative communities' that claim to make sense of a text, means the strategies of reading that are the fashion in the academy, and not the cultural context of interpretation to which the target text belongs.

[83] Said (1983). He complains: 'It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that an implicit consensus has been building for the past decade in which the study of literature is considered to be profoundly, even constitutively nonpolitical' (p. 18). Critics of Athenian tragedy now complain that the reverse (that political, even democratic, readings dominate) is true. See Act III, introduction below.

[84] Seaford (1995), 203.

[85] Goldhill (2000), 56.

[86] Ibid. (my italics).

not?", but "what is at stake in our *determination* that it is ambiguous, open or not?".'[87] Yet while Goldhill is making a claim for ambiguity that encompasses different cultural circumstances—'the agon of producing, controlling, debating political meaning'—the language that he draws upon betrays the context of his debate with Seaford: both critics are responding to the trial scene in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, arguably *the* agon on the tragic stage.[88] Here I return to the metaphor of the agon which began my investigation: drawing on two authors from his tradition and constructing a law court out of their rival perspectives, Longinus introduces a metaphor for criticism that still has purchase in contemporary studies of those texts. The power of the agon as a metaphor for reading ancient Greek literature derives in part at least from its presence in the literature under investigation.

This study aims to ground the idea of 'agonistics' in close readings of exemplary texts, and show the impact of those texts in establishing a particular cultural framework of interpretation.[89] As noted above, Jean-Pierre Vernant has discussed the idea of the centre (the 'meson') in relation to the institution of the assembly (agora) in the typical Greek polis. He goes on to suggest that the physical landscape of the polis has an effect on the psychology of the people within it: by investing in the central space of the community as a public arena in which decisions that affected the community were made, the citizens of the community not only took charge of running their own lives, but also became better prepared to do so. In Vernant's words: 'What this urban framework in fact defined was a mental space; it opened up a new spiritual horizon.' In a similar fashion, this book will argue that the presence of formal debate in the public literature of ancient Greece helps to create a 'mentalité' of agon; it challenges each audience (member) not just to find a place

[87] Ibid. (his italics).

[88] See Act III, introduction below. Cf. Goldhill (1986), 30–2, 48–56.

[89] In another context Goldhill (1999*b*), 118 writes about the need to study reading practices in different periods as a means of exploring how reading and self-formation are interconnected; as he puts it, 'the conceptualization of the citizen as a speaking subject, the cultural frames of interpretation, and the idea(l)s of the body, each informs the notion of reading in antiquity'.

in-between the opposing positions represented, but also to reflect on the reasons for doing so.[90]

Ultimately, then, the representation of debate is a two-way process, and continually so: the importance attached to institutional debate within the broad cultural framework of the time (sixth–fourth century BC) generates the intense interest in it in each of the three literary genres under investigation; and at the same time these very representations help renew the audience's or, even, a readership's commitment to debate and the management of dissent.[91] Being an audience of epic or tragedy, or even reading history, may thus be understood as an activity intimately connected to the exercise of citizenship.[92]

It is with the origins of this institution that we begin, with the scenes of debate in Homeric epic.

[90] Modern studies of theatre criticism have emphasized the plurality of responses, even among audiences homogenous in other respects, such as time and place. Given the highly fractured nature of 'we', this book tries to avoid the suggestion that there is only one way 'we' read the debates in ancient Greek literature. Nevertheless, it hopes to show the value of bringing out the structures embedded in the text, such as the ways in which they invite certain responses, and of speculating on the possible experience of those structures. See also Pelling (2000), esp. 1–17, who suggests that 'there is . . . a sense in which a text illuminates the dynamics of its own occasion' (p. 17).

[91] Smith (1984), 26 argues that evaluations are not individual acts but take place through various institutional procedures. A right or wrong evaluation is contingent, not upon an abstract truth, but upon 'how well it performs various desired/able functions for the various people who may be concretely involved with it'.

[92] Farenga (2006), esp. 7–12, offers an alternative route to citizenship, through an examination of individuals who perform 'scripts' (p. 8) of justice. Cf. Hammer (2002), esp. 19–48.