Ancient Greeks remembered their past before the rise of historiography, and after it poetry and oratory continued to serve commemorative functions. This book explores the field of literary memory in the fifth century BCE, juxtaposing the works of Herodotus and Thucydides with samples from epinician poetry, elegy, tragedy and oratory. Various socio-political contexts and narrative forms lent themselves to the expression of diverse attitudes towards the past. At the same time, a common gravitational centre can be observed, which is distinct from modern ideas of history. As well as presenting a broad overview on memory in various genres, Professor Grethlein sheds new light on the rise of Greek historiography. He views Herodotus and Thucydides against the background of memory in poetry and oratory and thereby elucidates the tension between tradition and continuity in which the shaping of historiography as a genre took place.

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THE GREEKS AND THEIR PAST

Poetry, Oratory and History in the Fifth Century BCE

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1 Cover of Stanley Lombardo’s *Iliad* translation. © 1997 by Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved.  


3 Detail of Brygos Cup (AB1911.615). Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
Preface

This book has taken shape in several places, each with its own distinctive environment. It was written in Widener Library in Cambridge MA, at the foot of the Black Forest in Freiburg, on the sunny shores of Santa Barbara and, finally, at Heidelberg in view of the Philosophenweg. Although The Greeks and their Past is less about space than time, more specifically about how Greeks in the fifth century BCE envisaged their past, it has benefited from the experience of very different environments. The moves have, if nothing else, sensitized me to the different temporalities reigning in the Western world which, at least in this regard, is less unified than the discourse of globalization would lead one to believe. California’s infatuation with youth and the present as well as the nostalgia of Heidelberg, the capital of Romanticism, may be clichés, but, as many clichés, they are not without significance. While the primary goal of this book is to chart the gravitational field of literary memory in fifth-century Greece, tracing back both the differences in the genres and the common ground they share, it is contemporary interest in memory that has triggered this study and continuously serves as a point of comparison, explicitly in the introduction and epilogue as well as implicitly throughout the book.

My argument requires close readings, but all texts are translated to make the book fully accessible to readers without knowledge of ancient Greek. Quotations from the Iliad are taken, with slight adaptations, from Lattimore (1951). For the translations of other texts, which do not aim at elegance, but stay close to the Greek, I have consulted the following editions: Aeschylus: Hall (1996); Andocides: Edwards (1995); Herodotus: Waterfield (1998); Isocrates: Norlin (1966); Lysias: Lamb (1976); Pindar: Nisitich (1980); Race (1997); Verity (2007). Simonides fr. 11 W²: West in Boedeker and Sider (2001a), other elegiac poetry: Gerber (1999); Thucydides: Lattimore (1999). As to Greek names, I have taken latinized forms, except where familiarity dictates otherwise. The abbreviations of
journals follow the *année philologique*, those of ancient authors the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.


I was very lucky in finding on both sides of the Atlantic people with whom I could fruitfully discuss my work. It would be impossible to name all those to whom I am indebted, but I nonetheless wish to thank here Apostolos Athanassakis, Carolyn Dewald, Francis Dunn, Renaud Gagné, Ralph Galluci, Hans-Joachim Gehrke, Tonio Hölscher, Ted Lendon, David Konstan, Greg Nagy, Robin Osborne, Randy Pogorzelski, Kurt Raaflaub, Matthias Steinhart, Bernhard Zimmermann. I am particularly grateful to Stefania Tutino, Sara Lindheim and Robert Morstein-Marx for giving me such a warm welcome in California and making my time there a wonderful experience. The book has gained a great deal from the comments made by friends who have unflinchingly taken upon themselves the task of reading the entire manuscript: Deborah Boedeker, Bill Furley, Marianne Hopman, Christopher Krebs, Antonios Rengakos. In Heidelberg, Sabine Hug, Matthias Becker, Dominic Meckel and Hans-Josef Merz have been an immense help in preparing the manuscript for publication. I wish to thank finally Michael Sharp for his interest and his support of this project, and, last but not least, the two readers for Cambridge University Press whose comments have been very useful. One report in particular has enriched the book through a wealth of suggestions at different levels.

I dedicate this book to my teacher, friend and father, Christian.

JONAS GRETHLEIN

Heidelberg
Abbreviations

IG Inscriptiones graecae (1873–). Berlin.
P. Oxy. The Oxyrhynchus Papyri. (1898–) London.
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Abbreviations


